

ILLINOIS PYS 2024-2027

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## OVERVIEW

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Governor of each State must submit a Unified or Combined State Plan to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor that outlines a four-year strategy for the State's workforce development system. The publicly-funded workforce development system is a national network of Federal, State, regional, and local agencies and organizations that provide a range of employment, education, training, and related services and supports to help all job-seekers secure good jobs while providing businesses with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. States must have approved Unified or Combined State Plans in place to receive funding for core programs. WIOA reforms planning requirements, previously governed by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), to foster better alignment of Federal investments in job training, to integrate service delivery across programs and improve efficiency in service delivery, and to ensure that the workforce system is job-driven and matches employers with skilled individuals. One of WIOA's principal areas of reform is to require States to plan across core programs and include this planning process in the Unified or Combined State Plans. This reform promotes a shared understanding of the workforce needs within each State and fosters development of more comprehensive and integrated approaches, such as career pathways and sector strategies, for addressing the needs of businesses and workers. Successful implementation of many of these approaches called for within WIOA requires robust relationships across programs. WIOA requires States and local areas to enhance coordination and partnerships with local entities and supportive service agencies for strengthened service delivery, including through Unified or Combined State Plans.

## OPTIONS FOR SUBMITTING A STATE PLAN

A State has two options for submitting a State Plan— a Unified State Plan or a Combined State Plan. At a minimum, a State must submit a Unified State Plan that meets the requirements described in this document and outlines a four-year strategy for the core programs. The six core programs are—

- the Adult program (Title I of WIOA),
- the Dislocated Worker program (Title I),
- the Youth program (Title I),
- the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program (Title II), and
- the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program (authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III),
- the Vocational Rehabilitation program (authorized under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV).

Alternatively, a State may submit a Combined State Plan that meets the requirements described in this document and outlines a four-year strategy for WIOA's core programs plus one or more of the Combined State Plan partner programs. When a State includes a Combined State Plan partner program in its Combined State Plan, it need not submit a separate plan or application for that particular program. If included, Combined State Plan partner programs are subject to the "common planning elements" (Sections II-IV of this document) where specified, as well as the program-specific requirements for that program where such planning requirements exist separately for the program. The Combined State Plan partner programs are—

- Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, as amended by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)
- Employment and Training programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4)))
- Work programs authorized under section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(o))
- Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers programs (Activities authorized under chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.))
- Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program (programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et seq.)
- Unemployment Insurance programs (programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws in accordance with applicable Federal law)
- Senior Community Service Employment program (programs authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.))
- Employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Community Services Block Grant (Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.))<sup>1</sup>

[1] States that elect to include employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.) under a Combined State Plan would submit all other required elements of a complete CSBG State Plan directly to the Federal agency that administers the program. Similarly, States that elect to include employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development that are included would submit all other required elements of a complete State Plan for those programs directly to the Federal agency that administers the program.

## HOW STATE PLAN REQUIREMENTS ARE ORGANIZED

The major content areas of the Unified or Combined State Plan include strategic and operational planning elements. WIOA separates the strategic and operational elements to facilitate cross-program strategic planning.

- The **Strategic Planning Elements** section includes analyses of the State's economic conditions, workforce characteristics, and workforce development activities. These analyses drive the required vision and goals for the State's workforce development system and alignment strategies for workforce development programs to support economic growth.
- The **Operational Planning Elements** section identifies the State's efforts to support the State's strategic vision and goals as identified in the Strategic Planning Elements section. This section ensures that the State has the necessary infrastructure, policies, and activities to meet its strategic goals, implement its alignment strategy, and support

ongoing program development and coordination. Operational planning elements include:

- State Strategy Implementation,
- State Operating Systems and Policies,
- Assurances,
- Program-Specific Requirements for the Core Programs, and
- Program-Specific Requirements for the Combined State Plan partner programs. (These requirements are available in a separate supplemental document, Supplement to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified and Combined State Plan Requirements. The Departments are not seeking comments on these particular requirements).

When responding to Unified or Combined State Plan requirements, States must identify specific strategies for coordinating programs and services for target populations.<sup>2</sup> States must develop strategies that look beyond strategies for the general population and develop approaches that also address the needs of target populations. Use of links to external websites and documents is permitted within the State Plan narrative submission, if such links remain active and adhere to Section 508 accessibility requirements.

**Paperwork Reduction Act:** The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA) provides that an agency may not conduct, and no person is required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. Public reporting burden for this information collection is estimated to be 86 hours per state; including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Responding to this collection is required to obtain or retain the Federal grant benefit. In addition, responses to this information collection are public, and the agencies offer no assurances of confidentiality. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Workforce Investment, and reference OMB control number 1205-0522. Note: Please do not return the completed plan to this address.

[2] Target populations include individuals with barriers to employment, as defined in WIOA Sec. 3, as well as veterans, unemployed workers, and youth.

## I. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### A. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE

**Unified or Combined State Plan.** Select whether the State is submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan. At a minimum, a State must submit a Unified State Plan that covers the six core programs.

**Unified State Plan.** This plan includes the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser Act, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, and Vocational Rehabilitation programs.

**Combined State Plan.** This plan includes the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser Act, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, and Vocational Rehabilitation programs, as well as one or more of the optional Combined State Plan partner programs identified below.

This is a unified plan

## COMBINED PLAN PARTNER PROGRAM(S)

Indicate which Combined Plan partner program(s) the state is electing to include in the plan.

Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, as amended by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)

No

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)

No

Employment and Training programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4)))

No

Work programs authorized under section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(o))

No

Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers programs (activities authorized under chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.))

No

Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program (programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et. seq.)

No

Unemployment Insurance programs (programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws in accordance with applicable Federal law)

No

Senior Community Service Employment program (programs authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.))

No

Employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development

No

Community Services Block Grant (Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.))

No

## B. PLAN INTRODUCTION OR EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Unified or Combined State Plan may include an introduction or executive summary. This element is optional.

***Towards a more Equitable Workforce System***

Illinois' Workforce Development System has a key role to play in improving equity and accessibility in educational and economic opportunity. Illinois is committed to applying an equity lens to our workforce development strategies to help ensure that our most vulnerable populations gain skills and access good jobs. Key to that work is identifying inequitable outputs and outcomes in the workforce system, exploring the cause of those inequities, and implementing solutions to advance equity within the system.

To that end, Governor JB Pritzker formed the Commission on Workforce Equity & Access in 2021. The Commission was charged with creating a vision for an equitable, accessible, and effective state workforce system grounded in an understanding of user and stakeholder experience, including how racial, social, and geographic inequities inform experience and outcomes across Illinois' federally and state-funded workforce programs. Among its top priorities were finding ways to strengthen and diversify existing workforce training programs to address shortages, expand access to talent and to promote equity and inclusion across all industries.

The Commission released its final report in the Spring of 2023. Recommendations in the report focused on increasing the accessibility, inclusivity, and responsiveness of the Workforce Development System.

Additionally, the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board created an Equity Task Force in October 2020 to address equity within the Illinois workforce system and ensure that all customers are on pathways to success. The task force issued its report in 2022 that included a framework of recommendations within Illinois' workforce and education system to establish goals and remove inequities for the populations the system is meant to support.

The vision, goals, strategies and activities outlined in this plan reflect the findings and recommendations of both the Governor's Commission and the IWIB's Equity Task Force.

Throughout the life of this plan Illinois will continue to refine its strategies and activities to ensure this vision becomes reality.

### ***Establishing Illinois as a leader in Next Generation Technologies***

As Illinois continues to support the growth of its traditional economic drivers, it also is cultivating next-generation technologies, such as clean energy, bio-tech and quantum computing.

Illinois is already investing in next-generation technologies. Passed in 2021, the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act is a workforce development program that will equitably grow the clean energy workforce in Illinois. It supports renewable energy and energy efficiency projects in low-income and historically marginalized communities throughout the state.

Additionally, Illinois has invested \$200 million in the Quantum Exchange, a hub for researchers, both academic and industrial, oriented around the goal of advancing efforts in the science and engineering of quantum information. This investment will put Illinois at the forefront of creating jobs for the next century.

Illinois will leverage its own investments alongside WIOA funding and programs to modernize its energy sector, address environmental justice issues that overly impact marginalized communities and put the state on a path to being a leader in next-generation technologies.

### ***Illinois' Vision Statement***

Illinois' workforce system will meet employers, jobseekers, and community members where they are, centering the customer experience in an interoperable, equitable, and accessible manner to ensure all customers achieve their goals. We will support employers by building diverse, quality career pathways and provide effective training, education, and economic opportunities for jobseekers and communities to thrive.

**State Goals and Strategies:**

1. **Goal 1:** Illinois' Workforce Development System is an example of excellence in its approach to collaboration and customer service.
  - a. **Strategy:** The Workforce Development System uses a customer-centered approach to service delivery.
  - b. **Strategy:** The Workforce Development System advances diversity, equity, inclusion and access.
  - c. **Strategy:** WIOA partners and other workforce and education systems in Illinois enhance coordination and collaboration.
  - d. **Strategy:** Jobseekers and employers have a broader awareness of the Workforce Development System.
  - e. **Strategy:** The state enhances local service delivery through supporting development to frontline workers.
2. **Goal 2:** Illinois' Workforce Development System will enhance employers' abilities to hire and retain skilled workers that meet their emerging needs.
  - a. **Strategy:** The Workforce Development System supports, informs and enhances employers' talent strategies.
  - b. **Strategy:** The various partners in the Workforce Development System leverage their business services to provide more holistic support to employers.
  - c. **Strategy:** The Workforce Development System will build out tools and practices that can help employers adopt a culture that promotes equity and accessibility.
3. **Goal 3:** Illinois' Workforce Development System will use customer-centered and data-informed practices to improve the quality of the jobseeker experience in pursuing fulfilling career pathways in a manner that is equitable and accessible.
  - a. **Strategy:** The Workforce Development System educates and supports jobseekers regarding how to navigate the labor market.
  - b. **Strategy:** The Workforce Development System interacts with jobseekers in the places where they live and visit.
  - c. **Strategy:** The Workforce Development System will use a data-informed approach to reduce barriers to services for jobseekers who have historically faced barriers to accessing services.
4. **Goal 4:** Illinois' Workforce Development System will support the state's efforts to cultivate next-generation technologies, such as clean energy, bio-tech, and quantum computing.



- a. **Strategy:** The Workforce Development System provides exposure to individuals and jobseekers to career opportunities in emerging industries, such as electric vehicle production, battery energy storage, bio-tech, smart manufacturing, and solar energy.

**Stakeholder Collaboration and Comment:** The IWIB is responsible for overseeing the development, implementation and modification of the Illinois' WIOA State Plan and for convening all relevant programs, required partners and stakeholders. The State agencies responsible for the administration of the core and required programs have reviewed and commented on appropriate operational planning portions of WIOA State Plan.

Additionally, Illinois employed an extensive stakeholder engagement strategy. Webinars were held early in the fall of 2023 soliciting feedback from individuals, employers, and workforce staff. Listening sessions were held in October and November of 2023 in each of the economic development regions. A summary of the feedback received during the listening sessions is included as an appendix.

Illinois' WIOA State Plan was released for public comment early in 2024 to allow interested stakeholders to participate in the development of the plan. Four comments were received. The public comments are included as an appendix.

## II. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a Strategic Planning Elements section that analyzes the State's current economic environment and identifies the State's overall vision for its workforce development system. The required elements in this section allow the State to develop data-driven goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce and to identify successful strategies for aligning workforce development programs to support economic growth. Unless otherwise noted, all Strategic Planning Elements apply to Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan as well as to core programs. Where requirements identify the term "populations", these must include individuals with barriers to employment as defined at WIOA Section 3. This includes displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; farmworkers (as defined at section 167(i) of WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 35-14); individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed individuals. Additional populations include veterans, unemployed workers, and youth, and others that the State may identify.

### A. ECONOMIC, WORKFORCE, AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the economic conditions, economic development strategies, and labor market in which the State's workforce system and programs will operate.

## 1. ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

### A. ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the economic conditions and trends in the State, including sub-State regions and any specific economic areas identified by the State. This must include—

#### I. EXISTING DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS

Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which there is existing demand.

#### II. EMERGING DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS

Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which demand is emerging.

#### III. EMPLOYERS' EMPLOYMENT NEEDS

With regard to the industry sectors and occupations identified in (A)(i) and (ii), provide an assessment of the employment needs of employers, including a description of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required, including credentials and licenses.

### **Existing Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations.**

Three of the most important economic benchmarks used by Illinois to understand our economic position and to evaluate the effectiveness of our efforts to improve that position are overall economic production, employment and earnings. Examining these three indicators across the past ten years provides an uncommonly stark description of Illinois' experience before, during and since the brief recession in 2020 at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The main narrative told by the numbers in Table 1 is that Illinois has struggled to keep up with its neighboring states and the nation, both in terms of economic output and employment growth. Though the Great Lakes region (IL, IN, MI, OH and WI) has lagged the nation on both economic indicators, Illinois has been particularly challenged. Between 2012 and 2017, the state's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increased by 3.7 percent compared to the US GDP growth of 11.2 percent. The GDP in the Great Lakes Region was 6.5 percent for the same period. The story through 2022-- the latest year for which data are available--shows that even though GDP growth in Illinois picked up over the decade, it lagged both the Great Lakes Region and the nation. The last ten years have seen an increase in the state's GDP of nearly 10 percent, which is less than the region's growth of 14.0 percent and the nation's 23.1 percent growth.

A look at the employment data suggests a similar struggle: in the five years ending 2022, Illinois' employment contracted by 1.0 percent, reflecting the lingering impact of the pandemic on the labor market. In contrast, the Great Lakes region overall registered a slight contraction of -0.4%, while the U.S. experienced positive employment growth of 3.2 percent in these last five years.

Growth in earnings in Illinois presents a comparative bright spot: over the last five years, personal incomes among Illinoisans have increased almost as much as the region (47.4 percent vs 49.5 percent, respectively). However, earnings in the nation have surpassed both Illinois and the region, growing by 62.1 percent during that same time period.

Table 1: Illinois vs. Benchmark States vs. US:

Change in GDP, Employment & Earnings over 10 years

	Gross Domestic Product			Employment			Earnings		
	2012	2017	2022	2012	2017	2022	2012	2017	2022
ILLINOIS	726,399	753,027	797,969	5,989,454	6,237,933	6,176,876	314,743,600	368,130,900	463,838,300
Great Lakes Region *	2,272,451	2,421,179	2,591,533	21,310,883	22,709,662	22,614,423	989,410,400	1,175,192,200	1,479,570,600
US	16,253,970	18,076,651	20,014,128	142,469,083	153,337,417	158,291,083	6,918,166,000	8,469,518,000	11,213,920,200

	Percent Change in Gross Domestic Product			Percent Change in Employment			Percent Change in Earnings		
	2012-2017	2017-2022	2012-2022	2012-2017	2017-2022	2012-2022	2012-2017	2017-2022	2012-2022
ILLINOIS	3.7%	6.0%	9.9%	4.1%	-1.0%	3.1%	17.0%	26.0%	47.4%
Great Lakes Region *	6.5%	7.0%	14.0%	6.6%	-0.4%	6.1%	18.8%	25.9%	49.5%
US	11.2%	10.7%	23.1%	7.6%	3.2%	11.1%	22.4%	32.4%	62.1%

The situation described by these numbers provides the setting for continuing implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The challenge for Illinois is to utilize WIOA and all of the partner programs to assist the state's employers to increase productivity, employment and earnings throughout the state.

Table 2 shows projected employment demand through 2030 for major industry sectors across Illinois. It is expected that the largest number of job openings will be created within the leisure and hospitality, professional/business services and health care/social assistance sectors. Large percentage increases in employment are expected in these three sectors, as well as in transportation and warehousing and retail trade.

Table 2: Illinois Employment by Major Industry Sector

North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Title	Base Year Employment 2020	Share of Statewide Base Year Employment 2020	Projected Year Employment 2030	Net Change 2020-2030	Ten-Year Percent Change 2020-2030	Location Quotient 2020
<b>TOTAL, ALL INDUSTRIES</b>	<b>6,315,758</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>6,809,830</b>	<b>494,072</b>	<b>7.82%</b>	<b>1.00</b>
Agricultural Production	71,639	1.13%	72,937	1,298	1.81%	0.37
Natural Resources and Mining*	6,794	0.11%	6,885	91	1.34%	0.35
Utilities	23,817	0.38%	24,547	730	3.07%	1.09
Construction	216,665	3.43%	238,373	21,708	10.02%	0.75
Manufacturing	554,523	8.78%	575,158	20,635	3.72%	1.15
Wholesale Trade	281,714	4.46%	289,569	7,855	2.79%	1.25
Retail Trade	556,348	8.81%	592,583	36,235	6.51%	0.94
Transportation and Warehousing	324,853	5.14%	378,324	53,471	16.46%	1.26
Information	87,444	1.38%	88,124	680	0.78%	0.81
Financial Activities*	404,583	6.41%	421,118	16,535	4.09%	1.15
Professional and Business Services*	890,779	14.10%	971,653	80,874	9.08%	1.10
Educational Services, Private and Public	533,943	8.45%	550,625	16,682	3.12%	1.04
Health Care and Social Assistance	789,002	12.49%	855,247	66,245	8.40%	0.96
Leisure and Hospitality*	458,858	7.27%	612,602	153,744	33.51%	0.90
Personal and Other Services	230,494	3.65%	252,722	22,228	9.64%	1.17
Government**	331,873	5.25%	348,013	16,140	4.86%	0.88
Self Employed, Unpaid Family Workers and Others n.e.c.***	278,423	4.41%	261,424	-16,999	-6.11% *	

Note: LQ Sources by NAICS code, unless otherwise noted

\*LQ Source: BLS QCEW, 2020 Annual Averages, State of Illinois and U.S., Combined Industry Code

\*\*LQ Source: BLS QCEW, 2020 Annual Averages, State of Illinois and U.S., Government Ownership, all industries

\*\*\*No LQ Source Available

*Projections Source: IL Department of Employment Security Statewide Long-Term Employment Projections*

The location quotient for selected major industries in each county and EDR is provided on the accompanying maps (see below). These maps indicate where each industry has a comparative advantage versus the rest of the United States, based on private-sector employment. A value of

1.0 indicates the industry is at the national level, values greater than 1.0 indicate the industry has a comparative advantage versus the nation, and values less than 1.0 indicate the industry has a comparative disadvantage versus the nation. The degree of comparative advantage or disadvantage increases as the value deviates from 1.0.

Regions with a comparative advantage in a particular sector will be encouraged and supported in efforts to leverage their situation. Regions without a comparative advantage in a sector will be encouraged and supported in efforts to understand the root causes and use this information to target resources at sectors where the outcomes look most promising.

The following table provides a ranking of sectors by LQ and by the Percent Change in Employment depicted on the prior maps.

**Table 3: Ranking of Sectors by Location Quotient**

Sector	LQ	Percent Change in Employment, Dec '20 - Dec '22	Sector	LQ	Percent Change in Employment, Dec '20 - Dec '22
All Industries, Private	1.02	8.1%	All Industries, Private	1.02	8.1%
<b>Sorted by LQ Rank</b>			<b>Sorted by Percent Change Rank</b>		
Manufacturing	1.15	4.3%	Leisure & Hospitality	0.9	41.9%
Financial Activities	1.15	1.1%	Information	0.81	13.0%
Professional & Business Services	1.1	6.4%	Natural Resources & Mining	0.35	7.5%
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	1.08	3.9%	Professional & Business Services	1.1	6.4%
Education & Health	0.99	5.4%	Construction	0.75	5.6%
Leisure & Hospitality	0.9	41.9%	Education & Health	0.99	5.4%
Information	0.81	13.0%	Manufacturing	1.15	4.3%
Construction	0.75	5.6%	Trade, Transportation & Utilities	1.08	3.9%
Natural Resources & Mining	0.35	7.5%	Financial Activities	1.15	1.1%

Four sectors, Manufacturing, Financial Activities, Professional & Business Services and Trade, Transportation & Utilities have an LQ indicating a comparative advantage for Illinois. Two sectors, Education and Health and Leisure & Hospitality have an LQ at or greater than 0.90, which indicates they are near the national level. Information and Construction are the next level at 0.81 and 0.75, respectively. The one true outlier is Natural Resources and Mining, with an LQ of 0.35.

Note that the Leisure & Hospitality sector increased by nearly 42% in employment during the two-year timeframe, a rate more than triple that of the next highest sector. This unusually high increase is a direct reflection of the recapture of the thousands of jobs lost during the early months of the pandemic. It should be noted that at this point in the economic recovery since the pandemic, this sector has regained x% of its workers.

The analysis of Location Quotients and Change in Employment is merely the first step in identifying priority sectors. The next section of the Unified State Plan covers how industries are categorized as Leading, Emerging or Maturing and how that information is used to help determine priority sectors.

Table 4 shows projected employment demand through 2030 for major occupational sectors throughout Illinois. The largest numbers of new jobs are expected to be created within occupational categories of food preparation and service, transportation and material moving, management occupations, and business and financial operations occupations. Large numbers of job openings (including replacement jobs) are expected in those occupations, as well as



healthcare support occupations and sales and related occupations. Regardless of overall employment change, significant numbers of job openings are still expected annually due to replacements of existing workers who will transfer or exit from the labor force.

Table 4: Illinois Employment by Major Occupational Sector

Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Title	Base Year Employment	Share of Statewide Base Year Employment	Projection Year Employment	Net Employment Change 2020-2030		Average Annual Job Openings due to			
	2020	2020	2030	Number	Percent	Exits	Transfers	Growth	Total
<b>TOTAL, ALL OCCUPATIONS</b>	6,044,269	100.00%	6,542,650	498,381	8.25%	265,312	410,839	49,838	725,989
Management Occupations	500,219	8.28%	546,414	46,195	9.23%	13,916	28,114	4,620	46,650
Business & Financial Operations Occupations	374,508	6.20%	405,807	31,299	8.36%	10,196	22,887	3,130	36,213
Computer & Mathematical Occupations	194,823	3.22%	214,158	19,335	9.92%	4,240	10,082	1,934	16,256
Architecture & Engineering Occupations	81,317	1.35%	87,201	5,884	7.24%	2,000	4,020	588	6,608
Life, Physical & Social Science Occupations	44,222	0.73%	47,544	3,322	7.51%	943	3,152	332	4,427
Community & Social Services Occupations	113,433	1.88%	122,965	9,532	8.40%	4,103	7,532	953	12,588
Legal Occupations	54,159	0.90%	60,120	5,961	11.01%	1,526	2,127	596	4,249
Education, Training & Library Occupations	354,738	5.87%	374,715	19,977	5.63%	15,082	16,805	1,998	33,885
Arts/Design/Entertainment, Sports/Media Occs	93,451	1.55%	100,920	7,469	7.99%	3,686	6,110	747	10,543
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical Occs	368,095	6.09%	394,118	26,023	7.07%	9,602	11,432	2,602	23,636
Healthcare Support Occupations	222,763	3.69%	251,261	28,498	12.79%	13,952	14,537	2,850	31,339
Protective Service Occupations	136,197	2.25%	147,256	11,059	8.12%	6,579	8,950	1,106	16,635
Food Preparation & Serving Occupations	408,273	6.75%	511,900	103,627	25.38%	35,034	46,719	10,363	92,116
Building & Grounds Cleaning & Maint. Occs	184,947	3.06%	199,734	14,787	8.00%	11,010	13,971	1,479	26,460
Personal Care & Service Occupations	127,540	2.11%	155,256	27,716	21.73%	8,754	11,148	2,772	22,674
Sales & Related Occupations	570,010	9.43%	598,825	28,815	5.06%	28,911	45,641	2,882	77,434
Office & Administrative Support Occupations	776,594	12.85%	759,009	- 17,585	-2.26%	36,809	47,644	- 1,758	82,695
Farming, Fishing & Forestry Occupations	14,917	0.25%	15,082	165	1.11%	632	1,700	16	2,348
Construction & Extraction Occupations	204,432	3.38%	221,556	17,124	8.38%	6,293	14,370	1,712	22,375
Installation, Maintenance & Repair Occs	213,317	3.53%	232,112	18,795	8.81%	7,084	13,992	1,880	22,956
Production Occupations	410,389	6.79%	418,815	8,426	2.05%	15,637	29,630	843	46,110
Transportation & Material Moving Occupations	595,925	9.86%	677,882	81,957	13.75%	29,324	50,276	8,196	87,796

### Emerging Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations.

The State Plan must contain an assessment of sectors and industries that are leading, emerging and maturing across the state as a whole, as well as in the sub-state regions. To start this analysis, the Interagency State Data Team used the standard grouping of Sectors & Industries from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, show in the following table:

Bureau of Labor Statistics Sectors/Industries Available for Review		
Agricultural Production	Information	Professional & Business Services
Construction	Leisure & Hospitality	Retail Trade
Educational Services (Private+ Public)	Manufacturing	Transportation & Warehousing
Financial Activities	Natural Resources & Mining	Utilities
Health Care & Social Assistance	Personal & Other Services	Wholesale Trade

For each of these Sectors' Industries, the team looked at the following data points:

- Number of workers

- % share of all Illinois workers
- 12-year projected net change
- Location Quotient (Illinois activity vs U.S.)

Location Quotient is a calculation comparing the concentration of sector activity (number of workers, number of establishments, etc.) of a given region compared to a larger region. A value above 1.0 indicates activity is more concentrated than in the larger area, and a value below 1.0 indicates activity is less concentrated. The farther away from 1.0, the greater the difference. For example, a location quotient of 5.0 indicates a much higher concentration of activity than a value of 1.5. For the statewide analysis, sectors compared activity in Illinois to the national totals.

Based on these factors, each sector was categorized as one of the following:

Category	Number of Workers	Projected Change	Location Quotient
LEADING	High/Medium	Net Growth	Above 1.0
EMERGING	Medium/Low	Net Growth	Below 1.0
MATURING	High/Medium	Net Loss	Below 1.0

LEADING industries are identified as those that are expected to grow during the projection period and which are important within the state (i.e., have a location quotient greater than 1.0).

EMERGING industries are identified as those that are not strongly represented in the current economy (i.e., have a location quotient that is less than 1.0) but are expected to grow during the projection period.

MATURING industries are identified as those that are important within the state but are not expected to grow during the projection period.

Each of these categories is significant for the economy, job growth and availability and are therefore important for the planning of WIOA and partner programs during the period of this Unified State Plan. In summary, LEADING industries are those that will likely provide the largest numbers of job openings due to their combination of size and growth; EMERGING industries are those that are currently small but are quickly gaining in economic importance and job creation; and MATURING industries are those which have slower job growth but still have hefty presences in the economy and will continue to create significant job openings, if only through attrition (e.g., accelerating retirements).

Tables 5, 6 and 7 display the results of categorizing (according to this methodology) the major industries from Table 3. Major industry categories that are not included in one of these three categories are now dropped from the analysis.

Table 5: LEADING Major Industry Sectors Statewide

North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Title	Base Year Employment 2022	Projected Year Employment 2030	Net Change 2022-2030	Location Quotient 2022
<b>TOTAL, ALL INDUSTRIES</b>	<b>6,362,775</b>	<b>6,542,650</b>	<b>179,875</b>	<b>1.00</b>
Transportation and Warehousing	350,646	378,324	27,678	1.25
Financial Activities	403,166	421,118	17,952	1.15
Manufacturing	571,391	575,158	3,767	1.15
Professional and Business Services	970,812	971,653	841	1.11
Utilities	23,852	24,547	695	1.09

Table 6: EMERGING Major Industry Sectors Statewide

North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Title	Base Year Employment 2022	Projected Year Employment 2030	Net Change 2022-2030	Location Quotient 2022
<b>TOTAL, ALL INDUSTRIES</b>	<b>6,362,775</b>	<b>6,542,650</b>	<b>179,875</b>	<b>1.00</b>
Health Care and Social Assistance	816,218	855,247	39,029	0.98
Retail Trade	571,311	592,583	21,272	0.95
Agricultural Production*	71,639	72,937	1,298	0.95
Leisure and Hospitality	558,857	612,602	53,745	0.91
Government**	324,434	348,013	23,579	0.82
Construction	230,263	238,373	8,110	0.77

Table 7: MATURING Major Industry Sectors Statewide

North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Title	Base Year Employment 2022	Projected Year Employment 2030	Net Change 2022-2030	Location Quotient 2022
<b>TOTAL, ALL INDUSTRIES</b>	<b>6,460,465</b>	<b>6,809,830</b>	<b>349,365</b>	<b>1.00</b>
Wholesale Trade	294,854	289,569	-5,285	1.28
Personal and Other Services	262,278	252,722	-9,556	1.07
Educational Services, Private and Public	558,016	550,625	-7,391	1.03

The regional planning process utilizes the same analytics steps to assist regional teams to identify leading, emerging and maturing industries within each region. The regional planning process includes the development of crosswalks between the detailed (3-digit) industries and the occupational pathway for each region. The results of this crosswalk pinpoint occupations related to the detailed industries identified statewide as leading, emerging, and maturing. These are considered starting points for conversations with employers regarding critical occupations within their industries during the complete regional planning process.

Table 8 below summarizes the leading, emerging and maturing sectors preliminarily identified for each of the statewide Economic Development Regions based on these current and projected employment data, along with a brief comment on each region.

Table 8: LEADING, EMERGING and MATURING Industry Sectors Identified by Economic Development

Region	Leading Sectors	Emerging Sectors	Maturing Sectors	Comments
Central	Agricultural Production, Manufacturing, Utilities, Health Care & Social Assistance, Other Services	Natural Resources & Mining, Transportation & Warehousing, Professional & Business Services, Educational Services, Leisure & Hospitality	Wholesale Trade, Retail Trade, Government	Modest job losses are projected in the maturing Wholesale and Retail Trade sectors during the forecast period. Agriculture and Utilities sectors are the most significantly concentrated industries in the Central region, although the Health Care & Social Assistance and Other Services sectors also maintain industry concentrations above the national average.
East Central	Agricultural Production, Manufacturing	Retail Trade, Utilities, Transportation & Warehousing, Leisure & Hospitality, Other Services, Government	Wholesale Trade, Educational Services, Health Care & Social Assistance	Agriculture and Educational Services are the sectors of greatest employment concentration in this region. Over the next decade, moderate job growth is projected in the region's Leisure & Hospitality and Government sectors. The Information, Financial Activities, and Professional & Business Services sectors are projected to reduce payroll employment in EDR 2 by 2030.
North Central	Agricultural Production, Retail Trade, Utilities, Financial Activities, Educational Services, Health Care & Social Assistance	Natural Resources & Mining, Construction, Transportation & Warehousing, Leisure & Hospitality	Manufacturing	Agriculture and Utilities are the most highly-concentrated industries in the region, while Information and Government are among the least-concentrated industries. Manufacturing is the only sector classified as maturing in the region, where job losses will offset some job growth in Leisure & Hospitality and Transportation & Warehousing.
Northeast	Manufacturing, Transportation & Warehousing, Financial Activities, Other Services	Agricultural Production, Natural Resources & Mining, Construction, Retail Trade, Utilities, Health Care & Social Assistance, Leisure & Hospitality, Government	Wholesale Trade, Professional & Business Services	Though currently the state's most concentrated market for Professional & Business Services, hiring in the upcoming years will be led by Leisure & Hospitality and Health Care & Social Assistance. Job growth will also continue in Financial Activities and Government. Payroll employment in Wholesale Trade is estimated to diminish slightly as those sectors continue their maturation.
Northern Stateline	Agricultural Production, Manufacturing, Other Services	Natural Resources & Mining, Construction, Financial Activities, Professional & Business Services, Leisure & Hospitality	Retail Trade, Utilities, Transportation & Warehousing, Health Care & Social Assistance	The state's most highly-concentrated Manufacturing workforce, the region is anticipated to add jobs in this industry looking out to 2030, coinciding with robust job growth in Leisure & Hospitality. The Health Care & Social Assistance sector will shed a minimal number of jobs, while the Government labor footprint is estimated to continue its contraction in EDR 5.



Region	Leading Sectors	Emerging Sectors	Maturing Sectors	Comments
Northwest	Agricultural Production, Retail Trade, Utilities, Transportation & Warehousing, Other Services, Government	Construction, Professional & Business Services, Health Care & Social Assistance	Natural Resources & Mining, Manufacturing, Wholesale Trade	Agricultural Production and Utilities are both highly concentrated sectors in this region. Manufacturing and Wholesale Trade are classified as maturing sectors in this region, as job growth faces challenges on both the supply and demand side. Transportation & Warehousing is a leading sector and is anticipated to continue job growth. The Professional & Business Services sector has the highest job creation projection in the forecast period.
Southeast	Agricultural Production, Manufacturing, Utilities, Transportation & Warehousing, Other Services	Construction, Wholesale Trade, Information, Financial Activities, Professional & Business Services	Natural Resources & Mining, Retail Trade, Health Care & Social Assistance, Government	Agriculture and Manufacturing are both highly concentrated sectors with anticipated job openings in this region. Over this projection's time frame, the number of jobs in Leisure & Hospitality is expected to shrink and the job pool in Financial Activities and Manufacturing will expand.
Southern	Agricultural Production, Manufacturing, Utilities, Health Care & Social Assistance	Professional & Business Services, Leisure & Hospitality, Other Services	Natural Resources & Mining, Retail Trade, Educational Services, Government	Agriculture and Natural Resources & Mining are prevalent sectors as compared with the state's other regions. Professional & Business Services and Health Care & Social Assistance entities are expected to create employment growth over this projection period, with the number of jobs in Government and Educational Services is anticipated to decline.
Southwest	Agricultural Production, Manufacturing, Retail Trade, Utilities, Transportation & Warehousing, Other Services, Government	Professional & Business Services, Health Care & Social Assistance	Construction, Educational Services, Leisure & Hospitality	Transportation & Warehousing and the Leisure & Hospitality sectors are both more highly concentrated in this region than in any other region of the state. Agriculture and Utilities are also highly concentrated sectors in this region. Of these four sectors, Transportation & Warehousing is projected to add the most jobs. The Health Care & Social Assistance and Other Services sectors will both create significant employment in this region over the coming decade.
West Central	Agricultural Production, Manufacturing, Wholesale Trade, Retail Trade, Other Services, Government	Construction, Utilities, Transportation & Warehousing, Information, Financial Activities, Professional & Business Services	Natural Resources & Mining, Educational Services, Health Care & Social Assistance	Agricultural Production, Government, Manufacturing, and Wholesale Trade are the sectors of greatest employment concentration in this region. Based on current projections, employers in twelve of the forecast's sixteen sectors in EDR 10 are anticipated to add jobs in the coming decade.

As mentioned in the analysis of existing demand industries, the selection of priority sectors considered if the data indicated a sector was LEADING, EMERGING or MATURING. In addition, we looked at the status of all sectors in each of our ten regions. Giving greater weight to LEADING and EMERGING sectors, those with a larger geographic spread were rated higher than those less widespread across the state.

The following table displays the LEADING and EMERGING statewide sectors ranked following the application of geographic weighting.

**Table 9: Sector Ranking with Regional Weighting**

RANKED WITH REGIONAL WEIGHTING

WEIGHTING

3

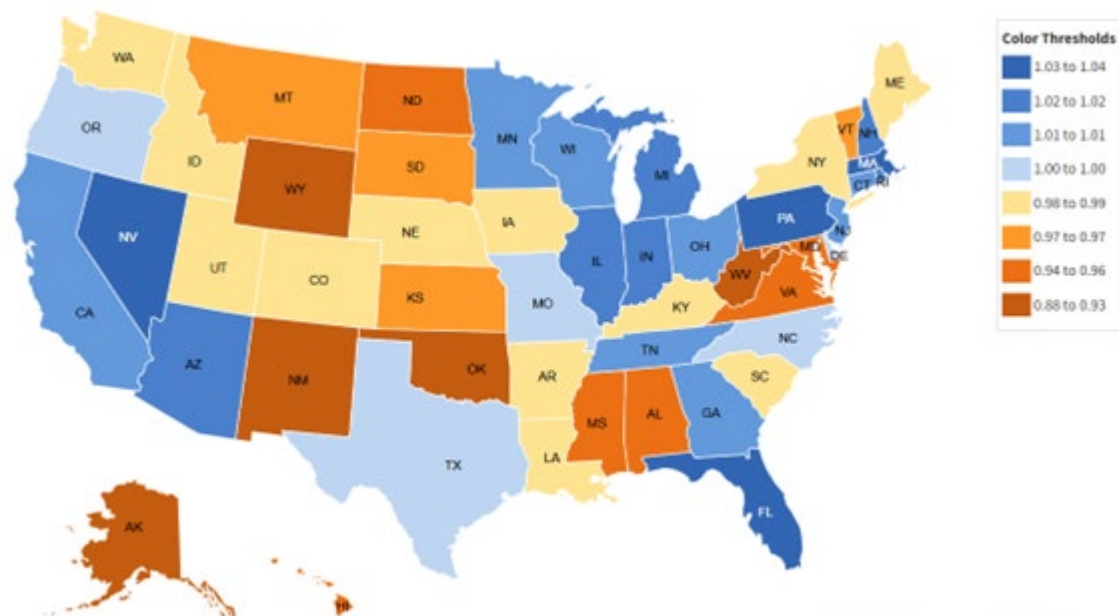
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2022 Base Year

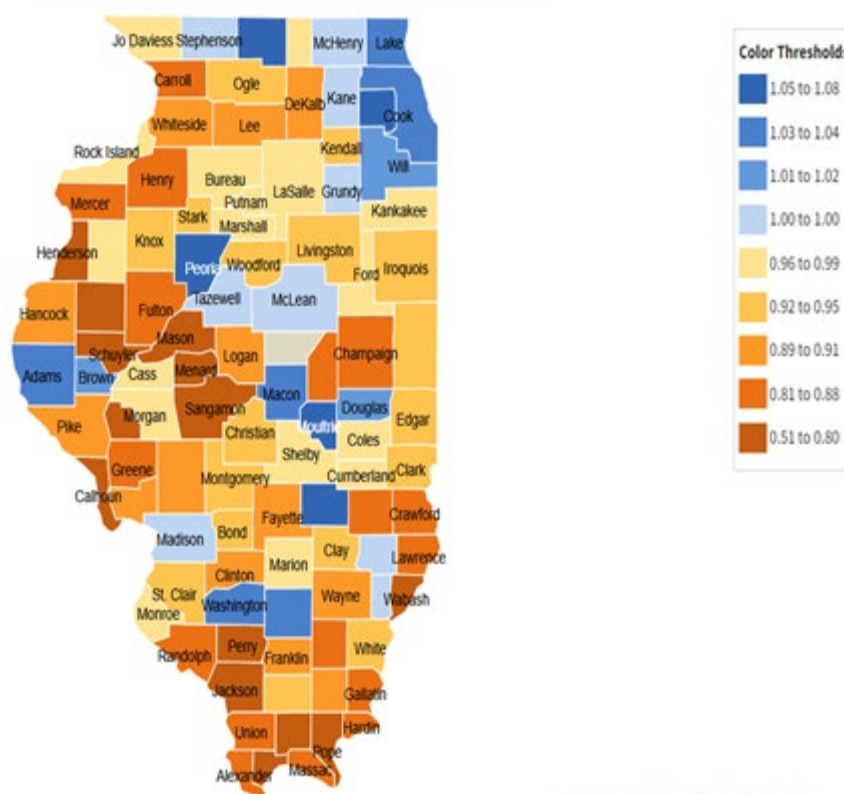
Sector/Industry	State Status	Leading Regions	Emerging Regions	Maturing Regions	TOTAL:
Agriculture	Emerging	27	2	0	29
Other Services	Maturing	24	4	0	28
Manufacturing	Leading	24	0	2	26
Transportation and Warehousing	Leading	12	8	2	22
Utilities	Leading	12	6	3	21
Retail Trade	Emerging	12	4	4	20
Health Care & Social Assistance	Emerging	9	6	4	19
Professional and Business Services	Leading	0	14	1	15
Construction	Emerging	0	12	1	13
Leisure and Hospitality	Emerging	0	12	1	13
Financial Activities	Leading	6	6	0	12
Wholesale Trade	Maturing	3	2	4	9
Educational Services, Private & Public	Maturing	3	2	4	9

Location quotient, Total, All Industries Private Dec 2022 (p)



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics ([www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov))

Location quotient, Total, All Industries Private Dec 2022 (p)



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics ([www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov))

## Employers' Employment Needs

To identify some recurring employer needs in the major employment sectors, we examine job postings analytics from Lightcast (formerly Emsi-Burning Glass). Lightcast analyzes online job postings from multiple platforms (e.g., LinkedIn, Indeed, Monster) and identifies skills and certifications frequently mentioned by type of employer or type of job opening. The data includes separate distinctions for general, common skills such as communications, and more occupation-specific, specialized skills. Care must be taken when viewing job postings analytics, given that some sectors do not typically recruit candidates via a public job ad, e.g., hiring via recruiters. Further, some skills frequently appear in job postings for general screening purposes. Finally, given the varied staffing needs and fragmented nature of skills required within a sector, the most prevalent specialized skills and certifications do not necessarily translate to the most frequent occupational titles. For example, CPA certification appears frequently regardless of sector, because most industries require accountants.

Sector	Example Occupations	Common Skills	Specialized Skills	Certifications
Transportation & Warehousing	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers, Laborers and Freight/Stock/Material Movers, Customer Service Representatives	Communication, Customer Service, Operations	Warehousing, Truck Driving, Forklift Truck	CDL, Tanker Endorsement, Hazmat Endorsement
Utilities	Electrical/Electronics Technician, Business/Management Analyst,	Communication, Management,	Project Management, Auditing,	MBA, Professional Engineer License, Project

Sector	Example Occupations	Common Skills	Specialized Skills	Certifications
	Project Manager	Operations	Computer Science	Management Certification
Professional & Business Services	Software Developers, Sales representatives of Wholesale and Manufacturing products, All Other Computer Occupations	Communication s, Management, Leadership	Project Management, Accounting, Marketing	MBA, Project Management Professional Certification, CPA
Health Care & Social Assistance	Registered Nurses, Home Health and Personal Care Aides, Nursing Assistant	Communication s, Customer Service, Management	Nursing, medical records, nursing care, CPR	RN, Basic Life Support, CPR
Other Services	Hairdressers & Cosmetologists, Childcare Workers, Customer Service Representatives	Communication s, Customer Service, Management	Marketing, Cosmetology, Project Management, Housekeeping	Barber License, CPR, Automotive Service Excellence
Government	Police Officers, Registered Nurses, Secretaries & Administrative Assistants	Communication s, Management, Operations	Law enforcement, rehabilitation, international laws	Certified Loss Control Specialist, RN, Airline Transport Pilot License
Construction	Construction Managers, Construction Laborers, Janitors and Cleaners	Communication s, Customer Service, Management	Project Management, Subcontracting, HVAC	CDL, CPR/First Aid, 30-hour OSHA General Industry Card
Manufacturing	Software Developers, Production Workers, Managers	Communication s, Management, Leadership	Auditing, New Product Development, Process Improvement	MBA, Project Management Professional Certification, Forklift Certification
Wholesale Trade	Laborers and Material Movers, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers, Software Developers	Communication s, Sales, Customer Service	Warehousing, Marketing, Merchandising	CDL, MBA, Forklift Certification
Leisure & Hospitality	Fast Food and Counter Workers, Food Service Managers, Waiters and Waitresses	Customer Service, Communication s, Management	Restaurant Operation, Food Safety and Sanitation,	ServSafe Certification, Food Handler's Card, CPR

Sector	Example Occupations	Common Skills	Specialized Skills	Certifications
			Cash Handling	
Retail Trade	Retail Salespersons, First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers, Stockers and Order Fillers	Customer Service, Sales, Communications	Merchandising, Selling Techniques, Cash Register	Valid Driver's License, Certified Pharmacy Technician, Registered Pharmacist
Financial Activities	Software Developers, Securities/Commodities/Financial Services Sales Agents, Customer Service Representatives	Communications, Management, Customer Service	Marketing, Financial Services, Project Management	MBA, FINRA Series 7 for General Securities Representative, CPA
Educational Services	Postsecondary Teachers, Registered Nurses, Postsecondary Education Administrators	Communications, Teaching, Research	Marketing, Project Management, Student Services	Teaching Certificate, Board Certification, First Aid/CPR/AED/basic life support
Information	Retail Salespersons, Sales Representatives, Software Developers	Communications, Sales, Customer Service	Marketing, Project Management, Selling Techniques	BMBA, Project Management Professional, Certified Information Systems Security Professional

Source: Lightcast, job postings analytics by industry supersector, July 2022-July 2023.

## B. WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the current workforce in the State and within various state regions. Provide key analytical conclusions in aggregate as well as disaggregated among populations to identify potential disparities in employment and educational attainment and understand labor force conditions for items (i)-(iii) below. Populations analyzed must include individuals with barriers to employment described in the first paragraph of Section II. Analysis must include—

### I. EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Provide an analysis of current employment and unemployment data, including labor force participation rates, and trends in the State.

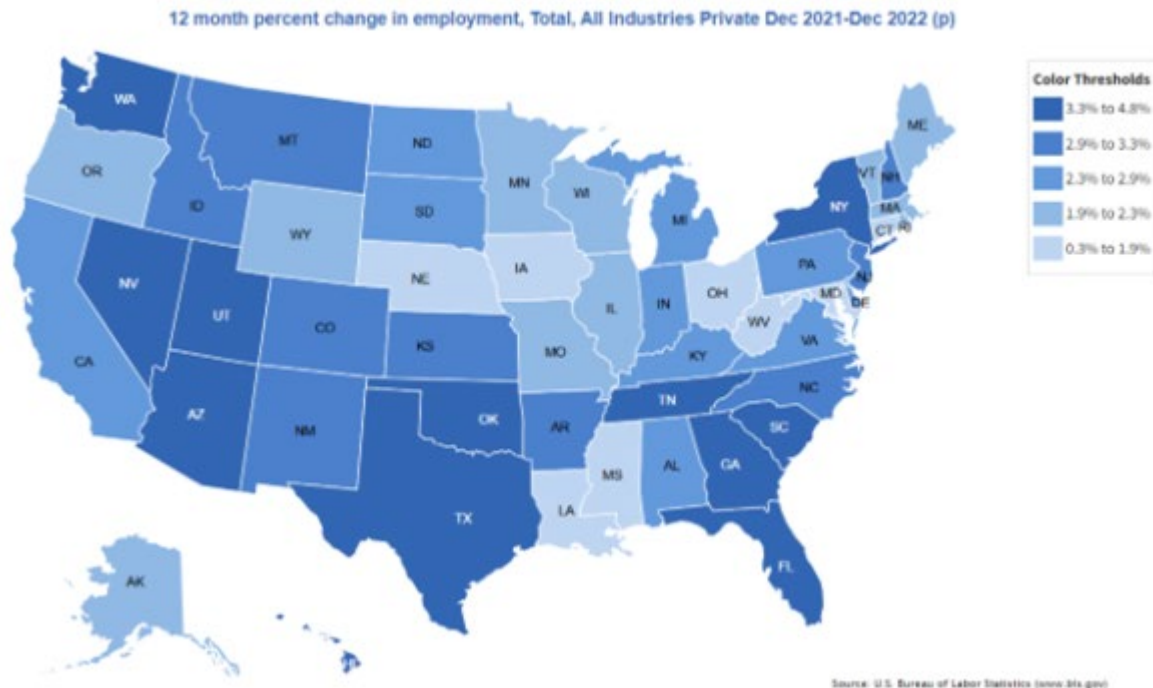
### II. LABOR MARKET TRENDS

Provide an analysis of key labor market trends, including across existing industries and occupations.

### III. EDUCATION AND SKILL LEVELS OF THE WORKFORCE

Provide an analysis of the educational and skill levels of the workforce.

## Employment and Unemployment

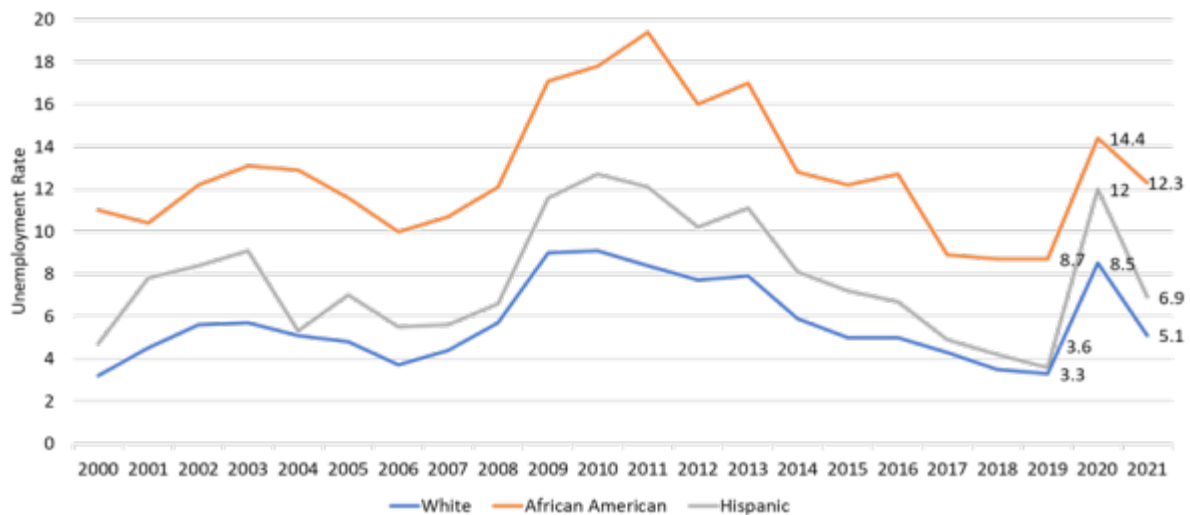


In recent years, Illinois had a somewhat higher unemployment rate than the nation. The gap widened at the height of the pandemic in April 2020, but it narrowed in 2021. As of June 2023, the Illinois unemployment rate (seasonally adjusted) was 4.0% and the national unemployment rate was 3.6%.

Unemployment varies by race and gender, with white workers typically having a lower unemployment rate than Hispanic and African American workers. In both Illinois and the nation, the group with the lowest unemployment rate is white women and the group with the highest unemployment rate is African American men. In both Illinois and the nation, Hispanic workers (men and women) have an unemployment rate between white workers and African Americans.

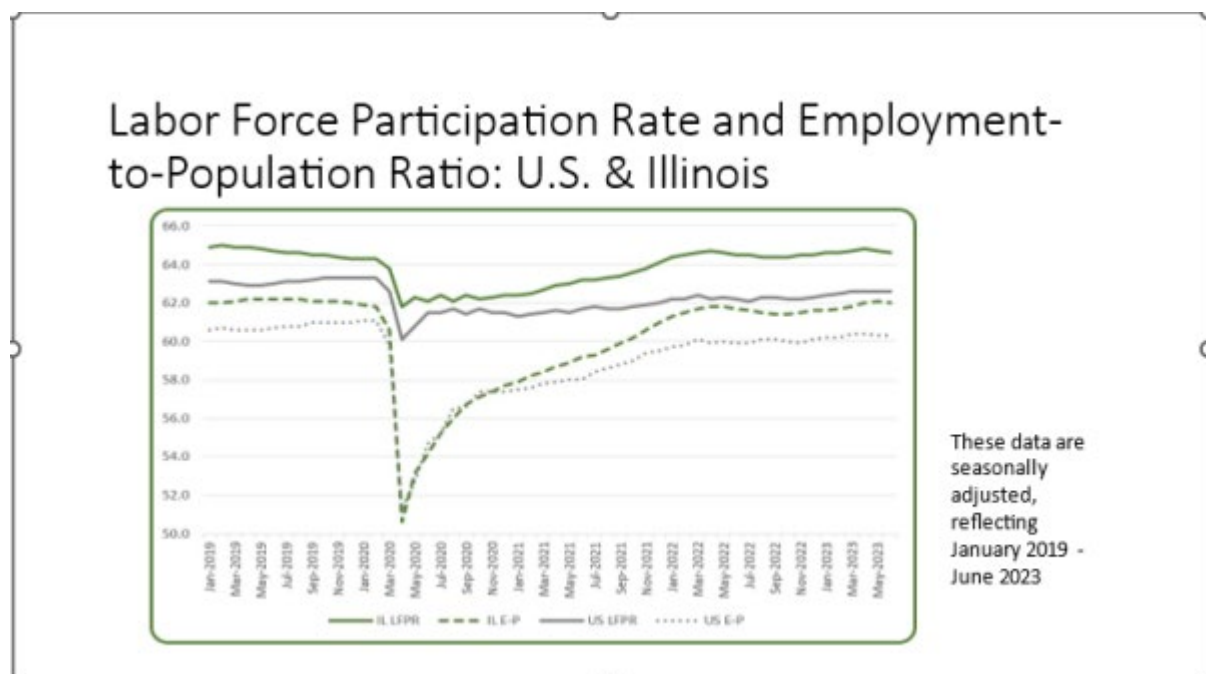
Unemployment gaps for Hispanic and African American workers have persisted since 2000. In 2019, pre-pandemic, the African American unemployment rate was 8.7 and the Hispanic unemployment rate was 3.6, compared to a white unemployment rate of 3.3.





**Source: BLS, Geographic Profile of Employment and Unemployment, Tables 12 (2000-2002) & 14 (2003-2021), respective years.**

Although Illinois has a somewhat higher unemployment rate than the nation, there is also a higher labor force participation rate. In both geographies, the labor force participation rate remains lower in 2023 than it was in January 2019. Labor force participation fell in April 2020 due to the pandemic, but it gradually recovered through 2021. By January 2022, labor force participation had nearly returned to pre-pandemic levels and has remained relatively stable in 2023.



In both the pandemic downturn and the 2007-2009 recession, payroll recovery in Illinois lagged behind the nation. It took 38 months for Illinois payrolls to return to pre-pandemic levels, while recovery at the national level took 26 months. Recovery from the COVID downturn was significantly faster than recovery from the Great Recession. Illinois payrolls recovered from the great recession in 72 months, and national payrolls recovered in 54 months.

## Two Business Cycle Recoveries: U.S. & Illinois, Seasonally Adjusted



It took nearly two additional years for Illinois to recover from the Great Recession of 2007-09 than the nation, as measured by nonfarm payroll employment. In June 2023, Illinois is just shy of reaching its prior peak 38 months after the trough of 2020.

Unemployment varies considerably within Illinois, by region and by county. The region with the highest unemployment rate is the Northern Stateline, with a not-seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate of 6.0% compared to 4.5% statewide. Three regions tied for the lowest unemployment rate, at 4.4%: Northeastern, Southeastern, and Southwestern. However, unemployment is not consistent within EDRs. For example, the Southern region has a 5.1% unemployment rate, but the rate is higher than 7% in the counties of Alexander and Pulaski.

### Unemployment by County, June 2023, Not Seasonally Adjusted





According to the World Economic Forum, the roles that are transitioning from human to AI the quickest include clerical or secretarial roles, bank tellers, postal service clerks, cashiers and data entry clerks[2]. Resumebuilder.com surveyed 1,000 U.S. business leaders about their use of AI and found that 25 percent of respondents have already replaced workers with the AI tool ChatGPT, and 93 percent of respondents that use ChatGPT plan to use their use of the tool in the future[3].

However, the boom of AI technology is also causing job growth in some sectors. The World Economic Forum predicts that AI and machine learning specialists, data analysts and scientists, and digital transformation specialists are expected to grow rapidly.

A Goldman Sachs analysis recognizes that historically, automation of jobs has been offset by new jobs and new occupations that are made possible because of new technology. The other item of consideration is that new technology tends to automate specific tasks instead of entire jobs, as described in the Goldman Sachs analysis[4].

*In 2016, for instance, the artificial intelligence pioneer Geoffrey Hinton considered new “deep learning” technology capable of reading medical images. He concluded that “if you work as a radiologist, you are like the coyote that’s already over the edge of the cliff but hasn’t yet looked down.”*

*He gave it five years, maybe ten, before algorithms would “do better” than humans. What he probably overlooked was that reading the images is just one of many tasks (30 of them, according to the U.S. government) that radiologists do. They also do things like “confer with medical professionals” and “provide counseling.” Today, some in the field worry about an impending shortage of radiologists. And Mr. Hinton has since become a vocal public critic of the same technology he helped create.*

As more tasks become fully or partially automated through AI, it will be important for employers to reskill workers to effectively use AI. This need for reskilling is similar to many workers needed to be reskilled to use computers as the workforce transitioned from physical to digital tools during the last 50 years.

The youngest workers in the labor market are likely the most prepared to a landscape where AI tools are used as a matter of course.

*Zoomers ... tend to be open to exploring new technologies, said Shaun Pichler, professor of management at the College of Business and Economics at California State University at Fullerton.*

*But the tech isn’t just helping Zoomers with writing prose. Daniel Osorno Villamil, a May computer science graduate from Georgia Tech, said he has used ChatGPT to double-check his math and review code. He once fed it 300 lines of code and asked it to find the problem, which it did. Generative AI also has helped him with his finances, finding areas in which to reduce costs, he said. He said he’s excited to see how he can leverage it at his new software engineering job at Microsoft in the fall[5].*

### **Other Shifts in the Labor Force**

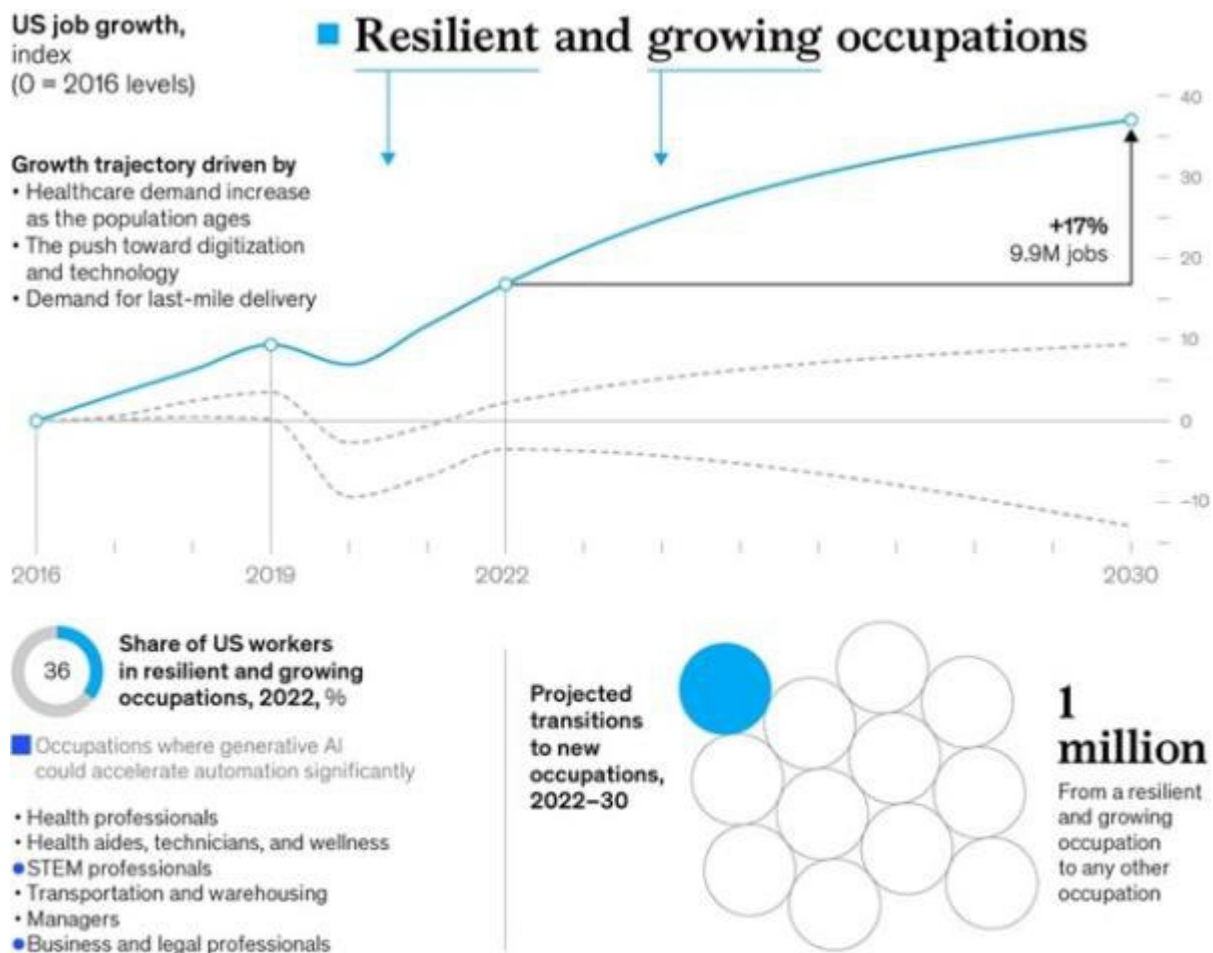
A McKinsey Global Institute report suggests that up to 12 million occupational transitions may be needed by 2030 as the economy adjusts to the introduction of generative AI; the transition to more clean energy technologies, including large public investments in the infrastructure need to make this transition; and long-term trends around aging, e-commerce and remote work. This shift will likely impact workers in lower-wage jobs disproportionately and require them to

obtain new skills to successfully shift occupations. The McKinsey report states that women are 1.5 times more likely to need to move into new occupations than men.[6]

*The United States will need workforce development on a far larger scale as well as more expansive hiring approaches from employers. Employers will need to hire for skills and competencies rather than credentials, recruit from overlooked populations (such as rural workers and people with disabilities), and deliver training that keeps pace with their evolving needs.*

The World Economic Forum predicts that analytical and creative thinking skills are the most important for workers to cultivate. Other skills needed by employees include flexibility, motivation, dependability and attention to detail.

As the economy rebalances over the next several years, many sectors predicted to add jobs already face labor shortages. For example, health care is predicted to add 3.5 million jobs nationally by 2030, but as of April 2023 had 1.9 million unfilled job openings. Similarly, construction jobs could increase by as much as 12 percent by 2030, but that sector had more than 380,000 unfilled job openings as of April 2023.



Source: O\*NET; US Bureau of Labor Statistics; Current Population Survey, US Census Bureau; McKinsey Global Institute analysis

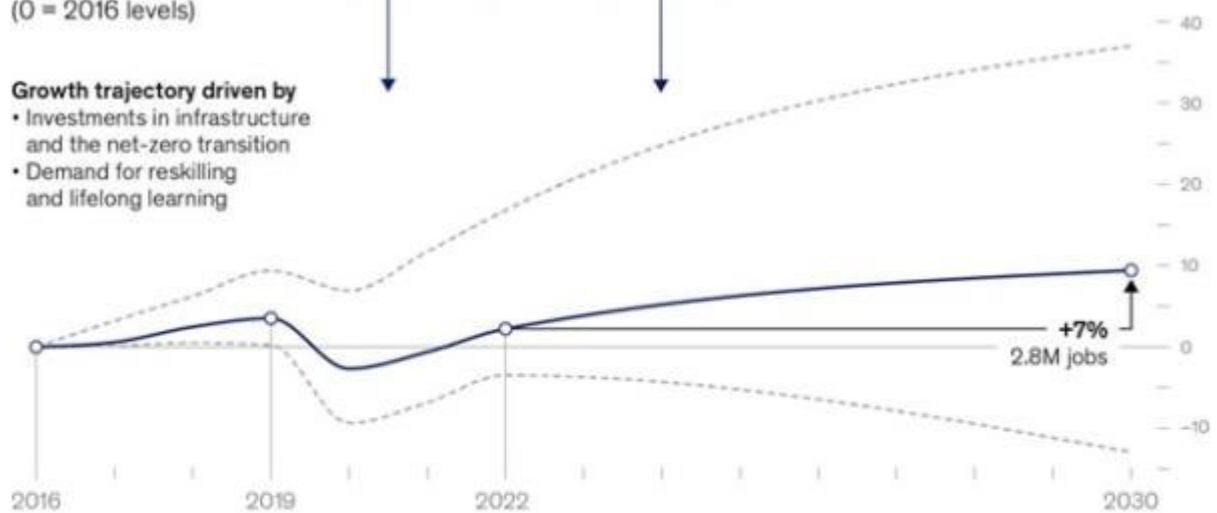
McKinsey & Company

US job growth,  
index  
(0 = 2016 levels)

## ■ Stalled but rising occupations

### Growth trajectory driven by

- Investments in infrastructure and the net-zero transition
- Demand for reskilling and lifelong learning

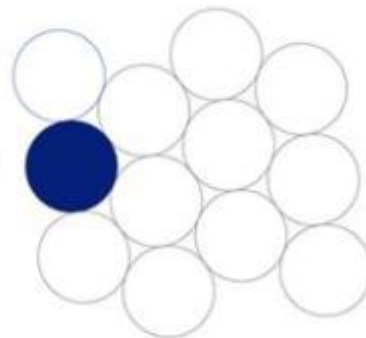


25 Share of US workers in resilient and growing occupations, 2022, %

■ Occupations where generative AI could accelerate automation significantly

- Creatives and arts management
- Property maintenance
- Education and workforce training
- Builders
- Community services
- Mechanical installation and repair
- Agriculture

Projected transitions to new occupations, 2022–30

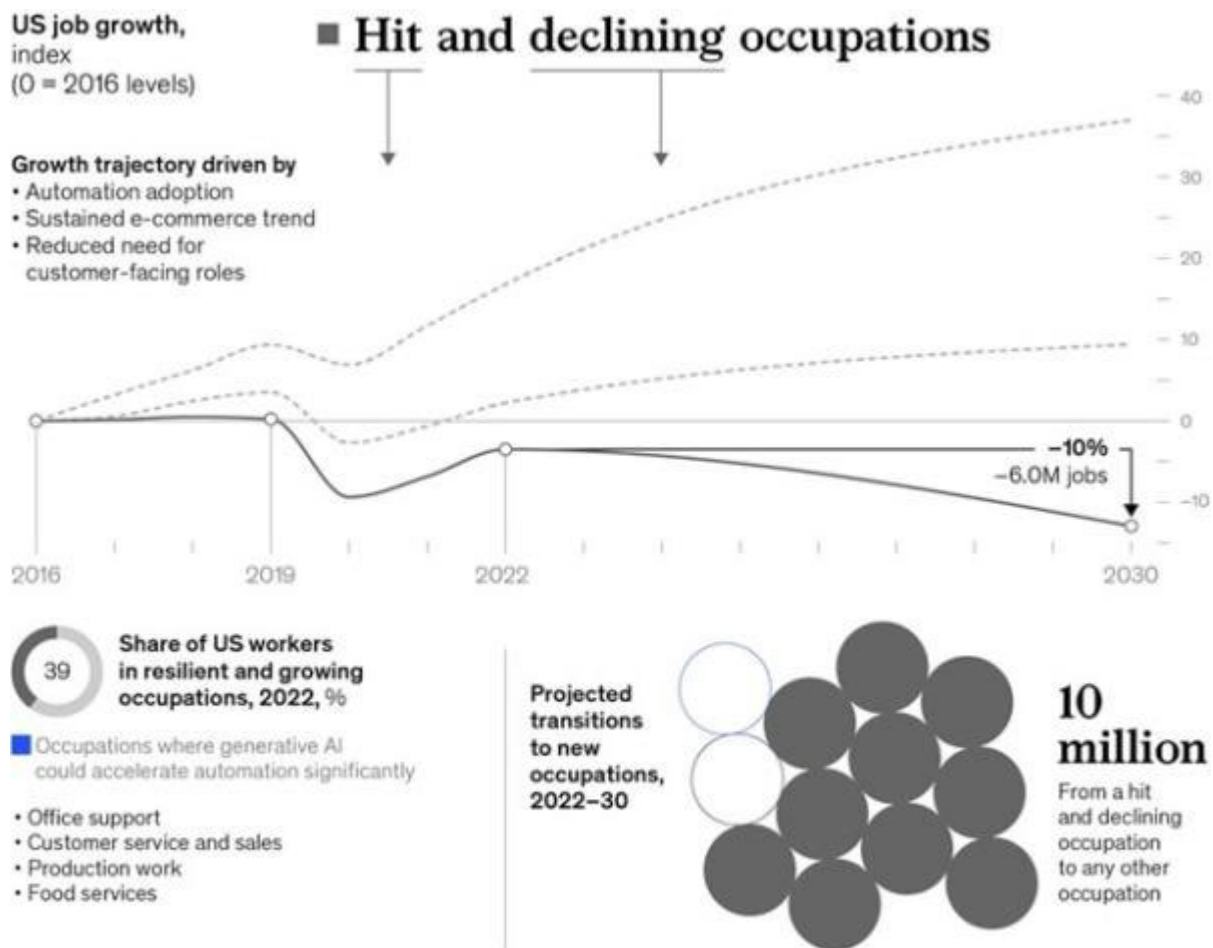


1 million

From a stalled but rising occupation to any other occupation

Source: O\*NET; US Bureau of Labor Statistics; Current Population Survey, US Census Bureau; McKinsey Global Institute analysis

McKinsey & Company



Source: O\*NET; US Bureau of Labor Statistics; Current Population Survey, US Census Bureau; McKinsey Global Institute analysis

McKinsey & Company

This incongruence is reflected in employers' responses to the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report from 2023.

*Respondents express confidence in developing their existing workforce, however, they are less optimistic regarding the outlook for talent availability in the next five years. Accordingly, organizations identify skills gaps and an inability to attract talent as the key barriers preventing industry transformation. In response 48% of companies identify improving talent progression and promotion processes as a key business practice that can increase the availability of talent to their organization, ahead of offering higher wages (36%) and offering effective reskilling and upskilling (34%).*

## Skills and Reskilling

Almost 70 percent of human resource professionals believe their organization has a skills gap, according to Wiley's Closing the Skills Gap 2023: Employer Perspectives on Educating the Post-Pandemic Workforce report[7]. This concern has grown since 2021. Many of the employers surveyed by Wiley's indicate the high rate of resignations has exacerbated the skill gap in their organization. They stated that recruiting and retaining long-term talent – including employees they are willing to invest time and resources in – is difficult in the current labor market. Most organizations want to upskill or reskill their current employees but have internal barriers to doing so.

*Although some organizations address their skills gap by hiring candidates (48%) or using contractors (41%), the most common approach is to upskill or reskill employees (65%). Unfortunately, a lack of employee development initiatives (41%) and in-house training resources (38%) often stand in the way of those efforts.*

Workers are willing to upskill or reskill, too. According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, workers in both positions prone to high turnover and positions that are relatively stable are willing to reskill[8].

*The same holds true across all education levels. College educated individuals are nearly equally interested in reskilling and upskilling as those without formal education. Likewise, individuals of all ages are willing to upskill and reskill while the desire decreases with age.*

Additionally, the skills employees need are evolving faster than the ability to upskill or reskill current employees.

*Nearly half of the respondents believe hard skills have a shelf life of two years or less ... With the expanding need for soft skills and the rapid erosion of hard skills, HR professionals must work overtime to keep workforce competencies up to date. When they fall behind, their organization's skills gap will likely widen.*

These two factors – difficulty in recruiting and retaining employees and difficulty in reskilling or upskilling current employees – are the largest contributors to the current skills gap.

### **Illinois Labor Force**

Illinois labor force has been mostly stagnant for the past several decades, however, the types of occupations have shifted. For example, there has been an increase in the share of jobs in the transportation/warehousing and professional services sector, with a decrease in the share of jobs in the retail trade and manufacturing sectors.

Most sectors in Illinois have recovered the number of jobs lost during the pandemic. Those sectors include the private sector, professional and business services, trade and transportation, construction, and healthcare services. Manufacturing, financial activities and leisure/hospitality still lag behind their pre-pandemic levels.

The Illinois Future of Work Task Force examined the opportunities and challenges facing the state's labor market through a lens of creating equitable access to quality jobs, education and training opportunities in a way that supports employers and workers alike. The task force found that shifts away from manufacturing have translated to a loss of middle-wage jobs. What's more, lower-wage and higher-age jobs are projected to increase, resulting in a polarized labor market. Other findings include that unionization continues to decline in Illinois and non-traditional and gig work continues to increase. Several indicators suggest a robust labor market, with modest growth through the next several years.

### **Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce**

The most recent completer data for the statewide community college system indicates over 21,400, or one-third, of graduates completed an Associate level award designed to transfer into baccalaureate programs of study. Additionally, over 7,300 were awarded a General Education Core Curriculum credential reflecting the work completed at the community college that meets the requirements toward an Associate in Arts degree and addresses the general education requirements toward transfer.



Of the nearly 36,000 awards that are designed for individuals to enter the workforce directly, the top five career clusters are: 1) Health Science; 2) Manufacturing; 3) Transportation, Distribution and Logistics; 4) Business, Management and Administration; and 5) Information Technology. A complete breakout is provided in the table below.

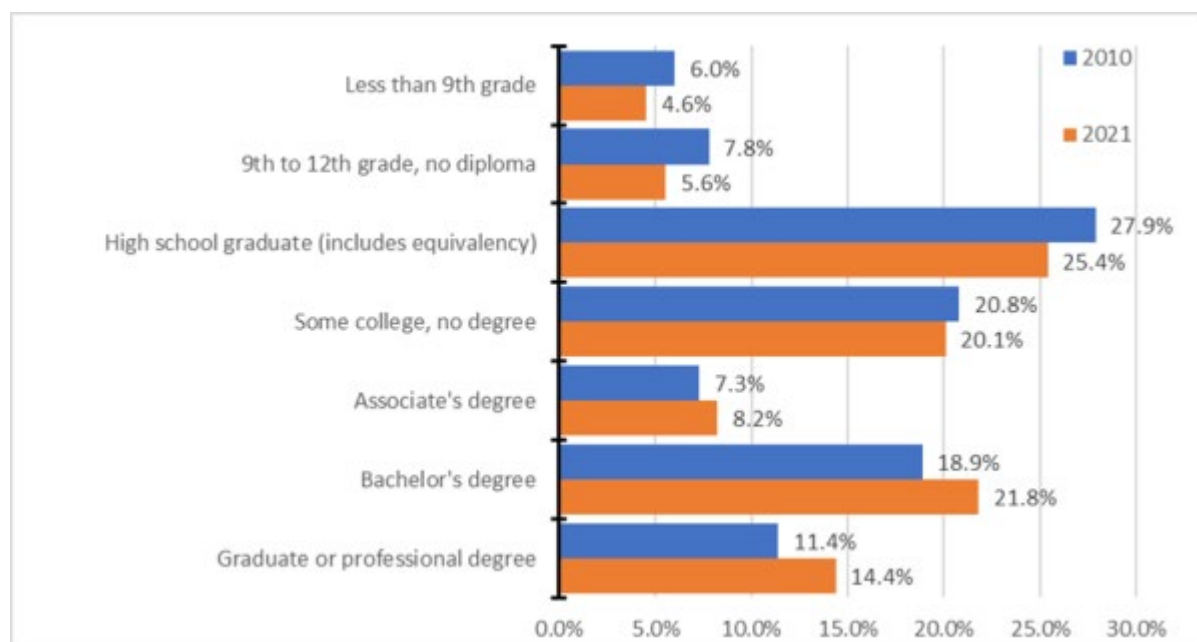
Fiscal Year 2022 Summary of Graduates by Career Cluster

Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources	Architecture and Construction	Arts, Audio/Video Technology and Communications	Business, Management and Administration	Education and Training	Finance	Government and Public Administration	Health Science	Hospitality and Tourism	Human Services	Information Technology	Law, Public Safety, Corrections and Security	Manufacturing	Marketing	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics	Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics	Associate - Transfer	General Education Core Curriculum Credential	Total
951	2,285	694	2,575	312	685	0	14,246	695	1,904	2,424	1,726	3,830	207	121	3,323	21,458	7,361	64,797

Source: ICCB Centralized Data System

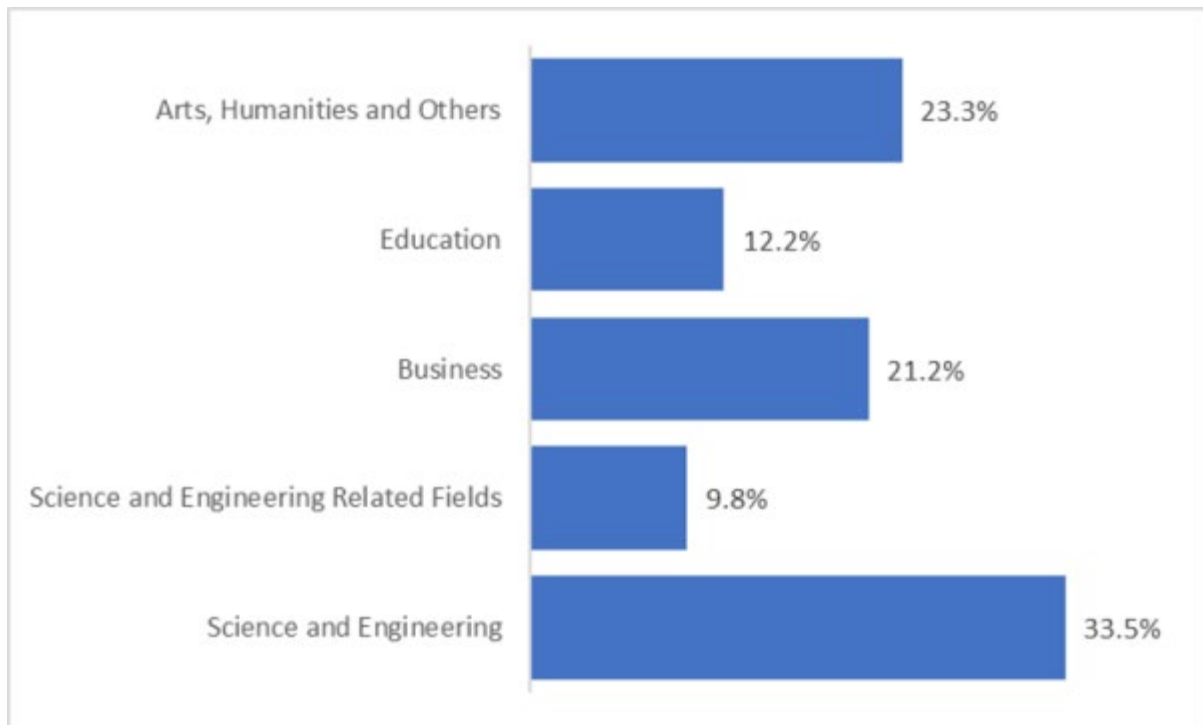
Baccalaureate completers, per the Illinois Board of Higher Education,

Over the past 20 years, educational attainment has generally improved, with a smaller share of adults (ages 25+) having a high school diploma or less, and more adults with an associate's degree or higher. The share of residents with a bachelor's degree increased from 18.9% and 21.8% and the share of residents with a graduate or professional degree increased from 11.4% to 14.4%.



Source: US Census Bureau, 2006-2010 & 2017-2021 American Community Survey, Table S1501.

According to the 2017-2021 American Community Survey, the largest share of bachelor's degree holders in Illinois majored in science and engineering fields (33.5% of bachelor's degrees). The second largest category for bachelor's degree attainment was arts and humanities. The least common category for bachelor's degree attainment was science and engineering related fields. In the science and engineering related fields, some job seekers instead pursue associate's degrees or postgraduate degrees.



Source: US Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey, Table S1502.

In 2022, there were 67,810 bachelor's degree completions. The largest share of completions were for health professions, such as registered nursing. The second largest curriculum category for bachelor's degree completions was business, management, and marketing. This category includes accounting, business administration, and finance. The third largest category for bachelor's degree completions was social sciences. Relatively fewer completions were in math & statistics, public administration, or English.

### **Bachelor's Degree Completions in 2022**

Curriculum Category	Count of Bachelor's Degree Completions in 2022	Share
Total	67,810	
Health Professions	13,660	20.1%
Business, Management, and Marketing	11,131	16.4%
Social Sciences	3,910	5.8%
Engineering	3,872	5.7%
Psychology	3,727	5.5%
Visual and Performing Arts	3,684	5.4%
Computer and Information Sciences	3,584	5.3%
Biological and Biomedical Sciences	3,578	5.3%



Curriculum Category	Count of Bachelor's Degree Completions in 2022	Share
Education	3,502	5.2%
Communication and Journalism	3,014	4.4%
Parks, Recreation, Leisure, and Fitness	1,479	2.2%
Security & Protective Services	1,457	2.1%
Math & Statistics	1,074	1.6%
Public Administration & Social Service	1,058	1.6%
English Language & Literature	1,048	1.5%
All Other, <1,000 Completions Each	8,032	11.8%

Source: Illinois Board of Higher Education, 2022.

There were 44,026 Masters' Degree completions in 2022. The largest share of completions were in business, management, and marketing, e.g., MBA. Health professions were the second largest category, and the largest sub-category was Family Practice Nursing. The third most common category was education.

#### **Masters' Degree Completions in 2022**

Curriculum Category	Count of Masters' Degree Completions in 2022	Share
Total	44,026	
Business, Management, and Marketing	11,799	26.8%
Health Professions	8,078	18.3%
Education	5,648	12.8%
Computer and Information Sciences	2,926	6.6%
Public Administration & Social Service	2,457	5.6%
Psychology	1,606	3.6%
Engineering	1,496	3.4%
Math & Statistics	986	2.2%
Visual and Performing Arts	973	2.2%

Curriculum Category	Count of Masters' Degree Completions in 2022	Share
Legal Professions	948	2.2%
Theology	831	1.9%
Social Sciences	824	1.9%
Biological and Biomedical Sciences	787	1.8%
Communication and Journalism	718	1.6%
Parks, Recreation, Leisure, and Fitness	701	1.6%
Multidisciplinary Studies	562	1.3%
All Other, <500 Completions Each	2,686	6.1%

Source: Illinois Board of Higher Education, 2022.

There were 9,953 doctoral completions in 2022. By far the largest category for doctoral completions was health professions, which represented 45.4% of completions. The second largest category was legal professions at 17.7%. Education was the third largest category, representing 6.8% of doctoral completions.

#### **Doctoral Degree Completions in 2022**

Curriculum Categories	Count of Doctoral Completions in 2022	Share
Total	9,953	
Health Professions	4,521	45.4%
Legal Professions	1,764	17.7%
Education	679	6.8%
Engineering	515	5.2%
Psychology	447	4.5%
Physical Sciences	326	3.3%
Biological and Biomedical Sciences	315	3.2%
Social Sciences	242	2.4%
Agriculture	166	1.7%
Computer and Information Sciences	139	1.4%
Theology	132	1.3%

Curriculum Categories	Count of Doctoral Completions in 2022	Share
Math & Statistics	112	1.1%
Business, Management, and Marketing	102	1.0%
All Other, <100 Completions Each	493	5.0%

Source: Illinois Board of Higher Education, 2022.

**[1]How ChatGPT Will Destabilize White-Collar Work**

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2023/01/chatgpt-ai-economy-automation-jobs/672767/>

**[2]The Future of Jobs Report 2023**

<https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2023>

**[3]1 in 4 companies have already replaced workers with ChatGPT**

<https://www.resumebuilder.com/1-in-4-companies-have-already-replaced-workers-with-chatgpt/>

**[4]Goldman Sachs Global Economics Analyst**

[https://www.key4biz.it/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Global-Economics-Analyst\\_-The-Potentially-Large-Effects-of-Artificial-Intelligence-on-Economic-Growth-Briggs\\_Kodnani.pdf](https://www.key4biz.it/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Global-Economics-Analyst_-The-Potentially-Large-Effects-of-Artificial-Intelligence-on-Economic-Growth-Briggs_Kodnani.pdf)

**[5]New Gen Z graduates are fluent in AI and ready to join the workforce**

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2023/06/28/ai-gen-z-work/>

**[6]Generative AI and the future of work in America**

<https://www.mckinsey.com/mgi/our-research/generative-ai-and-the-future-of-work-in-america>

**[7]Closing the Skills Gap 2023: Employer Perspectives on Educating the Post-Pandemic Workforce**

<https://universitieservices.wiley.com/thank-you-closing-the-skills-gap-2023/>

**[8]Data Deep Dive: Upskilling and Reskilling Our Workforce**

<https://www.uschamber.com/workforce/education/data-deep-dive-upskilling-and-reskilling-our-workforce>

C. COMPARISON OF ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYTICAL CONCLUSION. DESCRIBE AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR MEETING HIRING, EDUCATION, AND SKILLS NEEDS IDENTIFIED IN THE ECONOMY COMPARED TO THE ASSETS AVAILABLE IN THE LABOR FORCE IN THE STATE.

**Comparison of Economic and Workforce Analytical Conclusion**

*Data Disaggregation of Economic Outcomes*

Based on the review of educational attainment, labor force participation, and unemployment rates by race, sex, and target populations, several trends are apparent:

- African Americans are considerably less likely to have a bachelor's degree, participate in the labor force, or find employment. The unemployment rate for African Americans is more than double the unemployment rate for the total labor force in Illinois.
- Hispanic persons are more likely to participate in the labor force, but they are also more likely to be unemployed and less likely to have a bachelor's degree.
- Several target populations have considerably larger unemployment rates than the total population- those with low income, single parents, persons with disabilities, and youth.
- Veterans typically have a lower unemployment rate than the overall civilian population, but they are also considerably less likely to participate in the labor force.
- Single parents are considerably more likely to participate in the labor force, but they are also more likely to be unemployed.
- Persons with disabilities are substantially less likely to participate in the labor force, and those in the labor force have higher unemployment rates.

### *Employers' Employment Needs*

When examining trends in job postings by major employment sectors, we identified several key trends in employers needs for general and specialized job skills:

- Communication skills are one of the most in-demand foundational skills in every employment sector. Other common skills mentioned in the majority of sectors include management, customer service, and business operations. These categories are broad, but necessary in most employment settings.
- CPR and basic life support certifications are mentioned frequently in several large employment sectors- health care, construction, leisure & hospitality, education, and other services (e.g., repair and maintenance).
- One of the largest employment sectors is health care and social assistance. The most in-demand specialized skills in this sector are nursing, medical records, and nursing care.
- Each employment sector has unique employment needs, but several specialized skills are currently in demand across multiple sectors.
  - Forklift operation is needed for transportation and warehousing, manufacturing, and wholesale trade
  - Project management is necessary for utilities, professional and business services, other services, construction, manufacturing, financial activities, and education.
  - Marketing is a specialized skill required in professional services, wholesale trade, financial activities, education, and information.

### *Skill Gaps & Labor Market Alignment*

We measured labor market alignment using gap ratios that compare educational completions to projected job openings. The analysis offers an initial assessment of how recent education

completers match employer demand in occupations with large numbers of job openings statewide. Several key takeaways from the analysis are:

- Illinois has a stronger supply of completers for occupations requiring more education. There was a surplus of completers for demand occupations requiring an associate's degree, and for occupations requiring education beyond a bachelor's degree. There were considerable shortages of completers for occupations requiring some college (certificate or license).
- Occupations with strong surpluses (more completers than job openings) include:
  - Certificate programs for medical secretaries and EMT/paramedics
  - Associate degree programs for computer user support specialists, although this program attracts a considerable number of international students who might not find employment in Illinois
  - Bachelor's degree programs for secondary school teachers
  - Graduate programs for management occupations in computer and information systems management, sales, marketing, and finance. These occupations have different work responsibilities and skill requirements, but overlapping education requirements.
- Occupations with large shortages of completers relative to job openings include:
  - Certificate programs for automotive service technicians and licensed practical/vocational nurses
  - Associate's degree programs for paralegals, medical records/health information technicians, and miscellaneous engineering technicians
  - Bachelor's degree programs for insurance sales agents and software developers
  - No demand occupations at the graduate-degree level had major shortages- the lowest gap ratio in this category was 0.9 – just below one completer per job opening.

## 2. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the workforce development activities, including education and training in the State, to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, as identified in (a)(1)(B)(iii) above, and the employment needs of employers, as identified in (a)(1)(A)(iii) above. This must include an analysis of—

### A. THE STATE'S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Provide an analysis of the State's workforce development activities, including education and training activities of the core programs, Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan, and required <sup>6</sup> and optional one-stop delivery system partners.<sup>7</sup>

[6] Required one-stop partners: In addition to the core programs, the following partner programs are required to provide access through the one-stops: Career and Technical Education (Perkins), Community Services Block Grant, Indian and Native American programs, HUD

Employment and Training programs, Job Corps, Local Veterans' Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program, National Farmworker Jobs program, Senior Community Service Employment program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) (unless the Governor determines TANF will not be a required partner), Trade Adjustment Assistance programs, Unemployment Compensation programs, and YouthBuild.

[7] Workforce development activities may include a wide variety of programs and partners, including educational institutions, faith- and community-based organizations, and human services.

## **B. THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES**

Provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce development activities identified in (A), directly above.

## **C. STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY**

Provide an analysis of the capacity of State entities to provide the workforce development activities identified in (A), above.

### **The State's Workforce Development Activities**

#### **Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity**

U.S. Dept. of Labor Funded Programs

#### **WIOA TITLE I**

DCEO administers the workforce development activities required by Title I: Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth. WIOA Title I formula funds allocated to local areas for adults and dislocated workers must be used to provide career and training services through the one-stop delivery system. Local Workforce Development Boards determine the most appropriate mix of these services to deliver through American Job Centers.

- The Adult program is targeted at low-skill and low-income adults.
- Dislocated Worker services are targeted for workers who are unemployed and have lost a job through no fault of their own, such as mass layoffs, global trade dynamics, or transitions in economic sectors. or who have exhausted their Unemployment Compensation.
- WIOA Youth services focus on assisting youth who have one or more barriers to employment prepare for post-secondary education and employment opportunities, attain educational and/or skills training credentials, and secure employment with career/promotional opportunities. Youth services are available to in and out-of-school youth between 14 and 24 years old.

#### **Trade Adjustment Assistance (Required WIOA Partner)**

DCEO and Local Workforce Innovation Areas provide services to Illinois employers who are planning or have gone through a layoff. The Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program helps workers who have lost their jobs as a result of international trade get back to work. The program offers a variety of benefits and services to eligible workers, including job training,

income support, job search and relocation allowances, tax credits for health insurance costs, and a wage subsidy to workers 50 years of age and older.

#### National Dislocated Worker Grants

DWGs are time-limited funding assistance in response to major economic dislocations or other events that cause a significant impact on states and local areas that exceed the capacity of existing formula funds and other relevant resources to address.

- DWGs are supplemental resources that provide flexibility responding and recovering from qualifying events (disasters and layoff events)
- The projects align with existing state and local priorities, resources, and programs including coordination with local government, emergency management agencies, social service agencies, employers and industry organizations, education, faith-based organization, public health, etc.

#### Apprenticeship Expansion

Apprenticeship Illinois is a hub or network for fostering apprenticeship expansion and supporting the apprenticeship ecosystem throughout the State of Illinois. The Apprenticeship Illinois website provides a platform for Employers, Job Seekers, and Apprenticeship Partners to connect, learn, and act.

1. Employers: On the employer site, businesses can (a) connect with an Apprenticeship Specialist in their region for support in creating a program; (b) learn about different industries and occupations with apprenticeship programs, the state's tax credit, and the value proposition for adopting the apprenticeship training model; and (c) start the process for implementing an apprenticeship program.
2. Job Seekers: Individuals who wish to start an apprenticeship program can (a) see successful apprentices in Illinois from various industries and occupations; (b) learn about the benefits of an apprenticeship program; and (c) search for programs in their area.
3. Apprenticeship Partners: Apprenticeship Partners, who include workforce, education, and economic development professionals, can (a) connect with the State and others who are in the apprenticeship ecosystem; (b) access professional development and resources; and (c) support employers, job seekers, or each other with aspects of an apprenticeship program.

#### Rapid Response

DCEO and Local Workforce Innovation Areas provide services to employers in the state of Illinois who are planning or have gone through a layoff. Along with providing services, they, along with individuals and employers, have the ability to report layoffs in Illinois.

Rapid Response is a federal service strategy which coordinates services with an employer and employee representative(s) to maximize efforts and avert a planned layoff and/or minimize disruption for individuals and communities in dislocation events.

#### U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services Funded Program

#### Community Services Block Grant



Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) helps individuals attain the skills, knowledge and motivation necessary to achieve self-sufficiency and provide immediate life necessities such as food, shelter, medicine, etc. An equal emphasis is placed on self-sufficiency efforts and providing relief for the immediate needs of eligible low-income populations. Individuals served must be at or below 125% of the federally established poverty level.

CSBG funds are allocated through Illinois' network of Community Action Agencies (CAAs) and statewide migrant organizations to provide antipoverty services in Illinois' 102 counties and in the City of Chicago. The funds are allocated among the CAAs according to a poverty population-based formula.

## State of Illinois Funded Programs

### Climate and Equitable Jobs Act

The Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) is comprehensive energy legislation that:

- Incentivizes renewable energy development;
- Accelerates electric vehicle (EV) adoption and expands charging station infrastructure;
- Creates statewide clean energy workforce training programs to ensure our workforce is prepared for the jobs of the future; and,
- Supports communities facing energy transitions and much more.

The clean energy workforce training programs will help Illinois' workforce prepare for and train for jobs in the clean energy industry and to provide support to workers and communities facing plant closures. These programs prioritize Illinoisians who live in communities that have historically faced economic barriers and environmental damage, bolstering a diverse workforce in the clean energy industry. CEJA workforce programs include:

- The *Energy Transition Navigators Program* will provide outreach, education, and recruitment to eligible individuals to participate in CEJA workforce programs, and work with local job markets and workforce organizations to help place trainees in careers. The Energy Transition Navigator Program will prioritize outreach and recruitment for the Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program and the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Hubs. They will provide support and career guidance for participants enrolling in these two workforce programs. They will engage with local workforce innovation boards, community organizations, and educational institutions to promote the CEJA workforce and contractor programs. They will engage with employers, apprenticeship programs and local economic development organizations to facilitate job and apprenticeship placement.
- Through the *Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program*, thirteen Workforce Hubs across Illinois will offer training, certification preparation, and skill development for entry-level jobs in clean energy-related industries. This program will utilize a *Clean Jobs Curriculum* developed by DCEO and its implementation partners and prepared via a broad stakeholder process. This curriculum will identify career pathways, a training curriculum, and skill sets needed for participants to enter clean energy jobs.
- The *Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program* will provide training to prepare people to succeed in apprenticeship programs in construction and building trades that are expected to see clean energy job growth. The goal is to create a qualified, diverse pipeline of clean energy workers.

- The *Returning Resident Clean Jobs Training* provides training to prepare people in the custody of the Illinois Department of Corrections for entry-level clean energy jobs. Participants will receive essential employability skills training as part of vocational or occupational training. The training will lead to certifications or credentials that prepare candidates for employment. The Returning Resident Program will use a standard Clean Jobs Curriculum (similar to the one used in the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program).
- The *Clean Energy Contractor Incubator Program* will provide eligible contractors with access to low-cost capital, support for obtaining insurance, assistance registering to become vendors for state incentive programs, connections with firms hiring contractors and subcontractors, and other vital services. Participating contractors will receive training, mentoring and support to build their businesses, connect to projects, compete for capital, and execute clean energy-related project installations and subcontracts.
- The *Clean Energy Primes Contractor Accelerator Program* will provide a 5-year, 6-month progressive course of one-on-one coaching to assist contractor participants in developing 5-year business plans. This will include review of monthly metrics and advice on achieving participant's goals. Participating contractors will also be eligible for operational support grants (not to exceed a total of \$1,000,000 annually) and will have access to capital for upfront project costs and pre-development funding. Participants will receive mentorship, assistance preparing bids and Request for Proposal applications, assistance connecting to state and federal programs, and more.

#### Illinois Works Pre-apprenticeship Program

The goal of the Illinois Works Act is to ensure that all Illinois residents have access to State capital projects and careers in the construction industry and building trades, as well as provide contracting and employment opportunities to historically underrepresented populations in the construction industry and the trades. The *Illinois Works Pre-apprenticeship Program* is a critical component in the success of the Act, by increasing the number of qualified construction and building trades apprentices who are women, people of color, veterans or from otherwise underrepresented populations and preparing them to enter full apprenticeship programs on their way to careers in the construction and building trades.

#### Illinois Community College Board

##### U.S. Dept. of Education Funded Programs

##### WIOA TITLE II: Adult Education and Family Literacy Act

The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) provides services to help adults develop basic skills (e.g., reading, writing, math, English language acquisition), transition to postsecondary education and training, and gain employment. The purpose of AEFLA is to help adults increase literacy and numeracy activities necessary to complete a high school education, transition to postsecondary education and training, and obtain employment. The Act funds adult education and literacy services, including workplace literacy, family literacy programs, and English language services.

##### Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education

The Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education is a part of the AEFLA Act. IELCE services are education services provided to English language learners who are adults, including professionals with degrees or credentials in their native countries, that enable such adults to

achieve competency in the English Language and acquire the basic and more advanced skills needed to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens in the United States. IELCE services include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation and includes workforce training. Title II eligibility is limited to adults who are at least 16 years of age and not currently enrolled, or required to be enrolled, in high school. Additional eligibility criteria include one or more of the following: basic skills deficient; lack a high school diploma or its equivalent; function below the level of a high school graduate (even if the individual has a high school credential); or unable to speak, read, or write the English language.

#### Illinois Career Accelerated Preparation System - Integrated Education and Training Program

The Integrated Education and Training Program, funded with braided funding from Adult Education and Literacy and Postsecondary Perkins, is designed to support the development, improvement, and scale of integrated education and training (IET) programs. IET is a service approach that provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

#### Postsecondary Career and Technical Education (Perkins V)

Postsecondary CTE is funded by both state and federal dollars, as authorized by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V). The purpose of the Perkins Grant program is to develop more fully the academic knowledge and technical and employability skills of postsecondary education students who elect to enroll in career and technical education (CTE) programs of study. The intent of postsecondary CTE is to provide students with the skills and knowledge necessary to excel in the global economy. CTE equips students with the foundational knowledge to explore a cluster of occupations and careers, allowing them to transition seamlessly while providing them with hands-on exploration and rigorous academics.

Perkins V also places a concerted focus on equity and encourages recipients to adopt an equity lens in program design and implementation. In Illinois, eligible recipients of Postsecondary Perkins Grant funds are the community colleges. Funding is also provided to the Department of Corrections to enhance instruction and academic support activities that strengthen and improve career and technical education within Illinois correctional centers. CTE coursework at correctional centers is provided by several Illinois community colleges and is available for in several program areas including automotive technology, culinary arts, construction occupations, and horticulture.

#### State of Illinois Funded Programs

##### Early School Leaver Transition Program

The Early School Leaver Transition program, funded by both federal Perkins and State CTE dollars, is aimed at helping at-risk students (ages 16-24) become reoriented and motivated to complete their education by allowing students to participate in adult education instruction as well as career and work training activities. The overarching goal is to assist students in achieving high school completion as the basis for entry into postsecondary education/training and meaningful employment by incorporating Model one of the Integrated Career Academic and Preparation System (ICAPS) outlined as an Integrated Education and Training (IET) model.

##### Non-College LPN Program

The purpose of the Licensed Practical Nursing grant is to provide operational funding for LPN programs at the Capital Area Career Center and Career Center of Southern Illinois. State funding supports this workforce development activity.

#### Innovative Bridge and Transition Grant

State funding supports the Innovative Bridge and Transition grant which is designed to create, support, or expand: innovative bridge programs and services; transition programs which improve student transitions to and through postsecondary education and into employment; programs that promote equity and diversity among those served; and/or programs and services that support individuals with disabilities. The target population includes those individuals 16 years of age or older, who have limited academic or basic skills, underemployed or unemployed and youth who are in school preparing to enter postsecondary education or training programs.

#### Pipeline for the Advancement of the Healthcare Workforce (PATH) Grant

The purpose of the PATH Grant is to create, support, and expand the opportunities of individuals in the nursing pathway and select healthcare pathways to obtain credentials and degrees that allow them to enter and/or advance their careers in the healthcare workforce. This grant program aims to address the shortage of workers in the healthcare industry that have been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The program was modeled off the Workforce Equity Initiative grant program and requires colleges to meet unmet healthcare community and employment needs by increasing enrollment and retention in nursing and other healthcare pathways, specifically for underrepresented groups of students who might not otherwise be successful or able to enroll in healthcare programs.

#### Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI)

The purpose of this grant is to create, support, or expand short-term workforce (credit and/or noncredit) training opportunities in high need communities focused on specific sectors with identified workforce gaps. The grant requires a minimum of 60% of the students served to be African American students. The overall goal is to accelerate the time for the individuals to enter and succeed in postsecondary education/training programs that lead to employment in high skilled, high wage, and in-demand occupations.

The ICCB supports other workforce development activities that may vary from year to year dependent on competitive, short-term federal funding opportunities such as the Customized Apprenticeship Programming in Information Technology grant funded by the U.S. Department of Labor that ends December 2023 as well as state initiatives that may be funded on irregular basis.

#### Rev Up EV Initiative

The ICCB administers the Illinois Rev Up EV initiative which aims to promote the development and growth of training programs that prepare individuals for careers in EV technology and EV specific advanced manufacturing fields, with a priority focus on programs and training in areas that are most in demand by EV business and industry partners. The ICCB partners with the Illinois Green Economy Network, a consortium of community colleges dedicated to clean energy and sustainable initiatives, to administer this grant.

### **Illinois Department of Employment Security**

#### U.S. Dept. of Labor Funded Programs

#### WIOA TITLE III: Wagner-Peyser

Wagner-Peyser funds are used by the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) to provide employment services to all job seekers and employers seeking qualified individuals. Those services are provided online through the state's labor exchange system, Illinois JobLink or by IDES staff located in AJCs and include, but are not limited to, career services, job readiness, employer outreach, employer seminars, employment retention services, labor market information, career information, employment plans, and referrals to training, educational opportunities and supportive services.

Employment services offered include assessments for job placement, job search assistance, and online job application processing. Employment Security is responsible for increasing community awareness about the services provided via job fairs, community collaborations, onsite recruitments, resource linkage and presentations to both job seekers and employers. Wagner-Peyser Employment Services are available for all U.S. citizens and those eligible to work in the U.S.

IDES also employs dedicated staff who conduct outreach to migrant and seasonal farmworkers to inform them of services available in the AJCs, their employment rights, and how to file any employment-related complaints. IDES also employs an MSFW State Monitor Advocate who monitors whether MSFWs are receiving equitable services as required under Wagner-Peyser.

#### WIOA Title III: Wagner-Peyser 7b Special Populations

Section 7b of the Wagner-Peyser Act provides that 10% of the state's allotment under the Wagner-Peyser Act is reserved for providing activities including but not limited to services for groups with special employment needs. IDES focuses its use of Wagner-Peyser 7b funds on services to youth through Hire the Future (HTF), and to returning citizens through Re-Entry Employment Services (RESP.)

Hire the Future is designed to provide qualified candidates for employers seeking to fill positions within their respective companies. HTF strives to give the youth of Illinois opportunities to gain work experience with employers who understand the importance of encouraging career growth by collaborating with those employers as well as other workforce partners to hold youth-centered hiring events. In addition, IDES staff conduct outreach to schools to present information regarding career planning through the Illinois Career Information System (CIS) and other employment readiness topics.

Re-Entry Employment Services offers assistance to Returning Citizens (persons who are residents of a given area who were previously involved with the justice system) by helping them to overcome their employment hurdles and barriers to employment. Employment Services staff administer direct case management through Illinois JobLink to returning citizens. This assistance begins with an assessment interview and may include: referrals to other WIOA workforce partners; staff assisted services; career guidance; job search activities; referral to employment opportunities; resume assistance; and, interview coaching. In addition, IDES staff strive to develop relationships with employers who may be open to hiring Returning Citizens so that quality employment referrals can be made.

#### Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment

Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA). RESEA is an Unemployment Insurance eligibility program funded by the U.S. Department of Labor to assist unemployment insurance claimants with returning to work. IDES's Economic Information and Analysis Division (EI&A) has developed a predictive analog that identifies claimants with the highest propensity for exhausting UI benefits, in addition to transitioning veterans receiving Unemployment

Compensation for Ex-Service Members (UCX). UI claimant participation in RESEA is required, for those identified, to remain eligible for UI benefits. Services provided by the RESEA teams include, but are not limited to, orientations to the American Job Centers and services offered by our workforce partners, development of individual employment plans, labor market information, career information, job readiness assistance, , employment retention services and referrals to employment, training and educational services.

#### Jobs for Veterans State Grant Program (JVSG)

IDES is responsible for the (JVSG) program. All veterans and other eligible persons coming into the AJCs receive an Initial Assessment and if they self-attest to one or more Significant Barrier(s) to Employment they are referred to the JVSG program staff for Individualized Career Services and possible case management. While receiving services from the DVOP specialist, a veteran and other eligible person may continue to receive services from all AJC partners.

#### WorkShare IL

WorkShare IL is Illinois' Short-Term Compensation (STC) program. WorkShare IL is a voluntary unemployment insurance program that provides employers with an alternative to layoffs during an economic downturn. IDES administers this program and coordinates with DCEO on outreach to employers who may see this layoff diversion program as a solution in order to keep trained employees engaged and on the job.

Foreign Labor Certification: IDES assists employers in complying with federal requirements when they seek to hire foreign workers under the federal H2A (seasonal agricultural jobs) and H2B (non-agricultural jobs) visa programs. IDES assists with activities to ensure that if there are not enough qualified U.S. workers available to perform the work and that the hiring of foreign workers will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of similarly employed U.S. workers. IDES staff assist with the posting of employer job orders into IJL, inspection of housing for agricultural workers, and conduct field visits.

#### Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) Program

WOTC is a federal income tax credit incentive provided to private sector employers. An employer may be eligible for WOTC when they hire from certain target groups of job seekers who face employment barriers. The requirements for the program are set by the Internal Revenue Service and the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. WOTC is an incentive for employers and is intended to help individuals move from economic dependency, while participating employers can reduce their income tax liability. IDES processes WOTC certification requests submitted by employers.

Fidelity Bonding Program (FBP): The U.S. Department of Labor established the FBP to provide fidelity bonds that guarantee honesty for "at-risk," hard-to-place job seekers. The bonds cover the first six months of employment. There is no cost to the job applicant or the employer. The bonds issued by the FBP guarantee the job honesty of job seekers to employers who want to hire them. IDES assists employers who can request the bonds as an incentive to hire these applicants.

### **Illinois Department of Human Services - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

#### U.S. Dept. of Education Funded Programs

#### WIOA TITLE IV: Vocational Rehabilitation

The Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services oversees the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program to provide VR services for individuals with disabilities, consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice, so that they may prepare for and engage in competitive integrated employment or supported employment and achieve economic self-sufficiency.

To be eligible for the VR program, individuals must have a physical or mental impairment that results in a substantial impediment to employment and who require and can benefit from VR services to achieve employment and maximize career goals.

An Individualized Plan for Employment directs how services are provided and funded. Supporting services to VR customers may be either provided directly by a VR counselor or through contracts with community rehabilitation programs, local school districts for employment related services and supports, and other vendors offering transition, employment, and other support services.

#### Small Business Enterprise Program for the Blind

The Small Business Enterprise Program for the Blind (SPEPB) is a subset of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program authorized by the Randolph-Sheppard Act provides persons who are blind with remunerative employment and self-support through the operation of vending facilities on federal and other property. The program, enacted into law in 1936, was intended to enhance employment opportunities for trained, licensed blind persons to operate facilities. The law was subsequently amended in 1954 and again in 1974 to ultimately ensure individuals who are blind are a priority in the operation of vending facilities, which included cafeterias, snack bars, and automatic vending machines, that are on federal property. The program priority has broadened in Illinois through state law to include state locations as well. The BEPB has a total of 489 main locations and satellites of main locations.

#### Supported Employment Program

The Supported Employment Program provides supported employment services for individuals with the most significant disabilities, which includes youth with the most significant disabilities, who require supported employment services following the achievement of a supported employment outcome. Supported employment grant funds are used to supplement funds provided under the State VR Services Program to provide supported employment services. Program funds may be used to provide supported employment services for up to 24 months and to supplement other VR services necessary to help individuals with the most significant disabilities find work in the integrated labor market.

#### Independent Living for Older Blind Individuals Program

The Independent Living for Older Blind Individuals Program is not exclusively employment focused, but rather dedicated to assisting individuals who are losing their vision later in life (after the age of 55) to adjust to the change and to retain their independence through training, adaptive aids and advocacy.

### **Illinois Department of Human Services - Division of Family and Community Services**

#### U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services Funded Programs

##### TANF Job Placement with Retention Program (Required WIOA Partner)

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Job Placement with Retention Program is for individuals receiving TANF benefits. Customers participate in a variety of activities that are

countable in the federal participation rate while searching for unsubsidized employment. Activities are highly structured, monitored and documented to develop work experiences or unsubsidized employment that leads to a livable wage.

Individuals on TANF do eligible activities for up to 30 hours/week and this maintains their qualifications to receive their monthly TANF cash award. Activities allowed are defined by the TANF program. Additionally, the Provider is responsible for developing and administering programs in a manner that will result in a client compliance level of at least 75%. Activities are highly structured, monitored and documented

#### U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Funded Programs

##### Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment & Training (Required WIOA Partner)

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment & Training (SNAP E&T) Program is a program to help customers acquire work skills and find employment. The program also helps customers with work-related expenses and retention support up to 90 days after attaining a job.

Participation in SNAP E&T enables participants to gain work skills and experience, meet the federal work requirements for SNAP benefits, if applicable, and become self-sufficient through SNAP E&T “components”. Components are categories of allowable program activities such as, Job Search Training, Vocational Training, etc. Many participants are hard to serve individuals with limited work histories and experience. Some may need additional education and training to find and keep a job or have other significant barriers to employment.

##### SNAP to Success Program

SNAP to Success Program is intended to help customers acquire work skills and find employment. Participation in SNAP E&T enables participants to gain work skills and experience, meet the federal work requirements for SNAP benefits, if applicable, and become self-sufficient through SNAP E&T “components”. Components are categories of allowable program activities such as, Job Search Training, Vocational Training, etc. Many participants are hard to serve individuals with limited work histories and experience. Some may need additional education and training to find and keep a job or have other significant barriers to employment. This is a newer program and utilizes more matching funds to fund services and is not as reliant on USDA 100% funds (meaning grant funds), however the rules and restrictions on these funds is more complex.

##### Earnfare

Earnfare is an employment and training program which offers eligible participants an opportunity to gain work experience and earn limited cash assistance. Participation is limited to adults who receive SNAP benefits, who volunteer for the program and to individuals who are court-ordered to participate. Participants “work off” the value of their SNAP benefits at the state minimum wage up to a maximum number of hours per month as determined by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) before earning an additional amount in cash stipend.

##### Illinois Youth Investment Program

The Illinois Youth Investment Program (IYIP) is a multi-faceted approach to youth employment that invests in the future of Illinois’ at-risk transition-age youth (16-24). This approach to youth employment accounts for the youth’s employment barriers as well as the physical, emotional,



social, and mental health needs while helping them to secure and sustain long-term and/or career employment thereby ensuring a greater likelihood of success and self-sufficiency.

The Department has identified four program categories for which it made grant funding available. Each of the first three categories are designed to take into account various stages of a youth's employment readiness and employment needs. The fourth and final category, addresses the need within the State and local communities to develop additional employer training programs.

This multi-faceted approach will allow applicants to consider programming and services best suited to meet the needs of youth.

- Category I – Short-term, Summer Employment

(Work-based Learning; Career Development Experience; and Pre-Apprenticeship programs)

- Category II – Targeted Long-term Employment

(Targeted long-term employment and Youth Apprenticeship programs)

- Category III – Career Development - Industry-linked Long-term Employment

(Registered Apprenticeship; Non-Registered Apprenticeship; and Recognized Postsecondary Credentials (Industry-Linked Credentials, Certifications, or Licenses))

- Category IV – Expansion of Industry-Linked Career Development Opportunities

(Registered Apprenticeships; Non-Registered Apprenticeships; Youth Apprenticeships; and Recognized Postsecondary Credentials (Industry-Linked Credentials, Certifications, or Licenses))

#### Second Chance Act Youth Offender Reentry Program

The Second Chance Act Youth Offender Reentry Program supports states, to provide comprehensive reentry services for moderate to high-risk youthful offenders before, during, and after release from confinement. Within the context of this initiative, reentry is viewed as an evidence-based process that begins while the offender is still confined and ends with their successful reintegration into the community. Successful reintegration is denoted by no criminal behavior, to include but not be limited to rearrests, at 6-month increments for up to 24 months post-release.

### **The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities**

#### **Strengths**

Building on the work of the IWIB Equity Task Force, diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging is emphasized for all program delivery. Supportive service and barrier reduction funds are being used to address challenges to training and employment.

Workforce program delivery continues to become more integrated across WIOA core and required partners, as well as with other workforce development programs.

- State-funded programs housed in community colleges, Clean Energy Workforce Hubs, and local community-based organizations are coordinating services, primarily through local American Job Centers. Navigator roles are being funded to facilitate this work.

- The RESEA program now has dedicated staff who assist UI claimants with getting back to work more quickly. IDES is working on program improvement, including a new focus on utilizing RESEA as an entry way for UI claimants into other workforce services.

State-funded workforce development activities, including the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, Workforce Equity Initiative, and others provide the ability to quickly address talent pipeline issues.

Workforce partners are highly coordinated locally for Business Services outreach. We have built a good foundation for coordinated outreach to employers.

### **Weaknesses**

Demand for services frequently exceeds available resources. This is becoming increasingly true for services directed towards immigrant populations. Regulatory restrictions on expenditures can create additional challenges.

State-funded workforce development activities, due to their annual budget process, are more difficult to predict, causing issues for capacity and planning.

### **State Workforce Development Capacity**

During the pandemic, workforce partners all pivoted quickly to virtual service delivery and now virtual service delivery is a necessary component to delivering public services. That means that the workforce system needs to focus on the infrastructure needed to maintain and enhance virtual services and the staff skills and competencies to do that effectively.

The capacity of the workforce ecosystem continues to be affected by the decline in real dollars of the federal resources while the cost of delivering services does not. One-time funding opportunities and state and local resources are not a predictable or sustainable substitute.

## **B. STATE STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS**

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the State's strategic vision and goals for developing its workforce and meeting employer needs in order to support economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. This must include—

### **1. VISION**

Describe the State's strategic vision for its workforce development system.

### **2. GOALS**

Describe the goals for achieving this vision based on the analysis in (a) above of the State's economic conditions, workforce, and workforce development activities. This must include—

(A) Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including preparing youth and individuals with barriers to employment<sup>8</sup> and other populations.<sup>9</sup>

(B) Goals for meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers.

[8] Individuals with barriers to employment include displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of

literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers (as defined at section 167(i) of WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 35-14); individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed individuals.

[9] Veterans, unemployed workers, and youth and any other populations identified by the State.

### 3. PERFORMANCE GOALS

Using the tables provided within each Core Program section, include the State's expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA. (This Strategic Planning element only applies to core programs.)

### 4. ASSESSMENT

Describe how the State will assess the overall effectiveness of the workforce development system in the State in relation to the strategic vision and goals stated above in sections (b)(1), (2), and (3) and how it will use the results of this assessment, which may include evaluation findings, and other feedback to make continuous or quality improvements.

IWIB members, state agency leaders representing core, required and other workforce partners, various employers and representatives of community-based organizations came together as part of the development of the WIOA State Plan for Illinois to envision what the workforce system in the state should focus its efforts in the near future. Informing the visioning process were learnings from Governor J.B. Pritzker's Commission on Workforce Equity and Access, the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board's Equity Task Force and other examinations of the state's workforce system and current economic trends.

General concepts that resulted where:

- Using a customer-centered approach to service delivery
- Ensuring employers know the workforce system can provide them with skilled workers to meet their evolving needs
- Centering equity and access throughout the Workforce Development System
- Providing job-seekers with pathways to good careers, not just jobs
- Enhancing coordination and collaboration between WIOA partners and other workforce and education systems
- Building a broader awareness of the Workforce Development System

Those concepts helped inform the state's vision and goals, and provided the foundation for the state plan, regional plans and local plans.

#### **Illinois' Vision:**

Illinois' workforce system will meet employers, jobseekers, and community members where they are, centering the customer experience in an interoperable, equitable, and accessible manner to ensure all customers achieve their goals. We will support employers by building diverse, quality career pathways and provide effective training, education, and economic opportunities for jobseekers and communities to thrive.

Illinois supports a unified Workforce Development System that looks beyond programmatic and funding silos. Therefore, in addition to being informed by the visioning process, the goals for the state's WIOA State Plan were also created to be in alignment with other workforce development plans being generated. Those plans included:

- Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Five-Year Economic Development Plan
- Illinois' Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) Five-Year Plan
- Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Five-Year Apprenticeship Expansion Grant Plan
- Illinois Department of Employment Security Jobs for Veterans State Grant Annual Plan
- Illinois' Perkins V State Plan
- Illinois Department of Human Services Home Illinois: Illinois' Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness
- Illinois Poverty Commission and Interagency Task Force on Poverty

Based on the work done to create Illinois' vision for its Workforce Development System and the identification of how the WIOA State Plan could intersect with other workforce plans being developed, the state created the following goals:

1. Illinois' Workforce Development System will be a national example of excellence in its approach to collaboration and customer service.
2. Illinois' Workforce Development System will enhance employers' abilities to hire and retain skilled workers that meet their emerging needs.
3. Illinois' Workforce Development System will use customer-centered and data-informed practices to improve the quality of the jobseeker experience in pursuing fulfilling career pathways in a manner that is equitable and accessible.
4. Illinois' Workforce Development System will support the state's efforts to cultivate next-generation technologies, such as clean energy, bio-tech, and quantum computing.

Illinois' proposed performance targets along with supporting documentation (including source references) associated with the PY 2024-2027 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) proposed performance targets has been prepared in response to the instructions provided by the United States Departments of Labor and Education. Illinois will enter negotiations with the Departments in State Fiscal Year 2024 to come to agreement on performance outcomes for Program Years 2024 and 2025. For the Title IB programs, this will be followed by local negotiations for each of the twenty-two local areas with their Local

Workforce Innovation Board (LWIB) negotiation teams. New policy and procedures supported with technical assistance will be developed to guide the process.

Based on an analysis of historical and current participant outcomes, each core partner will negotiate WIOA performance measures for each indicator, as applicable for Program Years 2024 and 2025. The six primary indicators of performance under WIOA for each core partner (note that primary indicators four and five do not apply to Wagner-Peyser Employment Services) are:

- Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after exit - The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program (for Title I Youth, the indicator is participants in education, or training activities or employment in the 2nd quarter after exit);
- Employment Rate 4th Quarter after exit - The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program (for Title I Youth, the indicator is participants in education, or training activities or employment in the 4th quarter after exit);
- Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after exit - The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the 2nd quarter after exit from the program -- participants who obtain a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent must also be employed or enrolled in an education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within one year of the exit from the program;
- Credential Attainment Rate - The percentage of program participants enrolled in education or training program (excluding those in OJT and customized training) who attain a recognized post-secondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in, or within, 1 year after exit from the program. A participant who has attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent only must also be enrolled in education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within one year after exit;
- Measurable Skills Gains - The percentage of participants who during a program year are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized post-secondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains, defined as documented academic, technical, occupational or other forms of progress towards such a credential or employment; and
- Effectiveness in Serving Employers (not yet defined by DOL or the United States Department of Education (ED)) - This will be based on indicators developed as required by Section 116(b)(2)(A)(iv) of WIOA.

The core partners present performance data to the IWIB regularly. This collaboration ensures all core partners are on track to meet the requirements set forth in this Plan and ensures customers in the Workforce System are provided with the education, training, and resources necessary to increase the talent pipeline for Illinois' diverse business and industry. See the Assessment and Evaluation Section of the Strategic Elements of the state plan for further details about the evaluation of the performance goals.

The Departments continue to pilot three approaches designed to gauge three critical workforce needs of the business community as a sixth indicator of performance.

1. Approach 1 – Retention with the same employer – addresses the programs’ efforts to provide employers with skilled workers;
2. Approach 2 – Repeat Business Customers – addresses the programs’ efforts to provide quality engagement and services to employers and sectors and establish productive relationships with employers and sectors over extended periods of time; and
3. Approach 3 – Employer Penetration Rate – addresses the programs’ efforts to provide quality engagement and services to all employers and sectors within a State and local economy.

A Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) was issued on September 14, 2022 that proposes to define in a standardized way the performance indicator for effectiveness in serving employers for the regulations implementing the jointly administered requirements governing WIOA's six core programs. The NPRM proceeded through a public comment period and the Departments and WIOA programs are awaiting a final determination as to which Approach will be selected for states to report on and be assessed. The Departments concluded that the Approach 1 - Retention with the Same Employer approach placed the least amount of burden on States to implement while also providing a valid and reliable approach to measuring the indicator.

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board selected Approaches 1 and 3 to report on during the pilot phase. Until further guidance on a final approach to the 6<sup>th</sup> indicator of performance on effectiveness in serving employers, Illinois’ core programs will submit a unified set of data for these two approaches.

Further, in accordance with WIOA Final Rules, states will be assessed on two Overall State scores, the Overall State Program Score and Overall State Indicator Score beginning with Program Year (PY) 2022. The Overall State Program Score is the average of individual indicator scores across all WIOA core programs, and the Overall State Indicator Score is the average of individual indicator scores for a single IWOA core program.

Following the completion of Program Year 2022, the Departments issued joint guidance that due to insufficient data to produce reliable estimates to be incorporated into the statistical adjustment model (SAM), revisions to the performance indicators to be assessed would change for Program Year (PY) 2022. Training and Employment Notice (TEN) 04-23 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Core Program Performance Accountability Assessment for Program Year (PY) 2022 (issued August 11, 2023) indicated the measurable skill gains indicator of performance would not be assessed for all core programs, nor would any indicators for the Title II program. Additionally, the Overall State Indicator Scores for all core programs and the Overall State Program Scores for Titles I, II and IV will have a delayed assessment.

This means the Departments will not assess performance for the purpose of imposing sanctions for the outlined performance indicators for PY 2022 but will continue to use performance data for effective program management, oversight, monitoring, and continuous improvement. Illinois will continue to submit timely and complete performance reports with risk of sanction for failure to do so. At this time, Illinois’ core programs are proceeding as if all individual indicators of performance and the two Overall State Scores will be assessed beginning in PY 2023.

The context within which Illinois developed its proposed levels of performance for Adult, Dislocated Workers, Youth and Wagner-Peyser measures encompasses past performance outcomes. Averages for prior program year outcomes were computed (using the five prior program years), as well as a Target Outcome and Predicted Outcome that was produced by DOL. Target values were established using all the above and the ninety percent threshold applied to

the DOL Target Outcome. Taking all data element outcomes into account, along with the environmental factors in Illinois, each target was set as shown in Table 19.

Table 19: Performance Goals for Program Year 2024 and 2025

	<b>Program Years: 2024/2025</b>	
	<i>Expected Level</i>	<i>Negotiated Level</i>
<b>Employment Rate – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit</b>		
Title I – Adult	75.5%	TBD
Title I – Dislocated Worker	79.5%	TBD
Title I – Youth <sup>1</sup>	74.5%	TBD
Title II – Adult Education	27.0%	TBD
Title III- Wagner – Peyser	TBD	TBD
Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation	TBD	TBD
<b>Employment Rate – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit</b>		
Title I – Adult	76.0%	TBD
Title I – Dislocated Worker	79.5%	TBD
Title I – Youth <sup>1</sup>	74.0%	TBD

Title II – Adult Education	27.6%	TBD
Title III- Wagner – Peyser	TBD	TBD
Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation	TBD	TBD
<b>Median Earnings – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit</b>		
Title I – Adult	\$8,400	TBD
Title I – Dislocated Worker	\$11,300	TBD
Title I – Youth	\$4,300	TBD
Title II – Adult Education	\$4,926	TBD
Title III- Wagner – Peyser	TBD	TBD
Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation	TBD	TBD
<b>Credential Attainment</b>		
Title I – Adult	73.5%	TBD
Title I – Dislocated Worker	74.0%	TBD
Title I – Youth	70.5%	TBD
Title II – Adult Education	30.9%	TBD
Title III- Wagner – Peyser <sup>2</sup>		
Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation	TBD	TBD
<b>Measurable Skill Gains</b>		
Title I – Adult	60.0%	TBD
Title I – Dislocated Worker	61.0%	TBD
Title I – Youth	56.6%	TBD
Title II – Adult Education	37.1%	TBD
Title III- Wagner – Peyser <sup>2</sup>		
Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation	TBD	TBD
<b>Effectiveness in Serving Employers<sup>3</sup></b>		
Retention with the Same Employer in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit Rate	TBD	TBD
Employer Penetration Rate	TBD	TBD

1 Title I Youth Program Measure also includes participants enrolled in education or training activities.

<sup>2</sup> Title III Wagner-Peyser is not assessed on the education-based indicators of performance including Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains.

<sup>3</sup> “Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being developed and this data will not be entered in the 2024-2027 Illinois Unified State Plan.



Table 20: PY2024 and PY2025 WIOA Expected Levels of Performance for Illinois

<p>TITLE I ADULT TITLE I DISLOCATED WORKER TITLE I YOUTH</p>	<p>All measures were negotiated between U.S. DOL Region 5 and the State May19, 2022 for Program Years 2022 and 2023. No measures remain in baseline status. However, the Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit, Credential Attainment Rate, and Measurable Skill Gains indicators were not planned to be evaluated for performance success or failure until PY2022. For the Title IB Youth Program, the Employment Rates 2nd and 4th Quarter after Exit also included youth participants who Enrolled in Education or Training. A Statistical Adjustment Model (SAM) will be applied to all negotiated goals to determine adjusted levels of performance. Actual performance outcomes will be compared to the adjusted levels to determine success or failure by the State.</p>
<p><b>TITLE II ADULT EDUCATION</b></p>	<p>Employment, credential attainment and MSG targets were negotiated with the Department of Education for PY2022 and PY23 with targets demonstrating continuous improvement. Targets for PY2023 are indicated above for all measures, except Effectiveness in Serving Employers (which remains in baseline).</p> <p><i>*Title II Adult Education Employment Rate 2nd Quarter and 4th Quarter after exit and Median Earnings indicators require a file submittal to the state wage agency in order obtain wages on the individuals. It's important to note that current matching algorithms to track individuals into employment require an SSN. While students without an SSN are included in the tracking cohort (i.e., denominator), only students with a valid SSN can be successfully tracked and positively counted for employment. This results in undercounting for successful employment. No self-reported or survey data from programs on successful employment of students is included in these rates.</i></p>
<p><b>TITLE III WAGNER- PEYSNER</b></p>	<p>All measures were negotiated between U.S. DOL Region 5 and the State May19, 2022 for Program Years 2022 and 2023. No measures</p>

<p>TITLE I ADULT TITLE I DISLOCATED WORKER TITLE I YOUTH</p>	<p>All measures were negotiated between U.S. DOL Region 5 and the State May19, 2022 for Program Years 2022 and 2023. No measures remain in baseline status. However, the Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit, Credential Attainment Rate, and Measurable Skill Gains indicators were not planned to be evaluated for performance success or failure until PY2022. For the Title IB Youth Program, the Employment Rates 2nd and 4th Quarter after Exit also included youth participants who Enrolled in Education or Training. A Statistical Adjustment Model (SAM) will be applied to all negotiated goals to determine adjusted levels of performance. Actual performance outcomes will be compared to the adjusted levels to determine success or failure by the State.</p>
	<p>remain in baseline status. However, the Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit indicators were not planned to be evaluated for performance success or failure until PY2022.</p> <p>Credential Attainment and Measurable Skill Gains does not apply for WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser.</p> <p>A Statistical Adjustment Model (SAM) will be applied to all negotiated goals to determine adjusted levels of performance. Actual performance outcomes will be compared to the adjusted levels to determine success or failure by the State.</p>
<p><b>TITLE IV VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION</b></p>	<p>For PY 2022 and 2023, Title-IV Vocational Rehabilitation programs have all five metrics able to be measured by their performance. For PY2022 the negotiated goal and expected level of performance for our Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit is 56%, 4th Quarter after Exit is 49%, Median Wage 2nd Quarter after Exit is \$3,627 and Credential Attainment Rate is 29.5%. Expected level of performance for MSG rate is 72.5% and</p>

<p>TITLE I ADULT TITLE I DISLOCATED WORKER TITLE I YOUTH</p>	<p>All measures were negotiated between U.S. DOL Region 5 and the State May19, 2022 for Program Years 2022 and 2023. No measures remain in baseline status. However, the Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit, Credential Attainment Rate, and Measurable Skill Gains indicators were not planned to be evaluated for performance success or failure until PY2022. For the Title IB Youth Program, the Employment Rates 2nd and 4th Quarter after Exit also included youth participants who Enrolled in Education or Training. A Statistical Adjustment Model (SAM) will be applied to all negotiated goals to determine adjusted levels of performance. Actual performance outcomes will be compared to the adjusted levels to determine success or failure by the State.</p>
	<p>negotiated level of performance is 61.0%.</p> <p>In PY 2023 the negotiated goal and expected level of performance for Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit is 60.0%, 4th Quarter after Exit is 51.0%, Median Wage 2nd Quarter after Exit is \$3,942 and Credential Attainment Rate is 31.0%. Expected level of performance for MSG rate is 75% and negotiated level of performance is 63.0%.</p> <p>A Statistical Adjustment Model (SAM) will be applied to all negotiated goals to determine adjusted levels of performance.</p> <p>Actual performance outcomes will be compared to the adjusted levels to determine success or failure by the State.</p>

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) established the Continuous Improvement Committee (CIC) is guided by six charges.

**Charge 1: Evaluation Design.** Review evaluation elements of policies and processes created by the IWIB to determine the appropriateness of their relationship to their expected outcomes. Provide feedback and recommendations.

**Charge 2: Evaluation Outcomes.** Review outcomes of evaluation to determine if results conformed to the intended outcome. Provide feedback and recommendations.

**Charge 3: Continuous Improvement at Local Level.** Review local performance related to the six federal performance measures for the WIOA core partners and make recommendations about strategies for continuous improvement at local levels.

**Charge 4: Benchmarks.** Examine and evaluate workforce quality and earning benchmarks and recommend changes.

**Charge 5: Data Recommendations.** Provide Recommendations for Readily Accessible Data and technical assistance recommendations for an intended audience.

**Charge 6: Priority Activities.** Manage priority activities as assigned by the IWIB Strategic Plan.

As part of the development of this plan, a tool has been designed to evaluate and report progress on the vision and goals laid out in previous sections. To accomplish this evaluation, the tool will examine the progress made on core program activities and strategies for accomplishing Illinois' strategic vision and goals.

Each core program activity will be evaluated every six months on the following four criteria by a group composed of members of the four core partners and others.

1. Goal (is the goal of this activity clear, shared and actively being worked towards?)
2. Committed Resources (are there adequate human and financial resources to carry out this activity?)
3. Leadership (Is there an advocate of the activity leading the effort to reach its goal?)
4. Progress (Is progress being made on the desired outcome of the activity?)

Each criterion will be evaluated on a four-point scale. The scale is as follows:

1. 1 point – failing expectations
2. 2 points – falling below expectations
3. 3 points – meets expectations
4. 4 points – exceeds expectations

Further explanation will be provided anytime a score of 1 or 4 is provided to either adjust to ensure the success of the activity or to highlight best practices in the Workforce Development System.

### C. STATE STRATEGY

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the State's strategies to achieve its strategic vision and goals. These strategies must take into account the State's economic, workforce, and workforce development, education and training activities and analysis provided in Section (a) above. Include discussion of specific strategies to address the needs of populations provided in Section (a).

1. DESCRIBE THE STRATEGIES THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT, INCLUDING INDUSTRY OR SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS RELATED TO IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS AND CAREER PATHWAYS, AS REQUIRED BY WIOA SECTION 101(D)(3)(B), (D). "CAREER PATHWAY" IS DEFINED AT WIOA SECTION 3(7) AND INCLUDES REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP. "IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTOR OR OCCUPATION" IS DEFINED AT WIOA SECTION 3(23)

2. DESCRIBE THE STRATEGIES THE STATE WILL USE TO ALIGN THE CORE PROGRAMS, ANY COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN, REQUIRED AND OPTIONAL ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS, AND ANY OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THE STATE TO ACHIEVE FULLY INTEGRATED CUSTOMER SERVICES CONSISTENT WITH THE STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS DESCRIBED ABOVE. ALSO DESCRIBE STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN REGARD TO WEAKNESSES IDENTIFIED IN SECTION II(A)(2)

### **Goal 1 Strategies**

1. **Strategy:** The Workforce Development System uses a customer-centered approach to service delivery.
2. **Strategy:** The Workforce Development System advances diversity, equity, inclusion and access.
3. **Strategy:** WIOA partners and other workforce and education systems in Illinois enhance coordination and collaboration.
4. **Strategy:** Jobseekers and employers have a broader awareness of the Workforce Development System.
5. **Strategy:** The state enhances local service delivery through supporting development to frontline workers.

### **Goal 2 Strategies**

1. **Strategy:** The Workforce Development System supports, informs and enhances employers' talent strategies.
2. **Strategy:** The various partners in the Workforce Development System leverage their business services to provide more holistic support to employers.
3. **Strategy:** The Workforce Development System builds out tools and practices that can help employers adopt a culture that promotes equity and accessibility.

### **Goal 3 Strategies**

1. **Strategy:** The Workforce Development System educates and supports jobseekers regarding how to navigate the labor market.
2. **Strategy:** The Workforce Development System interacts with jobseekers in the places where they live and visit.
3. **Strategy:** The Workforce Development System uses a data-informed approach to reduce barriers to services for jobseekers who have historically faced barriers to accessing services.

#### **Goal 4 Strategy:**

1. **Strategy:** The Workforce Development System provides exposure to individuals and jobseekers to career opportunities in emerging industries, such as electric vehicle production, battery energy storage, bio-tech, smart manufacturing, and solar energy.

### **III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS**

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an Operational Planning Elements section that supports the State's strategy and the system-wide vision described in Section II(c) above.

Unless otherwise noted, all Operational Planning Elements apply to Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan as well as to core programs. This section must include—

#### **A. STATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION**

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include—

##### **1. STATE BOARD FUNCTIONS**

Describe how the State board will implement its functions under section 101(d) of WIOA (i.e., provide a description of Board operational structures and decision making processes to ensure such functions are carried out).

The Governor-appointed Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB), mandated by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), includes leaders from business, industry, state agencies, education, labor, and community-based organizations to evaluate and meet the workforce needs of Illinois' employers and workers. WIOA requires that state workforce boards take a leadership role in guiding the workforce system through policies, strategies, and performance that address the needs of employers, consumers, employees, community members, and partners. The boards oversee the Unified State Plan's development, implementation, and modification, convening all relevant programs, required partners, and stakeholders and providing oversight and strategic leadership for the state Workforce Development System.

Furthermore, boards are to act as conveners of the system, bringing together employers and community partners at the state, regional, and local levels to promote economic growth through these partnerships and ensure alignment between education and workforce services. Active participation of all board members and close collaboration with partners, including public and private organizations, is vital to this success.

In Illinois, this active participation occurs through a committee and task force structure, in which IWIB representatives from private/public partner programs implement policy recommendations to strengthen Illinois' workforce system.

Equitable access is a fundamental principle within WIOA, the Illinois WIOA State Plan, as well as a high priority of the Governor. The work of the IWIB is to establish goals to improve inequities for the populations we serve, create accessible career pathways for all customers that address barriers to employment, and enhance equality among partners.

#### **Business Engagement:**

The IWIB will engage the business community through sector strategies and career pathways that strengthen and expand the building and sustainability of business-led partnerships. Engagement will be targeted through industry sectors and emerging pathways by promoting work-based learning, seeking out minority-owned businesses, and developing innovative approaches to improve competitiveness and equity among partners.

### **Customer-Centered Design:**

Executing a customer-centered service delivery model has the intended outcome of utilizing approaches that produce equitable outcomes and result in higher customer satisfaction for both businesses and job seekers. This will be accomplished by addressing challenges to employment and creating career pathway approaches for all clients that lead to industry-recognized credentials and, ultimately, sustainable employment.

### **Technology:**

Deploying user-friendly, accessible technology to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of the system provides for coordinated service delivery, which is a foundational approach under WIOA.

### **Workforce Board Impact:**

Strengthening state and local workforce board effectiveness moves these boards into a strategic position to set priorities and garner a better understanding of roles and responsibilities.

Through a committee and task force structure, IWIB representatives from private/public partner programs offer policy recommendations to strengthen Illinois' workforce system. Illinois strives to foster improvement and expansion of employer-driven regional sector partnerships to increase the focus on critical in-demand occupations in key sectors that are the engine of economic growth for the state and its regions.

The IWIB supports the key elements outlined in the WIOA State Plan by creating an environment favorable to the formation of employer-led sector partnerships and the improvement of communications between business, economic development, workforce development, and education through the work of the IWIB Business Engagement Committee. The IWIB works to increase the number of meaningful public-private relationships and improve the quality of the new and existing public-private partnerships within the work of the Apprenticeship Illinois Committee. Moreover, through the Continuous Improvement Committee, the IWIB promotes data and demand-driven workforce and education initiatives and provides support for the system to focus on evaluation. The IWIB supports utilizing the WIOA system infrastructure to support the alignment and integration of economic development, workforce development, and education initiatives to develop sector partnerships and career pathways through the Career Pathway Targeted Populations Committee. The IWIB is working to ensure that leaders and practitioners in the Illinois workforce system have the information, data, training, and skills they need to understand the equity challenges workforce system customers face and the tools they need to enhance equity in the workforce system through the work of the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access Committee. Each of the committees has its individual charges and priorities that are outlined in the IWIB Strategic Plan and are coordinated through the Executive Committee and the IWIB Leadership Committee.

The IWIB Leadership Committee was established as a networking vehicle and serves as a place for dialogue between committee chairs, the executive committee, and lead committee staff to coordinate work and remedy duplication between committees. In addition, the IWIB committee

staff meet monthly to create space for informal conversation and opportunities for collaboration.

Furthermore, the IWIB strategies and activities discussed within this plan align with those found in the Illinois WIOA State Plan and the Perkins V state plan.

The Workforce Development System has a key role to play in improving equity in educational and economic opportunities in Illinois and across America.

Illinois is committed to applying an equity lens to our workforce investment strategies to help ensure that our most vulnerable populations gain skills and access good, family-supporting jobs. Key to that work will be identifying inequitable outputs and outcomes in the workforce system, exploring the cause of those inequities, and implementing solutions to advance equity within the system.

In 2020, the IWIB's Equity Task Force developed a framework of recommendations within Illinois' workforce and education system to establish goals and remove inequities for the populations the system is meant to support.

The IWIB formed the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Committee in 2023 based on the recommendations of the IWIB Equity Task Force. Its work is informed by the recommendations of the Equity Task Force and the Governor's Commission on Workforce Equity and Access. The primary focus for this committee is working to ensure that leaders and practitioners in the Illinois workforce system have the information, data, training, and skills they need to understand the equity challenges that customers, clients, and students face and the tools they

## 2. IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGY

Describe how the lead State agency with responsibility for the administration of each core program or a Combined Plan partner program included in this plan will implement the State's Strategies identified in Section II(c). above. This must include a description of—

### A. CORE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES TO IMPLEMENT THE STATE'S STRATEGY

Describe the activities the entities carrying out the respective core programs will fund to implement the State's strategies. Also, describe how such activities will be aligned across the core programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan and among the entities administering the programs, including using co-enrollment and other strategies, as appropriate.

#### **Core Program Activities to Implement the State's Strategy**

### **GOAL 1 STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES**

The Workforce Development System uses a customer-centered approach to service delivery.

1. **ACTIVITY:** Service Integration: The core partners will continue efforts to align service delivery in a way that best helps the customers. Illinois will implement a new service integration self-assessment tool for economic development regions and local workforce areas that will ensure continuous improvement is made on service integration. Illinois will identify and use data already being collected related to a customer-centered approach to service delivery to identify areas of improvement related to service delivery and integration.



2. **ACTIVITY:** Referrals: The current referral process will be reviewed as part of a larger examination of service integration. Efficiencies and best practices will be recommended to make the referral process better for both customers and for staff. Additionally, enhanced referral streams from programs outside of WIOA will be examined.
3. **ACTIVITY:** Assessment of American Job Centers: Illinois will design and implement a comprehensive assessment of physical design, service delivery systems and staffing capacities of American Job Centers in the state. Based on the findings of that assessment, recommendations will be crafted on how American Job Centers can make improvements to better support individuals and employers.
4. **ACTIVITY:** Exploring how the state can support the local partners in exploring what the future of the workforce system looks like.

The Workforce Development System advances diversity, equity, inclusion and access.

1. **ACTIVITY:** Data will be disaggregated to uncover areas where equity and access need improvement. Review data to make sure it is good data.
2. **ACTIVITY:** The Nondiscrimination Plan will be integrated into the state, regional, and local planning efforts.
3. **ACTIVITY:** Good-Job Standard: U.S. DOL guidance (TEGL 07-22) released in early 2023 encourages state workforce agencies to develop a strategy for identifying and creating long-term partnerships with employers offering good jobs, and to create strategic, flexible career pathways to good jobs that respond to local labor market needs. TEGL 07-22 lays out attributes of good jobs, including pay levels, benefits, DEIA, job security, organizational culture, career advancement opportunities, among others. There are available indicators of some of these attributes, including quarterly wage records that allow calculations of earnings and tenure with individual employers. However, many are difficult to measure. Several Illinois state agencies that administer WIOA programs will continue working together and with the Illinois Department of Labor to determine ways of assessing job quality and subsequently working with employers to highlight best practices and provide strategies for improvement.
4. **ACTIVITY:** Support immigrants, migrants and asylum seekers: Core partners will explore how to provide the appropriate and allowable support the ongoing influx of immigrants, migrants, and asylum seekers entering Illinois.

WIOA partners and other workforce and education systems in Illinois enhance coordination and collaboration.

1. **ACTIVITY:** Region and Local Plan: An expanded focus on coordination and collaboration will be included in Illinois' guidance to economic development regions and local workforce areas regarding the development of four-year plans. This includes an update to a service integration self-assessment tool and a renewed service integration policy from the state's workforce board.
2. **ACTIVITY:** Interagency Agreement: The four Illinois state agencies responsible administering core WIOA programs in the state will create an interagency agreement

that describes how, where possible, services will be shared, integrated and aligned between all agencies to best support the Workforce Development System.

Jobseekers and employers have a broader awareness of the Workforce Development System.

1. **ACTIVITY:** Illinois will develop a marketing plan for the Workforce Development System that will raise awareness of the services the system provides. This could include advertisements through traditional media, social media and other avenues, word-of-mouth and other peer-to-peer campaigns.
2. **ACTIVITY:** Illinois will coordinate outreach efforts by the core and required WIOA partners to customers.

The Workforce Development System improves local service delivery through enhanced support of frontline workers.

1. **ACTIVITY:** Professional Development and Technical: Illinois will provide professional development and technical assistance to service providers to enhance the ability of local workforce areas to implement recommendations from the Governor's Commission on Workforce Equity and Access and the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board's Equity Task Force.

## **GOAL 2 STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES:**

The Workforce Development System supports, informs and enhances employers' talent strategies.

1. **ACTIVITY:** Facilitate Industry Champions in Emerging and Growing Sectors: The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board's Business Engagement Committee (BEC) will establish a network of industry champions and a community of practice for each targeted industry in the state. The BEC wants to ensure that its effort to establish a network of industry champions to assist in outreach to employers within targeted industries, respects existing industry leadership, leverages existing relationships and brings additional value to the champions and the employers within their industry. As such, the BEC will pilot this approach, learn more about workforce needs directly from industry leaders, and ensure that sector partnership activities deliver a clear return on investment for employers in the industry.
2. **ACTIVITY:** Promote Employer-Driven Regional Sector Partnerships: The BEC will educate executive-level employees at employers throughout Illinois about Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) sector strategies, including how to operationalize public-private partnerships, sector partnerships and various talent pipeline management concepts. This outreach will effectively educate potential partners regarding sector strategies, including the TPM approach.
3. **ACTIVITY:** Expanding Apprenticeships: Illinois will build upon the existing apprenticeship infrastructure to better align partners, funding, and services to fully integrate and institutionalize within the Illinois workforce ecosystem. Illinois will build stronger partnerships with the State and local workforce system. Illinois will target

innovative programs in Educational Services (K-12 Teachers), Care Economy, Climate/Clean Energy, Public Sector, Technology/Cybersecurity, Transportation, Hospitality, and the Supply Chain. Illinois will explore how to utilize apprenticeships to align and support the jobs required to implement the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, including the expansion of broadband in Illinois.

4. **ACTIVITY:** Expanding Awareness and use of Existing Pools of Employees: Illinois will support both advancing diversity, equity, inclusion and access and employers' talent pipeline strategies by expanding awareness of existing talent pools that have traditionally been overlooked, such as returning citizens.

The various partners in the Workforce Development System leverage their business services to provide more holistic support to employers.

1. **ACTIVITY:** Alignment of Business Service Teams Efforts: Illinois will leverage the various business service teams in the state, aiming to offer comprehensive and a more holistic approach to support employers. For example, Illinois will use U.S. DOL State Apprenticeship Expansion Formula funds to help local workforce boards support the roles of Apprenticeship Specialists within regional integrated business service teams (IBST). These teams will encompass representatives from various organizations, including WIOA core partners and local workforce, education, and economic development entities. The teams are tasked with coordinating IBST efforts, forging regional industry partnerships, engaging employers to offer an array of workforce solutions, and expanding registered apprenticeship programs. The integrated business service teams will play a pivotal role in promoting, connecting, and granting access to initiatives that enable employers to access and implement workforce programs aligned with their specific needs. To ensure effective implementation, the State will utilize the IWIB's Integrated Business Services Team Workgroup's Illinois' Integrated Business Services Framework, urging local business service teams to collaborate with partners for its execution.

The Workforce Development System will build out tools and practices that can help employers adopt a culture that promotes equity and accessibility.

1. **ACTIVITY:** Illinois will explore what local workforce areas are doing, both here and outside of Illinois, in regards to supporting employers promote a work culture that embraces equity and accessibility.
2. **ACTIVITY:** Illinois will also explore using existing equity and accessibility tools to help local workforce areas support employers' equity and accessibility efforts.

### **GOAL 3 STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES:**

The Workforce Development System educates and supports jobseekers regarding how to navigate the labor market.

1. **ACTIVITY:** The core WIOA partners will develop a plan on how to coordinate educational efforts to help individuals find and navigate good career pathways.

The Workforce Development System interacts with jobseekers in the places where they live and visit.

1. **ACTIVITY:** The core WIOA partners will highlight and support best practices regarding service delivery outside of the one-stop center.
2. **ACTIVITY:** Illinois will explore what a virtual footprint looks like and lessons learned from the pandemic regarding alternative service delivery strategies.

The Workforce Development System will use a data-informed approach to reduce barriers to services for jobseekers who have historically been underserved.

1. **ACTIVITY:** The WIOA Core partners will review data to make sure it is accurate, reliable and usable.
2. **ACTIVITY:** The WIOA Core partners will share good data to identify existing barriers and what can be done to reduce those barriers.

#### **GOAL 4 STRATEGY AND ACTIVITIES:**

The Workforce Development System provides exposure to individuals and jobseekers to career opportunities in emerging industries, such as electric vehicle production, battery energy storage, smart manufacturing, and solar energy.

1. **ACTIVITY:** Education and workforce agencies will collaborate on training strategies, leveraging the public Workforce Development System, to meet the workforce needs of these emerging sectors, including the development of comprehensive career pathways and identifying state and federal funding to support training solutions.
2. **ACTIVITY:** The WIOA Core partners will continue to partner with entities outside of WIOA to support jobseekers and employers in the development of emerging industries such as clean energy and advanced agriculture.

#### **B. ALIGNMENT WITH ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE PLAN**

Describe how the activities identified in (A) will be aligned with programs and activities provided by required one-stop partners and other optional one-stop partners and activities provided under employment, training (including Registered Apprenticeships), education (including career and technical education), human services and other programs not covered by the plan, as appropriate, assuring coordination of, and avoiding duplication among these activities.

#### **Alignment with Activities Outside the Plan**

Illinois took a comprehensive approach to aligning the work within WIOA to other activities and planning activities being undertaken by other state agencies and organizations.

Stakeholders in Illinois that are responsible for the creation of state and federal plans outside of WIOA were consulted throughout the development of the 2024 – 2028 WIOA State Plan. That communication will continue through the life of this plan, with the focus on how resources can be leveraged to best serve individuals and employers in the state. Some plans and stakeholders consulted for the development of this plan include:

- Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's Five-Year Economic Development Plan
- Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) Five-Year Plan
- Perkins V
- Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's Five-Year Apprenticeship Expansion Grant Plan
- Illinois Department of Employment Security's Jobs for Veterans State Grant
- Illinois Department of Human Service's Home Illinois, Illinois' Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness

The workforce system in Illinois will work outside of its funding and programmatic silos to ensure customers receive the services that will help them succeed. For example, The Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) was signed into law by Governor Pritzker on September 15, 2021. CEJA is comprehensive energy legislation that

- Incentivizes renewable energy development to put Illinois on a path to 100% renewable energy by 2050;
- Accelerates electric vehicle (EV) adoption and expands charging station infrastructure;
- Creates statewide, equity-focused clean energy workforce training programs to ensure the Illinois workforce is prepared for the jobs of the future; and,
- Supports communities facing energy transitions and much more.

The State will continue to explore how to braid funding and programmatic services of CEJA and WIOA. CEJA Regional Administrators will work with local workforce areas and to find opportunities for co-enrollment and leveraging of resources to efficiently deliver training and supportive services to participants in CEJA, WIOA, and other workforce programs.

Each CEJA program grantee is required to work in cooperation with the Local Workforce Innovation Centers in their service territory to leverage available resources to best serve program participants. The coordination can take the form of referrals or co-enrollment, depending on the needs of the participant and program eligibility.

Additionally, CEJA staff are working collaboratively with WIOA Regional Managers as well as the Regional Economic Development (RED) team and other DCEO offices to co-host events and co-present at other events where workforce opportunities are being discussed. Efforts are being made to coordinate calendars so similar events can either be combined or at least scheduled in a way that they don't compete.

#### C. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS

Describe how the entities carrying out the respective core programs, Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan, and required and optional one-stop partner programs will coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality, customer-centered services, including supportive services (e.g. transportation), to individuals, including those populations identified in section II(a)(1)(B), and individuals in remote areas. The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

#### **Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Individuals**

## **Regional Planning Assessment and Analysis**

Illinois promotes an integrated WIOA regional strategic planning process across education, workforce and economic development, which provides comprehensive, high-quality customer-centered services. The regional planning process and biannual modification processes includes an examination of target population data provided by the WIOA Interagency Data Team and other relevant local studies. Regional teams examine supply-side data and consider ways to leverage partners' expertise, programs and resources to adjust strategies and connect available talent pools to career opportunities in targeted industries. The planning process includes analysis of how the partners in each region will address the evolving needs of the targeted populations and an asset mapping process to inventory the career, education, training and supportive services that are available in each region.

## **MOU and Budget Guidance**

The State of Illinois will continue to develop and recommend policy to the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) regarding system-wide policy (e.g., One-stop Certification, Service Integration, Eligible Training Provider List, etc.). The annual Memorandum of Understanding and Budget Guidance for State and local partners to negotiate shared costs and service delivery through one-stop centers is developed in a collaborative process based on input from the field and operational guidance developed with the WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team to ensure compliance. Under the guidance, the Local Workforce Innovation Board (LWIB) must collaborate with required program partners to describe the programs and activities that will be made accessible through the American Job Centers, the service delivery methods, and the allocation of shared costs to operate the centers and local service delivery system.

The WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team seeks input annually and collaborates with others to revise the guidance to reflect new federal guidance and/or major policy changes affecting local operations. An MOU approved by the WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team is one of the prerequisites for obtaining one-stop certification.

## **One-Stop Certification**

The current one-stop certification framework addresses 41 criteria in 19 areas that include center effectiveness, accessibility, infrastructure and continuous improvement. The State reviews results of prior certification processes to identify improvements, opportunities for additional guidance and best practices. Additionally, the State ensures that the goals and outcomes from the systemwide policy are incorporated into the one-stop certification applications. The State will continue to develop recommendations for strengthening this policy and providing technical assistance as further information regarding the needs of the workforce system is gleaned and partners work toward advancing service integration at the state and local levels.

## **Labor Market Information**

Labor market information (LMI) and demand-driven data set the foundation for the WIOA career services in Illinois. The Illinois Department of Employment Security is responsible for LMI and the Illinois Career Information System, a web-based tool that incorporates Illinois-specific actionable data on in-demand occupations and wages that allow students and job seekers to make informed decisions about their career pathways. These services will result in individualized plans addressing how to reach career goals based on career and skill assessments and identified barriers requiring support services. Illinois will leverage the work of

statewide, public-private partnerships to better coordinate investments, resources and planning for those programs with the goal of providing more opportunities for targeted individuals.

Workforce and education partners including Adult Education, Postsecondary Perkins/Career and Technical Education and Illinois State Board of Education will expand career development guides and technical assistance materials to promote leading career pathway models and best practices that can be implemented through regional sector partnerships and other regional sector initiatives. These technical assistance materials (along with associated professional development) will address how to improve career services and expand customer access to accelerated and integrated work-based and classroom training, align and integrate programs of study leading to industry-recognized credentials and support services for targeted populations facing barriers to employment. They will also address how to fully mainstream targeted populations into sector-based career pathway initiatives to achieve outcomes similar to those of other populations.

### **Coordinated Case Management and Supportive Services**

Illinois will continue to highlight and encourage adoption of the best practices that are identified in statewide innovation projects that serve targeted populations throughout the state. This includes joint projects between the agencies responsible for administering the required WIOA programs.

- **Aligning and implementing the best practices for projects that address employment to people with disabilities.** The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the Illinois Community College Board and the Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) will work with regional and local partners to increase the participation of individuals with disabilities (aged 18 and above) in integrated career pathway and academic programs through community colleges and non-profit organizations in cooperation with American Job Centers, Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIB), employment networks and other regional partners.
- **Aligning and developing work-based learning programs, pre-apprenticeships, and bridge programs for low-literacy and low-skilled adults to sequentially bridge the gap between the initial skills of individuals and what they need to enter and succeed in post-secondary education and career path employment.** The state's bridge programs prepare adults with limited academic or limited English skills to enter and succeed in post-secondary education and training leading to career path employment in-demand occupations. The state agency partners will focus on expanding access and success in sector-based bridge programs that provide opportunities for low-skilled and low-literate youth and adults. The state will support new initiatives that promote sector-based pre-bridge, bridge programs and integrated education and training models that expand access and success of low-skilled youth and adults in career pathways. These programs are designed to introduce individuals to career pathway programs of interest.
- **Aligning and coordinating WIOA Title I services with efforts that currently address justice-involved youth.** Illinois is exploring a range of career pathway models for justice-involved youth seen nationally and statewide as best practices and examining ways to braid and blend funding for maximum impact. Where possible, these models will be folded into existing juvenile justice efforts for seamless service alignment to add the expertise of WIOA service providers to strengthen employment and training models.

- **Aligning and coordinating critical programs and services for veterans.** Through the federal Department of Labor-Veterans Employment and Training Services Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) funding, the Illinois Department of Employment Security employs Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists, who must be fellow VA-Service Connected disabled veterans and provide individualized career services in compliance with Veterans Program Letter 03-14 to eligible veterans and other eligible individuals to meet their employment needs, prioritizing service to special disabled and other disabled veterans, as defined by 38 U.S.C. 4211, and to other eligible individuals in accordance with priorities determined by the Assistant Secretary – Veterans Employment and Training Services. Illinois veterans will be served through the WIOA priority of service, as well as targeted initiatives administered by the workforce and education partners and the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs. As the WIOA definition of case management describes, it takes a community of resources to assist veterans to overcome/mitigate the identified barriers to employment and get them back into the workforce.
- **Aligning and coordinating WIOA Title I with Title II Adult Education services to ensure immigrants and other individuals who are English language learners have access to services, such as workforce readiness, bridge programs, and Integrated Education and Training through the Illinois workNet American Job Centers.** As an example, in areas with high populations of English language learners, the resource room in a one-stop will offer online classes for students learning English.

#### D. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS

Describe how the entities carrying out the respective core programs, any Combined State Plan partner program included in this plan, required and optional one-stop partner programs will coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality services to employers to meet their current and projected workforce needs and to achieve the goals of industry or sector partners in the state. The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

##### **Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Employers**

Employer engagement strategies and best practices are a hallmark of an efficient and effective workforce system. The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board's (IWIB) Business Engagement Committee is designed to ensure the state workforce system is responsive to current and future needs of employers. Three key objectives focus this committee:

- Identify Industry Sector Partnerships engaged in the workforce needs of the State of Illinois.
- Convene employers and WIOA service providers to better align employers needs with training, services and program design.
- Identify target industries to focus on bringing together small and large employers with the Illinois Workforce Development System to discuss what is needed to streamline existing pathways and create new opportunities.

This committee is employer-led, bringing together representatives of the state and local workforce boards and other employers and employer organizations, as well as representatives of Illinois' WIOA system to identify best practices, lessons learned, marketing strategies and



priority challenges. The diverse perspectives help create proactive measures to strengthen current engagement practices.

Under the strategic direction of the IWIB, Illinois has embedded sector strategies into workforce development programs across Illinois supporting businesses, employees and job seekers. These approaches enable the workforce system to customize solutions for employers in the industries that are most vital to our economy. Through customized training solutions, employed, unemployed and underemployed workers are better able to obtain the skills they need and that businesses require. Illinois will maintain this sector focus in the upcoming program years through activities that continue the development of a sector-based approach in Illinois.

### **Integrated Business Services Framework**

Illinois' Integrated Business Services Framework was developed by a workgroup made up of private sector members of the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board, representatives from the Illinois Workforce Partnership (IWP) and representatives from Illinois' core WIOA partners (Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Illinois Department of Employment Security, Illinois Department of Human Services, Illinois Community College Board).

The framework will support talent pipeline strategies designed to assist partners in working together to address the workforce needs of business in a region. At the core of these models are industry sector partnerships led by businesses and a focus on crucial industry clusters. Sector partners work collaboratively to listen to and understand the workforce needs of business and to develop customized solutions that respond to those needs. Eight foundational elements for the framework were identified and recommended by the workgroup. The integrated provision of business services should be:

- **Sector-based** – The provision of business services should align around regionally identified industry sectors significant to the regional economy.
- **Transformational** – Engagement of businesses should provide a platform for regular and ongoing dialogue, providing a transformation of the relationships between business and workforce partners.
- **Regional** – Service delivery should be regional in nature and should align with the Governor's ten economic development regions, as well as multi-region and multi-state approaches when those are indicated by the needs of the sector partnership.
- **Coordinated** – The framework should describe coordinated approaches and strategies used by *all* partners to meet business needs.
- **United** – Building upon efforts already underway, efforts should continue to co-locate partners to ensure maximum coordination.
- **Flexible** – The framework should provide enough guidance to be helpful but should also allow flexibility for regional innovation and customization.
- **Aligned** – Existing policies/procedures should be reviewed and revised to ensure alignment and progress toward service integration.
- **Allowable** – Partners' federal mandates to provide specific, related services must still be met when developing the state framework.

The workgroup identified five components that are necessary for the integrated provision of business services in the state and its ten economic development regions:

- **Organizational structure** – At both the State and regional level, organizational structures will be developed that enable communication between partners to develop a single, reliable, agreed-upon strategy to support engagement and contact between employers and the workforce/economic development system. The form of these organizational structures will vary according to economic development region and sector. Leveraging existing relationships between and among businesses and public partners is recommended as the most reliable initial strategy for engagement with particular employers and sectors. The ten economic development regions will develop mechanisms that will connect business to the full range of partner services—regardless of source.
- **Management of business intelligence** – Given the need to share information across partners—at the State level, but particularly at the regional/local level—management of business intelligence is critical. Recognizing the challenges of creating a statewide cross-agency Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, the State’s initial strategy will focus on supporting creative approaches to meeting these regional/local level responsibilities. It is important for regional partners to understand the grassroots nature of business intelligence development. Perhaps the most important data development issue will always be the creation of methods to record and access partner knowledge regarding employer needs, to share that knowledge across the partner network and then to utilize that knowledge to jointly develop and implement proactive solutions to business and sector needs.
- **Solutions-based service offerings** – The service offerings provided to businesses must be focused on delivering timely solutions to expressed business needs. Each region should have its own standardized process for contacting employers in each targeted industry sector and have the capability of providing direct access to appropriate services or referral to all partners who can provide those services. Solutions-based service first requires a focus on listening to what business communicates that it needs, and then requires flexible, creative and timely responses to those needs—a process that builds a portfolio of customized solutions for businesses without merely “dumping” pre-packaged programs and processes on them.
- **Emphasis on work-based learning and other business-focused services** – Closely tied to the solutions sought by businesses is the expanded use of work-based learning (On Site Work-Based Education, Registered Apprenticeships, Youth Apprenticeships, Pre-Apprenticeships, Customized Training, On-the-Job Training, Incumbent Worker Training and others). This emphasis recognizes work-based learning as often the most effective mechanism for delivering Training and Education solutions in an environment that is directly shaped to and for the needs of the employer—their own business.
- **Accountability and performance measurement** – The four framework elements discussed so far will bring significant changes in the focus, intent and utilization of business services. Along with those changes comes the need to develop appropriate measures of performance. This will enable the measurement (and dissemination) of the meaningful results of those business services activities and will also serve to establish feedback loops that will facilitate data-driven course corrections to the other four framework elements. In particular, these measures should be focused on the value of these services to businesses through measures, such as reduced turnover, reduction in

the time required to fill vacancies, enhanced employee retention, additional viable candidates applying for work and enhanced productivity.

### **Support Employer-Driven Regional Sector Initiatives**

Coordination of the core, required, and optional program partners in each region and local area of the state will be required for Illinois to achieve the goal of coordinated business services. The support of employer-driven sector initiatives is a key WIOA strategy. Illinois will expand business engagement across the workforce system to align training with needed skills and to match companies with qualified workers and workforce needs, which will help point the state towards the creation of a talent pipeline that fuels economic growth and creates career pathways for all citizens of Illinois.

Illinois will continue to focus on the development of employer-based training options that work directly with employers to identify hiring requirements, assess the skill levels of job seekers, and provide competency-based training to quickly fill skill gaps, prepare individuals to go to work, and allow employers to increase their productivity while reducing their hiring risk. Using approaches such as apprenticeships, internships, job shadowing, work experience, and on-the-job training provides employers with a quicker method to fill critical job openings while providing trainees with a quicker route to a paycheck.

### **Apprenticeship Expansion Strategies**

Illinois' apprenticeship expansion strategies are centered on supporting businesses and individuals. Expanding apprenticeships helps businesses with their current and future workforce needs as well as individuals with a career pathway, which includes work-based learning. Employers are key to the success of apprenticeship programs. Without employers utilizing the apprenticeship model to build their workforce, there are no opportunities for individuals to join apprenticeship programs. To achieve the goal of expanding Apprenticeship programs with employers, Illinois has utilized a set of strategies including (1) Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) and (2) apprenticeship navigators and integrated business service teams to help businesses better understand the value and return on investment of apprenticeships and to support them in their efforts to create successful programs.

### **Talent Pipeline Management**

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce developed the Talent Pipeline Management™ approach to address chronic national skill gaps. Skill gaps exist where there is a disconnect between what skills businesses want new employees to have when hired and the actual skills of applicant pool. TPM uses supply chain principles to call on business and public policy leaders to transform education and workforce systems to be employer-led and business demand-driven. TPM is an overarching, systematic approach intended to help businesses better understand their short and long-term talent needs and to help public education and workforce programs adapt as demand for skills evolves.

Illinois will continue to utilize the TPM framework as a sector strategy to improve local capacity for the integration of business services across core partners and statewide business engagement. Illinois will continue to invest in building an infrastructure around supporting businesses, which includes a cadre of trained workforce and economic development professionals across the State. This training supports the Governor's priority of implementing and expanding apprenticeship opportunities as well as providing seamless and robust support to businesses from core State agencies.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) Academy is a program designed to address workforce challenges by helping employers develop partnerships to create a steady pipeline of skilled workers. The TPM Academy trains business, workforce, and economic development leaders on the Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) approach, a demand-driven strategy to create real career pathways for students and workers aligned to dynamic business needs. TPM provides a framework and shared language for improving understanding and communication between employers and integrated business service team members.

The objective of the TPM training for Business Service Team representatives (DCEO Title I and IDES Title III) is to provide the resources and tools to develop and support industry sector partnerships within each of the local workforce innovation areas (LWIAs) and the ten economic development regions (EDR). The foundations are based on talent pipeline management (TPM) consisting of three principles and a six-strategy process for building high-performing education and workforce partnerships that delivers a measurable return on investment for employers and learners.

**Principle 1: Employers Drive Value Creation**—Employers play a new leadership role as end customers in closing the skills gap for jobs most critical to their competitiveness.

**Principle 2: Employers Organize and Manage Pipelines**—Employers organize and manage flexible and responsive talent pipelines in partnership with other employers and their preferred education and training providers.

**Principle 3: Employer Measures and Incentives Drive Performance**—Employers work collaboratively with one another to develop measures and incentives designed to reinforce and improve performance across all partners.

**Strategy 1: Organize for Employer Leadership and Collaboration**

**Strategy 2: Project Critical Job Demand**

**Strategy 3: Align and Communicate Job Requirements**

**Strategy 4: Analyze Talent Supply**

**Strategy 5: Build Talent Supply Chains**

**Strategy 6: Engage in Continuous Improvement and Resiliency Planning**

### **Apprenticeship Navigators and Integrated Business Service Teams**

Illinois will continue to refine and evolve apprenticeship expansion efforts based on feedback and need. Apprenticeship navigator program is focused on:

- Building sector strategies through the talent pipeline management approach
- Leveraging regional business services teams
- Increasing statewide capacity through a train the trainer network of apprenticeship navigators
- Developing new strategies for communicating the value of workforce diversity to employers and proactively creating equity strategies that lead to historically underrepresented individuals entering and succeeding in registered apprenticeship programs.

Apprenticeship navigators are a part of regional integrated business services team to support the expansion of apprenticeship and work-based-learning programs. Navigators support partnerships among employers, the workforce system, education/training providers, and other stakeholders. Illinois will continue to build an apprenticeship network that provides:

- **OUTREACH:** Serve as a point of contact to assist in the development of apprenticeship and work-based learning opportunities
- **PARTNER COORDINATION:** Support the regional coordination of apprenticeship and work-based learning opportunities with employers and workforce / education / economic development partners.
- **DIRECT ASSISTANCE IN DEVELOPING APPRENTICESHIPS:** Serve as a subject matter expert to facilitate the establishment of an apprenticeship or work-based learning program based on the needs of the employer.

Further expansion efforts are defined in the Illinois Five-Year Apprenticeship Expansion State Plan.

#### **E. PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND OTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS.**

Describe how the State's Strategies will engage the State's community colleges, adult education providers, area career and technical education schools, providers on the State's eligible training provider list, and other education and training providers, as partners in the workforce development system to create a job-driven education and training system. WIOA section 102(b)(2)(B)(iv). Include how the State's strategies will enable the State to leverage other Federal, State, and local investments to enhance access to workforce development programs at these institutions.

#### **Partner Engagement with Educational Institutions**

##### **The Illinois Community College System**

The Illinois Community College System covers the entire state with 48 colleges in 39 community college districts. Community colleges serve more than 600,000 Illinois residents each year in credit and noncredit courses and many more through their public service programs. The Illinois community college system is the largest workforce provider in the state, providing a range of customized training and formal education degrees that support the skill needs of local employers. Illinois community colleges work with nearly 10,000 unique employers in the state.

All community colleges are on the Eligible Training Provider List and as the most affordable public training option are priority providers for related technical instruction. All community colleges offer postsecondary career and technical education under the Strengthening CTE for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V), which is a required partner under WIOA. To date, there are 4,254 approved CTE programs, consisting of 1,217 degree programs and 3,037 certificate programs. Community colleges serve on local workforce innovation boards, strengthening the partnership between the local workforce area services and community college programming.

Community colleges as well as Title II and Postsecondary CTE have representation of the State's Workforce Innovation Board, ensuring strong collaboration between the systems.

##### **Adult Education Providers**

The Title II services are provided by over 70+ AEFLA funded programs which include community colleges, public school districts and Regional Offices of Education, correctional facilities, and community-based organizations. Each provider facilitates education and training services which include English Language Acquisition, adult literacy, digital literacy, career pathway, and employment instruction to all AELFLA participants to meet the expectations of WIOA and increase the talent pipeline for local employers.

One key strategy is the implementation of the Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System, ICAPS, an accelerated pathway to an industry-recognized credential through training partnerships – such as Career and Technical Education or an approved training provider – to serve eligible adult education students, including English Language Learners, while they are completing their Illinois High School Diploma and/or improving their English Language. Throughout the implementation of both work-place learning and work-based learning, core WIOA partners will provide ongoing support to all eligible adult learners as identified in the Coordinated Case Management and Supportive Services. As such, the state recognizes these strategies as mechanism for individuals who are basic skills deficient to enter employment and training. Core partners will engage with the community colleges, adult education providers, and area career and technical education schools through the support of WIOA customers enrolled in Bridge and ICAPS programming.

### **Workforce Education Exchange (WEX)**

The Illinois Innovation Network launched the Workforce Education Exchange (WEX) Connects education, workforce development, and industry resources to ensure a diverse, skilled, job-ready workforce for in-demand and emerging industries in Illinois. DCEO, ICCB, University of Illinois Extension, and the Lt. Governor serve on the Advisory Board of the IIN, which is organized around DCEO's 10 economic development regions.

WEX programming:

- Focuses on portable employer identified and recognized competencies and skills attainment
- Advances policy innovation in concert with technological innovation
- Adopts a life-long learning approach

This alignment ensures that P-20 initiatives are captured and incorporates braided and blended funding, programing, and service delivery.

WXX provides multiple business sector benefits that simultaneously improve the employee experience:

- Provides a common access point to the state's education and workforce networks
- Creates a linked regional education and training ecosystem
- Convenes employer and industry partners in the supply chain
- Delivers to training providers continuous technical assistance and training
- Identifies resources and assets
- Establishes joint research or innovation hubs
- Engages through VR, AR, and gaming design training

- Impacts, with intentionality, diverse communities and communities of service

WEX operates through collaborative, multi-institution and professionally staffed Innovation Teams focused on the following themes:

- Industry Sector Partnerships
- Transfers & Articulation
- Curricular Design
- Community Engagement & Technical Assistance
- Workforce Agency Alignment

Through these teams, WEX:

- Co-develops DEIA recruitment strategies
- Partners with networks of networks to identify, train, recruit, and retain talent
- Identifies through individualized company specific assessments jobs/sectors on which to focus
- Partners with industry and specific employers to identify and for them to provide the technical know-how for the job training
- Co-develops applied training programs and employer sponsored internships
- Identifies the facilities, labs, faculty, and support services needed for industry success
- Identifies the support services and ancillary supports that workers need to succeed in the training and placement, including job design, affordable housing, childcare, transportation, broadband connectivity, digital literacy, financial digital literacy, and language skills

By linking and accessing multiple resources, networks, and partners, WEX provides customized, just in time, sector focused training developed to meet the short-term and long-term needs of employers, creating a seamless trajectory for employees to enter and advance in their career trajectory. All Illinois employment providers, whether on the LIST or not, are eligible service delivery partners under WEX. Likewise, industry academy, universities, and training centers – those educational programs developed by industry within their own companies - are eligible service delivery partners. It is this unique combination of comprehensive aligned resources that invites customer focused engagement for employers, incumbent workers, and future workers.

### **Illinois Broadband Lab**

The Illinois Broadband Lab (IBL) enhances the ability of all people to connect and participate in the digital world. It is a collaboration between the Illinois Office of Broadband, Illinois Innovation Network, and the University of Illinois System, which serves as the administration agent. It is a strategic alliance with the Illinois Department of Innovation and Technology that installs broadband and the University of Illinois Extension, which has a presence in all 102 Illinois counties. The IBL convenes a statewide Digital Equity Network that brings together community-based organizations, local government, technical support providers, and education providers to align strategies for the delivery of digital literacy services, from digital awareness to digital skills. The IBL fosters a vibrant ecosystem committed to reducing and eliminating the

digital divide and bringing necessary resources to employees, employers, and communities throughout Illinois.

The IBL aligns its work broadly to include the following topics:

- Research (best practices, program design, and evaluation)
- Infrastructure (installation and technologies)
- Digital Literacy (awareness, access, and affordability)
- Financial Digital Literacy
- Workforce Development
- Digital Literacy & Digital Skills, including employer identified and recognized skills)
- Industry Workforce (e.g. fiber splicers)
- Target Populations

The focus of the IBL is to provide access beyond infrastructure: using technology for civic, social, political, and economic confidence and participation, which directly impacts industry and workforce development initiatives.

The IBL curricular design includes:

- Embedded pre- and post-assessment to identify local training needs
- A comprehensive digital literacy curriculum to serve populations with limited technological experience (including components on job search, safety, financial digital literacies, troubleshooting, and others)
- Transferrable platform-based resources for self-paced learning, hybrid, and in-class training
- A system of support to complement courses and advance learning transfer
- Relatable to global and national evidence-based frameworks and standards

Its goals are the certification for 21st-century skills desired by employers and use of critical digital literacies. An additional goal is increased access to governmental resources for communities and individuals for services, including enrollment and access of the State's One Stop Centers, training provider search, job search, job application submission, online training, and

The IBL runs multiple programs to address the lack of digital knowledge and skills as well as digital access and devices. A sample of the programs include:

Broadband Regional Engagement for Adoption + Digital Equity (READY) grants are provided to qualified regional entities statewide to explore opportunities for equitable advances in the areas of broadband access, adoption, and utilization.

The program is designed to identify current digital inequities as well as next steps in creating a digital inclusion ecosystem through regional collaboration.



Seeks to provide scalable solutions for broadband utilization across all 10 Illinois economic development regions.

The program was designed as a forerunner to provisions included in the Digital Equity Act, signed into law as part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and serves as a foundation for Office of Broadband work in Digital Equity + Inclusion.” The Broadband READY strategic partnerships is a regionally based partnership with local universities and programs to deliver digital equity and broadband services, including community based digital literacy education and training. These 10 projects operate in each of the 10 DCEO economic development regions.

Broadband Regional Engagement for Adoption + Digital Equity (READY) grants are provided to qualified regional entities—such as a community and economic development organization, regional planning council, or institution of higher education—to explore opportunities for equitable advances in the areas of broadband access, adoption, and utilization. The program is designed to identify current digital inequities as well as next steps in creating digital inclusion ecosystems through regional collaboration. It Seeks to provide scalable solutions for broadband utilization across all 10 Illinois economic development regions. The program was designed as a forerunner to provisions included in the Digital Equity Act, signed into law as part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and serves as a foundation for Office of Broadband work in Digital Equity + Inclusion.

Each READY region seeks to implement a Digital Equity Impact Project—often around digital literacy or device distribution—and serve as a key collaborator for regional digital equity work related to the state’s Digital Equity Plan. Information about regional projects can be found here: <https://dceo.illinois.gov/connectillinois/broadbandready.html>

The IBL offers a statewide Digital Navigators network that provides individual, training of the trainers, and group digital literacy training. The training includes access to financial digital literacy, free and reduced digital devices (computers, laptops, tablets, mobile phones, and hot spots), and enrollment training for supportive services (housing, health, mental health, banking, low-heat, etc.).

The IBL is in process of aligning Digital Literacy and Financial Digital Literacy Curriculum to ensure accessibility by persons without digital knowledge or experience, persons with low-literacy levels, and persons without confidence in the use of digital tools. The IBL curriculum will be used statewide through the Digital Navigators to enhance the work.

## **EdSystems**

Aiming to strengthen existing partnerships between education and workforce systems, EdSystems continues to be a valuable partner in workforce development. Housed in Northern Illinois University, EdSystem’s policy development encompasses numerous State agency partners and stakeholders to create organizational change. The partnership with EdSystems also includes residing on policy advisory committees to support career pathway systems. Two current advisory committees are the Work-based Learning Quality Criteria Advisory Committee and the Career Pathway Quality Criteria Advisory Committee.

### **ISBE Work-based Learning Quality Criteria Advisory Committee**

This committee explores innovations and promising practices pertaining to the student experience, including preparation, engagement and follow-up best practices for students, schools, and partners to ensure equitable access to high-quality work-based learning.

### **ISBE Career Pathway Quality Criteria Advisory Committee**

This committee explores innovations and promising practices pertaining to what the student experience and engagement should look like to inform continuous improvement processes and ensure equitable access to quality pathway components.

### **College and Career Pathway Endorsements**

College and Career Pathway Endorsements (CCPE) were developed under the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act (PWR Act). The PWR Act aligns support from State agencies, school districts, postsecondary education providers, employers, and other public and private organizations to allow the State of Illinois to develop and implement a coordinated career readiness system. This strategy from the PWR Act allows school districts to award college and career pathways endorsements on high school diplomas. EdSystems continues to enhance the comprehensive framework for CCPE, and one goal of the quality criteria advisory committees is to elevate and scale educator and employer connections.

### **Relaunching the Illinois Career Pathways Dictionary**

To help transform outcomes for youth and adults across Illinois, EdSystems, together with the Illinois Board of Higher Education, Illinois Community College Board, Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity, Illinois Department of Employment Security, Illinois State Board of Education, and Illinois Student Assistance Commission, re-launched the innovative Illinois Career Pathways Dictionary as a new comprehensive and user-friendly web-based resource. The first-of-its-kind Illinois Career Pathways Dictionary now includes expanded and updated definitions as well as resources and implementation guidance on a new website, [pathwaysdictionary.org](http://pathwaysdictionary.org).

As career pathways systems continue to scale across education and workforce systems throughout Illinois, the dictionary is geared towards equipping policymakers and practitioners with information and tools to implement high-quality college and career pathways.

### **The WIOA Eligible Training Provider List**

The Illinois Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) policy was revised in 2022 to ensure all customers have access to quality eligible training providers across all geographies, especially in communities and neighborhoods disproportionately impacted by adverse economic conditions. The revisions reflect the importance Illinois places on equitable access to services. The revisions were overseen and conducted by ETPL Workgroup membership, which comprised all WIOA Core Partners, employers, and local workforce representatives. Each stakeholder worked together to enhance engagement and coordination and to ensure the policy reflected the needs of the workforce system.

To ensure the continued expansion of the ETPL, Core Partner Leadership has begun developing roles to ensure coordination when adding and reviewing providers and programs to the list. Out-of-state provider procedures are also being evaluated to ensure oversight while promoting a comprehensive ETPL to encourage customer choice. WIOA Partners will continue to work together as the policy, and the system is updated to ensure understanding and implementation throughout the state.

### **Developing Green Career and Technical Education Pathway Program**

The Office of Employment and Training (OET) is allocating \$10 million in state funding to work on a Green Career and Technical Education Pathway Program with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). This funding will allow the OET and the ISBE to expand Green CTE pathway programs statewide. These efforts will be connected to the Illinois Community College Board's

Rev Up EV Community College Program. The OET and the ISBE will align efforts with the ICCB to ensure dual credit opportunities are available and EV curriculum is established. The program's overall goal is for secondary education and post-secondary education to align curriculum and experiences to create a true program of study.

#### **F. IMPROVING ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS**

Describe how the State's strategies will improve access to activities leading to recognized postsecondary credentials, including Registered Apprenticeship certificates. This includes credentials that are industry-recognized certificates, licenses or certifications, and that are portable and stackable.

##### **Improving Access to Postsecondary Credentials**

###### **Comprehensive Career Pathway System**

Core education and workforce partners agree that quality career pathways include a series of education and training experiences that enable individuals to grow their skills and progress through a range of steps in their education and career. To ensure local and state practitioners are aligned with their approach to comprehensive career pathway systems, the Illinois Career Pathways Dictionary was collaboratively created. The Illinois Career Pathways Dictionary, approved by core education and workforce partners, was first published in 2018 as a first-of-its-kind resource for policymakers and practitioners alike. It includes the overarching State definition for career pathways and terms essential to career pathway programs and system elements. These definitions were developed and refined through research, stakeholder engagement, and thoughtful alignment to a variety of efforts—especially the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Illinois Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Plan, and the Illinois Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR) Act.

Illinois implements many career pathway programs that contribute to increased postsecondary credential attainment.

###### **Integrated Education and Training**

ICAPS is a quality instructional framework in Illinois for the implementation of Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs, as defined by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). ICAPS provides an accelerated pathway to an industry-recognized credential through training partnerships – such as Career and Technical Education or an approved training provider – to serve eligible adult education students, including English Language Learners, at the same time that they are completing their Illinois High School Diploma and/or improving their English Language. Instruction and training are supplemented by support courses, and comprehensive student support services, and augmented by collaborative teaching practices between workforce training instructors and basic skills instructors.

Illinois supports the programmatic development of Integrated Education and Training that supports adult learners as they obtain industry recognized credentials through postsecondary education or approved training. The core support is delivered through the annual Transitions Academy which is designed to assist colleges and partnerships working on developing Bridge and ICAPS (Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System) programs. The extensive support includes technical assistance through an annual Academy, ongoing Virtual Learning Communities, and individualized programmatic support designed to improve the talent pipeline for Illinois businesses and employers.

All ICCB-funded adult education providers are required to offer a bridge program as well as an IET program. This requirement as well as the suite of professional development opportunities will continue into future program years.

### **Improving Access to Apprenticeships**

Community colleges are centers of their communities and have significant connections with employers, community-based organizations, and high schools; therefore, their role in helping Illinois meet its apprentice goals regarding equity and scale is substantial. In academic year 2023, Illinois community colleges served 1,320 apprentices across both registered and unregistered programs. Using a sector-based approach to apprenticeship expansion can be a targeted and successful approach to apprenticeship expansion. Through ICCB's USDOL-funded Customized Apprenticeship Programming in Information Technology, ICCB through a 10-community college consortium served over 2400 participants, of which 1100 were apprentices hired by an employer in an IT role. While this particular grant program will come to an end in December of 2023, the model will continue to be supported scaled through the system.

Illinois also recognizes that apprenticeships can include college apprenticeships that tap into career development opportunities, providing students the opportunity to simultaneously pursue employment and degreed education, rather than having to choose between the two, and thus increasing completion and graduation rates, access to higher skilled employment based on work-based experience obtained simultaneously with academic instruction, and ability to seek middle skill and grow into management positions. The focus on assessing academic majors directly respond to immediate employer needs, such as accountants in financial services or software programmers, also generates an opportunity to create shorter-term programs for upskilling and reskilling employees leaving jobs where demand or advancement is lacking.

### **Illinois Innovation Network's Workforce Education Exchange (WEX)**

The Illinois Innovation Network's Workforce Education Exchange (WEX) connects education, workforce development, and industry resources to ensure a diverse, skilled, job-ready workforce for in-demand and emerging industries in Illinois. This includes aligning experiential training opportunities to complement classroom instruction, paving the way,

### **Teacher Apprenticeship Pilot Program**

The Illinois State Board of Education, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and higher education partners are collaborating to address teacher shortages with a newly established teacher apprenticeship pilot program. This pilot program will strengthen and create sustainability in the teaching profession. The Notice of Funding Opportunity for this pilot aims to establish a teacher apprenticeship program for current paraprofessional educators facing barriers to employment. This apprenticeship program will provide career pathway opportunities and supportive services to ensure placement into the teacher workforce. Successful candidates will earn teacher licensure with the Learning Behavior Specialist I endorsement. This credential will allow paraprofessionals to upscale to certified teachers, enabling them to teach students from P-22. The overall goal of this program is to establish a Department of Labor-registered apprenticeship for teacher apprenticeships in Illinois.

### **Micro-Credentials**

To expand educational access through robust professional development efforts, workforce micro-credentials are currently under development. Through partnerships with Southern Illinois University - Edwardsville, the University of Illinois – Champaign, Illinois State University, and the Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity, the early stages of micro-credential

framework development are in the works. The workforce micro-credentials will be portable and stackable. In addition, the framework will incorporate competency-based, job embedded experiences. The first micro-credential that will be completed is Employment 101, which will incorporate both career awareness and career exploration.

#### G. COORDINATING WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Describe how the activities identified in (A) will be coordinated with economic development entities, strategies, and activities in the State.

##### **Coordination of Regional and Local Planning**

The state is coordinating a data/demand-driven strategic planning process across education, workforce and economic development at the state, regional and local levels using Illinois' ten Economic Development Regions (EDR). Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Development Regional Economic Development Regional Managers and supporting staff are responsible for managing business relationships, developing business plans and cultivating customer relationships and company growth in their assigned regions or territories. The goal is to provide a one-stop resource focus on providing customized services to business including:

- Intergovernmental Coordination
- Technical Assistance with Site Selection
- Regional Collaboration with Key Stakeholders
- Assistance Eliminating Governmental Red Tape
- Custom Workforce Training
- Expedited Permitting, Licensing & Other Approvals
- Connection to Civic & Business Partners
- Potential Financial Support

#### B. STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS AND POLICIES

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a description of the State operating systems and policies that will support the implementation of the State strategy described in section **II Strategic Elements**. This includes—

1. THE STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS THAT WILL SUPPORT COORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGIES (E.G., LABOR MARKET INFORMATION SYSTEMS, DATA SYSTEMS, COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS, CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS, JOB BANKS, ETC.).

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB), has charged its policy workgroups with developing several new and revised policies to assist in implementing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). These policies provide guidance for state agency partners and service providers in such areas as:

- General transition to and implementation of WIOA

- Designation of Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIAs)
- Chief Elected Official (CEO) agreements and functions
- Local workforce board composition and certification
- Eligibility for youth, dislocated worker and adult populations
- Eligible training providers and their programs
- Certification of One-Stop Centers
- Minimum Training Expenditures
- One-Stop Operator Procurement
- Service Integration
- Designation of Centers within Illinois' One-Stop System

The IWIB continues to utilize a highly collaborative policy development process to address policies with system-wide implications, such as one-stop certification and service integration. Due to the far-reaching impact of such policies, it is important that a broad cross-section of workforce stakeholders be involved in policy development. As a result, a process has been established that involves consultation among State and local Board members, chief elected officials, WIOA partners, employers and other stakeholders in crafting policy that provides cost-effective and efficient guidance to the field. Gathering input from all stakeholders ensures continuity and consistency among the programs throughout the state.

An important policy work group that has been launched under this policy development process is the IWIB Service Integration Work Group. As a foundational element of Illinois' Unified State Plan and the IWIB's Strategic Plan modifications, service integration is a way to link and leverage scarce resources and improve customer outcomes. This policy work group focused on using service integration to help "optimize the effectiveness of the one-stop system for all customers"—one of the five objectives of the IWIB's Strategic Plan. The content of the policy was shaped over a 16-month period by the IWIB's Service Integration Policy Work Group representing IWIB members, local workforce areas personnel, state-level WIOA partners, and other workforce stakeholders. The policy describes seven service integration functions, each having a corresponding outcome and one or more associated goals. The Service Integration Policy Work Group adopted a model of service integration that moves through five stages: isolation, communication, coordination, collaboration and integration. The work group organized into committees to develop clear standards of what each stage of integration looks like across the core functions of one-stop centers. These functions include customer-centered design, staff, intake and assessment, services, career pathways, information, and evaluation. Taken together, the goals and outcomes for these functions represent a long-term, high-level vision for one-stop service integration in Illinois. Operationalizing these goals is occurring locally through the WIOA planning, one-stop certification, and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) negotiation processes.

The Service Integration Policy Work Group is modeling how to leverage resources by utilizing the Illinois Department of Human Services Rehabilitation Services Technical Assistance Grant received from the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center, known as WINTAC. WINTAC is funded by the United States Department of Education. A key focus of WINTAC Activity is on service integration. Through WINTAC, the model is using the five stages and seven

core functions for service integration. Three sub-workgroups formed around the seven core functions will be exploring policy and practice best practices to put in place to achieve service integration.

The first sub-workgroup explored the development of a self-assessment tool that enables each local one-stop system to evaluate its level of integration across all seven core functions and use those results to develop an improvement plan. With WINTAC's permission, the project team developed the self-assessment tool based on their Service Integration Facilitator's Guide. Several of WINTAC's function areas overlapped with the goals of Illinois' service integration policy and other areas had to be developed by the team. The guide also outlines a process and related materials for convening one-stop partners to collaborate on the assessment.

The second sub-workgroup was tasked with integrating the goals and outcomes of service integration into the one-stop certification application when they were directly tied to a one-stop center versus the one-stop system as a whole. The group has conducted a detailed review of the original certification application and has identified a number of needed changes to strengthen its service integration requirements. Updates to the one-stop certification application have been finalized and will be used to certify centers in the future.

The final sub-workgroup was charged to recommend an evaluation approach/high-level design for the IWIB's Continuous Improvement Committee (CIC) that describes how outcomes of the new service integration policy will be measured, what information will be needed to assess and document outcomes, and a timeline. Technical assistance needs associated with local evaluation efforts also will be identified. The CIC will evaluate the policy to determine if it is being implemented as envisioned. The Service Integration Policy Work Group will reconvene in the coming months to discuss the evaluation conducted by the CIC and will make recommendations to address shortcomings of the policy if any are identified.

As part of policy development, guidance and technical assistance, Illinois continues to utilize an ePolicy manual (<https://apps.il-work-net.com/WIOAPolicy/Policy/Home>) on the Illinois workNet portal. This ePolicy manual contains policy, procedures, related documents and resources to support the LWIB in implementation and provision of service under WIOA. The manual organizes policy into logical categories (chapters) starting at the statewide system level and narrowing into guidance directly related to WIOA Title IB. This portal was reviewed by other states and is being adopted and adapted by at least one state under the direction of workNet staff. Additionally, to assist with service integration efforts, the portal houses a technical assistance site that deals specifically with service integration <https://www.illinoisworknet.com/WIOA/Resources/Pages/Service-Integration.aspx>.

The following are policies developed and issued through the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) Office of Employment and Training (OET) in consultation with the Interagency Technical Assistance Team:

- The IWIB continues to utilize the approved new procedures for communications between the State Board, its Executive Committee and the Interagency Technical Assistance Team – especially as they pertain to the continued implementation of WIOA and policies issued by the board, and begin to implement provisions of the IWIB Strategic Plan. It also provides guidance and instructions regarding: 1) regional and local planning requirements, 2) Governor's Guidelines to State and Local Program Partners Negotiating Costs and Services under WIOA, and 3) Criteria and Procedures for

Certifying Comprehensive One-Stop Centers under WIOA. This guidance provided a framework for program activities.

The IWIB will be discussing the policy process to identify any needed revisions. The CIC developed an implementation plan for evaluating policies that has been incorporated within initial draft changes, and further implementation steps may be incorporated, as necessary.

- Under a work group structure, Illinois has developed policies and guidance to address the provisions of WIOA. This ensures a seamless transition for customers during intake and the continued provision of career and training services, including the expanded training services described in WIOA.
- Membership, certification, and subsequent certifications of LWIBs under WIOA is governed under policies that are consistent with the provisions - including the assurance of more streamlined boards with a majority of business members, and minimum percentage of labor and community service organizations represented. Emphasis was placed on ensuring that business representatives reflect regional industry sectors and the diversity of the population. An online portal for tracking LWIB composition and compliance has been developed and use began with the LWIB recertifications that were due in October 2021. Changes to the Local Workforce Area Contact System (LWACS) that are identified during this implementation phase will occur over the next several years.
- Policy was implemented to address CEOs in each local area, including an understanding of their required functions as confirmed through a CEO agreement. The agreement addresses those LWIAs that have multiple CEOs. CEOs are given authority, as the local grant recipient, to designate local grant subrecipients and fiscal agents for the Title IB funds of WIOA. It also defines each CEO's liability for WIOA funds determined to have been misspent or used for unallowable purposes.
- Eligibility policies have been written and updated to ensure that all the requirements of WIOA are clearly outlined for the LWIAs and their staff that delivers intake and registration services to customers. All customers of the system, whether served by local one-stop staff, through technology or self-served, are included in the general eligibility policy. Those seeking more than self-service assistance are determined eligible based on the funding stream under which they will be served. Detailed descriptions of the eligibility requirements and allowable documentation sources to confirm such eligibility decisions provide guidance to career planners in their decision-making. Priority of service is emphasized throughout to all populations identified as priority of service within WIOA, taking into account preference to veterans. A stand-alone priority of service policy will be updated as equity goals discussed earlier in the plan are developed.
- WIOA policy has been issued to provide guidance to all training providers (including new providers, those that previously provided transitional eligibility, and the LWIBs and LWIAs) regarding the process for determining eligibility of providers and training programs. The policy covers initial and continued eligibility of all providers, with separate guidance for those Registered Apprenticeships choosing to be added to the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). This list highlights those programs that meet the state's requirements for in-demand occupations. The current procedures are under review by a work group that will address the performance collection requirements for all students, streamline the current approval process for eligibility, and make



suggestions for changes to the reporting system. This work group will also incorporate career pathways into the discussions and process of eligibility determination by local workforce innovation boards. The work group has developed new metrics to identify high demand jobs within Illinois. This list has incorporated the most recent data available on average annual job openings and wages, along with required education which were data points identified by the work group.

- The IWIB revised policy on the requirement that local boards expend a minimum of forty percent (40 percent) to fifty percent (50 percent) of their Title IB Adult and Dislocated Worker funds on direct training costs. Through a policy work group, the allowable activities and direct training that can be considered calculable was revised to ensure it reflects the WIOA emphasis on registered apprenticeships and other new training opportunities as well as certain leverage resources such as through grants supported by Statewide Activities funding. This activity will be managed under the priorities of the Continuous Improvement Committee.
- Policy guidance on the process for selecting, certifying and designating one-stop operators in each of the twenty-two workforce areas through a competitive procurement process was developed. Following further guidance by U.S. DOL, this policy was revised to address the information published in a Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL). Key elements related to the Federal Uniform Guidance to be followed in the process, components of a formal procurement process, essential contract elements, and conflicts of interest were included.

### **Governor's Guidelines for Negotiating Infrastructure and Other Shared Costs**

The State of Illinois has established the "Governor's Guidelines to State and Local Program Partners for Negotiating Costs and Services under WIOA" to fulfill the WIOA requirement that the Governor issue guidance to state and local partners for negotiating cost-sharing (including determining equitable and stable methods for all required partners to contribute to funding infrastructure costs in accordance with WIOA Section 121(h)(1)(B)), service access, service delivery, and other matters essential to the establishment of effective local workforce development services under WIOA (§678.705). The Governor's Guidelines address negotiation of local Memorandums of Understanding (MOU), negotiation of infrastructure costs, negotiation of local one-stop delivery system costs, timelines for negotiation of MOUs and infrastructure costs, reporting of interim and final negotiation outcomes and appeals processes and reconciliation. The state expects all required and optional partners to adhere to these guidelines. LWIBs and CEOs are to act in accordance with the guidelines and to otherwise comply with them. The scope of the Governor's Guidelines includes:

- General guidance, direction and requirements for negotiating local MOUs that are required in each LWIA to support the operation of the local one-stop delivery system.
- Guidance related to comprehensive one-stop center infrastructure costs, including guidance for budgeting, allocation, negotiation and reconciliation of these costs using the two funding methods WIOA prescribes.
- Guidance for identifying and negotiating local one-stop delivery system costs that will be shared among required partners.
- Timelines for local negotiation of MOUs and for reporting of the outcomes of these negotiations.

- Guidance related to requirements for reconciling budgeted shared costs to actual shared costs at least semi-annually, as well as new guidance regarding circumstances that require a formal budget amendment.
- Requirements for the process through which required partners can appeal decisions made in the application of these guidelines if the state infrastructure cost funding mechanism is used.
- Guidance for local boards wishing to request a waiver of any provision of the Governor's Guidelines.

Additionally, the Governor's guidelines include service matrices for career services and other programs and activities, demonstrating how career services and other programs are available through the local Comprehensive One-Stop Centers by required partners. To provide uniformity across the LWIAs, an MOU template is included in the Governor's Guidelines. This template provides the structure and elements of the MOU, providing placeholders for each LWIA to add their respective content and have been revised annually to incorporate the final WIOA regulations, subsequent guidance and submission timelines.

### **Evaluation & Benchmarks**

To determine whether the Illinois WIOA Unified State Plan and other WIOA requirements are being carried out effectively, and to identify continuous improvement opportunities in the effectiveness and efficiency of Illinois' Workforce Development System and related policy, the IWIB created a Continuous Improvement Committee (CIC). This IWIB standing committee consists of six IWIB members and is supported by the IWIB Staff with technical and logistical support from Illinois university partners. Specific responsibilities of this Committee include recommending tools, measures, benchmarks and strategies. This committee will also serve as a resource to policymakers and other IWIB committees in establishing standards and metrics to assess and continuously improve system and program performance.

During 2021 the CIC's Performance Work Group created a report to assist stakeholders in examining outcomes across the core partners related to the WIOA Performance Indicators. As a part of this work, the work group provides easily accessible information about the definitions of each measure as well as the targets established by each title through negotiations with federal officials. While individuals involved in the day-to-day work of administering WIOA programs are aware of this information, the CIC group also wanted to ensure that other interested parties could easily access this information and utilize it.

The Performance Workgroup continues to work closely with the CIC committee to explore ways to maximize the use of the new resource and address performance-related questions from the committee and larger IWIB Board.

Additionally, the CIC is currently piloting a new quarterly report on the progress being made on the strategies and activities listed in the Unified State Plan. The new report will highlight strategies and activities that exceed expectations, are falling below expectations or are failing expectations. The CIC plans to then further examine highlighted strategies and activities to either help determine a course correction, or to share with other programs the exceedingly successful strategies and activities.

2. THE STATE POLICIES THAT WILL SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE'S STRATEGIES (FOR EXAMPLE. CO-ENROLLMENT POLICIES AND UNIVERSAL INTAKE PROCESSES WHERE APPROPRIATE). IN ADDITION, PROVIDE THE STATE'S GUIDELINES FOR

## STATE-ADMINISTERED ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO A ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM AND ANY ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE FOR ONE-STOP PARTNER CONTRIBUTIONS.

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB), has charged its policy workgroups with developing several new and revised policies to assist in implementing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). These policies provide guidance for state agency partners and service providers in such areas as:

- General implementation of WIOA
- Designation of Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIAs)
- Chief Elected Official (CEO) agreements and functions
- Local workforce board composition and certification
- Eligibility for youth, dislocated worker and adult populations
- Eligible training providers and their programs
- Certification of One-Stop Centers
- Minimum Training Expenditures
- One-Stop Operator Procurement
- Service Integration
- Designation of Centers within Illinois' One-Stop System

The IWIB continues to utilize a highly collaborative policy development process to address policies with system-wide implications, such as one-stop certification and service integration. Due to the far-reaching impact of such policies, it is important that a broad cross-section of workforce stakeholders be involved in policy development. As a result, a process has been established that involves consultation among State and local Board members, chief elected officials, WIOA partners, employers and other stakeholders in crafting policy that provides cost-effective and efficient guidance to the field. Gathering input from all stakeholders ensures continuity and consistency among the programs throughout the state.

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### **Evaluation & Benchmarks**

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### 3. STATE PROGRAM AND STATE BOARD OVERVIEW

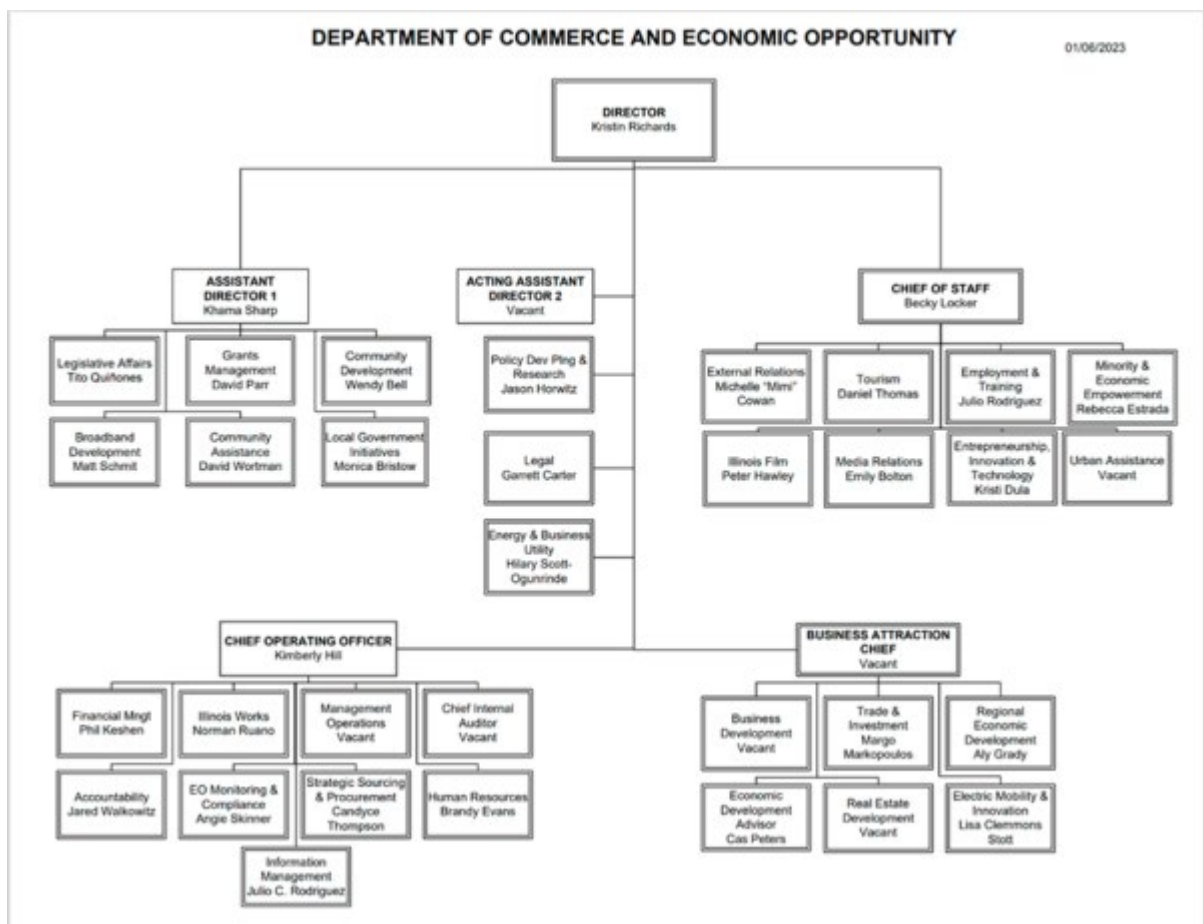
#### A. STATE AGENCY ORGANIZATION

Describe the organization and delivery systems at the State and local levels for the programs covered in the plan, including the organizational structure. Include an organizational chart.

#### State Agency Organization Charts

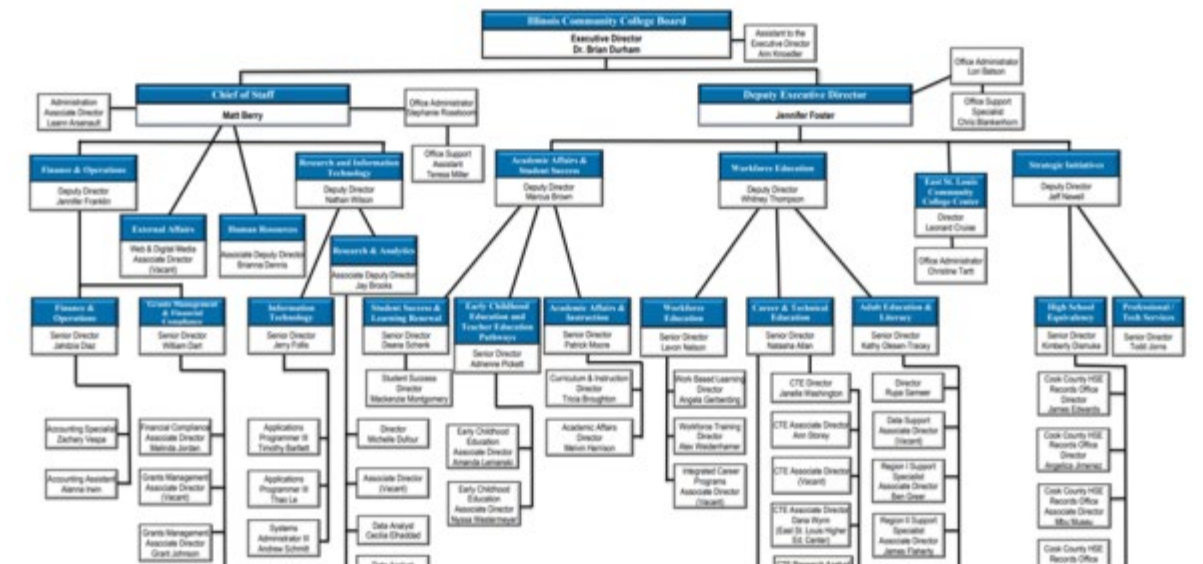
Images for each organization chart are also shown below:

#### Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Chart



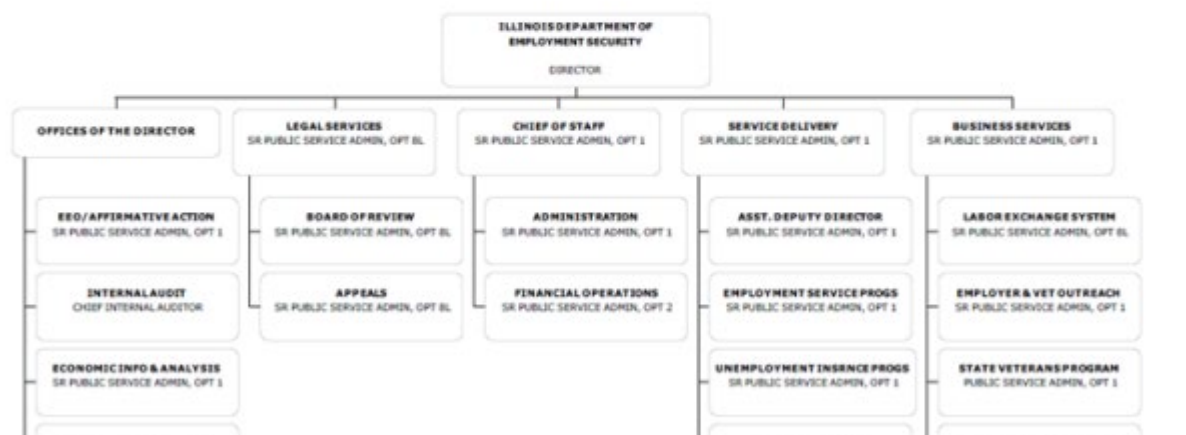
#### Illinois Community College Board Chart



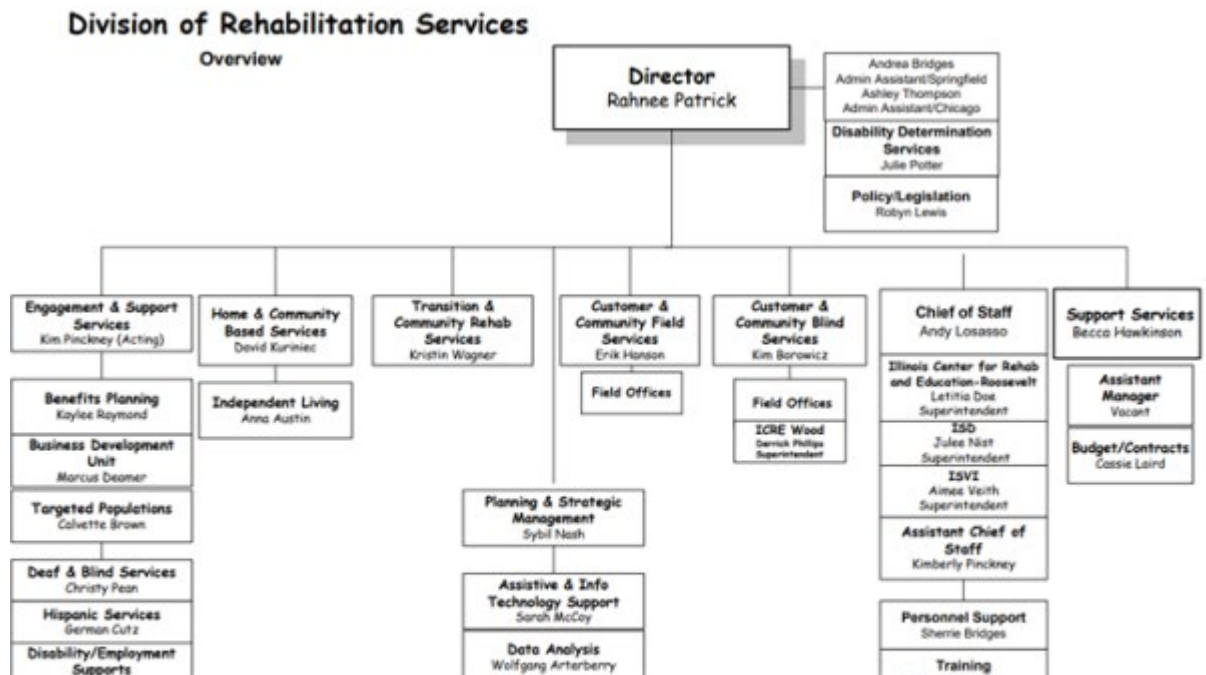


## Illinois Department of Employment Security Chart

# ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT SECURITY



## Illinois Department of Human Services Chart



## Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) is the state agency that leads economic development efforts for Illinois. Its mission is to support and maintain a climate that enables a strong economy for taxpayers, businesses, workers and communities by keeping, attracting and growing businesses, maintaining a skilled workforce, and enhancing communities so that the climate here is one in which businesses (small and large) and workers can succeed to the greatest extent possible. A primary focus is to retain and create jobs in Illinois by assisting:

Existing businesses, encouraging them to reinvest and create more jobs for Illinois citizens;

New businesses, inviting them to relocate, invest and create new jobs;

International companies, positioning Illinois as a global business destination for Foreign Direct Investment;

Entrepreneurs and investors, connecting resources to support their startups and ventures; and

Locally and globally, promoting Illinois as a world-class tourism and film destination.

DCEO works with businesses, local governments and community organizations to advance economic development and improve the state's competitiveness in the global economy. DCEO is organized into the following offices that are focused on economic growth for the State of Illinois:

Business Development: Administers job creation/retention grants, loans and tax credit programs;

Community Assistance: helps low-income households in Illinois maintain utility services and reduce energy costs through improved energy efficiency, and helps individuals and families move toward stabilization;

Community Development: Utilizes federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding to administer community infrastructure, housing and disaster recovery funding programs;

Employment and Training: Oversees statewide workforce training system and promotes and coordinates initiatives to bridge skills gaps;

Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Technology: Catalyzes local, national and global partnerships including the Small Business Development Center network and the Advantage Illinois program that strengthen Illinois' competitive advantage;

Film: Promotes the state's film and theatre industry through tax incentives, including the Illinois Film Tax Credit;

Minority Economic Empowerment: promote opportunities for all minority communities across the state through targeted programs, resources and advocates. The goal is to ensure minority enterprises have an equal opportunity to contribute to the growth of the Illinois economy;

Regional Economic Development: Integrates economic development activities and outreach across the state, connecting communities and businesses to programs and assistance;

Tourism: Markets state travel opportunities domestically and internationally, contributing to over \$2 billion in state and local tax revenues annually;

Trade and Investment: Promotes Illinois' economy through outreach events and trade missions, and provides financial and technical exporting assistance to Illinois companies; and

Urban Assistance: Manages the Urban Weatherization Initiative, targeting homes in disadvantaged communities and training home energy technicians, and the Employment Opportunities Grant program, which trains participants in the construction trade industry.

### **Office of Employment and Training**

Supporting innovative workforce programs that connect employers to a highly skilled workforce is central to Illinois' commitment to ensure that businesses and communities thrive in Illinois. The Office of Employment and Training (OET) administers the WIOA Title IB Programs, WIOA statewide activities including rapid response and the training component of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act Program. Key units of the OET include: Planning, Policy, Performance, Monitoring, Reporting, Rapid Response and Trade, Technical Assistance and staff support to state workforce board activities.

### **Coordination with Economic Development**

DCEO is responsible for ensuring that economic development activities are integrated with the workforce strategies outlined in Il.c.1. Over the last decade, there has been a purposeful move to integrate economic and workforce development services at the state, regional and local levels. At the state level, DCEO's Business Development, Regional Economic Development Offices and the Office of Employment and Training collaborate to respond to the needs of business and industry in Illinois. This collaboration has accelerated over the last year under the leadership of the Governor and DCEO Director. There have been multiple informational briefings between

offices and a marked increase in the use of cross-cutting teams to bring additional perspective and resources to bear on efforts of business retention, layoff aversion and business expansion. Establishing, maintaining and expanding these relationships is critical to the successful implementation of workforce strategies and activities.

### **Coordination with Community Development**

DCEO's Office of Community Assistance oversees the employment and training programs under the Community Services Block Grant Program funding. The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program provides federal funding to Illinois' 36 Community Action Agencies (CAAs) to carry out locally designed programs providing a range of services and activities that have measurable impacts on the causes and effects of poverty. The CSBG program assists low-income populations with transportation, clothing, health services, food, shelter and programs designed to increase self-sufficiency, such as job preparedness, education and housing assistance. Small business loans are also available with CSBG funding. DCEO will use the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) state, regional and local planning process to better align and integrate this program into the workforce and education system to strengthen Illinois' communities.

### **Guaranteeing Accessibility**

The Department's Office of Equal Opportunity (EO) Monitoring and Compliance is responsible for monitoring program and physical accessibility issues for WIOA-funded activities supported by the Office of Employment and Training, all its grantees including LWIAs, and one-stop centers across the state. In 2018, the EO offices in the Departments of DCEO and IDES developed an agreement to better manage the ADA monitoring process of American Job Centers. This agreement allows for better coordination of office inspection timing and for improved cross-agency communication regarding inspection findings. In addition, both offices agreed to use the same inspection checklist to promote cross-agency integration of effort.

In facilities with both Title IB and Title III staff, DCEO conducts the ADA inspections to avoid duplication of services and better align findings and related reports. DCEO provides IDES with the ADA inspection report after the inspection has been completed. If IDES is the leaseholder, IDES will then work with the Illinois Department of Central Management Services, which oversees all leases in state agencies reporting to the Governor, and/or the landlord to correct any findings. This agreement between agencies is a tangible example of WIOA service integration that increases efficiency and effectiveness of each department's EO staff and helps ensure that all individuals have access to WIOA services.

### **Illinois Talent Pipeline Program**

The Illinois Talent Pipeline Program develops strategies to train workers who can contribute to the growth and success of companies. Projects funded under this program are intended to develop sustainable work-based learning programs that will help Illinois companies retain and train current workers and hire new staff. The goal of a talent pipeline grant is to maintain a steady supply of hireable talent for the employer being served. Applications must address one or more of these Illinois Talent Pipeline activities to be considered for funding:

Projects that connect talent strategies with business needs;

Layoff aversion projects that support businesses and workers that are impacted or at risk of being impacted by company closures or layoffs; or

Projects that expand work-based learning opportunities including apprenticeships for targeted populations.

### **Youth Career Pathways Program**

The Youth Career Pathways Program provides grants for projects that address priorities identified in the WIOA Unified State Plan and that also incorporate practices that align with the statewide-adopted definition for a career pathway framework. Proposals must serve opportunity youth that face barriers to continued education and employment. Additionally, successful pilot projects will integrate workforce, education and economic development services and break down barriers to accessing job-driven training, resulting in employment opportunities. These projects will inform a framework for the development of sustainable career pathways for young people throughout the state. Additionally, they will assist in the effective and efficient implementation of WIOA regulations within Illinois' economic development regions.

### **Illinois Community College Board**

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) is the state coordinating organization for the Illinois Community College System - the third largest in the country and the leading public workforce development trainer in the state. The ICCB has statutory responsibility for administering state and federal grants to community college districts and adult education providers and managing high school equivalency testing for Illinois. Illinois community colleges serve over 600,000 residents each year in credit, noncredit, and continuing education courses. Illinois is home to 48 colleges in 39 community college districts which provide high quality, accessible, cost-effective educational opportunities to the entire state. The total economic output of Illinois community colleges on the statewide economy in fiscal year 2020 is estimated at \$3.5 billion.

The ICCB administers Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and receives funding for this purpose through the United States Department of Education Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education. Title II of the WIOA law reauthorizes and enhances the Adult Education & Literacy Act (AELA).

The eligible population to be served under the AELA include individuals who have attained 16 years of age and who are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under state law and are basic skills deficient, do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent and have not achieved an equivalent level of education, or are English language learners.

The purpose of Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 is to provide adult education and literacy services in order to assist adults in becoming literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency; assist adults who are parents or family members in obtaining education and skills that are necessary to become full partners in the educational development of their children lead to sustainable improvements in the economic opportunities for their family; assist adults in attaining a secondary school diploma and in transitioning to postsecondary education and training including through career pathways; assist immigrants and other individuals who are English language learners in improving their reading, writing, speaking and comprehension skills in English mathematics skills; acquiring an understanding of the American system of Government, individual freedom, and the responsibilities of citizenship.

The ICCB recognizes that the Illinois Adult Education system must prepare the state's residents with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in post-secondary education and the workforce. To this end, the Illinois' system has long been a national leader in advancing career and integrated pathways and the implementation of instructional models that combine basic skills and English Language instruction with employability skills and workforce training through integration with college and career readiness preparation, credit-bearing career and technical education programs, or non-credit vocational training. With an emphasis on expanding and scaling comprehensive career pathways, the Illinois Adult Education system is proactively responding to a future of work that demands robust skill enhancement for its participants in the new economy.

The continuum of key AELA Services include:

- Adult Basic Education for learners at the most basic literacy levels.
- Adult Secondary Education to prepare learners for their High School Equivalency Certificate.
- English as a Second Language instruction.
- Integrated Education and Literacy / Civics instruction for English Language Learners.
- Bridge Programming for ABE learners to provide work-based contextualized instruction.
- College and career readiness instruction to prepare learners to transition to post-secondary education or training.
- Employability Skills instruction embedded in all elements of Adult Education and Literacy instruction.
- Integrated Education and Training [through the ICCB's Integrated Career & Academic Preparation System (ICAPS)] that blends ASE instruction and workforce training, leading to an industry-recognized credential and community college certificates at those programs administered by the state's community colleges.

### **Illinois Department of Employment Security**

In addition to administering the Unemployment Insurance program in IL, IDES provides employment services to job seekers and businesses through programs funded by federal grants under: Wagner-Peyser Act (Title III of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, WIOA); the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment program (RESEA); Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG); the Work Opportunity Tax Credit program (WOTC); Foreign Labor Certification (FLC) program; and Federal Bonding Program.

Wagner-Peyser funds are used by IDES to: provide employment services to job seekers and businesses; manage the state's online labor exchange, Illinois JobLink (IJL); and provide economic information and analysis.

Employment Services (ES) are provided to all job seekers looking for employment and employers seeking qualified individuals for employment. Those services include but are not limited to: career services, job readiness, employer outreach, employer seminars, employment retention services, labor market information, career information, employment plans, and referrals to training, educational opportunities, and supportive services. ES services are organized as "7a" and "7b" services reflecting the designation under WP law that 10% of funds

can be designated for special initiatives. Under this provision (known as 7b), IDES focuses on returning citizens and youth (described below). In addition to direct services to job seekers and employers, IDES is responsible for increasing community awareness about the services provided via job fairs, community collaborations, onsite recruitments, resource linkage and presentations to both job seekers and employers.

IDES' ES services are provided by IDES staff in offices that are co-located with the partners, most frequently in American Job Centers (AJCs)[1]. IDES coordinates with the state agencies responsible for the other WIOA Titles Illinois (Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (Title I), Illinois Community College Board (Title II), Department of Human Service's Division of Rehabilitation Services (Title IV)), each local LWIA administrator and several other partners required under federal law to provide a range of services in the AJCs across the state, as well as additional "affiliate" sites. These centers provide job seekers and employers "one stop" to find a range of employment, workforce, training, and other support services from multiple public and private entities.

### **Wagner-Peyser funded services:**

*Illinois JobLink:* IllinoisJobLink.com (IJL) was established as Illinois' Labor Exchange System as required under Wagner-Peyser to provide a job bank plus intuitive tools and resources that empower job seekers and employers. IJL leverages the O\*NET system, the nation's primary source of occupational information, to deliver highly relevant and precise job and resume matches. This integration allows job seekers and employers to move seamlessly from self-service activities to receiving help from their local AJC. IJL is fully integrated with the case management section which determines eligibility for job seeker services and maintains program registration and enrollment records for state and federal programs. The case management system was designed for U.S. DOL/ETA grants and provides one-stop service tracking, data collection, and reporting. It allows case managers to track client self-services and allows partner programs to access clients' universal information. Job seekers can post resumes, search for jobs, and maintain a work search record. Employers create and maintain a self-service account for the purpose of posting open positions and searching for potential candidates.

IDES has a dedicated staff team that provides IJL Help Desk support utilizing the Finesse phone system. Within the IJL team are subject matter experts (SMEs) who are responsible for vetting pending new employer accounts. These staff assist employers in navigating through the approval process with direct contact. For those employers holding federal contracts or working with specific workforce programs such as the Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker Program (MSFW) or Foreign Labor Certification, IJL provides the means to meet federal job posting requirements, serving as the state's Agricultural Recruiting System.

### **Services for Job Seekers:**

IDES staff provide employment services and resources at no cost to the job seeker (these are referred to as "7a"). Services for job seekers may include: registration in Illinoisjoblink.com; assessments; assistance with individual employment plans; workshops (job readiness, resume building, job search techniques, interview skills, social media management, online job applications, etc); on-site recruitment events; referrals to open positions; assistance with IJL job search tools; and referrals to other programs and partner agencies. Referrals to other programs and/or partner workforce agencies can be for: job training; adult education or literacy programs; specialized services for veterans, youth, older workers, returning citizens, and people with disabilities. Interpretation and translation services are provided for LEP customers daily. Ongoing collaborations with various external providers are key to the success of service

provision to the many populations needing LEP services. The internal signage is in English and Spanish at the local offices with additional interpretation services available upon request.

#### **Outreach to Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFW):**

Wagner-Peyser regulations require that IDES ensure that domestic MSFWs have the opportunity to access ES services that are “qualitatively equivalent and quantitatively proportionate” to non-MSFW job seekers. IDES is required to conduct outreach to where MSFWs and their families work and reside in order to: make sure that they know about IDES services; make referrals to community partners that specialize in serving MSFWs; and collect any complaints related to their working conditions. In addition to IDES staff dedicated to conducting MSFW outreach, IDES also employs a State Monitor Advocate who monitors IDES services to ensure that the agency is complying with all federal requirements for serving MSFWs.

#### **Hire the Future (HTF):**

HTF is one of the 7b programs and is designed to provide qualified candidates to employers seeking to fill positions within their respective companies. HTF strives to give the youth of Illinois opportunities to gain work experience. IDES takes an active role in linking youth with employers who understand the importance of encouraging career growth.

The HTF program is designed to provide youth (ages 16-24) with employment assistance in job readiness and career development services. Employers participate in this program by offering entry level positions that may provide on-the-job training opportunities. Jobs may be full or part time.

#### **The Re-entry Employment Service Program (RESP):**

RESP is the other 7b program and offers assistance to Returning Citizens (persons who are residents of a given area that were previously incarcerated) through the administration of the RESP Program, which is designed to assist individuals in overcoming employment hurdles. RESP staff administer direct case management through IllinoisJobLink.com to returning citizens. This assistance begins with an assessment interview and can include: referrals to WIOA workforce partners; staff-assisted services; career guidance; job search activities; referrals to employment; resume assistance and interview coaching. IDES staff interview clients to identify employment barriers and then work with both the client and workforce providers to remediate those barriers in obtaining gainful employment.

#### **Employer Outreach:**

IDES reaches out to individual employers, industry associations, chambers of commerce, economic groups, community-based organizations, and other employing entities to determine their hiring and workforce needs. IDES employer outreach staff: conduct workshops and educate employers on services offered by IDES and other partner programs; coordinate and co-host hiring events; market Illinois Job Link and assist with entering job orders; market WorkShare Illinois (Illinois short-term compensation program); refer qualified candidates; provide data and information for workforce planning; and assist with accessing IDES' Fidelity Bonding and Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program (WOTC) programs. The IDES employer outreach staff are members of the business services teams in the LWIAs through which they coordinate outreach with local partners.

#### **Economic Information and Analysis (EI&A):**



In cooperation with the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and Employment and Training Administration (ETA), EI&A collects, analyzes, and disseminates data and related information, such as current employment statistics, average wages, job trends, and demographic characteristics that is useful in planning and evaluating economic and workforce development strategies. EI&A augments Title III funded activities with a range of independently-funded projects to meet a wide range of needs among government and business audiences. Through these innovative applications, the Division assists human service and economic development agencies in achieving program goals by expanding the usage of data previously collected. EI&A regularly supplies this workforce, career and labor market information to entities involved in or responsible for planning and decision-making in a small geography context, such as cities, counties, and other political subdivisions. These include Local Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Boards, dislocated worker centers, local economic development commissions, chambers of commerce, educational institutions, public utilities, and individual businesses.

#### **Employment Services programs with other federal funding:**

*Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA):* RESEA is a program that targets UI claimants that have been determined to be most likely to exhaust benefits and transitioning veterans receiving Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Servicemembers (UCX). By providing RESEA Services to job seekers, the goal is improving employment outcomes of claimants and reducing the average duration of unemployment compensation through re-employment activities. UI claimants identified for the RESEA program are required to participate to remain eligible for UI benefits. Services provided by the RESEA teams include, but are not limited to, orientations to the American Job Centers and services offered by our workforce partners, development of individual employment plans specific to the client's needs, labor market information, career information, job readiness workshops, employment retention services and referrals to employment, training and educational services.

#### **Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) Program:**

IDES offers priority career service and referral to job training opportunities to eligible veterans and other eligible persons ensuring them a smooth transition to the civilian workforce. The mission of the JVSG program is to assist those eligible veterans and other eligible persons who self-attest to having one or more Significant Barriers to Employment to obtain meaningful employment and connect employers with qualified veterans and other eligible persons candidates. Eligible veterans are those that have served more than 180 days on Active Duty and discharge other than dishonorable. If the DD form 214 states "Dishonorable Discharge", "Discharge under Dishonorable Conditions", or "Entry-Level / Unconditional Discharge" then the individual is not considered an eligible veteran for employment services from a Veteran Representative. All veterans, regardless of the type of military discharge, can receive staff-assisted Basic/Individualized Career Services from an Employment Services (ES) staff as well as any AJC Partners. Veterans and other eligible persons self-attesting to one or more Significant Barriers to Employment (SBEs) must be referred to the Veterans Career Coach - Disabled Veterans Outreach Program specialist (VCC-DVOP) for Individualized Career Services. Veterans Career Coach - DVOP specialists (VCC-DVOP) provide Individualized Career Services (Assessment Interview and / or Individual Employment Plan) to veterans and other eligible persons who have self-attested to having one or more SBEs. In addition to Individualized Career Services, the VCC-DVOP specialists facilitate the Case Management process to guide and monitor the progress of these veterans and other eligible persons. They work collectively with all AJC and Community Partners to assist veterans and other eligible persons to mitigate their SBEs so

they can concentrate on obtaining & retaining meaningful careers. Veterans Business Specialist - LVER (VBS-LVER) reach out to the employer community, including employers, employer associations, and business groups, to promote the advantages of hiring veterans and other eligible persons. VBS-LVERs advocate for the hiring of veterans and other eligible persons served by the AJC with business, industry, and other community-based organizations. Activities include, but are not limited to, participating in hiring events, conducting employer outreach, facilitating job search workshops in conjunction with employers, developing job opportunities, and informing Federal Contractors of the process to hire qualified veterans and other eligible persons. VBS-LVERs are also responsible for conducting training to all staff and partners within the state's employment service delivery system to ensure easier access to the appropriate employment and training services for job seeking veterans and other eligible persons.

IDES is also involved in special initiatives for incarcerated veterans, veterans experiencing homelessness, and veterans with service-connected disabilities:

The Incarcerated Veterans Transition Program (IVTP) eligible veterans receive employment focused workshops while incarcerated in designated Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) facilities. IDES coordinates with IDOC to provide employment workshops for inmates that are within 18 months of their maximum release date and are eligible veterans. The IVTP workshops are facilitated by DVOP specialists and place emphasis on job search techniques and resources to help these veterans address the unique employment barriers and other obstacles they will face when attempting to reenter the job market after their release. IVTP veterans within 90-days of release are referred by the IVTP facilitators to a DVOP nearest to their relocation address for more Individualized Career Services.

Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) is a DOL-VETS grant program with multiple grantees in Illinois. DVOP specialists are outstationed at the HVRP Grantee sites to assist with employment. In addition, to the extent possible, IDES supports Stand Down (all veterans) and Stand Up (Women Vets) events, coordinated by the Department of Veterans Affairs and other DOL-VETS approved grantees to provide resource services to homeless veterans. IDES supports these events with assistance from our DVOP staff.

Veterans Readiness and Employment (VR&E) is a U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs program. IDES focuses on the Re-Employment Track to assist Title 38, Chapter 31 veterans with service-connected disabilities and employment barriers to prepare for, find, and maintain suitable jobs. VR&E counselors refer veterans who are within 90-days of completing their VR&E funded training / rehabilitation and they are assigned to a DVOP specialist for Labor Market Information or Individualized Career Services as well as possible implementation of the Case Management Process.

#### **Foreign Labor Certification:**

IDES assists employers in complying with federal requirements when they seek to hire foreign workers under the federal H2A (seasonal agricultural jobs) and H2B (non-agricultural jobs) visa programs. IDES ensures that there are not enough qualified U.S. workers available to perform the work and that the hiring of foreign workers will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of similarly employed U.S. workers. To do that, IDES handles the placement of employer job orders, inspection of housing for agricultural workers, and the administration of prevailing wage and practice surveys.

#### **Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) Program:**

WOTC is a federal income tax credit incentive provided to private sector employers. An employer may be eligible for WOTC when they hire from certain target groups of job seekers who face employment barriers. The requirements for the program are set by the Internal Revenue Service and the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. WOTC is an incentive for employers and is intended to help individuals move from economic dependency, while participating employers can reduce their income tax liability. The maximum tax credit ranges from \$1,200 to \$9,600, depending on the employee hired.

### **Fidelity Bonding Programs (FBP):**

The U.S. Department of Labor established the FBP to provide fidelity bonds that guarantee honesty for “at-risk,” hard-to-place job seekers. The bonds cover the first six months of employment. There is no cost to the job applicant or the employer. The FBP is a unique hiring incentive tool and targets individuals whose backgrounds can pose significant barriers to securing or retaining employment, including:

- Justice-involved citizens
- Individuals in recovery from substance use disorders
- Recipients of public assistance
- Individuals with poor credit records
- Economically-disadvantaged youth and adults who lack work histories
- Individuals dishonorably discharged from the military

The bonds issued by the FBP guarantee the job honesty of job seekers to employers who want to hire them. IDES assists employers who can request the bonds – starting at \$5000 up to \$25,000 free-of-charge as an incentive to hire these applicants.

### **Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Rehabilitation Services**

The Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) is the designated state agency for administration of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program in Illinois. The main focus of the Department is to assist individuals with significant disabilities to obtain and retain competitive integrated employment. VR services are designed to prepare an individual for employment through an individualized planning process. Key VR services include:

- Job Placement - DRS VR counselors work with customers to identify job opportunities in the community, develop a resume and prepare for interviews. Other customers receive more intensive job placement and preparation services through community rehabilitation program agencies under contract to DRS.
- On-the-Job Training and Evaluations - Many VR customers receive on-the-job training and evaluation services arranged by DRS counselors in conjunction with local employers. These services provide an opportunity to demonstrate job skills and learn the requirements of a specific job.
- College and University Training - DRS assists many customers in pursuing a degree at a community college or at a university, based on the needs and abilities of the individual. Each year DRS assists about 3,500 individuals in attending college training.

- Treatment and Restoration Services - VR funds may be used to purchase medical, surgical, or psychological services, as well as other therapeutic services, to help customers achieve greater functioning and reduce barriers to employment.
- Supported Employment - Individuals with most significant disabilities often require a high level of support, both in preparation and on-the-job assistance, in order to achieve and maintain employment. Supported employment provides a variety of supports, such as job coaching, to assist customers in meeting employment goals.
- Assistive Technology - Many people with disabilities utilize a variety of technological devices to function in the world of work and increase their employment potential. The DRS VR program can assist customers with evaluation services and purchase of technology equipment that will meet their individual needs.
- Transition Services - Students with disabilities benefit from work-based learning experiences and other pre-employment services designed to prepare them for post-school employment or additional training.
- DRS counselors establish program eligibility based on an evaluation of functional limitations, then work with customers to develop an individualized plan for employment. Many services are provided through a network of community partners with the capacity to assist customers in obtaining employment consistent with their needs. These include:
  - Around 150 school districts which provide pre-employment transition services, including work-based learning experiences, to over 10,000 students with disabilities;
  - About 135 community rehabilitation providers who provide job development, job placement and supported employment services to around 4,000 individuals; and,
  - Community colleges and universities that provide training services to about 3,500 individuals pursuing degrees or credentials to enhance employment skills.

DRS works in partnership with other elements of the workforce system to provide people with disabilities access to a wide range of services and employment opportunities. DRS staff are members of local workforce boards and serve as a key linkage to information on disability awareness, work accommodations and accessibility requirements.

### **Employment First Initiative**

An important resource for meeting the employment needs of Illinoisans with disabilities is the Employment First initiative. Illinois became an Employment First state in July 2013 with the passage of the Employment First Act (Public Act 98-91). Employment First is a national movement to promote competitive integrated employment for people with disabilities, particularly individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. WIOA defines “competitive integrated employment” as the key objective for people with disabilities, creating inherent synergy between the two laws.

In 2009, Public Act 96-0368 created the Illinois Task Force on the Employment and Economic Development for Persons with Disabilities (EEOPD) to work towards the goal of increasing competitive integrated employment for citizens with disabilities. Members of the task force are appointed by the Governor and include people with disabilities, business representatives and officials from state agencies. The Employment First Act assigned additional responsibilities to the EEOPD for coordinating state efforts in pursuit of the Act’s objectives.

The guiding principles of the WIOA Unified State Plan align directly with Employment First. The focus on integrated service delivery, robust engagement with business, competitiveness and accessibility, cross-agency collaboration and alignment of results-driven practices are shared by both the Unified State Plan and the Employment First movement and are in line with the findings and goals of the EEOPD. In addition, EEOPD is linked to the IWIB to ensure coordination and alignment of policy and practice rather than the IWIB creating a duplicative structure.

[1] Under WIOA states are required to operate American Job Centers in each local workforce innovation area (LWIA). Illinois has 22 LWIAs and each is governed by a Local Workforce Innovation Board (LWIB).

## B. STATE BOARD

Provide a description of the State Board activities that will assist State Board members and staff in carrying out State Board functions effectively. Also, provide a membership roster for the State Board consistent with 20 CFR 679.110-120, including members' organizational affiliations and position titles.

Overseeing the Workforce Development System on behalf of the Governor and General Assembly is the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB). The IWIB provides oversight and strategic leadership to the Workforce Development System to further the state's goals of meeting the workforce needs of businesses and workers. Appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Illinois Senate, IWIB members are charged with the task of reviewing the progress of the state's workforce development efforts. To meet this directive, the IWIB, in accordance with federal legislation, includes leaders from business, state agencies, industry, labor, education, and community-based organizations.

The IWIB is led by two governor-appointed co-chairs – one representing the system and one representing business.

The Governor-appointed Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) includes leaders from state, business, industry, labor, education, and community-based organizations with the goal of evaluating and meeting the workforce needs of Illinois' employers and workers.

IWIB is responsible for:

- Overseeing the development, implementation and modification of the Unified State Plan
- Convening all relevant programs, required partners and stakeholders, and
- Providing oversight and strategic leadership for the state Workforce Development System.

Through a committee and task force structure, IWIB representatives from private organizations and public partner programs offer policy recommendations to strengthen Illinois' workforce system.

Members of the IWIB represent community-based organizations, agencies or other entities and require optimum policymaking authority within those organizations. The IWIB also represents the diverse regions of the state, including urban, rural and suburban areas. Over 51 percent of the IWIB is made up of business representatives from both small and large businesses across Illinois. Business representatives include employers who are users of the Workforce

Development System, leaders with optimum policy-making or hiring authority within their organization, representing diversity in company geography, industry, and size.

Other IWIB members include:

- the Governor
- A member from each chamber of the state legislature - two members are appointed from each chamber, one from the majority party, one from the minority.
- Local chief elected officials
- State government officials
- Governor designees
- Other representatives
- labor organizations;
- Registered apprenticeship
- youth activities representatives;
- Workforce training representatives and education, including adult education, vocational rehabilitation, employment security, and other institutional representatives.

The Governor has made it a priority to recruit new business leaders to ensure board can provide broad and renewed insight for setting policies, and that ensures workforce development activities are aligned and integrated with education and economic development in a way that serves the needs of employers, incumbent workers and job seekers.

To support and strengthen collaboration with the P-16 education system and local workforce boards and areas, the Governor has ensured members from the Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois Board of Higher Education, Department of Human Services, the Illinois Community College Board, Career & Technical Education under the Carl D. Perkins Act, and the sitting president of the Illinois Workforce Partnership (IWP) have a central role on the state board as Ex-Officio, Non-Voting representatives.

### **IWIB Roster – October 2023**

**WIB Roster – October 2023**

<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Elba	Aranda-Suh	National Latino Education Institute
Tom	Ashby	Coordinated Transportation Development, Inc.
Christine	Caves	Quad Cities Chamber
Donna	Dorsey	Navistar Inc.
Christopher "C.D."	Davidsmeyer	Illinois Road Contractors, Inc.
Kara	Demirjian Huss	DCC Marketing TCCI
Victor	Dickson	Safer Foundation
Kaili	Emmrich	Google
Marcus	Evans	Illinois House of Representatives 33rd District
Daniele	Ferrari	ITC, Inc
Jennifer	Foster	Illinois Community College Board
Jane	Flanagan	Illinois Department of Labor
David	Friedman	<u>AutonomyWorks</u>
Karina	Garcia	A&A Transportation 1 Inc.
Jess	Giudici	<u>Duravant</u>
Norine	Hammond	Illinois House of Representatives, 94th District
Aliana	Harkens	Current

Kevin	Irvine	Rush University Medical Center
Steve	LeFaver	PDC30 - North Central Illinois Finishing Trades Institute
William	Lo	Carbondale Chamber of Commerce
Ray	Marchiori	Illinois Department of Employment Security
Marlon	McClinton	Utilivate Technologies, LLC
Sheryl	Morris	UNITE HERE Chicago Hospitality Institute (UHCHI)
Mboka	Mwilambwe	Mayor of Bloomington IL
Sandeep	Nain	Sntial Technologies, Inc.
Barbara	Oilschlager	Lake County Vocational System
Rahnee	Patrick	Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Rehabilitation Services
Teresa "Terri"	Payne	AFL-CIO
Michael	Perry	AFSCME Council 31
Alex	Purcell	United
Kristin	Richards	Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
Daniel	Serota	AON
Elizabeth	Stuck	MXD USA
Chris	Toppin	AAR Corp
Jane	Vellinga	Chicago Women In Trades
Andrew	Warrington	United Conveyer Corporation
Terry	Wilkerson	Rend Lake College
Lisa	Wojick	Challenge Unlimited
<b>Ex-Officio Members</b>		
Tony	Sanders	Illinois State Board of Education
Caroline	Portlock	IWP representative
Brian	Durham	Illinois Community College Board
Grace	Hou	Illinois Department of Human Services
Nina	Tangman	Illinois Board of Higher Education
Whitney	Thompson	Illinois Community College Board

### IWIB Committee Structure

The IWIB utilized the standing committees, workgroups, and task forces to implement the IWIB Strategic Plan and the Unified State Plan.

IWIB committees include in alphabetical order:

1. Apprenticeship Illinois Committee
2. Business Engagement Committee
3. Career Pathways Targeted Populations Committee
4. Continuous Improvement Committee



5. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access Committee
6. Executive Committee

The work of the committees demonstrates the work of the IWIB. Each committee's work grows out of the priorities of the IWIB and is explained in the committee's charge and priority areas.

### **Apprenticeship Illinois Committee**

Charge:

- Fully integrate apprenticeship into state workforce development, education, and economic development strategies and programs.
- Support the rapid development of new apprenticeship programs and/or the significant expansion of existing programs.
- Support the development and recruitment of a diverse pipeline of apprentices.
- Build state capacity to make it easier for businesses to start apprenticeship programs and for apprentices to access opportunities.

Committee Priorities:

- Expanding apprenticeships geographically and to new industries.
- Increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion in apprenticeship.
- Formalizing statewide apprenticeship coordination across partnering state agencies.
- Growing statewide capacity to provide job seekers and businesses apprenticeship opportunities.

### **Business Engagement Committee (BEC)**

Charge:

- Provide guidance and direction to help bridge the gap between Illinois' important business sectors and employers, and the Illinois Workforce Development System.

Committee Priorities:

1. Engage Illinois' business community in the development and direction of regional industry-led sector partnerships that will convene employers, workforce development professionals, and other regional institutions and partners. These partnerships will seek to coordinate investments, align workforce and education systems, and promote economic growth across the state.
2. Develop and improve communication mechanisms between employers and the Workforce Development System in order to increase employers' awareness of the services that
3. are designed to provide them with the skilled workforce they require. Assist the IWIB and Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIBs) with outreach, recruitment, and engagement of business representatives to the board(s), that are representative of the geographic, demographic, and target industries of the state or local area, respectively.

### **Career Pathways Targeted Populations Committee (CPTP)**

#### Charges:

- Create opportunities for job seekers within specified targeted populations of all ages and abilities, understanding that creating equitable access to career pathways for target populations creates a more robust workforce system. Our goal is to enhance career awareness, career skills, career retention, and life skills through experiences with education and training, work-based learning, and essential skills leading to in-demand, high-wage occupations for target populations.

Through education and training and work-based learning, our goal is to enhance occupational skills, career awareness, and job retention in in-demand, high-wage careers for target populations.

- Serves as the intersection between job seekers, businesses, the education system, local workforce agencies, community-based organizations, and other interested stakeholders.

#### Committee Priorities:

- **Continuous Improvement:** Being a link between the IWIB and the Local Workforce system to impact and improve the lives of Illinois citizens, particularly those that are identified as WIOA-targeted populations, recognizing the equity implications of this work.
- **Service Integration:** Integration and comprehensive involvement of all partners, including the four core partners, business sector, secondary and postsecondary education, workforce labor, legislative, and local implementation partners. There is a need for a holistic approach for target populations.
- **Collaboration:** Act as a resource regarding career pathways for target populations across the state and in partnership with the committees and task forces of the IWIB. Participate in grant Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFO) as relevant.
- **Support Career Pathway Development for Target Populations:** Our three workgroups, the Returning Citizens Workgroup, Disability Workgroup, and Opportunity Youth Workgroup, work to advance career pathway opportunities for target populations.

#### Continuous Improvement Committee (CIC)

##### Charge:

- **Evaluation Design.** Review evaluation elements of policies, programs, and processes created or overseen by the IWIB to determine the appropriateness of their relationship to their expected outcomes and application of an equity lens. Provide feedback and recommendations.
- **Evaluation Outcomes.** Review outcomes of the evaluation to determine if results conformed to the intended equitable outcome. Provide feedback and recommendations.
- **Continuous Improvement at Local Level.** Review local performance related to the six federal performance measures for the WIOA core partners by applying an equity lens to evaluation and make recommendations about strategies for continuous improvement at local levels.

- **Benchmarks.** Examine and evaluate workforce quality and earning benchmarks and recommend changes.
- **Data Recommendations.** Provide Recommendations for Readily Accessible Data and technical assistance recommendations for an intended audience.
- **Priority Activities.** Manage priority activities as assigned by the IWIB Strategic Plan.

#### Committee Priorities:

1. Policy evaluation
2. Develop an understanding of how WIOA programs (under Title One, Two, Three and Four) are evaluated, what continuous improvement processes are in place and included, and what Technical Assistance from the lead agency is involved.
3. Provide the IWIB Committees with a Clear understanding of how outcomes are evaluated – defining the process for upcoming policy.
4. Service Integration

#### **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access (DEIA) Committee**

- **Draft Charge 1:** Review the recommendations of the Equity Task Force and the Governor's Commission on Workforce Equity and Access and develop a set of priorities that will guide the Committee's work.
- **Draft Charge 2:** Work to ensure that leaders and practitioners in the IL workforce system have the information, data, training, and skills they need to understand the equity challenges workforce system customers face and the tools they need to enhance equity in the workforce system.
- **Draft Charge 3:** Work with IWIB members and leadership to incorporate an equity lens into the IWIB's work.

#### **Executive Committee**

##### Charges

- Develop policies to strengthen communication between partners and support engagement between employers and the workforce/economic development system.
- Establish goals to improve inequities for the populations we serve, create accessible career pathways for all customers that address barriers to employment, and enhance equality among partners.
- Develop policies and initiatives to improve coordination, communication, and relationships across business service teams, increase access for our clients, customers, and students, and encourage system integration.
- Support a system change from a social services-driven approach to a business-driven one.
- Recommend state policy and/or guidelines to encourage the adoption of effective local business coordination practices with a focus on human-centered engagement.

#### **IWIB Professional Development**

Professional development for the IWIB is essential to ensure members are engaged with the system, aware of the program, and able to make an impact on the state. Over the past two years, the IWIB has worked to develop an onboarding process for IWIB members to introduce and reinforce their understanding of their roles and responsibilities, local workforce initiatives and strategies, and relevant workforce data and trends.

Throughout this year, the IWIB has implemented orientation for IWIB members and implemented online training focused on programs over which the board has authority. Online module topics include board effectiveness, partners and partnership, board policy development and oversight, and roles and responsibilities of represented sectors.

Action Items:

1. Maintain the implementation plan, including timelines and delivery strategies,
2. Utilize the annual IWIB retreat or time prior to regular quarterly meetings to inform members of the WIOA system climate.
3. Update the comprehensive, online IWIB Member Manual and maintain virtual libraries on workNet (including webinars, videos, and podcasts) for new IWIB and LWIB members. Topics should include their role, responsibilities, the overall purpose of the board, relevant legislation, an overview of WIOA programs and policies, core and required agency partners, and other providers of WIOA services.
4. Create a mentoring program to connect new members with long-term members.
5. Seek assistance from the National Association of Workforce Boards in building these libraries; adopt or adapt materials they might have already developed.

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) stressed the need for the provision of professional development. Illinois' response is the development of a comprehensive Illinois Workforce Academy (IWA). The purpose of the IWA is to support the WIOA system in pursuit of continuous improvement through education. The Illinois Workforce Academy is designed to support the WIOA system in pursuit of continuous improvement through education. The IWA will provide diverse professional development that advances foundational knowledge for all partners to help WIOA personnel have the knowledge, skills, and capacity to serve our customers effectively.

The goal of the IWA is to.

1. Create, promote, and foster a system environment that values development, diversity, growth, critical thinking, and problem-solving opportunities for all employees.
2. Develop a learning platform to enhance requisite knowledge and skills to understand the unique needs of each customer and determine the best way to provide customer-centered service throughout all levels of the WIOA system.
3. Provide quality training that includes leveraging technology and resources that are appropriate to increase individual and organizational productivity through opportunities that enhance knowledge, develop skills, and enrich the system.

The WIOA Professional Development Committee coordinates professional development opportunities, comprised of representatives from the WIOA Core partners and businesses. The WIOA Professional Development Committee is charged with coordinating regional and statewide professional development for the WIOA system as it relates to WIOA implementation,

service integration, and policy. As the committee worked to develop the IWA, they implemented a three-pronged approach to professional development to ensure all levels of the system were supported. Workforce Wednesday weekly webinars, regional workshops and a statewide WIOA Summit provide year-round support for the WIOA system.

#### 4. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS AND ONE-STOP PROGRAM PARTNERS

##### A. ASSESSMENT OF CORE AND ONE-STOP PROGRAM PARTNER PROGRAMS.

Describe how the core programs will be assessed each year based on State performance accountability measures described in section 116(b) of WIOA. Describe how other one-stop delivery system partner program services and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan will be assessed each year. This State assessment must include the quality, effectiveness, and improvement of programs broken down by local area or provider. Such state assessments should take into account local and regional planning goals.

The Core Partners continue to monitor program enrollment, obligations and expenditures to assess the ability of local workforce areas and the State as a whole to meet program requirements and goals. Going forward, program staff will consult with federal staff as needed and make recommendations to WIOA program directors, the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) and the IWIB's Continuous Improvement Committee (CIC) in response to any issues of concern and to identify best practices evolving from adapting service delivery during the pandemic.

The Governor, General Assembly, Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) and state agency partners continuously assess the performance outcomes of the workforce system in annual performance and benchmark reports. The state agencies responsible for each of the core programs outlined in program-specific areas constantly assess performance accountability measures at the state, regional and local levels as required by each core program. To ensure that program partners are well-positioned to meet the performance accountability requirements of WIOA, a working group on performance accountability was formed. This group will work with core partners to ensure that systems have the capacity to collect and report required new and updated data elements under WIOA, as well as the capacity to track aggregate data for performance indicators applicable to all four core partners to the extent possible.

The core programs continue to work with the IWIB to establish updated procedures to negotiate performance benchmarks as applicable. The state continues to develop strategies for aligning technology and data systems across core programs, and to evaluate common performance outcomes (including the quality, effectiveness, and improvement of programs by local areas). One tool to support that assessment is a dashboard to aggregate data for all core programs. The CIC Performance Work Group will use a high-level view of each core program's performance by quarter and help identify the need for technical assistance or adjustments. Meanwhile, the state is working to identify common definitions, standards, and procedures to prepare core program partners to meet performance accountability requirements of WIOA. The intent is to ensure that data collected by each core program partner fully conforms to WIOA and accurately reflects the outcomes for each core program on a local level and in aggregate.

The Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) provides reporting for three employment-related performance indicators (employment rate in the second and fourth quarters after exit and median earnings in the second quarter after exit), status in unsubsidized

employment and quarterly earnings through direct Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage match. Under “Effectiveness in Serving Employers” the State has selected the measures of “Retention with the same employer” and “Employer Penetration Rate.” IDES will report performance data for Retention by providing (UI) wage match, understanding that this is a shared outcome across all six core programs within the State and will be a combined reporting measure. Wage records will identify a participant’s employment using an establishment identifier – FEIN for example. The Employer Penetration Rate will be determined by each core provider tracking of the number of establishments served within a program year. The State will collect that data and compare it to the aggregate number of employers in a given State and/or county.

Illinois’ WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team includes representatives from all of the WIOA core partners and required one-stop partners administered by State agencies. The team develops and issues field guidance for regional and local planning, the one-stop memoranda of understanding and cost-sharing agreements and provides a mechanism to resolve local WIOA implementation issues between partners. This WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team also reviews regional and local plans, MOUs, and cost-sharing agreements to ensure that local areas have documents that are complete, compliant and committed to the integration of required programs under WIOA. This team works with IWIB committees and work groups to update the planning and MOU guidelines as needed. The Governor’s Guidelines for MOU Development are updated annually to align MOUs with priority activities. The latest version incorporates concepts from the statewide Service Integration Self-Assessment completed by all Local Workforce Innovation Areas.

Illinois continues to track and analyze each LWIA’s training expenditure rate, fund obligation rate and planned vs. actual data on program enrollment. Final revisions have been made to the policy and the CIC is currently engaged in an evaluation process to determine if the policy is meeting its intended outcomes. The State will use the performance data, expanded benchmark report, plan/MOU submission and certification process to assess the quality effectiveness and improvement of programs in each local area.

The IWIB Continuous Improvement Committee (CIC) has indicated they will be reviewing this information, as part of an overall review and analysis of all assessments conducted of the one-stop system to identify those best practices that all local workforce boards and one-stop operators could benefit from. Recommendations will be made to ensure the continuous improvement of all local workforce areas and ensure one-stop centers are providing the most effective and efficient services to customers.

The Governor, the General Assembly, the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) and state agency partners continuously assess the workforce system. The state agency responsible for each of the core programs outlined in program-specific areas regularly assesses performance at the state, regional and local levels as required by each core program.

The state will utilize technology and data systems across one-stop program partners and to evaluate common performance outcomes, including the quality, effectiveness, and improvement of programs by local areas. For example, a digital dashboard will be used to aggregate data for all core programs. A performance working group of the IWIB will use the dashboard to help identify the need for technical assistance or adjustments in various programs

The WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team will continue to review WIOA regional and local plans and local workforce area’s Memorandums of Understanding regarding infrastructure and service delivery costs. The state level review of these documents provides each of the core partner agencies an opportunity to assess each of the regions and workforce areas in Illinois.

The TA Team works with IWIB Committees and workgroups to update the planning guidelines as needed to include information for assessing the quality, effectiveness, and improvement of the one-stop program partners.

The IWIB, in cooperation with the WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team, established objective criteria and procedures for use by local boards in assessing and certifying Comprehensive One-Stop Centers, per Section 121(g)(1) of WIOA. The state standard certification criteria will help ensure a minimum level of quality and consistency of services in Comprehensive One-Stop Centers throughout Illinois, regardless of location. As local boards review and update the criteria and processes for certifying Comprehensive One-Stop Centers biannually, insights will be gained on assessing and establishing standards on effectiveness, physical accessibility, programmatic accessibility and continuous improvement. These review processes will help identify best practices in assessing and improving local one-stop partner programs, both core and required programs, to promote efficiency and effectiveness of the Workforce Development System. Outcomes of the assessments of one-stop program partners will be reported annually and made public. The State will use the performance data, expanded benchmark report, plan/MOU submission and certification process to assess the quality effectiveness and improvement of programs in each.

## **B. PREVIOUS ASSESSMENT RESULTS**

For each four-year state plan and state plan modification, provide the results of assessments of the effectiveness of the core programs and other one-stop partner programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the Unified or Combined State plan during the preceding 2-year period (i.e. the 2-year period of the plan modification cycle), in accordance with methods described in 4(A). Describe how the State is adapting its strategies based on these assessments.

### **Service Integration Update and Assessment**

Led by the IWIB Service Integration Workgroup, Illinois assessed service integration in each LWIA in 2019-2020. Each local area went through a service integration self-assessment process where all local partners participated in a facilitated joint assessment of integration. The assessment included current and desired levels of integration along a continuum from isolation to full integration for 16 integration goals organized around seven functions:

- Customer-centered design
- Staff
- Intake and Assessment
- Services
- Career Pathways
- Information
- Evaluation

The process resulted in each local area creating a plan to move service integration goals towards integration. However, these plans were derailed by the pandemic.

In 2022, the Service Integration Workgroup of the Continuous Improvement Committee was reformed in response to the ever-changing Workforce Development System in light of the COVID-19 Pandemic and subsequent necessary changes to WIOA service delivery. The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) therefore formed the Service Integration Workgroup with the following charge: WIOA empowers State and local elected officials and private sector-led workforce boards to develop a strategic, integrated plan that supports economic growth and labor force needs intended to grow the capacity and performance of the workforce system. The IWIB formed the Service Integration Policy Workgroup to convey State-level expectations of local workforce areas as they address this critically important feature of their one-stop centers. The Service Integration Workgroup prioritized understanding the barriers Workforce Development System customers experience and addressed them through customer-centered design and an equity lens.

Beginning in July 2022, the Service Integration Workgroup, led by Becky Raymond, embarked on setting state-level expectations for WIOA service integration while incorporating applications for local areas in revising the 2018 Service Integration Policy. The policy was approved by the IWIB on behalf of the Executive Committee in May 2023.

The Self-Assessment guidelines were updated to reflect the guidance in the revised Service Integration Policy. The policy, which includes system-level goals and local-level application points, is the foundation of the updated Self-Assessment. The Self-Assessment instructs local areas to assess their progress toward each application point and have the opportunity to request technical assistance if needed. These updates reflect the importance State WIOA Partners place on setting service integration goals for all customers by creating a continually improving, equitable system in operationalizing these goals.

Core Partner Leadership has also begun meeting to develop state-level referral standards for the Illinois Workforce System.

These efforts reflect the importance Illinois places on seamless service delivery and collaboration in and between all WIOA Partners to better serve all of its customers, and informed the development of the strategies included in this plan.

## **Equity Task Force**

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) created the Equity Task Force (ETF) in October 2020 to address equity within the Illinois workforce system and ensure that all customers are on pathways to success. The 42-member ETF met bimonthly from October 2020 through May 2022. Three workgroups were established to carry out the work: Data, Policy, and Program. Each group met monthly beginning in November 2020. Through workgroup and task force meetings, background readings, and consultations with experts and practitioners, the ETF explored challenges and opportunities and developed recommendations. In addition to its recommendations to the IWIB, the ETF also identified opportunities for local workforce boards, recognizing the critical role local workforce system leaders and practitioners play in advancing equity.

The following key insights emerged from the work:

### **Challenges:**

1. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA, P.L. 113-128) programs appear to be reaching the at-risk populations the workforce system is intended to serve. Some customers, however, have greater barriers than others, and it is not clear that all customers get the services they need to succeed.



2. There are differences in employment and earnings outcomes by race in the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs, but it is difficult to isolate the impact of the WIOA programs from other socioeconomic factors that impact employment and earnings using WIOA data alone.
3. Services accessed and occupational focus of training varies by participants' sex and race.
4. The current infrastructure, staffing, and systems for collecting and analyzing WIOA data in Illinois are not designed to support robust analysis of disaggregated data necessary to advance equity.
5. Organizations providing culturally specific services with a track record of success in serving target populations have trouble partnering with the workforce system and becoming eligible training providers (ETPs).
6. WIOA programs do not provide sufficient supportive services to help customers overcome systemic barriers that disproportionately impact women, people of color, people with disabilities, and other groups.

Through its discussions, background readings, and consultations with state board staff in Colorado and California, the ETF also identified the following opportunities for the IWIB:

- Increase equity by centering the voices and experiences of workforce system customers in decisions impacting the design and quality of workforce system services.
- Leverage its leadership role better to push forward the state's workforce system equity efforts while empowering and supporting local workforce areas, workforce development leaders, and practitioners to feel ownership over this work.
- Establish an ongoing process for analyzing or diagnosing the impact of the design and implementation of policies on underserved and marginalized individuals and groups, as well as identify and potentially eliminate barriers.

Based on these insights, the Task Force identified recommendations in the following six categories. Detailed recommendations and next steps for each category are included in the report.

1. Build a culture of equity in the Illinois workforce system.
2. Integrate an equity lens into the work of the IWIB.
3. Invest in data analysis capacity, track disaggregated data and outcomes, and identify disparities and factors contributing to those disparities.
4. Diversify workforce system leadership and staff and provide systemwide training on equity, cultural competence, and cultural awareness and humility for those served by the system.
5. Provide funding to, and partner with, organizations providing culturally specific services with a track record of success in serving target populations.
6. Prioritize workforce services that include supportive services.

The IWIB adopted the Equity Task Force Report and created a standing Equity Committee to coordinate implementation of recommendations; and work with the governor, legislature, and

state agencies to allocate resources necessary to develop and support the Equity Academy, data analysis, and local board activities identified in the report's recommendations. Recommendations from that report are incorporated into the strategies included in this plan.

### **2023 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) Online Survey.**

Illinois Department of Human Services – Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS), Illinois' Title IV partner, committed to a large-scale study to incorporate a variety of methods to ensure participation by people with disabilities across the State, including those from targeted communities and individuals with the most significant disabilities.

The DRS elected to subcontract the 2023 Satisfaction with Customer Service and the Needs Assessment Surveys. Both surveys were conducted concurrently using online methodology. Three customer groups (disabled persons, providers, and employers) were surveyed. More than 19,000 respondents between all three customer groups completed the survey, a stark increase from the 2018 needs assessment, where DRS only collected 1,000 valid responses.

Based on feedback from all three customer groups, the top five responses from all three groups were scored and weighted by priority of each group. The already implied responses were added for a total weighted score of priorities. This is the weighted priority order for all three groups:

- Making the referral process easier
- Virtual access to counselors
- Online access to applications
- Cross-training of staff on services provided by the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS)
- Information about transition programs on DRS website
- Better accessibility to other State workforce programs
- Coordinating funding and staffing
- Disability awareness training
- Increased DRS presence in the Illinois Workforce Development Systems
- Extended hours at in-person offices
- Accessible equipment in Workforce Development Centers
- Interpretation services for primary languages

The survey design incorporated feedback from collaboration with the Division of Rehabilitation Services State Rehabilitation Council (DRS-SRC) and a review of town hall meetings held by the Director of the DRS in 2022. The SRC indicated the following top priorities for the survey: statistically significant response rate, accessibility, readability, and translation into multiple languages. Analysis of the town hall transcripts revealed the following areas of concern: transportation, technology infrastructure, limited access to the DRS team, and the need for skills training.

Survey Respondents. Of the overall respondents, 84.9% were either a person with a disability (59.4% of overall respondents) or the parents or guardians of a person with a disability (25.6% of overall respondents). The remaining 15.1% of respondents break out as 12% as Disability Service Provider, Community Partnership Agency/Other, Teacher or Other Educational Professional and 3% Employers.

The disabled customers ages ranged: 8.4% were 18 years of age or younger, and 17.7% were within five (5) years of retirement age. Most respondents, 73.9%, will benefit from improvements in service in the next five years. The smallest age group(s) of disabled people responding were the three age ranges that include school-age students (Less than 14 years old, 15 to 16 years old, and 17 to 18 years old). Even combined these three populations only total 8.4% of the disabled respondents. Fifty-Six percent (56%) of respondents were female; while 42% were male; 1% non-binary; and 2% preferred not to say.

The greatest percentage of disabled respondents reported identifying with the “Physical disability affecting mobility, walking or standing” (23%); while the remaining respondents reported learning disability (12%); mental illness or psychiatric disorder (12%); cognitive or Intellectual disability (10%); physical disability affecting use of arms or hands (10%); chronic health conditions (10%); autism or autism spectrum disorder (9%); brain Injury or stroke (5%); blind or visual impairment (4%); and deaf or hard of hearing (4%).

Respondents reported belonging to the following special groups: below poverty level (31.3%); student (30.8%); senior citizen (20.3%); LGBTQ (8.3%); homeless (3.6%); veteran (3.1%); religious minority (1.4%); parolee re-entering workforce (0.8%); and refugee or displaced individuals (0.6%).

Both the “disabled” and “provider” respondent groups identify the highest special population as “below poverty level” with 31.3% and 20.8% respectively. Poverty creates an even greater need for employment support related to transportation and support services. The “below poverty level” special population highlights the importance of collaborating with employers to develop quality employment opportunities that include a living wage and benefits.

The DRS provides unbiased services to all special populations, age groups, gender, and disability types across the State of Illinois. However, the demographic data reveals a potentially disproportionate response to the survey which may indicate a disproportionate engagement with DRS based on demographics.

From the demographics, we learn that the African American population and the urban area demographic sector in Illinois access the 2023 Survey link at higher rates than other groups within the State. Of the survey respondents, 48% were white alone; 10% were Hispanic or Latino; 31% were Black or African American alone; and 11% reported “other”. The top five languages by percentage of respondents were English (93.7%); American Sign Language (2.4%); Spanish (2.3%); Arabic (0.3%); and Polish (0.3%). It is encouraging that the Division provides services to minority groups typically underserved.

An overwhelming majority of respondents in all groups reported living, working, or employing disabled persons in Cook County. All counties had at least one (1) disabled person or their parent participate in the survey. However, 77 counties remained underrepresented. Twenty-five (25) counties represented 80% of the disabled person/parents of disabled person respondent groups, with Cook County representing 44% of total overall respondents, and 55% of the highest responding counties (80% of overall counties). The county of residence is important to align disabled workforce growth with the economic development regions to ensure equitable access to workforce opportunities.

Knowing the location of one's advocates and navigators for workforce resources, training, and support is foundational to customer service. Thirty percent (30%) of total disabled or representative disabled respondents (~3000) reported not knowing the name of the DRS office responsible to help them navigate services and overcome roadblocks. Fourteen percent (14%) of total provider respondents (e.g., counselors, educators) reported not knowing the DRS office assigned to their customers. Eighteen percent (18%) of employer respondents reported not knowing the DRS office that would provide them or their employees employment support services.

**Satisfaction with Customer Service.** The key indicator question, "Overall, how happy are you with the employment support provided by the Division of Rehabilitation Services?" was asked of all three customer groups. The customer service results were overall affirming. According to the survey, 47.8% of respondents were either extremely or somewhat happy; 26.5% were neither happy nor unhappy; and 25.7% were somewhat or extremely unhappy with the employment support provided by DRS. Overall, respondents feel positively toward the services received by DRS. Respondents indicated they like the services received.

**Needs Assessment:** The Needs Assessment evaluates the effectiveness of programs within the DRS for the State of Illinois as reflected within the WIOA mission Statement. The survey organizes data into the service areas within the WIOA Mission Statement: Employment Programs, Education Services, Training Programs, and Support Services.

The survey also evaluates the communication and operational strengths of DRS. The survey assesses gaps in current services by asking the three customer groups (disabled, providers, and employers) how well these three program areas met their needs. The three response options were: "Did more than expected"; "Did a good job for me"; and "Did not meet my needs". The overall understanding of DRS programs and specific terminology by the three groups surveyed is unknown. The difference in interpretation of terms likely impacted the survey, therefore providing skewed results.

**Strengths:** The Satisfaction for Customer Service and Needs Assessment Survey revealed many DRS strengths. The strengths include strong Division leadership; strong and supportive SRC; mature data sets tracking performance measures; well-developed PTS; and strong engagement by the Black/African American minority group.

**Opportunities for improvement:** Overall, the Satisfaction for Customer Service and Needs Assessment Survey revealed many opportunities for improvement for DRS. Areas that could be improved include increased engagement with the Hispanic/Latinx minority group; implement a formal Customer Service program; engage and measure performance of the senior disabled "special population"; and assess workflows and staffing numbers. Specific recommendations for each of the four categories emphasized in the WIOA mission Statement are outlined below.

**Employment Programs:** Disabled customers and their parents, providers, and employers identified improvement in self-employment as their top priority. Additionally, employers need help identifying and incorporating into their business plans quality employment opportunities for people with disabilities, especially "earn while you learn" training options.

**Education Services:** Needs Assessment recommended improvements in the PTS programs. Based on the age ranges of survey respondents, it is important to remember that any improvements made in the PTS programs while positively impacting future students, will leave gaps for the students who have graduated or aged out before the improvements were initiated. Therefore, for the populations who aged out or completed the high school credentials, it is important to focus improvements on continuing education, training programs, and employment

programs that can positively impact the measurable skill gains to fill the needs created by any gaps in services identified by the current student group.

**Training Programs:** Providers and employers reported “Work-based learning- Employer paid work experiences: Learning while earning money at a job” was one of the top three keys to success for the disabled persons, both the Disabled Persons and the Provider groups reported “On-the-job Training: Learning a job while getting paid to work” as a high priority area that DID NOT meet their needs. Increasing “earn while you learn” programs, such as paid work-based learning experiences and on-the-job training opportunities is considered a priority opportunity for improvement.

**Support Services.** Both disabled and provider respondent groups identified the following priorities for needed improvements in the “Support Services” area:

1. Transportation: Help getting from home to school or work.
2. Benefits Planning Services: Help to manage Social Security Benefits and plan to begin working.
3. Assistive Technology Services and Support: Special Equipment and electronic devices to help with reading, speaking, or using a computer.

**Summary:** Overall, respondents feel positively toward the services received by DRS. Respondents indicated they like the services received. However, the demographic data reveals a potentially disproportionate response to the survey which may indicate a disproportionate engagement with DRS for services based on race demographics. The Satisfaction with Customer Service Survey’s greatest learning is the largest percentage of all respondent populations were not aware of which DRS office aided them in obtaining disability services and support and the corresponding relationship to lower satisfaction scores.

### C. EVALUATION

Describe how the State will conduct evaluations and research projects of activities carried out in the State under WIOA core programs; how such projects will be coordinated with, and designed in conjunction with, State and local boards and with State agencies responsible for the administration of all respective core programs; and, further, how the projects will be coordinated with the evaluations provided for by the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Education under WIOA (WIOA Section 116(e)).

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board’s (IWIB) Continuous Improvement Committee (CIC) leads the process to determine appropriate actions and recommendations to the IWIB regarding the design of evaluation and research projects across all four partners and one-stop required partners as opportunities arise. The CIC reviews performance measures to identify strategies that are effective in allowing local boards to meet their performance targets. Similarly, they will look at key factors that might present challenges to those boards that prevent them from meeting their goals. From this information, they identify and make recommendations regarding strategies that all boards should consider as methods for continuous improvement. The CIC reviews policies and processes to determine their relationship to positive outcomes, as well as to determine if outcome results conformed to the intended goals. They develop recommendations based upon their findings. Recommendations can be incorporated within new or revised policies, provided in informal guidance, and considered for inclusion in professional development and technical assistance opportunities.

Under the guidance of the CIC, an Evaluation Work Group will meet on a regular basis to ensure the state's Evaluation Toolkit remains relevant and reflects WIOA priorities and best practices for evaluation. Current policies that provide immediate opportunities to assess results are the one-stop center certification process and the recently updated service integration self-assessment.

## 5. DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

Describe the methods and factors the State will use in distributing funds under the core programs in accordance with the provisions authorizing such distributions.

### A. FOR TITLE I PROGRAMS

Provide a description of the written policies that establish the State's methods and factors used to distribute funds to local areas for—

#### I. YOUTH ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 128(B)(2) OR (B)(3)

##### **I. YOUTH ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 128(B)(2) OR (B)(3)**

Illinois will distribute Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth funds according to Section 128(b)(2)(A). Illinois does not intend to distribute WIOA Youth Program funds to local areas based on the youth discretionary allocation formula contained in Section 128(b)(3)(B). Utilizing the additional factors contained in Section 128(b)(3)(B) would, in our estimation, undermine decisions by the Governor and the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board regarding the local area boundaries within which WIOA should operate locally. In many instances, local areas would likely be left without the amount of funding necessary to allow them to operate viable youth programs.

#### II. ADULT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) OR (B)(3)

##### **ii. Adult and training activities in accordance with WIOA section 133(b)(2) or (b)(3)**

###### Distribution of Funds-Title I (Adult)

Illinois will distribute WIOA Adult funds according to Section 133(b)(2)(A). Illinois also does not intend to distribute funds to local areas for adults based on the adult discretionary allocation formula contained in Section 133(b)(3)(B). As with the discretionary youth allocation described above, utilizing the additional factors contained in Section 133(b)(3)(B) would likely undermine the decisions by the Governor and the Illinois Workforce Board regarding the local workforce area boundaries. In many instances, local areas would likely be left without the amount of funding necessary to allow them to operate viable adult programs.

#### III. DISLOCATED WORKER EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) AND BASED ON DATA AND WEIGHTS ASSIGNED

Illinois intends to allocate WIOA dislocated worker funds on the basis of the formula described below, pursuant to section 133(b)(2)(B). The state applies the required minimum provision requirements found in WIOA 133(b)(2)(B)(iii) to the Dislocated Worker funds just as it does for the Adult and Youth funding streams. Each of the following factors will be used to distribute 25 percent of the funds to be allocated:

- Insured unemployment data: Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) unemployment insurance (UI) claimant data for the most recently completed calendar year will be used. Each local workforce area's share of the state total of such claimants is determined, and the area is allocated that share of the funds apportioned by this factor.
- Unemployment concentrations: Unemployment figures for the most recently completed program year will be used. Only counties with unemployment rates above the statewide average will be included in the formula. Each workforce area's share of the state total of such unemployment is determined, and the area is allocated that share of the funds apportioned by this factor.
- Declining industries data: For each workforce area, employment by three-digit North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code is determined for the first calendar quarter (January-March) of the two most recent years for which data is available from IDES' ES-202 UI-covered employment report. The number of jobs lost within industries showing an employment loss from one year to the next is totaled for each area. Each workforce area's share of the state total of such employment loss is determined, and the area is allocated that share of the funds apportioned by this factor.
- Long-term unemployment data: IDES data for the number of UI claimants who were unemployed for 15 or more weeks during the most recently completed calendar year will be used. Each workforce area's share of the state total of such long-term claimants is determined, and the area is allocated that share of the funds apportioned by this factor.
- The plant closing and mass layoff data factor will be given zero weighting under the WIOA dislocated worker allocation formula, due to a lack of public use data sources with sufficient geographic detail to adequately serve the requirements of an allocation formula.
- The farmer-rancher economic hardship factor will be given zero weighting under the WIOA dislocated worker allocation formula, due to a lack of public use data sources with sufficient geographic detail to adequately serve the requirements of an allocation formula.

## B. FOR TITLE II

### I. DESCRIBE THE METHODS AND FACTORS THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL USE TO DISTRIBUTE TITLE II FUNDS.

#### **Multi-year grants or contracts**

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) is the state's eligible agency for adult education and literacy programs. ICCB is responsible for administering funds and providing fiscal, programmatic, and performance oversight to grantees. The ICCB will provide funding to eligible local entities for the provision of adult education services through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). Funding for the AEFLA funds, Corrections Education, and Integrated English Language and Civics Education funds are allocated based on an equitable grant competition. Continuation of funding is provided within the designated continuation period if the grantee adheres to all state and federal grant expectations measured through annual applications, quarterly financial and program performance reports, and student outcomes measured by the Title II Management and Information System.

Through this funding process, the ICCB will identify, assess, and award multi-year grants to eligible providers throughout the state. AEFLA, Corrections Education, and IELCE funding reflect a number of variables, including availability of funding, demonstrated effectiveness from year to year, and other factors. Applicants may apply as a single entity or as part of a consortium and they can apply for AEFLA funds, Corrections funds, IELCE funds, or any combination of funding opportunities. To ensure equity in access, the application process used to award funding for eligible adult education applicants will be the same for every applicant. All eligible applicants of demonstrated effectiveness must provide evidence of their ability to meet or exceed prescribed performance outcomes and provide evidence of their capacity to provide instructional and support services to the targeted populations identified in the WIOA Unified State Plan.

An eligible applicant is an organization that has demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education activities to eligible individuals and may include: a local education agency; a community-based or faith-based organization; a volunteer literacy organization; an institution of higher education; a public or private nonprofit agency; a library; a public housing authority; a nonprofit institution with the ability to provide adult education and literacy services; a consortium or coalition of agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries or authorities described above; and a partnership between an employer and an entity described above.

To determine if an applicant is an organization of demonstrated effectiveness, all applicants will be required to provide data demonstrating their ability to improve the skills of low-literate adults in the applicable instructional areas as described in the NOFO. Applicants may use existing data to demonstrate the ability to achieve state and federal performance measures for all student levels including English language learners or provide data and information to demonstrate the ability to assist learners in achieving learning gain, including low-literacy level and English language learners. An applicant will be required to demonstrate its record of improving the knowledge and skills needed to transition successfully to post-secondary education, skills training or employment. Each application will be reviewed to determine whether it meets the standard of demonstrated effectiveness. Applications that do not provide sufficient evidence of demonstrated effectiveness will not be considered for funding.

In continuation years of a multi-year grant cycle, demonstrated effectiveness will be evaluated based on past performance in achieving state negotiated performance measures, as well as achieving the prescribed requirements of the grant, including the attainment of educational functional level increases/measurable skills gains, and successful programs that transition students to post-secondary education, training and employment.

During the competitive grant cycle, all eligible providers will be notified of the funding opportunity through a uniform public notification and application process and will be asked to submit a competitive application, as well as complete a thorough pre-qualification process. All providers who meet all the eligibility requirements will be able to access and participate in the application process of a competitive grant cycle. Considerations used in the competitive process are listed below.

1. The documented need of the eligible applicant to serve individuals in the community who are most in need of literacy services and those who are in need of career pathway services, including individuals who have literacy skills (i.e., literacy statistics, regional and local needs, etc.).
2. The program is of sufficient intensity and duration for individuals, including those with learning disabilities, to achieve substantial learning gains.



3. The past effectiveness of an eligible applicant in improving the literacy skills of adults, including those with low literacy levels; and demonstrates the ability to meet or exceed the levels of performance.
4. The demonstrated alignment to the requirements of the adult education services and activities, as well as alignment to the local plans.
5. The program uses instructional practices and activities that research has proven to be effective in teaching to achieve learning gains, is of sufficient intensity and duration, is built on a strong foundation of research and effective educational practice and includes the essential components of reading.
6. The program demonstrates the effectiveness in providing instruction in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, and English language acquisition and is based on best practices, research and state standards.
7. The program activities effectively employ advances in technology including the use of computers as a part of instruction, as well as distance education, when applicable.
8. The program activities provide contextualized learning including integrated education and training, as well as bridge programs to ensure that an individual has the skills needed to compete in the workplace, transition to post-secondary education and training, advance in employment, and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
9. The program is staffed by well-trained instructors, counselors, support staff and administrators who meet state guidelines and have participated in high-quality professional development.
10. The program activities are coordinated with other available resources in the community, such as establishing strong links with elementary schools and secondary schools, postsecondary institutions, Comprehensive One-Stop Centers, job training programs, business, and social service agencies.
11. The program offers flexible schedules and supportive services (such as childcare and transportation) that are necessary to enable individuals, including individuals with disabilities or other special needs, to attend and complete programs.
12. The program maintains a high-quality information management system, as determined by the ICCB and has the capacity to report participant outcomes and to monitor program performance measures.
13. The local communities have a demonstrated need for additional English Literacy programs and civic education programs.
14. The proposed budget is consistent with the eligible provider's activities, is cost-efficient within administrative guidelines and places emphasis on serving the target populations (state consideration).

## Timeline

The following steps will be taken in conducting the AEFLA, Corrections, and IELCE competitions.

Competition Timelines	Activities
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Competition Timelines	Activities
January – March	ICCB publishes multi-year federal AEFLA, Corrections, and IELCE Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFO) aligned with the priorities in the approved Unified State Plan and in compliance with state GATA and federal EDGAR and FFATA rules.
February – March	<p>An open bidder’s conference will be held to provide an overview of the competitive NOFO.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ICCB provides technical assistance to inquiries from potential eligible providers.</li> <li>2. ICCB recruits candidates to review and score AEFLA grant applications.</li> <li>3. ICCB coordinates reviewers with LWIBS.</li> </ol>
February – April	FAQs are posted to the ICCB website to distribute broadly the questions asked during the bidder’s conference, as well as during the entire process.
March – April	<p>Due date for AEFLA, Corrections, and IELCE grant applications.</p> <p>Grant Review Training is provided to all grant reviewers.</p>
April – May	Using a Merit Based Review Process, Grant readers score the AEFLA, Corrections, and IELCE grant applications. This includes review of budgets and grant requirements. Final scores used to develop a rank ordered slate based on applicant scores.
May – June	ICCB announces AEFLA, Corrections, and IELCE grant applicants that will receive funding, contingent upon the release of state and federal funding.
July 1	AEFLA, Corrections, and IELCE grant providers begin grant cycle, programming, and funding.

### **Funding Distribution**

Title II Adult Education and Literacy funding will be used to provide prescribed instructional and supportive services in all the designated Area Planning Councils (APCs) in Illinois. The APCs, designated by Illinois state statute as the geographic units for adult education funding distribution, are aligned with each of the 39 community college districts which are represented in each workforce region as well as Local Workforce Innovation Area. Funds that are awarded

through competitive grant cycles will be distributed using a comprehensive funding methodology that is based on the APC's index of need, as calculated on an annual basis using the most recent United States Census Data/American Community Survey results. The variable used includes literacy needs of both the English-speaking population and the English language population, as well as poverty and unemployment needs in an area.

Within an APC, the funds are then distributed proportionately among approved eligible providers based on a variety of elements, including but not limited to, demonstrated performance, past performance and past enrollment. During continuation years in a multi-year grant cycle, the funding formula will also consider the most recently completed and verified data of skill gains as a continuous indicator of demonstrated effectiveness. Providers who are new to the process will be awarded funding based upon their proposed enrollments as indicated in their application as related to the funding request.

## II. DESCRIBE HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL ENSURE DIRECT AND EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ALL ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS TO APPLY AND COMPETE FOR FUNDS AND HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL ENSURE THAT IT IS USING THE SAME GRANT OR CONTRACT ANNOUNCEMENT AND APPLICATION PROCEDURE FOR ALL ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS.

### **Direct and equitable access**

All grants awarded through the State of Illinois are subject to the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA), based on EDGAR, the Education Department General Administrative Regulations and FFATA, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act. Under GATA, all grant applications and awards are subject to uniform processes to ensure transparency, fairness and equitable access to all eligible participants and providers. Grant notifications are performed through the posting of a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) to a public web portal, Grants.Illinois.gov, where all of the eligibility criteria, application and grant requirements, and an explanation of the application and approval process are posted.

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), state eligible agency, will also provide notification and access to the public portal using the ICCB web site and with direct electronic mail notifications to all potential applicants, including both current providers and eligible potential providers. As part of the application process, an eligible provider must enter the portal and complete the grant prequalification registration process as listed detailed below. The ICCB will use the same application, process, and rubric/grading process for all applicants applying. When funding determinations are made, the ICCB will publish a Notice of State Award to the GATA portal and to the ICCB website.

#### **Grantee Pre-qualification:**

All entities must be qualified to do business with the State of Illinois. To be qualified for a grant award, an entity must:

- Have a valid UIE number;
- Have a current SAM.gov account;
- Not be on the Federal Excluded Parties List;
- Be in Good Standing with the Illinois Secretary of State, as applicable;
- Not be on the Illinois Stop Payment list;
- Not on the Dept. of Healthcare and Family Services Provider Sanctions list.

Pre-qualification status will be verified after Grantee Registration is registered and nightly thereafter. If an entity has a pre-qualification issue, the specific issue and remediation support is provided thru the grantee portal. Entities on the Federal Excluded Parties List are not eligible to do business with the State of Illinois.

The ICCB will use the same procedures for announcement, application, and submission for all eligible applicants under WIOA Sections 225, 231, and 243. Each application will be reviewed and evaluated using criteria as indicated in the grant or contract application. Each applicant must address the areas that are applicable. Eligible applicants will be asked to address applicable activities listed below:

1. Adult education;
2. Literacy;
3. Workplace adult education and literacy activities;
4. Family literacy activities;
5. English language acquisition activities;
6. Integrated English literacy and civics education;
7. Workforce preparation activities; or
8. Integrated education and training.

During a competitive year, to be considered for funding an applicant of demonstrated effectiveness must:

1. Be an Eligible Applicant (Provider), which means an organization that has demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education and literacy activities that may include:
  - a. Local educational agencies (LEAs)
  - b. Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) or Faith-Based Organization (FBO)
  - c. Volunteer Literacy Organizations
  - d. Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs)
  - e. Public or Private nonprofit agencies
  - f. Libraries
  - g. Public-housing authorities
  - h. Non-profit institutions that are described previously and have the ability to provide adult education and literacy services to eligible individuals
  - i. Consortium or coalition of agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities as described previously
  - j. Partnership between an employer and an entity as described above
2. Respond to the Request for Proposal by the due date
3. Complete all required portions of the application, including registration through the State of Illinois Grants Accountability and Transparency Act portal.

4. Meet all deadlines and other elements as specified in the Request for Proposal
5. Meet all eligibility requirements The past effectiveness of an eligible applicant in improving the literacy skills of adults is a strong factor in the delivery of adult education instruction and supportive services. In addition, the alignment of local adult education activities with the local area plans and services, as well as local regional workforce plans are essential.

All grants awarded through the State of Illinois are now subject to the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA), based on EDGAR, the Education Department General Administrative Regulations and FFATA, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act. Notification of continuation plan application availability will be via listserv. Eligible providers must then complete a thorough pre-qualification and application process through the public web portal, Grants.Illinois.gov. Eligible providers may then apply for grants. The continuation of an applicant is contingent upon the availability of federal and state funding; a sufficient appropriation of funding, as well as the applicant's demonstrated effectiveness in serving the target population, achieving the state negotiated performance targets, and the ability to meet all grant eligibility requirements.

### C. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

In the case of a State that, under section 101(a)(2)(A)(i) of the Rehabilitation Act designates a State agency to administer the part of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under which VR services are provided for individuals who are blind, describe the process and the factors used by the State to determine the distribution of funds among the two VR agencies in the State.

#### **Vocational Rehabilitation**

This is not applicable to the State of Illinois.

## 6. PROGRAM DATA

### A. DATA ALIGNMENT AND INTEGRATION

Describe the plans of the lead State agencies with responsibility for the administration of the core programs, along with the State Board, to align and integrate available workforce and education data systems for the core programs, unemployment insurance programs, and education through postsecondary education, and to the extent possible, the Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan. The description of the State's plan for integrating data systems should include the State's goals for achieving integration and any progress to date.

Describe data-collection and reporting processes used for all programs and activities, including the State's process to collect and report data on co-enrollment, and for those present in the one-stop centers.

#### I. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PLANS TO MAKE THE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR THE CORE PROGRAMS INTEROPERABLE TO MAXIMIZE THE EFFICIENT EXCHANGE OF COMMON DATA ELEMENTS TO SUPPORT ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

The Illinois core partners have long-standing data sharing agreements in place whereby the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) and Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) request data matching of the Unemployment Insurance Wage Record Data from the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES). The agencies continue to look closely at the

long-term agreements and determine if changes need to be made to accommodate the new and innovative sharing of data between the agencies.

The agreements facilitate cross-program access to data about common participants while minimizing duplicative systems costs. In addition to one-on-one data access, the Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS) and the Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) fully executed a multiple agency data sharing agreement with all the State of Illinois educational and workforce agencies. This data sharing agreement allows for the sharing of agency data via the newly established Centralized Demographic Dataset Administrator (CDDA). The interagency agreements and the CDDA arrangement establish a master client index number for all clients and facilitates integrated and streamlined service delivery, common reporting and measurement of interagency longitudinal performance outcomes as required under WIOA Section 116(d)(2).

Illinois will continue to use existing web-based interfaces that integrate data via Application Program Interface (API) tools. Real-time access to workforce development resources for individuals, businesses and workforce professionals is available, shareable and viewable in user-friendly dashboards for better customer service. Ongoing discussions include how to further integrate the Internet-based data systems to enhance program alignment and service delivery.

- The DCEO - Illinois workNet portal connects individuals and businesses to workforce services and data. The portal serves as a hub for WIOA implementation resources and guidance for all WIOA programs and partners. The open-source and widget technology available in the new version allow for maximum agility in on-demand program development and implementation needs. The Illinois Workforce Information System (IWIS) launched in 2020 piloted the first fully case managed and DOL integrated reporting system - built in the cloud with agile development capabilities, IWIS is proving to be a system that can adapt and evolve quickly to add and integrate both state and Federal programs. It has robust client referral, tracking, and reporting capabilities, as well, among other innovative tools and enhanced data tracking features. Built in responsive design, IWIS can safely and securely be available on any device to accommodate the virtual workforce and virtual client needs.
- Employment Security administers the IllinoisJobLink (IJL) system to collect data on job seeker and employer customers. IllinoisJobLink.com is an internet-based system with a centralized job search engine and resume service that integrates workforce customer information to facilitate coordination of services across partner programs.
- The Illinois Community College Board—Adult Education administers the Illinois Data and Information System (DAIS-i), which is a web-based system that collects relevant student-level record data on education, attendance, courses and employment data needed for reporting to WIOA.
- The Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Rehabilitation Services. The Web Case Management System (WebCM) is the primary case management system for the Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation program, providing electronic storage of customer case records, as well as links to other systems that display information related to case requirements. WebCM is an internet-based system that can be accessed from any location with appropriate security and was developed internally by DHS information systems staff.

The IWIB and the Continuous Improvement Committee (CIC) is working to align the state's evaluation and reporting strategies to ensure that they will be supported by the improved data systems.

The Governor's Office has embarked on Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS) 2.0. The ILDS 2.0 target operating model consists of five pillars: Governance, Systems Architecture, Data, Program Management and Organizational Capability. The Governance body consists of two standing committees: the Executive Committee which meets once or twice a year consisting of agency leads and the Managing Committee that meets every other month that includes appointees from each agency that support research, data management, and technology. These roles differ at the different agencies.

- The core of the Systems Architecture uses an IBM tool called CloudPak for Data supported by the Department of Innovation and Technology (DoIT). Other technologies will be leveraged to create an ecosystem of data management and portal applications.
- The core of the system architecture will be made up of two standing datasets: the Early Childhood Participation Dataset and a dataset bringing together K-12, Higher Ed, and Workforce data. These datasets are still being defined.
- ILDS will provide program management services that help manage projects using this data including a process for a unified data request process across ILDS agencies and a process to develop a common analytics agenda. There is currently a working group in progress to define the data request process.
- ILDS Governance is working on the concept of "Data as a Function". This means that data analysis and management is a function similar to legal, finance, and IT, where it is infused within each agency based on defined roles and responsibilities but supported across state government with common processes and guidelines.

This initiative provides a technical record matching, identity resolution procedure and software to securely and confidentially match records across seven different agencies that include the four core partners:

- Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
- Illinois Community College Board
- Illinois Board of Higher Education
- Illinois State Board of Education
- Illinois Department of Employment Security
- Illinois Student Assistance Commission
- Illinois Department of Human Services

## II. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PLANS TO INTEGRATE DATA SYSTEMS TO FACILITATE STREAMLINED INTAKE AND SERVICE DELIVERY TO TRACK PARTICIPATION ACROSS ALL PROGRAMS INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN

Illinois is working to align and integrate participant and performance data across WIOA programs with the ultimate goal of providing effective and efficient services that lead to the participants' employment as quickly as possible. The Illinois Department of Innovation and Technology (DoIT) has conducted two phases of an independent *WIOA Technical Assessment* of

the core partners' applications supporting the WIOA programs. The goal of the *WIOA Technical Assessment* is to identify technical solutions to better integrate the WIOA system in Illinois. The state Chief Information Officer contracted with technical experts to lead the assessment team that included technical leads from each of the WIOA core partners. The team identified that the WIOA data integration strategy should include:

- Functional and technical assessment of external and internal systems that can act as the common intake solution;
- Generation of unique customer identification;
- An automated initial assessment based on intake questions;
- Automated referral to partner agencies;
- Common dashboard for participant information;
- Identification and execution of the appropriate procurement plan;
- Execution of an inter-governmental agreement among partner agencies to fund and use a common intake system;
- Upgrading of agency solutions where needed to integrate to common intake solution; and
- Definition of detail plans by working with HHi2 program and state data practice for data warehouse and Master Data Management solutions.

The scope of the WIOA technical assessment included a review of business, information and system architecture and current applications supporting WIOA programs for the core partner businesses. This assessment is a key step in developing the capacity for common intake and improving service delivery. The WIOA technical assessment team's approach was to view the WIOA core partners collectively as an enterprise or program that is responsible for providing job seekers with a technology offering *Single Sign-On* (SSO) access, *Integrated Workforce Registration* (IWR), real-time triage and coordinated service provisioning for the portfolio of WIOA programs. The WIOA technical assessment team approached the assessment of each of the core partner's systems from a customer-centric, job seeker user experience. The WIOA technical assessment team's approach aligned with the employment Training Administration's national vision for states to provide "a system that is driven by a single Workforce System Registration as the entry point to the nation's *reemployment system* and offers a coordinated customer-centric focus with full partner access." DoIT and the agency partners have developed the following strategic recommendations as a result of the assessments:

- Create a configurable, web-based intake solution capable of conducting initial assessment and referral to appropriate partner systems;
- Allow partners to maintain and enhance their existing solutions to effectively manage eligibility, enrollment and cases;
- Develop a WIOA hub system capable of integrating with any number of existing and new agency systems to coordinate and update data needed for processing;
- Leverage the state's Health and Human Services Innovation Incubator (HHi2) Master Data Management solution to generate unique participant identification numbers based on attributes collectively defined by the state; and



- Migrate data to the state's proposed data warehouse environment for business intelligence and analytics.

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board identified its Service Integration Policy Workgroup as the lead party for implementing the strategies towards its priority activity to provide a uniformly positive customer experience for job-seekers at all Illinois one-stop centers. These strategies include making the system easy to navigate and promoting a “no wrong door” approach that will adopt, adapt, or create one or more models of streamlined intake and referral that one-stop centers throughout the state can utilize to improve service delivery.

### III. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE BOARD WILL ASSIST THE GOVERNOR IN ALIGNING TECHNOLOGY AND DATA SYSTEMS ACROSS REQUIRED ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS (INCLUDING DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMON INTAKE, DATA COLLECTION, ETC.) AND HOW SUCH ALIGNMENT WILL IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY TO INDIVIDUALS, INCLUDING UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) monitors the state's data infrastructure, including strategic coordination between core partners. This ensures the data systems across the required one-stop partner programs lead to improved service delivery and evaluation of common performance outcomes. The IWIB Continuous Improvement Committee's (CIC) Performance Workgroup, with active participation from each core WIOA partner, was established and meets regularly to ensure the system has the tools and capacity necessary to collect and report all required data elements. This ongoing, unified, and collaborative leadership process strengthens the performance outcomes.

Under CIC's direction the Performance Workgroup created a public facing dashboard which aggregates data for all core programs. This dashboard will enable a process for ongoing and streamlined sharing, monitoring, and evaluating of data throughout each program year to help identify potential needs for technical assistance or adjustment in program services. This process will improve service delivery to all individuals as potential gaps in service can be identified and action steps to remedy concerns can be put into place.

In addition to the ongoing data analysis, the CIC has created an evaluation tool kit to provide a framework and tools for effective evaluation for statewide workforce programs, policies, and processes across the various Titles. This toolkit uses an equity lens as its foundation based on the IWIB Equity Task Force's concept of an equity lens an equitable workforce system is one where diversity, equity, and inclusion are foundational – in which race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, health, ability, and other demographic or geographic characteristics no longer predict one's outcomes in the labor market. When program outcomes are not met, the core partners and local one-stop partner programs have access to the toolkit to evaluate their services to identify evidence-based strategies for improvement.

Early work on evaluation will address questions of service delivery and potential approaches to improve the system, including exploring how data and technology can be better leveraged to ensure a successful system.

The CIC is developing a state and regional cross-agency benchmark report for stakeholders and the public. The WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team will build on the findings to provide additional regional planning data and tools to further support regional planning to align education, workforce and economic development. Furthermore, the WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team will build upon existing agency initiatives to develop and use strategic indicators and benchmarks as part of comprehensive data resources for state and regional planning.

IV. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S DATA SYSTEMS AND PROCEDURES TO PRODUCE THE REPORTS REQUIRED UNDER SECTION 116, PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM. (WIOA SECTION 116(D)(2)).

The four core partner programs currently collect all data necessary to develop and produce performance accountability reports required under Section 116(d)(2). Each partner submits quarterly and annual reports to the Departments of Labor and Education as appropriate to meet federal reporting requirements. These reports are reviewed with state and local program administrators to ensure Illinois continues to meet and exceed negotiated performance levels.

The State has in existence the ability to develop and produce reports required by sec. 116(d)(2) of WIOA and submit them annually using the template the Departments disseminate and, therefore, provide the required minimum levels of performance achieved with respect to the primary indicators of performance levels achieved consistent with § 677.175. The core state partners in collaboration with local workforce innovation boards and education institutions utilize existing database management systems to meet all the elements required for full WIOA reporting via Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) formatted submission on Workforce Integrated Performance System (WIPS).

B. ASSESSMENT OF PARTICIPANTS' POST-PROGRAM SUCCESS

Describe how lead State agencies will use the workforce development system to assess the progress of participants who are exiting from core programs in entering, persisting in, and completing postsecondary education, or entering or remaining in employment. States may choose to set additional indicators of performance.

Lead state agencies are continually assessing the progress of participants who are exiting from core programs entering into and completing postsecondary education, or entering or remaining in employment. Via accountability and transparency dashboards and reports, student and participant activities are tracked, monitored and follow-up services are conducted. State and local staff maintain regular contact with the individuals and/or employers during follow-up services.

Performance experts from the WIOA core and required partners continue to work with the Illinois Department of Innovation Technology to connect data systems that will allow the state to assess the progress of participants that exit the program and continue on with education programs and enter employment. This cross-agency workgroup is exploring the development of a common information system using the existing Illinois Framework for Healthcare and Human Services. Ongoing discussions include the possibility of adapting that framework for WIOA purposes, including tracking participant exits from all programs. Two additional initiatives that will support this effort are the *Longitudinal Data System* and the *Work Readiness Through Apprenticeship and Pathways*.

Partners established a common vision and built the Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS) with data-sharing agreements with universities and others to ensure consistently high levels of quality, reliability and security in matching and managing participant-level data across agency and university partners. The ILDS Agencies and the Governing Board have made substantial progress on activities that relate to the ILDS Functions. As detailed in this Section, this progress includes:

- Development and adoption of the Initial Annual Report and Plan;
- A number of intra-agency enhancements that support the broader LDS effort;

- The selection and establishment of the Centralized Demographic Dataset Administrator; and
- Significant work and accomplishments in the end-user service priorities established by the Governing Board.

The Unemployment to Reemployment data environment, an established program between states and the Coleridge Initiative, has implemented longitudinal record linkage between the following Illinois administrative data sources:

- quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW);
- weekly Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimant files;
- weekly Program for Measuring the Insured Unemployed Statistics (PROMIS) files;
- quarterly Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage records;
- monthly Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage records;
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I training data; and
- Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) services data.

The workforce system will leverage this record-linkage best practice to integrate the state's new hires file and design portal reports to address key reemployment questions, such as:

- Does the reemployment rate of individuals following a spell of unemployment differ by education and training?
- What is the relationship between the new job and their prior job loss?
- Are claimants in some education categories reemployed with the same employer at a higher rate than others?
- If not, are they reemployed in the same industry?

The portal will display timely reemployment metrics for diverse claimant subgroups. State agencies faced an immediate need in March of 2020 to provide an effective, data-based, response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to an unprecedented workload, the occupational composition of the unemployed changed drastically to a population unused to job loss. Within some industries, new occupational strata of unemployed emerged, in others the concentration of layoff activity intensified in traditional occupational groups, and, as well, there was greater concentration and geographic dispersion of some occupations than others. The Midwest Collaborative moved swiftly to develop an unemployment-to-reemployment portal (a UI portal) to inform policy makers. The structure of the portal highlights weekly (timely), county-based (local), and actionable information on Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimant composition and transitions.

While the unprecedented claims volume has dissipated for much of the country, local workforce boards are struggling for data-driven, reemployment strategies in an effort to reengage large unemployed populations with the workforce. The pandemic labor market has necessitated and catalyzed a range of labor market behaviors among job seekers that requires policy makers and program administrators to find new data and information sources to plan and allocate resources. Of greatest importance is timely and locally-relevant information on reemployment pathways for workers by education/training. This project uses existing data in new ways to

deepen understanding and increase timeliness of information, helping to fill that data gap as local economies quickly evolve. The project proposes to:

- create Tableau visualizations on local unemployment spell behavior for equity groups, such as low income, by claimant education/training categories; and
- establish the Directory of New Hires in the ADRF environment for the purpose of developing timely, local measures on reemployment activity. The data lag for the Directory of New Hires is only 1-2 months and the Quarterly UI Wage records (the only alternative employment data source) is 7-9 months.

The primary outcomes of the project are:

- Visualizations of local unemployment spell behavior by claimant education/training categories. Tableau visualizations and code on unemployment spell behavior for claimants by local area have already been developed and implemented in the “Unemployment to Reemployment” portal (see below). We will develop summary tabulations from administrative data and add a filter to display local spell trends by education/training categories for claimant cohorts. This will require 2-3 months.
- Timely measures for reemployment activity.
- The Coleridge ADRF already hosts seven Illinois administrative data sets covering employers, workers, claimants, and training participants. This project adds the Directory of New Hires to the ADRF environment for the purpose of developing timely measures on reemployment activity. Task 2 will require 4-5 months.
- Task 3- National Applied Data Analytics Training
- Illinois will partner with the Coleridge Initiative to offer a national data-analytic training on education/training and the reemployment of UI claimants. This training will be structured similarly to the successful effort sponsored by U.S. DOL/ETA in Spring 2021 on the Unemployment to Reemployment portal. Task 3 will require 3 months to prepare training materials and 3 months to deliver the training.

The IWIB’s Continuous Improvement Committee continues to implement certain provisions of the IWIB’s Strategic Plan related to evaluations, assessments, performance, and accountability, they will be looking at opportunities for continuous improvement throughout the workforce and education systems. One measure they may consider after further discussion is the long-term employment of participants exiting the program. While current common performance measures track customers up to four quarters after exit, the IWIB is exploring utilizing available and new data to determine employment outcomes beyond one year. These might include employment within the same company, within the field of study or the wages of the customer for as many as five years after employment.

### C. USE OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) WAGE RECORD DATA

Explain how the State will meet the requirements to utilize quarterly UI wage records for performance accountability, evaluations, and as a source for workforce and labor market information, consistent with Federal and State law. (This Operational Planning element applies to core programs.)

#### **Use of Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage Record Data**

The Illinois Department of Employment Security will provide reporting for three employment-related performance indicators (employment rate in the second and fourth quarters after exit and median earnings in the second quarter after exit), status in unsubsidized employment and quarterly earnings through direct Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage match and State Wage Interchange System (SWIS) wages match. Under “Effectiveness in Serving Employers” the State has selected the measures of “Retention with the same employer” and “Employer Penetration Rate.” Employment Security will report performance data for Retention by providing (UI) wage match keeping in mind that this is a shared outcome across all six core programs within the State and will be a combined reporting measure. Wage records will identify a participant’s employment using an establishment identifier – FEIN for example. The Employer Penetration Rate will be determined by each core provider tracking of the number of establishments served within a program year, and the State will collect that data and compare it to the aggregate number of employers in a given State and/or county.

The Unemployment to Reemployment portal presents a series of data-analytic visualizations that are: 1. claimant based (UI certified status); 2. structured by cohort (anchored in the benefit week as determined when the claimant files a new initial claim (time stamp)); 3. longitudinal (sequenced by receipt of a weekly unemployment benefit (i.e., depletion of the maximum benefit amount)); and 4. made locally relevant (geographic coding of each claimant record by place of residence). The success of the portal culminated in a U.S. DOL/ETA-funded Applied Data Analytics training program in the Spring of 2021 that was attended by 120 participants representing 30 states.

#### D. PRIVACY SAFEGUARDS

Describe the privacy safeguards incorporated in the State’s workforce development system, including safeguards required by section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g) and other applicable Federal laws.

Privacy Safeguards are incorporated into the Workforce Development System. Continuing to comply with federal and state laws governing protection of personally identifiable information is a priority during WIOA implementation. Existing privacy safeguards in administering the core programs in Illinois pose opportunities for additional collaboration and interoperability, while efforts also exist to ensure security systems and procedures do not inhibit service integration.

For instance, the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) maintains student data related to high school equivalency exams. Any entities outside of the community college board system submit forms to ICCB staff focused on data accountability to ensure compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 USC § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99), which protects the privacy of student education records. Future considerations include how data integration between required programs can facilitate a smooth transition from high school to the workforce or to post-secondary education while preserving the privacy of their records throughout the workforce system.

The Department of Employment Security’s (IDES) existing system could also serve as a model for cross-agency collaboration. The Labor Exchange Program is a password-protected program backed by a user agreement, including an explanation of how individual data will be used throughout service delivery. Internal communications through the program use a unique participant identification number rather than a Social Security number. The unique identification number could be used across required programs to help preserve privacy and facilitate tracking of that participant by core program partners.

#### 7. PRIORITY OF SERVICE FOR VETERANS.

A. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT THE PRIORITY OF SERVICE PROVISIONS FOR COVERED PERSONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE JOBS FOR VETERANS ACT, CODIFIED AT SECTION 4215 OF 38 U.S.C., WHICH APPLIES TO ALL EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS FUNDED IN WHOLE OR IN PART BY THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR.

B. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL MONITOR PRIORITY OF SERVICE PROVISIONS FOR VETERANS.

C. DESCRIBE THE TRIAGE AND REFERRAL PROCESS FOR ELIGIBLE VETERANS AND OTHER POPULATIONS DETERMINED ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE SERVICES FROM THE JOBS FOR VETERANS STATE GRANTS (JVSG) PROGRAM'S DISABLED VETERANS' OUTREACH PROGRAM (DVOP) SPECIALIST/CONSOLIDATED POSITION.

### **Priority of Service for Veterans**

Illinois places a priority in serving veterans and other eligible persons located throughout the state. Veterans and other eligible persons will receive priority of service in accordance with the Title 38 United States Code 4215, 20 CFR 1010, TEGL 10-09, TEN 15-10, and VPL 07-09. The Comprehensive American Job Centers are committed to helping veterans and other eligible persons find a job. Illinois veterans and other eligible persons have been served over the years through targeted programs administered through the Department of Employment Security (IDES) and the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs in cooperation with other education and workforce agencies.

In Illinois, Employment Security serves as the lead agency for veterans' employment and employer services. The Illinois Department of Employment Security's JVSG Four-Year Stand-Alone State Plan incorporates and aligns with the Illinois Unified State Plan. All veterans, regardless of their characterization of discharge, are provided employment services by Wagner-Peyser staff, using the veterans eligibility triage process in accordance with Veterans Program Letters (VPL) 03-14 with Changes 1 & 2, 07-14, and 03-19. All veterans and other eligible persons coming into the American Job Centers must receive an Initial Assessment from either an Employment Specialist or WIOA staff. If during this Initial Assessment, a veteran or other eligible person self-attests to one or more Significant Barrier(s) to Employment (per Veterans Program Letter 03-14 with changes 1, 2, and 3), then they must be referred to the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist for Individualized Career Services and possible case management. While receiving services from the DVOP specialist, a veteran and other eligible person may continue to receive services from all AJC partners. Once their significant barriers to employment (SBE) have been mitigated and are job-ready, the DVOP specialist will work to place them in active IJL Job Orders, make referrals and provide resumes to the Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) for placement assistance. As a member of the agency's Business Services Team, the LVER advocates for all veterans and other eligible persons with businesses and business groups within the American Job Center's operational area. Any American Job Center staff member can refer a qualified veteran / covered person to the LVER for job development.

DVOP specialists provide employment assistance to all Chapter 31 Referred Veterans - U.S. Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment to include Labor Market Information and Individualized Career Services. For those veterans that are not eligible for VA-VR&E services or may need more specific state-level assistance, the DVOP specialist may refer veterans and other eligible persons to the IDHS-Division of Rehabilitation Services to assess and assist the veteran with mitigating his or her disability in order to meet their employment goal.

DVOPs also work closely with other core and required partners, as well as community supportive service organizations, to help veterans and other eligible persons receive various supportive assistance, training and certification credentials. Some of the highlighted programs serving veterans and other eligible persons in Illinois include:

- IllinoisJobLink.com - Illinois Labor Exchange, an online tool used by veterans and other eligible persons searching for jobs in Illinois, provides Veteran Preference by notifying the veteran job seeker of a job opening 24-48 hours before a non-veteran. This system also signifies the person is being a veteran by placing an American flag next to their name.
- Illinois Joining Forces Foundation - Statewide public and private organizational network that works to identify, collaborate and marshal available resources and services to create efficient access and delivery of these programs to the state's military and veteran communities. One of the main objectives is to provide a network of organizations with improved capacity, awareness and intra-network referrals.
- Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) - RESEA targets any recipient of regular UI or UCX (Unemployment Compensation for Ex-service Members) benefits. The foundational element of the RESEA program is a one-on-one meeting between the claimant and an appropriately trained American Job Center (AJC) staff member to assess the claimant's continuing UI eligibility, employment status, and work search activities. RESEA services must provide participants with: 1) support in the development of an individual reemployment plan; 2) customized career and labor market information; 3) enrollment in the Wagner-Peyser Employment Service program; and 4) information and access to other AJC services and resources that support the claimant's return to work.
- Incarcerated Veterans Transition Program (IVTP) - IVTP offers Illinois' eligible incarcerated veterans employment services during and post confinement at selected Illinois Department of Correction locations.

Nine DVOP specialists comprise the IVTP Team Leads that provide quarterly employment-focused workshops in 15 Illinois Department of Corrections facilities. Employment Security partners with the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) and the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA) to coordinate employment workshops for eligible veterans within 18 months of their maximum release date. Emphasis is placed on job search techniques and resources to help these veterans address the unique significant barriers to employment and other obstacles they may face in order to set them up for successful re-entry into the workforce and communities after their release.

Both DVOP and LVER staff conduct quarterly capacity building workshops to all AJC Partners, focusing on tools and updates to get veterans and other eligible persons hired. These quarterly capacity building workshops provide a platform for all AJC partners to train and educate each other on what they do to support/promote the provision of services or training programs to qualified veterans and other eligible persons.

The State of Illinois has issued policy addressing the priority of services requirement in serving eligible veterans and other eligible persons at the AJC. It requires that AJC staff appropriately identify customers at the point of entry who meet the priority in accordance with state and locally developed and implemented policies and processes. These policies address the provision of services regardless of the method of receipt, whether it be in a physical location or through

technology. In compliance with Federal guidance, state policy details the appropriate priority decision-making that considers the eligibility criteria for enrolling and serving participants.

#### 8. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners), will comply with section 188 of WIOA (if applicable) and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities. This also must include a description of compliance through providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. Describe the State's one-stop center certification policy, particularly the accessibility criteria.

##### **Addressing the Accessibility of the One-Stop Delivery System for Individuals with Disabilities**

Illinois is committed to ensuring both programmatic and physical accessibility to the one-stop delivery system by maintaining compliance with WIOA Section 188, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and all other applicable statutory and regulatory requirements. Compliance monitoring is conducted at the state and local level to make certain that all comprehensive one-stop facilities, programs, services, technology and materials are accessible and available. These services must be provided "on-demand" and in "near real time" in the physical comprehensive one-stop center location or via technology consistent with the "direct linkage" requirement defined in WIOA.

Another significant role in ensuring the physical and programmatic accessibility is the IWIB's One-Stop Center Certification policy discussed in the State Operating Systems and Policies portion of the Unified Plan. The certification criteria specified by the IWIB to evaluate the Comprehensive One-Stop Center's programmatic accessibility ensures equal access to all required programs, services, and activities to eligible participants and employers regardless of their range of abilities, mobility, age, language, learning style, intelligence or education level. Services must be made available without unlawful discrimination. Primary criteria include equal access to career services, equal access to program services, direct linkage and reasonable accommodations. The indoor space is evaluated to make sure there is "equal and meaningful" access to programs for individuals with disabilities. Examples include computer accessibility, ergonomic set-up, screen-reading software programs (JAWS and DRAGON) and access to interpreters.

In addition to the role of the EOMC, the state has participated in or funded initiatives through the one-stop system that expand access to services for individuals with disabilities and that focus on developing relationships by leveraging resources and enhancing employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Opportunity Youth are participating in sector-based training such as Information Technology through a connection between the school district and the one-stop system to make their existing "career pathways" systems fully inclusive of and accessible to individuals with disabilities. A significant improvement in this pilot is the development of an Individualized Career Development Plan (ICDP). The ICDP provides an overview of planned experiences for students participating in secondary school beginning at age 14½, or upon entry to high school. It also aligns with the Illinois Individualized Education Program (IEP) Transition Plan and Summary of Performance components to alleviate duplication of document development for students with disabilities and to provide



comprehensive information about goals and avenues for meeting post-high school goals. It is important to note that the ICDP is a result of discussions between the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and DCEO. Furthermore, ISBE adopted the ICDP for use by special education programs.

Finally, staff training is integral to making sure all services are programmatically and physically accessible. The state has hosted a series of webinar events that include updated provisions on WIOA Section 188, technical assistance provided by Diversity Partners project on leveraging business relations to benefit job seekers with disabilities, and the requirements of Comprehensive One-Stop Center certification. Additionally, the state has and will continue to conduct summits that provide best practices for serving individuals with disabilities.

The Departments of Commerce and Employment Security developed an agreement to better align the ADA monitoring process of American Job Centers. This agreement will allow for better alignment of office inspection timing and for improved cross-agency communication regarding inspection findings. In facilities where both Title III and Title IB staff are located, DCEO will conduct the ADA inspections in order to avoid duplication of services and better align findings and related reports. DCEO will provide IDES with the ADA inspection report after the inspection has been completed. If IDES is the leaseholder, IDES will then work with Central Management Services and/or the landlord to correct any findings.

#### 9. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners) will ensure that each one-stop center is able to meet the needs of English language learners, such as through established procedures, staff training, resources, and other materials. Describe how English language learners will be made aware of the opportunity to enroll and/or co-enroll in all the core programs for which they are eligible.

##### **Addressing the Accessibility of the One-Stop Delivery System for Individuals who are English Language Learners**

In Illinois, there is a great need for interpreters due to limited English proficiency in many portions of the state. Staff members are trained to ensure that an interpreter is provided in these situations “in real time” to meet the needs of English Language Learners. The State of Illinois has a master contract with an interpreting service provider to offer these services to assist English Language Learners.

Adult Education and Literacy is the key education program in the state that provides English language instruction. These services will be coordinated within the one-stop delivery system. The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) English language programs provide instruction to approximately 36,000 students annually. This instruction includes services to adults 16 years and over to achieve competence in reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension of the English language.

Adult Education English language programs provide instruction in civics education, workforce readiness, bridge programs, and Integrated Education and Training to English Language Learners at varying educational functioning levels. Adult Education has recently expanded online instructional efforts to connect more students to English language activities. In addition, the Integrated Education Literacy and Civics Education (IEL/CE) activities are being expanded to include more instruction offered concurrently in English language instruction, Workforce Preparation, Civics Education, and concurrently Integrated Education and Training. ICCB Adult

Education has also developed an IEL/CE toolkit that will assist programs in the development of these instruction offerings. Training for this activity is determined by the ICCB, aligned with research-based strategies and using an equity lens. The trainings are provided to administrators, support staff, and instructors through the Professional Development Network. Additionally, as stated previously, WIOA Title I and Title II, Adult Education will partner within the one-stop center resource rooms to provide an online digital solution for language learning.

One of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's Department of Equal Opportunity Monitoring Compliance (EOMC)'s most essential ongoing goals is to ensure access to all. By working with the LWIAs, EOMC has outlined strategies to prevent discrimination based on national origin by failing to provide language services to someone with limited English proficiency (LEP). As such, under the new rules, recipients must take reasonable steps to ensure that individuals with LEP have meaningful access to aid, benefits, services and training. Together with Central Management Services (CMS), EOMC has secured language transcription and translation services that are utilized statewide with the assistance from contracts executed by the Governor's Office. Multilingual Connections holds the Translation and Interpretation Services Master Contract (19-416CMS-BOSS4-P-8618) through May 13, 2023. Under this contract, Multilingual Connections provides the written translation, audio transcription and in-person interpretation services in dozens of languages. Together, with Propio Language Services, another DoIT communication contract that provides language interpreter services, EOMC can include oral interpretation and written translation of both hard-copy and electronic materials in non-English languages. This service ensures that individuals with LEP are informed about or able to participate in covered programs or activities.

The Illinois workNet portal consolidates resources for job seekers and businesses into one online forum that provides career, education, and work support information. Illinois workNet is designed to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their level of English proficiency, can access workforce services through the portal. Toward this effort, workNet has incorporated Spanish language content. Specifically, local and state content published in Spanish with a language switcher link is available to toggle between Spanish and English pages. The Spanish site provides the model to allow information in additional languages with minimal effort.

The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) collects data on participants' preferred languages. Service providers record the preferred language of applicants who seek to participate in the Workforce Development System to help ensure they have the necessary information to serve LEP individuals as effectively as English-speaking applicants.

By utilizing this front-end approach to language determination, diverse non-English speaking participants will have meaningful access to aid, benefits, services, and training by utilizing the language of choice as administered during applicant inquiry. Breaking down the communication barriers ensures that individuals with LEP are informed about and able to participate in covered programs or activities. EOMC continues to clarify which documents are "vital" and thus must be translated into languages spoken by a significant number or portion of the population eligible to be served or likely to be encountered.

Each recipient must also record the limited English proficiency and preferred language of each applicant, registrant, participant, and terminee. To that end, EOMC continues to clarify which documents are "vital" and thus must be translated into languages spoken by a significant number or portion of the population eligible to be served or likely to be encountered. U.S. DOL CRC has identified and required vital information be offered in the most prevalent languages spoken by a significant number or portion of the population eligible to be served and/or likely to be encountered. EOMC reserves the right to add additional languages as appropriate and has

adopted the following list of specific languages as follows: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, French Creole, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

EOMC continues to educate LWIAs during continuous training seminars on the promising practices to help recipients comply with their legal obligations and includes the components of a plan to facilitate meaningful access for individuals with limited English proficiency. With these increased provisions to provide universal access throughout the workforce system, annual on-site monitoring of all recipients was enacted to provide assurances that recipients are complying with all nondiscriminatory provisions of the law.

Copies of all monitoring reviews are submitted to U.S. DOL during their review schedule. These reports include findings, as well as corrective actions taken to ensure recipients of WIOA funding adhere to the assurance clauses of their contracts. Affirmative outreach efforts are also discussed and reviewed as part of the annual monitoring process at each LWIA. If EOMC determines there is insufficient outreach being performed (either through monitoring or data analysis review), the LWIA is required to complete a corrective action plan detailing how they will improve their efforts to attract the under-represented group(s).

The Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) ensures meaningful and equal access to the Limited English Proficient (LEP) Population so that they may enjoy the benefits, services and programs IDES offers in the same or similar way as English-speaking Illinoisans. Additionally, in August of 2021, IDES created and designated a Language and Disability Access Coordinator position to assist the agency in ensuring compliance with the Nondiscrimination laws.

Language and disability access as well as community outreach, are just a few ways that IDES has supported and furthered its DEI Plan's goals and objectives. There are various ways in which IDES documents these services. Illinois Benefit Information System (IBIS) is a computer software programs that IDES uses to implement and assist in issuing Unemployment Insurance (UI) services to claimants. IBIS tracks LEP claims filed and claimant's preferred languages. This data is used to determine whether IDES is meeting its language needs. IDES also documents the provision of language assistance services via the tracking of its webpages. IDES gathers and monitors data regarding the number of visits on each public facing webpage, including its multilingual pages. IDES uses this data to analyze whether it is meeting its requirements under the U.S. DOL LEP provisions. Economic Information and Analysis (EI&A) is a division within IDES that tracks labor market data on a quarterly basis. EI&A's data analysis also assists in ensuring that IDES can forecast trends and see where its services are needed.

The Office of Equal Opportunity Monitoring and Compliance (EO) Compliance Reporting Unit conducts an analysis and completes various reports which review the agency's LEP services and needs. These reports are the Illinois Bilingual Needs and Bilingual Pay Survey, the Affirmative Action Plan Report, the Illinois State Services Assurances Act Report and the Employment Plan Surveys. The Compliance Unit also reviews all hires and promotions to assess whether IDES employs sufficient bilingual staff to meet the LEP communities' needs. Also, EO's Monitoring Unit reviews Local Offices annually to determine the nature of LEP services that are sufficient to meet the needs of the LEP communities. Additionally, IDES' language line vendor compiles a report regarding the number of calls to the language line, what languages are being requested and the minutes being used on each call. This data is used on a continual basis to ensure IDES is staffed appropriately according to geographic location.

Below is an overview of all language services to be provided to LEP individuals as of January 2022. IDES will or is in the process of providing the following language services to LEP individuals:

- Language Translations Widget on website - IDES has a Google translation widget on its public facing website. This widget allows all IDES webpages to be translated into multiple languages, including but not limited to the 6 most common Illinois languages at an instant. Additionally, IDES has performed a human review for accuracy of the multilingual widget to ensure the integrity of the translation.
- Language Line Services - DES contracts with various vendors to provide language translation services via the telephone. IDES also has created the multilingual telephony AI bot which assists callers in their preferred language. The language line vendor assists IDES in answering calls in hundreds of languages. Additionally, they provide IDES with vital data regarding language needs by geographical location. These services assist IDES in meeting U.S. DOL LEP requirements and determining where additional bilingual staff may be needed.
- Bilingual Employees - IDES employs 148 bilingual employees within its workforce to assist the LEP community in receiving its services and benefits. The languages that the bilingual employees speak are Spanish, Polish and Chinese. All other translation services are conducted via interpreters with our language line services.
- Advisory Councils - IDES has a representative on several Illinois Employment Plan Advisory Councils. The Councils in which IDES has a representative are the Hispanic, Asian American, African American and the Native American Employment Advisory Councils. Each Council is comprised of advocates that represent the specific group's interests and needs with a focus on State services and employment. These Councils offer advice and recommendations for how IDES as well as other State agencies may effectively reach and service, in a meaningful way, the LEP communities that they represent. IDES also holds roundtable discussions with legal aid clinics, the Illinois Language Justice Coalition and other stakeholders and community groups.

#### IV. COORDINATION WITH STATE PLAN PROGRAMS

Describe the methods used for joint planning and coordination among the core programs, and with the required one-stop partner programs and other programs and activities included in the Unified or Combined State Plan.

Illinois uses well-established cross-program groups created by the state workforce board (IWIB) and State agency directors to provide and review plan content to ensure the IWIB's vision for the public workforce development system is faithfully captured in the state's plan. A team of staff from the core partners and representatives from other related agencies used an online collaborative editing process involving all partners. This included regular meetings to review draft content and make edits and suggestions as needed, as well as asynchronous tools to offer suggestions and comments in real time between meetings. This method of plan development allows for robust and coordinated drafting and editing of new content while also being much more efficient.

Further more, key stakeholders were updated throughout the development of the plan to ensure the content matched their needs, expectations and capacities. Interagency groups, the Governor's Office and the IWIB board will continue to provide system leadership and coordination during the implementation of the plan.

This partnership continues as the state workforce board develops a new strategic plan for itself and Illinois crafts a new five-year Economic Development Plan.

#### V. COMMON ASSURANCES (FOR ALL CORE PROGRAMS)

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The State has established a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a State Board or local board member, or the entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts;	Yes
2. The State has established a policy to provide to the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of State Boards and local boards, and information regarding activities of State Boards and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes;	Yes
3. The lead State agencies with optimal policy-making authority and responsibility for the administration of core programs reviewed and commented on the appropriate operational planning elements of the Unified or Combined State Plan, and approved the elements as serving the needs of the populations served by such programs;	Yes
4. (a) The State obtained input into the development of the Unified or Combined State Plan and provided an opportunity for comment on the plan by representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administering the core programs, required one-stop partners and the other Combined Plan programs (if included in the State Plan), other primary stakeholders, including other organizations that provide services to individuals with barriers to employment, and the general public, and that the Unified or Combined State Plan is available and accessible to the general public; (b) The State provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by the State Board, including State agency official(s) for the Unemployment Insurance Agency if such official(s) is a member of the State Board;	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
5. The State has established, in accordance with WIOA section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments made for the core programs to carry out workforce development activities;	Yes
6. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with uniform administrative requirements in this Act, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA section 184(a)(3);	Yes
7. The State has taken the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA section 188, Nondiscrimination, as applicable;	Yes
8. The Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program;	Yes
9. The State will pay an appropriate share (as defined by the State board) of the costs of carrying out section 116, from funds made available through each of the core programs;	Yes
10. The State has a one-stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all one-stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA);	Yes
11. Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate; and	Yes
12. Priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses is provided in accordance with 38 USC 4215 in all workforce preparation, development or delivery of programs or services funded directly, in whole or in part, by the Department of Labor.	Yes

## VI. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

The State must address all program-specific requirements in this section for the WIOA core programs regardless of whether the State submits either a Unified or Combined State Plan.

## PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE I-B

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following with respect to activities carried out under subtitle B—

### A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

#### 1. REGIONS AND LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS

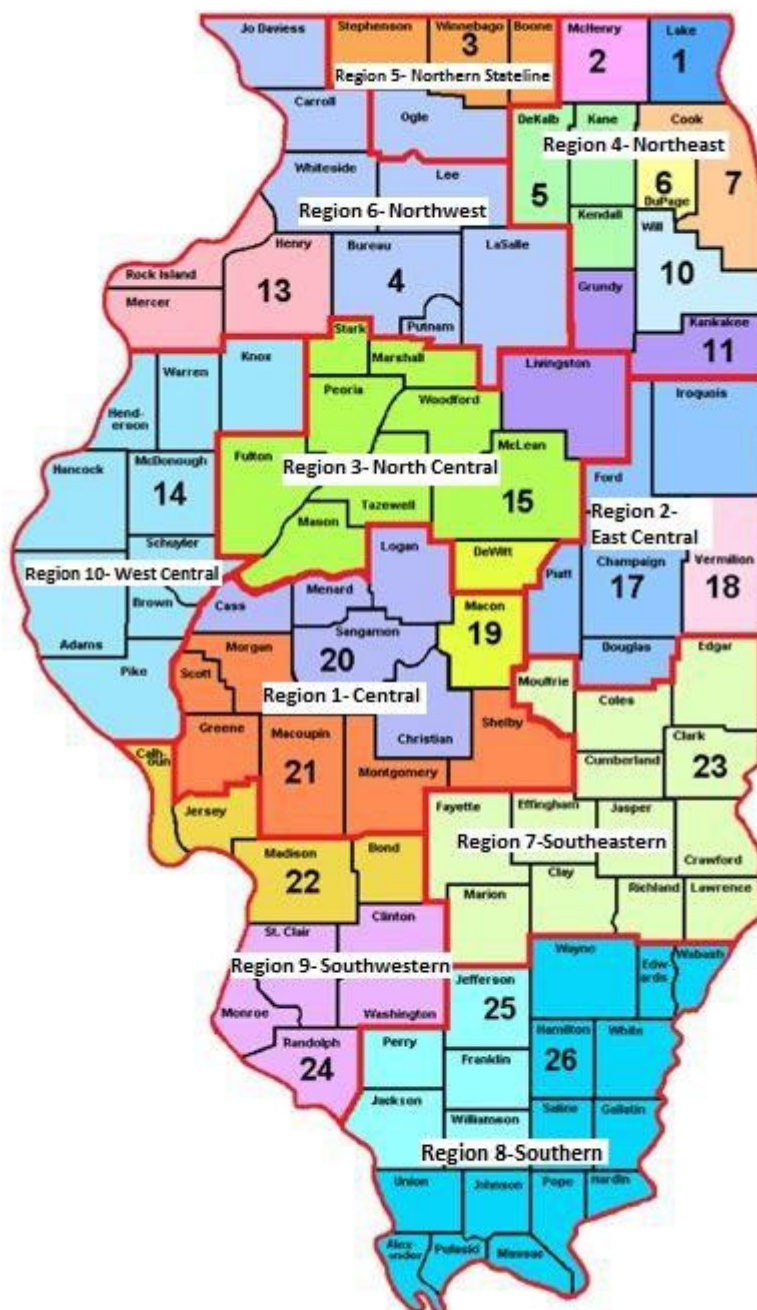
##### A. IDENTIFY THE REGIONS AND THE LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS DESIGNATED IN THE STATE

For purposes of WIOA, the 102 counties in Illinois are grouped into ten Economic Development Regions (EDR) and twenty-two (22) Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIA). The regions range from a relatively compact four counties in the Northern Stateline region to the much larger nineteen (19) county Southern region.

The 22 LWIAs range from six (6) single-county LWIAs to an area with 14 counties. All but one of the single-county LWIAs are located in the Northeastern Economic Development Region that covers the greater Chicagoland area. There are a small number of instances where the EDRs cross LWIA boundaries. The Governor designated ten EDRs that are also used for the purposes of alignment with workforce development. Here is a list of counties in each region:

- Region 1 (Central (12 counties)) - Cass, Christian, Greene, Logan, Macon, Macoupin, Menard, Montgomery, Morgan, Sangamon, Scott, Shelby Counties.
- Region 2 (East Central (6 counties)) - Champaign, Douglas, Ford, Iroquois, Piatt, Vermilion Counties.
- Region 3 (North Central (10 counties)) - De Witt, Fulton, Livingston, Mc Lean, Marshall, Mason, Peoria, Stark, Tazewell, Woodford Counties.
- Region 4 (Northeast (10 counties)) - Cook, De Kalb, Du Page, Grundy, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Lake, Mc Henry, Will Counties.
- Region 5 (Northern Stateline (4 counties)) - Boone, Ogle, Stephenson, Winnebago Counties.
- Region 6 (Northwest (10 counties)) - Bureau, Carroll, Henry, Jo Daviess, La Salle, Lee, Mercer, Putnam, Rock Island, Whiteside Counties.
- Region 7 (Southeastern (13 counties)) - Clark, Clay, Coles, Crawford, Cumberland, Edgar, Effingham, Fayette, Jasper, Lawrence, Marion, Moultrie, Richland Counties.
- Region 8 (Southern (19 counties)) - Alexander, Edwards, Franklin, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Jackson, Jefferson, Johnson, Massac, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Saline, Union, Wabash, Wayne, White, Williamson Counties.
- Region 9 (Southwestern (9 counties)) - Bond, Calhoun, Clinton, Jersey, Madison, Monroe, Randolph, St. Clair, Washington Counties.
- Region 10 (West Central (9 counties)) - Adams, Brown, Hancock, Henderson, Knox, McDonough, Pike, Schuyler, Warren Counties.

The current LWIA boundaries trace their origins back to the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act program of the 1970s. Through the transitions to the Job Training to the Job Training Partnership Act, Workforce Investment Act and now WIOA, the LWIA boundaries remained largely unchanged, save for the consolidations mentioned previously.



The Governor established ten Economic Development Regions (EDR) in 2003 based on contemporary economic data. These regional boundaries were reexamined in 2015 and 2017 and 2018 based on the latest economic data and were found to generally still be valid. While the EDR boundaries largely follow the pre-existing LWIA structure, the overlay is not 100 percent and there are a handful of outlier counties that cause their LWIA to cross into another EDR. These counties are: DeWitt, Ogle and Livingston.



Throughout 2018 and early 2019, the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) used updated labor-market information provided by the Department of Employment Security (IDES) to facilitate local negotiations for realigning selected outlier counties between four local workforce areas. Effective July 1, 2019, Calhoun and Jersey counties transitioned from LWIA 21 to LWIA 22; and Douglas county transitioned from LWIA 23 to LWIA 17.

The State is requesting a waiver, described further later in this section, to extend the deadline for bringing all LWIA boundaries into full alignment with the EDRs.

**B. DESCRIBE THE PROCESS AND POLICY USED FOR DESIGNATING LOCAL AREAS, INCLUDING PROCEDURES FOR DETERMINING WHETHER THE LOCAL AREA MET THE CRITERIA FOR “PERFORMED SUCCESSFULLY” AND “SUSTAINED FISCAL INTEGRITY” IN ACCORDANCE WITH 106(B)(2) AND (3) OF WIOA. DESCRIBE THE PROCESS USED FOR IDENTIFYING REGIONS AND PLANNING REGIONS UNDER SECTION 106(A) OF WIOA. THIS MUST INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE STATE CONSULTED WITH THE LOCAL BOARDS AND CHIEF ELECTED OFFICIALS IN IDENTIFYING THE REGIONS**

*Procedures for Determining if Local Areas Met the Criteria for “Performed Successfully”*

Illinois issued the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Transition Policy 1 to address the initial designation of local areas as required by WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) Number 27-14 that was issued by the United States Department of Labor (DOL). The process for designating Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIA) under WIOA was established by WIOA Transition Policy 1, issued on April 23, 2015. This policy letter describes conditions necessary for the Governor to approve a request to designate an area, defines “performed successfully” and “sustained fiscal integrity” as required by the Act. “The term “performed successfully” used with respect to a local area, means the local area met or exceeded the adjusted levels of performance for core indicators of performance described in Section 136(b)(2)(A) of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, as in effect the day before the date of enactment of WIOA for each of the last two (2) consecutive years for which data are available preceding the determination of performance under this paragraph;” “The term “sustained fiscal integrity”, used with respect to a local area, means that the Secretary of Labor has not made a formal determination, during within of the last two (2) consecutive years preceding the determination regarding such integrity, that either the grant recipient or the administrative entity of the area misappropriated funds provided under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (as in effect prior to the effective date of WIOA subtitle B) due to willful disregard of the requirements of the provision involved, gross negligence, or failure to comply with accepted standards of administration.” The conditions necessary for the governor to designate a local area as described in the policy letter are:

- The local area was designated under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 on or before July 1, 2012.
- The local area successfully met or exceeded adjusted performance requirements for core indicators under Section 136(b)(2)(A) of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 for each of the most recent two consecutive years for which data are available.
- The local area did not receive a declaration of having failed to sustain fiscal integrity for the two prior program years by the Secretary of Labor.
- All county Chief Elected Officials (CEO) within a current LWIA, following a review of all current operations of the local area and by signature on the request, agree to all matters with regard to the request for designation by the state of the current local area. The

majority (20 of 22) of the local workforce areas in Illinois met the criteria outlined in Section 1.A of TEGL 27-14. All of the Chief Elected Officials that met these criteria, in consultation with the local workforce boards, submitted a request to be designated as a local area under WIOA.

#### *Procedures for Determining if Local Areas Sustained Fiscal Integrity*

In determining whether the grant recipient/administrative entity in the local area sustained fiscal integrity, the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity reviewed the following for the two-year period immediately preceding Program Year 2015: 1) Formal determinations of disallowed costs and non-compliance as documented by reports of the results of the state's WIA/WIOA monitoring, single audits and DOL monitoring (if applicable); 2) Results of investigations of incident reports alleging gross negligence, fraud, abuse or other misconduct; and 3) Formal communication of high-risk status and/or suspension of cash payments resulting from continued violations of administrative requirements and grant terms and conditions and the subsequent corrective actions implemented by the local area to correct the violations. The implementation of the Illinois Grant Accountability and Transparency Act established standard pre-award, establishment and grant administration procedures across all state agencies. This added another set of tools to ensure grant recipients sustain fiscal integrity.

#### *Process Used to Determine Regions and Planning Regions*

Regional Planning Areas were designated to align with the state's ten Economic Development Regions (EDR). These ten regions address the WIOA Section 106 requirement that the Governor identify and organize local workforce boards and core program partners into regional planning areas to engage in joint planning, coordinate service delivery, share administrative costs and enter regional coordination efforts with economic development agencies operating in the same region. The ten regions were first established in 2003 by the Governor based on the analysis of statewide commuting patterns surrounding major and minor metropolitan centers and other economic factors.

As mentioned in the prior section, the state completed a new economic analysis in 2018 and the data confirmed this regional alignment is still appropriate. In early 2015, the Department collaborated with the Illinois Community College Board on creating a strategic plan for workforce and education. The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (Commerce) and the Department of Employment Security (Employment Security) and the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) made the local areas and community college districts aware the data indicated the EDRs were still valid. Furthermore, we jointly announced our intent to strengthen the linkages of all our efforts to economic development by using these regions as the base for community college and WIOA planning regardless of community college district and LWIA alignments. As part of the ICCB planning, data packets for each region were prepared that included a map showing how the community college districts and LWIAs overlapped with the planning regions. To promote continuity from the ICCB planning, these data packets were also used by WIOA regional planning teams. Updated data packets were prepared by the State Interagency Data Team and distributed to regional planning teams for each WIOA planning cycle.

### **C. PROVIDE THE APPEALS PROCESS AND POLICY REFERRED TO IN SECTION 106(B)(5) OF WIOA RELATING TO DESIGNATION OF LOCAL AREAS**

Illinois WIOA Transition Policy 1 provides that the Governor's decision regarding local area requests for initial designation may be appealed in accordance with Sections 679.290 of the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. The policy also describes conditions under which the governor may approve a request for initial designation as a local workforce development area under

WIOA from any area that was designated as a local area under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998, but failed to meet all the aforementioned requirements; and conditions under which the governor may also designate a local workforce development area upon the request of the State Workforce Development Board. Furthermore, the policy describes the appeals process that may be used should a local area disagree with the Governor's determination and provides an application form to be filed by local area CEOs. Local areas may appeal to the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board, which has 60 days to render a decision. If a decision has not been made by that time or if the appeal does not result in a designation, the entity may appeal to the Secretary of Labor. There were no local workforce areas that appealed the Governor's decision regarding initial designation.

#### D. PROVIDE THE APPEALS PROCESS AND POLICY REFERRED TO IN SECTION 121(H)(2)(E) OF WIOA RELATING TO DETERMINATIONS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

The appeals process relating to the determinations for infrastructure funding and the State Funding Mechanism is outlined in the Governor's Guidelines for MOU Development (Revision 4), included as Attachment G, formerly Attachment J in the Unified State Plan. Specifically, the appeals process is described in Part VI, Section 3, pp. 23-24, and is as follows:

From Part VI, Section 3:

*24. Grounds for Appeal: As provided in 20 CFR Part 678.750, a required partner may appeal the Governor's determination based on a claim that:*

*a. The Governor's determination is inconsistent with the proportionate share requirements of 20 CFR Parts 678.735, 678.736 and 678.737; or*

*b. The Governor's determination is inconsistent with the cost contribution caps described in 20 CFR Part 678.738;*

*25. Appeals process: An appeal to the interagency work groups comprised of representatives of core and required partners established to act on behalf of the Governor must be made within 21 days of the Governor's determination of each required partner's proportionate share of comprehensive one-stop center infrastructure costs;*

*a. Action at the State level on the appeal must occur within 30 days of the date of an appeal.*

*b. Following State action on the appeal, a required partner may request a review of this determination through an appeal to the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board.*

*c. The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board has 30 days to either hear the appeal and render a decision or to inform the required partner of its decision not to hear an appeal.*

*d. In instances where the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board refuses to hear a required partner appeal, the State-level decision stands.*

## 2. STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES

#### A. PROVIDE STATE POLICIES OR GUIDANCE FOR THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM AND FOR USE OF STATE FUNDS FOR WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES

The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (Commerce) oversees the administration of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title IB and Trade Adjustment Assistance Training programs. As administrator, Commerce issues policy guidance through its series of policy letters and notices that are posted on the Illinois workNet portal

(<https://apps.il-work-net.com/WIOAPolicy/Policy/Home>). Commerce has issued guidance on the implementation and administration of WIOA for the following activities:

- Data Management and Reporting
- Fiscal Reporting and Accountability
- General Administration
- Governance
- Performance Management
- Planning
- Program Eligibility
- Training

More specifically, the following policies have been developed and issued through Commerce's Office of Employment and Training (OET):

- Guidance was issued to provide the Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIB), Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIA), core partner programs, service and training providers, sub-grantees and other interested parties with an overview of the implementation steps Commerce, primarily through OET, has taken to implement the provisions of WIOA. This insured a seamless transition for the customers during intake and the continued provision of career and training services, including the expanded training services described in WIOA. This guidance also addressed reporting requirements during and after the transition period as changes to the workforce data reporting system, Illinois Workforce Development System (IWDS), is being updated.
- Membership and certification of LWIBs under WIOA is governed under policies that are consistent with the new provisions including the assurance of more streamlined boards, but with a majority of business members and minimum percentage of labor and community service organizations represented. Emphasis was placed on ensuring the business representatives reflect the regional industry sectors, labor market information (LMI) and the diversity among populations. This policy provided new forms for completion for nominated applicants to the board, as well as reiterated the process for appointees with fixed and staggered terms. Certification (and recertification) of the boards is conducted by OET only after a review of the requisite information on each local board member to ensure appropriate composition is maintained. This process further includes reviews of LWIB bylaws, and compliance with the Sunshine Provision and parliamentary procedures.
- Policy was implemented to address chief elected officials (CEO) in each LWIA to include an understanding of their required functions, which is confirmed through a CEO agreement signed by each CEO in the LWIA. The agreement further addresses those LWIAs that have multiple CEOs when there is more than one unit of general local government residing within the boundaries of the area. CEOs are given the authority as the local grant recipient, including the authority to designate local grant sub-recipients and fiscal agents for the Title IB funds of WIOA. It also defines each CEO's liability for WIOA funds determined to be misspent or used for unallowable purposes.

- Eligibility policies have been written to ensure all the requirements of WIOA are clearly outlined for the local areas and their staff providing the intake and registration of customers. ALL customers of the system, whether served by local one-stop staff, through technology, or self-served, are included in the general eligibility policy. Those seeking more than self-service assistance are then determined eligible based on the funding stream they will be served under including the youth, adult and dislocated worker populations. Detailed descriptions of the eligibility requirements and documentation sources allowed confirming such eligibility decisions provide guidance to the career planner in their decision making. The documentation is further outlined to determine low-income status, veteran or qualified spouse of a veteran status, and identity and employment eligibility. Priority of service is emphasized throughout to all population identified as priority of service within WIOA taking into account preference to veterans. A stand-alone priority of service policy will be created as equity goals discussed earlier in the plan are developed. Priority of service is also given for individualized career services and training services for adults who are either recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient.
- WIOA policy was issued to provide guidance to all training providers (including new providers and those previously provided transitional eligibility) and the LWIB and LWIA on the process for determining eligibility of providers and training programs. Illinois has required LWIAs to develop and implement local policies as necessary. The policy includes initial and continued eligibility of all providers, with separate guidance for those Registered Apprenticeships choosing to be added to the eligible training provider list (ETPL). In limited instances, there are exceptions for when a training provider is not required to apply for eligibility determination by the local boards. In addition to the IWDS system which is the main intake point for applications of eligibility by training providers and for their training programs, the state's online workforce system, Illinois workNet, will maintain information on all eligible training providers and their programs, as well as performance information as it becomes available. This list highlights those programs that meet the state's requirements for in-demand occupations. The current procedures are currently under review by a work group to address the performance collection requirements for all students, streamline the current approval process for eligibility, and make suggestions for changes to the reporting system.
- The IWIB approved procedures for communications between the board, its executive committee, and the Interagency Technical Assistance Team especially as they pertain to the continued implementation of WIOA. The State developed guidance and instructions regarding 1) Regional and Local Planning Requirements, 2) Governor's Guidelines to State and Local Program Partners Negotiating Costs and Services under WIOA, and 3) Criteria and Procedures for Certifying Comprehensive One-Stop Centers under WIOA. The State issued policy and procedures for the procurement of the One-Stop Operator (OSO) as required by *Training and Employment Guidance Letter 15-16 (TEGL 15-16)*. The policy emphasizes the requirements of TEGL 15-16 and the contractual provisions in 2 CFR 200.318 through 200.326. Part of this requirement is for the LWIB and the selected *One-Stop Operator* to enter into a legally binding agreement which may take the form of a written contract or another type of agreement, such as a *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)* which is explained in the Competition Requirements section below. Following Illinois WIOA assessment, the State updated the OSO policy and procedures and conducted a monitoring review of all OSO Agreements.

- Under a work group structure, Illinois continues development of policy to address all the types of training services allowed under WIOA. The first of these training options was on-the-job training (OJT) for which recent policy was issued. General requirements for all OJTs outline the guidance for potential new employees or eligible underemployed workers that provide an opportunity for acquisition of new skills or knowledge essential to job performance. Eligibility of participants and employers, including apprenticeships, addresses the types of customers (job seeker, incumbent worker and business) allowed through OJT contracts. To ensure proper implementation, local workforce boards are required to set policy for OJTs. The employer reimbursement scale is detailed to both attract businesses and ensure they have a level of accountability to the training program and customer's success. Monitoring and evaluation guidance assures further accountability.
- The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity is currently working with the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation to encourage LWIBs to include legal aid services as an allowable supportive service as outlined under § 680.900 and § 681.570 of the WIOA Final Rule into state policy. Legal aid can help support WIOA's goals by expunging or sealing old criminal records; obtaining, reinstating revoked or suspended driver's licenses; assisting with securing occupational licenses when a criminal record is a discretionary obstacle; untangling outstanding court debt issues; negotiating wage garnishments, such as for child support orders; securing certificates of rehabilitation for the formerly incarcerated; stabilizing lives by preventing illegal evictions, resolving credit report problems, or filing for domestic violence restraining orders; and assisting veterans with accessing healthcare, education grants, and housing services. The Ready-to-Work ("R2W") Initiative is a "community redevelopment" project designed "to help individuals overcome legal barriers to getting and or keeping a job." Under the initiative, legal aid grantees partner with workforce development agencies to provide on-site intake and develop referral relationships to help job seekers address obstacles including criminal records, driver's license suspensions, wage theft, and related civil legal issues. As part of the Ready-to-Work initiative, legal aid groups (specifically Cabrini Green Legal Aid, LAF, Prairie State Legal Services, Land of Lincoln Legal Aid and Illinois Legal Aid Online) have forged partnerships with 12 workforce development agencies and 26 community-based programs across the state. Partners include the North Lawndale Employment Network, Jane Addams Resource Center, National ABLE (Pilsen & Chicago Heights), CARA, Growing Home, Man-Tra-Con, Madison County Employment & Training, Vermillion County Works, the Job Center of Lake County, and Illinois workNet Centers (Champaign & Peoria).
- Title IB ePolicy Chapter 6.1 titled *Annual Allocation and Modification Requirement of WIOA Formula Grant Funds* provides guidelines by which the Title IB Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) formula grants shall be established and modified. The State will provide additional guidance through an annual funding notice that includes information regarding the formula allocations and any additional guidance that is applicable to the program year funds.
- Title IB ePolicy Chapter 3.5 titled *Incentives and Sanctions for Performance* a required statewide activity policy related to the Title IB incentive bonus awards and sanctions associated with exceeding and failing negotiated performance standards. In addition, it provides the bonus incentive measures related to completion of training in a demand occupation and subsequent employment in that occupation.

- Title IB ePolicy Chapter 6.2.1 titled *Dislocated Worker Emergency Assistance Application* outlines a statewide Rapid Response policy to provide additional assistance to local areas that experience disasters, mass layoffs, or plant closings, or other events that precipitate substantial increases in the number of unemployed individuals, carried out in local areas by the State, working in conjunction with the local boards and the chief elected officials for the local areas.

Beginning in March 2020, a small number of policy notices were issued in response to Covid-19 social distancing mandates with guidance on holding virtual local workforce board meetings, handling digital signatures and how local boards and one-stop operators should work with one-stop partners to safely reopen American Job Centers.

**B. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE INTENDS TO USE GOVERNOR'S SET ASIDE FUNDING FOR MANDATORY AND DISCRETIONARY ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING HOW THE STATE WILL CONDUCT EVALUATIONS OF TITLE I ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES.**

Commerce works with the IWIB and WIOA core partners to implement the strategies and activities outlined in the Unified Plan. Governor's set aside funding will be used as appropriate and available for statewide initiatives that support the vision, principles, goals and strategies articulated within the WIOA Unified State Plan. Projects must also align with the priorities outlined in the Regional and Local Workforce Plans. There are four general categories of activity that Illinois will support with these funds.

*Sector Partnership Projects*

- Implement new or expanded local and regional sector-based partnerships that increase the workforce investment system's capacity to provide critical training that aligns with the needs of businesses and industries. Activities include regional planning and sector strategies that will align resources to address skills, competency and credential realignment with training providers and other needs of in-demand industries, including Talent Pipeline Management training academies. Regional planning and sector strategies support participants by assessing the regional economic landscape to identify new or growing employment opportunities in the region. They also help ensure that partnerships and regional assets from the workforce investment system, industry, community colleges, labor unions, nonprofits, and other stakeholders are aligned and integrated under strategies that can be used to respond to economic shocks, such as plant closings, natural disasters, and long-term unemployment within the regional workforce.

*Innovative Workforce Pilot and Research Projects*

- Implementing innovative programs and strategies designed to meet the needs of business, which may include incumbent worker training programs, customized training, sectoral and industry cluster strategies and implementation of industry or sector partnerships, career pathway programs, apprenticeships, microenterprise and entrepreneurial training and support programs, utilization of effective business intermediaries, layoff aversion strategies, activities to improve linkages between workforce partners, and other business services and strategies that better engage employers in workforce investment activities and make the workforce development system more relevant to the needs of State and local businesses.

- Developing or identifying education and training programs that respond to real-time labor market analysis; that utilize direct assessment and prior learning assessment to measure and provide credit for prior knowledge, skills, competencies, and experiences; that evaluate such skills and competencies for adaptability; that ensure credits are portable and stackable for more skilled employment and that accelerate course or credential completion.

#### *Priority Population Projects*

- Developing strategies for effectively serving individuals with barriers to employment and for coordinating programs and services among workforce partners. Projects may include, but are not limited to, the coordination of employment and training activities with:
- Child support services, and assistance provided by State and local agencies carrying out Part D of Title IV of the Social Security Act (42 USC 651 et seq.);
- Cooperative extension programs carried out by the Illinois Department of Agriculture;
- Programs carried out in local areas for individuals with disabilities, including programs carried out by State agencies relating to intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities, activities carried out by Statewide Independent Living Councils established under section 705 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 USC 796d), programs funded under Part B of Chapter 1 of Title VII of such Act (29 USC 796e et seq.), and activities carried out by centers for independent living, as defined in section 702 of such Act (29 USC 796a);
- Adult education and literacy activities, including those provided by public libraries;
- Activities in the corrections system that assist returning citizens as they reenter the workforce;
- Financial literacy activities;
- Supporting the development of alternative, evidence-based programs and other activities that enhance the choices available to eligible youth and encourage such youth to re-enter and complete secondary education, enroll in postsecondary education and advanced training, progress through a career pathway, and enter unsubsidized employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency.

#### *Statewide Technical Assistance and WIOA Implementation Projects*

- Providing technical assistance to local boards, chief elected officials, one-stop operators, workforce partners, and eligible providers in local areas, such as: the development and training of staff, identification and development of exemplary program activities, and assistance in abandoning less effective or less efficient but well-entrenched practices.
- Providing technical assistance to improve the integration of case management, training services, supportive services, business services, and employer engagement among workforce, education and economic development partners.
- Provide professional development training for Title I and Title III staff focusing on business sector partnerships to assist in the development of career pathways,



onboarding and upskilling training opportunities while developing a comprehensive pipeline of talent to meet the local industry needs.

- Statewide activity funds will be used to support implementation of the Illinois Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA). This Act aims to transition the state away from the generation of fossil fuels in favor of renewable energy sources. The Act provides dedicated funding for training new workers and re-training incumbent workers. State and local workforce staff will be providing complimentary service and support as CEJA is implemented across the state.
- Set aside funds are being used to develop a replacement for the antiquated Illinois Workforce Development System (IDWS) used to track and report on Title IB customers. The current system was initially deployed approximately three decades ago. Creation of the replacement system is in its first phases and is slated to go active in approximately two years.

Evaluations of program activities and outcomes will be undertaken by State staff in conjunction with the various State Workforce Board committees and work groups and may include the assistance of outside contractors. Potential evaluations under consideration are related to apprenticeship activity and service equity, including disproportionate impact analysis for Title IB program outcomes; geographic equity in service delivery and outcomes; and the National Dislocated Worker Grant QUEST initiative, among others.

C. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL UTILIZE RAPID RESPONSE FUNDS TO RESPOND TO LAYOFFS AND PLANT CLOSINGS AND COORDINATE SERVICES TO QUICKLY AID COMPANIES AND THEIR AFFECTED WORKERS. STATES ALSO SHOULD DESCRIBE ANY LAYOFF AVERSION STRATEGIES THEY HAVE IMPLEMENTED TO ADDRESS AT RISK COMPANIES AND WORKERS.

#### *Layoff Aversion Strategies*

Illinois has long believed the best layoff aversion strategy is prevention. Layoff aversion begins as soon as a company realizes it must adjust to remain competitive in its market. Such adjustments could be streamlining operations for improved productivity or taking advantage of a market opportunity to create new revenue streams or otherwise increase profitability. Often these operational adjustments require upskilling incumbent workers and/or access to new skilled workers. The challenge lies in being able to help businesses before it's too late.

A key Title IB layoff aversion activity is incumbent worker training. We encourage and support skill upgrades that create new or improve existing revenue streams for employers, increase productivity, improve operational efficiencies or reduce employee turnover. Each of these types of training contribute to layoff aversion.

#### *Rapid Response Support for Layoff Aversion*

The state of Illinois wants to prepare workers for careers. Helping workers find ways to refresh their skills and credentials to stay competitive gives those workers an advantage in the labor market over the long run. One promising and efficient way to refresh skills is through work-based learning opportunities. Sometimes, learning on the job can also save a worker from being laid off and, continue to contribute to the company's growth and success. Companies make decisions daily that may affect workers' employment status, including needing to downsize to remain competitive, eliminate jobs that are not needed anymore, or lay off workers when their skills are no longer relevant to the company's mission.

Proactive investments in layoff aversion benefit the state, businesses and workers by retaining jobs and helping workers pivot into a new role in the company or find employment quickly elsewhere. New grant opportunities will be offered as funds are available throughout the plan term.

Programs generally address one or more of the activities listed below:

- projects connect talent strategies with business needs
- projects support businesses and workers that are impacted or at risk of being impacted by company closures or layoffs
- projects expand work-based learning opportunities including apprenticeships for targeted populations
- projects provide skill upgrading/training services to businesses and workers impacted or at risk of being impacted by company closures or layoffs.

For Rapid Response Activity, the State of Illinois considers a layoff averted when:

- A worker's job is saved with an existing employer that is at risk of downsizing or closing; or
- A worker at risk of dislocation transitions to a different job with the same employer or a new job with a different employer and experiences no or minimal unemployment.

A successful layoff aversion program averts layoff costs and reduces the financial risks to the employer and community as well as the Unemployment Insurance benefit costs. Further, the worker continues paying payroll and other taxes which results in a positive outcome for all. Layoff aversion provides workers with new skills to retain their existing job or quickly transition to a new one and maintain financial stability. The value for employers is remaining competitive in the global economy and saving operational, overhead and productivity costs by training current, reliable employees rather than going through the process of replacing them. Applicants that administer layoff aversion projects are required to identify the factors that contribute to the “risk” of layoffs. Below are some of the “risk” indicators Illinois identified to determine if a business needs training assistance to maintain a competitive workforce.

- Declining Sales
- Misalignment of competency skill sets
- Supply Chain Issues
- Industry/Market Trends
- Changes in Management Philosophy or Ownership
- Worker Does Not Have the Necessary Skills
- Strong Possibility of a Job If a Worker Attains New Skills
- Other “At-Risk” Indicators

As part of layoff aversion strategies, the Rapid Response Team connects companies to Unemployment Insurance programs, such as WorkShare IL, a program designed to prevent layoffs or to reemploy dislocated workers quickly. WorkShare IL allows an employer to reduce the number of hours worked in any unit of their business in order to avoid permanent layoffs.

This is a voluntary program that provides employers facing a decline in business with an alternative to layoffs. Employees receive a corresponding percentage of unemployment benefits during the period of temporary reduction to offset the reduction in earnings. Retaining compensation and benefits during the decline can increase the likelihood that experienced workers will be available to resume full-time work as business demand increases.

#### D. DESCRIBE THE STATE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES TO PROVIDE RAPID RESPONSES IN CASES OF NATURAL DISASTERS INCLUDING COORDINATION WITH FEMA AND OTHER ENTITIES.

The Department of Commerce is the lead state agency for coordinating rapid response activity in Illinois. The Rapid Response Team includes the Department of Commerce Rapid Response Staff, IDES Staff, Local Workforce Area Staff and other partners, as appropriate. These partners coordinate efforts to make impacted workers and businesses aware of available services, eligibility requirements and the application process.

The Illinois Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act, requires employers to provide 60 days advance notice of pending plant closures or mass layoffs. The law applies to “business enterprises” with 75 or more employees (excluding part-time employees). A covered “mass layoff” under Illinois WARN is a reduction in force (“RIF”) at a single site of employment that is not the result of a “plant closing” and results in employment losses during any 30-day period (or, in some cases, during any 90-day period) for at least 33% of the employees and at least 25 employees, or at least 250 employees regardless of the percentage. Pursuant to the Illinois and Federal Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act (WARN) requirements, Illinois initiates an annual mailing to over 12,000 employers. The mailing includes information on reporting requirements and layoff aversion services such as WorkShare IL and Rapid Response.

While rapid response is required for closures and mass layoffs, it is the Department of Commerce’s policy that effective rapid response services are to be provided to as many workers and companies as possible. Rapid Response funds will be used to administer all of the required and allowable activities outlined in WIOA, including, but not limited to:

- Layoff aversion activities;
- Immediate and on-site contact with the employer, representatives of the affected workers and the local community;
- The provision of information and access to unemployment compensation benefits and programs, such as short-time compensation, comprehensive one-stop system services, and employment and training activities, including information on the Trade Adjustment Assistance program, Pell Grants, the GI Bill, and other resources;
- The delivery of other necessary services and resources including workshops and classes, use of worker transition centers, and job fairs, to support reemployment efforts for affected workers;
- Partnership with the local board(s) and chief elected official(s) to ensure a coordinated response to the dislocation event and, as needed, obtain access to state or local economic development assistance. Such coordinated response may include the development of an application for a national dislocated worker grant as provided under WIOA;
- The provision of emergency assistance adapted to the particular layoff or disaster;

- Developing systems and processes for identifying and gathering information for early warning of potential layoffs or opportunities for layoff aversion, analyzing, and acting upon, data and information on dislocations and other economic activity in the state, region, or local area; and tracking outcome and performance data and information related to the activities of the rapid response program;
- Developing and maintaining partnerships with other appropriate federal, state and local agencies and officials, employer associations, technical councils, other industry business councils, labor organizations, and other public and private organizations, as applicable, in order to:
  - Conduct strategic planning activities to develop strategies for addressing dislocation events and ensuring timely access to a broad range of necessary assistance;
  - Develop mechanisms for gathering and exchanging information and data relating to potential dislocations, resources available, and the customization of layoff aversion or rapid response activities, to ensure the ability to provide rapid response services as early as possible;
- Delivery of services to worker groups for which a petition for Trade Adjustment Assistance has been filed;
- The provision of additional assistance and funding to local areas that experience disasters, layoffs, or other dislocation events when such events exceed the capacity of the local area to respond with existing resources; and
- Provision of guidance and financial assistance as appropriate, in establishing a labor management committee if voluntarily agreed to by the employee's bargaining representative and management. The committee may devise and oversee an implementation strategy that responds to the reemployment needs of the workers.

Natural disasters create more significant impacts than economically-driven layoffs because multiple facets of individuals' lives are disrupted, sometimes permanently and often without warning. Natural disasters in Illinois are typically related to: tornadoes, flooding, ice and snow, drought, and less frequently, earthquakes and fires. State rapid response staff mobilize upon learning that a natural disaster is underway to assist in the provision of allowable and appropriate services. The State reserves statewide rapid response funds that are available to quickly provide resources to the local workforce area(s) to serve eligible participants. In instances where the Federal Emergency Management Agency declares a *public assistance* disaster area the State will typically submit a National Dislocated Worker Grant.

In October 2019 the State of Illinois received approval of a waiver to allow the use of statewide funds reserved by the Governor to provide statewide rapid response activities (i.e. WIOA section 134(a)(2)(A)), and for use to provide statewide employment and training activities (i.e. WIOA section 134(a)(2)(B) and (3)) in order to provide comprehensive Disaster Recovery assistance to affected areas as described in WIOA 170(d) and 20 CFR 687.100(b). Under this waiver permitted WIOA statewide fund use includes expeditious allocation of funds to a local workforce innovation board, or local board, so they may respond quickly to a disaster, emergency, or other qualifying event as described at 20 CFR 687.100(b). Only those events, and cascading events caused by a

qualifying event, that have been declared as an emergency or disaster by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), by the chief official of a Federal Agency with jurisdiction over the Federal response to a disaster with potential significant loss of employment, or the Governor of Illinois qualify for the use of WIOA statewide funds.

E. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE PROVIDES EARLY INTERVENTION (E.G., RAPID RESPONSE) AND ENSURES THE PROVISION OF APPROPRIATE CAREER SERVICES TO WORKER GROUPS ON WHOSE BEHALF A TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE (TAA) PETITION HAS BEEN FILED. (SECTION 134(A)(2)(A) AND TAA SECTION 221(A)(2)(A) .) THIS DESCRIPTION MUST INCLUDE HOW THE STATE DISSEMINATES BENEFIT INFORMATION TO PROVIDE WORKERS IN THE GROUPS IDENTIFIED IN THE TAA PETITIONS WITH AN ACCURATE UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROVISION OF TAA BENEFITS AND SERVICES IN SUCH A WAY THAT THEY ARE TRANSPARENT TO THE DISLOCATED WORKER APPLYING FOR THEM (TRADE ACT SEC. 221(A)(2)(A) AND SEC. 225; GOVERNOR-SECRETARY AGREEMENT). DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE FUNDS THAT HAVE BEEN RESERVED FOR RAPID RESPONSE TO PROVIDE SERVICES FOR EVERY WORKER GROUP THAT FILES A TAA PETITION AND HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THE PROVISION OF APPROPRIATE CAREER SERVICE TO WORKERS IN THE GROUPS IDENTIFIED IN THE PETITION (TAA SEC. 221(A)(2)(A)).NOTE: UNTIL THE TAA PROGRAM IS REAUTHORIZED, THE REQUIREMENTS TO PROVIDE RAPID RESPONSE AND APPROPRIATE CAREER SERVICES TO WORKER GROUPS ON WHOSE BEHALF A PETITION HAS BEEN FILED IS NOT APPLICABLE.

The state will use the information developed by the interagency data team, feedback from regional sector partnerships and intelligence from economic development officials to expand layoff aversion efforts and respond to the needs of businesses before layoffs occur. As the Department of Commerce Office of Employment and Training receives notice of potential layoffs and petition filings, the Rapid Response team organizes and establishes logistics for informational meetings for Trade impacted and non-Trade Act impacted worker groups. In addition to members of the Rapid Response team investigating news articles, the Trade Unit reviews all WARN filings, Mass Layoff Statistics and the USDOL website for filed petitions and certifications that may have ties to Illinois. These activities ensure early petition filing and outreach to workers who may be affected by foreign trade. The Rapid Response team includes partners from IDES and Title 1B administrators from the local workforce areas, as well as other partner programs based on worker and situational needs. An overview of the Trade Adjustment Assistance benefits and services including the next steps if the petition is certified is presented. Since workers oftentimes are not all scheduled for layoff on the same date, multiple workshops are held to provide the Trade specific information to the workers. Staff, including Title 1B, has access to updated Trade Program forms and information on Illinois workNet, and ongoing support and technical assistance from the Department of Commerce and the Department of Employment Security UI and Trade program staff.

Once certified, the Benefits, Rights and Obligations document, along with Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Trade Readjustment Assistance (TRA) and RTAA/ATAA benefits are covered at length with the affected workers. Rapid Response Reserve funds are dedicated to layoff aversion strategies and to assist businesses and laid-off workers. Funding supports businesses and workers impacted or at risk of being impacted by company closures or layoffs. The goal of this program is to help businesses avert layoffs where possible and help current workers retrain to meet the companies' current workforce needs and to help those workers who were laid off successfully and quickly re-enter the workforce.

Commerce is interested in investing in projects that specifically identify employers that are at-risk and to serve WIOA-eligible workers; including projects for recently separated veterans; projects that connect employers to WIOA eligible dislocated workers, eligible incumbent workers through short-term, on-the-job and customized training programs; and registered apprenticeships before or after layoff and prior to new employment.

Training projects must provide workers with new skills to retain their existing job or meet new company workforce needs. In the case of a layoff, the goals are to quickly transition to a new job and maintain financial stability. The value for employers is remaining competitive in the global economy and saving operational, overhead and productivity costs by training current, reliable employees rather than going through the process of replacing them. For laid-off workers, Rapid Response Reserve funds offer additional assistance for outreach and recruitment, training, supportive services and in the case of large layoffs, these funds also provide assistance for transition centers to supply additional support for affected workers and accommodate serving more individuals.

As the Department of Commerce Office of Employment and Training receives notice of potential layoffs and petition filings, the Rapid Response team organizes and establishes logistics for informational meetings for Trade impacted worker groups. The Rapid Response team includes partners from IDES and Title 1B administrators from the local workforce areas, as well as other partner programs based on worker and situational needs. An overview of the Trade Adjustment Assistance benefits and services including the next steps if the petition is certified is presented. State and local staff are available to answer questions about the Trade program. Attendees are encouraged to make an individual appointment to begin WIOA enrollment for career services and training. Since workers oftentimes are not all scheduled for layoff on the same date, multiple workshops are held to provide the Trade specific information to the workers.

## B. ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKERS PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

### 1. WORK-BASED TRAINING MODELS

If the State is utilizing work-based training models (e.g. on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, transitional jobs, and customized training) as part of its training strategy and these strategies are not already discussed in other sections of the plan, describe the State's strategies for how these models ensure high quality training for both the participant and the employer.

Work-based training is one of the highest priorities for Illinois under WIOA. The underlying advantage of work-based learning is that by definition, it incorporates skill competencies needed by the business. Trainees learn specific skills needed, and how to apply skills in the way the employer prefers. This practically guarantees individuals that complete training are positioned to immediately add value in the workplace and have gained marketable skills to provide upward mobility and move forward along a career pathway.

Illinois remains committed to supporting all types of work-based learning. Over the next four years we will explore options to expand current efforts through grants and develop new strategies to promote work-based learning.

#### *Incumbent Worker Training*

Illinois recognizes one of the best ways for local areas to help key industries remain globally competitive and establish good relationships with businesses is through incumbent worker training projects. Illinois has a long history of supporting incumbent worker training at the state, regional and local levels and will continue this support over the next four years. Illinois is

requesting an extension of the waiver of the six-month employment requirement. Additional information is provided in the waivers section.

### *On-the-Job Training*

While standalone OJT continues to be supported, its use is projected to diminish as more and more OJT placements are incorporated into apprenticeships. OJT will be encouraged as a potential onramp for companies to eventually engage with apprenticeship programs.

### *Customized Training*

Customized training will be made available to companies on an as-needed basis. Like OJT, this form of training is expected to be utilized less as apprenticeships continue to become more prevalent.

## 2. REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

Describe how the State will incorporate Registered Apprenticeship into its strategy for service design and delivery (e.g., outreach to sponsors and prospective sponsors, identifying potential participants and connecting them to apprenticeship opportunities).

The State is embedding pathways to Registered Apprenticeship on multiple levels and aligning it within career pathways as part of all workforce development efforts. The use of Registered Apprenticeships will be encouraged through demonstration projects, policy guidance and technical assistance. With increased attention on various forms of work-based learning, we expect all types of apprenticeship (pre-apprenticeship, youth, non-registered and registered) to become more common as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is implemented. Encouraging participants to simultaneously earn and learn higher technical skills through an apprenticeship will set them up to succeed in the workplace. The ultimate solution to incorporating Registered Apprenticeships into WIOA will depend on the final form of Title IB performance requirements, the planned duration of the training and the occupational demand.

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) is moving toward a comprehensive, cross-program, public-private approach to fostering the use of Registered Apprenticeships. On June 16, 2016, the IWIB created an Apprenticeship Standing Committee (now rebranded as the Apprenticeship Illinois Committee) to recommend a plan for establishing a comprehensive and integrated apprenticeship system in Illinois, oversee its implementation and performance and recommend improvements. This committee represents employers, business associations, organized labor, education, community-based organizations, philanthropies, local workforce innovation areas, national non-profits, and the four core state agency partners.

The committee's planning efforts started in June 2016 and was supported by an ApprenticeshipUSA State Accelerator Grant. Since then, the Committee, through the Department of Commerce, has applied for and received Apprenticeship Expansion grants from the U.S. Department of Labor, including the latest State Apprenticeship Expansion Formula (SAEF) grant.

Through its planning and implementation responsibilities, this committee plays a lead role in integrating Registered Apprenticeships throughout Illinois' workforce development system and is leading the efforts to create an inclusive Illinois 5-Year Apprenticeship Expansion Plan beyond WIOA. Four areas of activity are included in the Apprenticeship Illinois Committee's charge:

1. Fully integrate apprenticeship into state workforce development, education, and economic development strategies and programs;
2. Support the rapid development of new apprenticeship programs and/or the significant expansion of existing programs;
3. Support the development and recruitment of a diverse pipeline of apprentices; and
4. Build state capacity to make it easier for industry to start apprenticeship programs and for apprentices to access opportunities.

There is an expectation that Apprenticeship Illinois Committee members:

- Provide leadership and guidance to the apprenticeship field.
- Be knowledgeable about apprenticeship – nationally, statewide, and regionally.
- Be ambassadors and champions for Apprenticeship Illinois.
- Be a strategic partner for growth plans for apprenticeship.
- Actively address inequities in apprenticeships – both on the employer and participant sides.

The IWIB Apprenticeship Committee recognizes that apprenticeship is an effective work-based learning strategy into a career pathway. To further integrate apprenticeship and advance the use of this strategy, the Committee created four workgroups: Marketing, Youth Apprenticeship, Pre-Apprenticeship, and the new Apprentice Ambassador workgroup. . These work groups were created to identify and implement specific activities to reach Illinois' goals of expanding and diversifying Registered Apprenticeship throughout the State. They formed and have refined a strategic plan that identifies priority activities to reach the overarching workforce goals for the IWIB Apprenticeship Committee and to ensure it is aligned with the State's strategic plan.

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) Apprenticeship Committee's Marketing Workgroup was formed in part to help determine short-term and long-term outreach goals to both potential sponsors and participants to expand awareness of apprenticeship programs and opportunities for businesses and individuals in Illinois. They have rebranded apprenticeship in Illinois to "Apprenticeship Illinois" with a new URL, [www.ApprenticeshipIllinois.com](http://www.ApprenticeshipIllinois.com), and a new logo. This website is the official apprenticeship-landing page for the State and is a repository of resources for potential employers, sponsors, apprentices, etc.

The Marketing Workgroup has started creating outreach strategies to employers and potential apprentices. On a continuum of work-based learning and the level of employer engagement, Registered Apprenticeship requires the highest level of employer engagement. Due to the lack of interest, awareness, and understanding of apprenticeship, the Marketing Workgroup decided to first focus on outreach to employers. Expanding apprenticeships helps businesses with their current and future workforce needs as well as individuals with a career pathway, which includes work-based learning.

The workgroup completed a state-by-state analysis of apprenticeship websites and best practices for (a) apprenticeship listings and searches, (b) identifying content gaps in the state's apprenticeship website – [ApprenticeshipIllinois.com](http://ApprenticeshipIllinois.com), and (c) marketing and outreach resources by audience. The work group also completed a series of detailed one-on-one personal interviews with business managers and owners throughout Illinois with different: industries,



sizes, locations in Illinois, and familiarity with apprenticeship programs. These business interviews revealed the following:

- They mostly hire internally and use some type of on-the-job training.
- Important factors for training programs included seeking out candidates with appropriate soft skills, diverse skills, and the ability to process information.
- Most are experiencing high turnover.
- Most had misconceptions about what apprenticeship programs provide and how they function.
- Many are aware of apprenticeship programs in the trades but are generally unfamiliar with any within their own industry.

The interviews also revealed that businesses consider cost and time as barriers to implementing Registered Apprenticeship programs.

The Marketing Workgroup will also focus on outreach to individuals, specifically those from disenfranchised populations. Most apprentices in Illinois are white males between the ages of 25 and 54. The Marketing Workgroup has identified multiple organizations to support outreach to other populations.

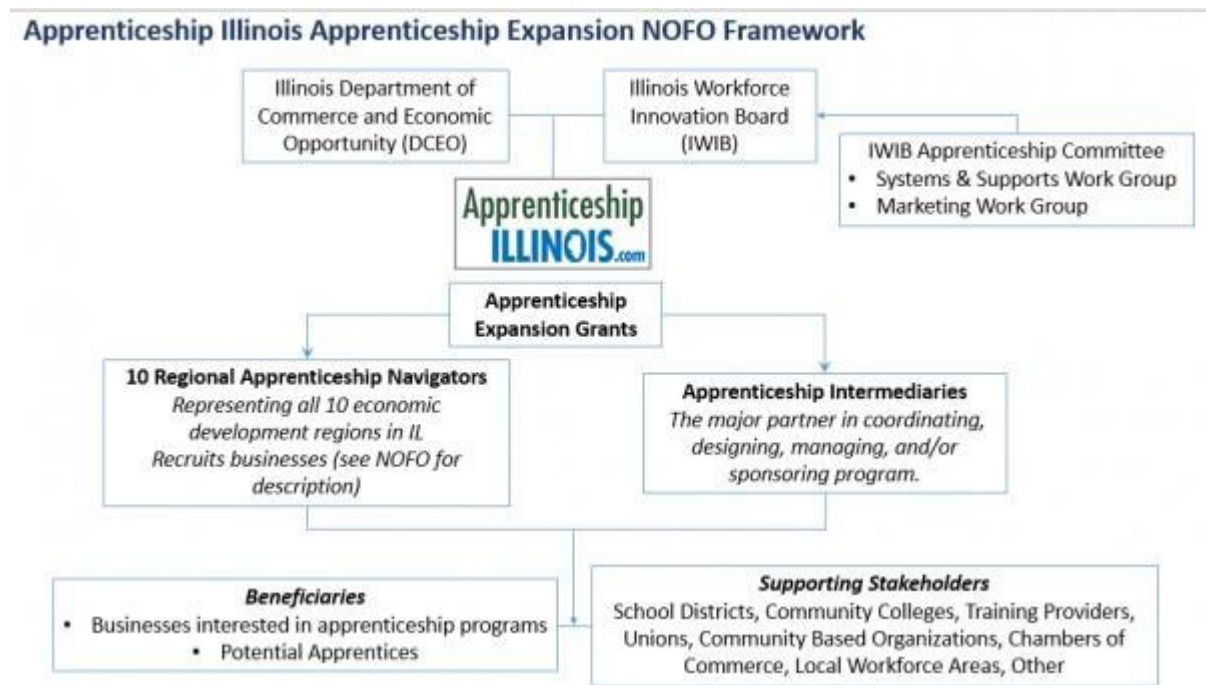
Next steps for the Marketing Work Group's current research indicates the following needs to successfully promote apprenticeships as a way to meet workforce needs with businesses across the state and to attract individuals to a career pathway:

- develop consistent marketing platforms in social media
- identify and secure outreach "ambassadors" or "champions"
- identify and secure organizations and apprentices sharing their success stories
- networking and collaboration
- development of outreach materials
- improving the ApprenticeshipIllinois.com site as a resource
- press releases

Some states, such as Illinois, do not have state apprenticeship offices, where apprenticeship development and programming can be centralized and expanded. Currently, apprenticeship programs cut across four state entities: Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Department of Employment Security, Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services, and the Illinois Community College Board. Commerce has a long-term vision for growing apprenticeships that revolves around funding designated regional navigators to promote expansion and intermediaries to support the apprenticeship experience start to finish.

Because Illinois has a decentralized structure as a state, expanding apprenticeships statewide will need an infrastructure to support development and implementation in the field. The Department and the IWIB Apprenticeship Committee determined support for Apprenticeship Intermediaries and Regional Navigators are the best investment to build the foundation for apprenticeship expansion in Illinois. Illinois needs an effective, uniform apprenticeship support

system that builds on the state’s holistic apprenticeship framework (including pre-apprenticeship, youth apprenticeship, registered apprenticeship and non-registered) and facilitates employers’ development and use of quality apprenticeship programs in a variety of sectors and regions. Regional Apprenticeship Navigators and Apprenticeship Intermediaries represent two important sides of a statewide apprenticeship system: Navigators represent the demand side, e.g., businesses who want to host apprenticeships. Intermediaries represent the supply side, e.g., the institutions and/or partnerships that coordinate and/or implement apprenticeship programs, including recruiting potential apprentices and preparing them to enter apprenticeships. The following graphic represents the original Apprenticeship Illinois Framework.



Starting in PY2017, Commerce supplemented the USDOL apprenticeship expansion funds with Statewide Activities grants for apprenticeship navigators and intermediaries. The increased enrollment in WIOA-funded pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeships noted earlier is a direct result of the work undertaken in these grants. A formal Notice of Funding Opportunity to continue the efforts into PY19 and beyond was released in October 2019. In July 2021, a third Notice of Funding Opportunity efforts was issued in PY22. The Apprenticeship Expansion Program is part of a larger strategy to help Illinois companies develop and increase apprenticeship opportunities. Expanding apprenticeships helps businesses with their current and future workforce needs and individuals with a career pathway, including work-based learning. Proposals may include projects seeking to align public and private partners’ efforts better, introduce innovation, increase traditional and non-traditional RAPs, and ensure programmatic design, recruitment, and retention efforts reflect overarching diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goals. Support for these activities will continue in the planning period based on available funding. The Apprenticeship Committee also identified the need to expand people’s understanding of apprenticeship. As a direct outcome from the Committee’s recommendations for building capacity, Commerce contracted Chicago Jobs Council (CJC) and Young Invincibles (YI) to create and provide Apprenticeship 101 and Apprenticeship 201 workshops in all 10 Economic Development Regions of the State.

To increase employer involvement and buy-in, the Apprenticeship Committee researched how other states provided incentives to employers, finding several providing tax credits. On May 29, 2019, the Illinois legislature passed SB 1591, which is an apprenticeship education tax credit, allowing employers to receive a tax credit up to \$5,000 towards the expenses incurred on Registered Apprentices' related training instruction.

While implementing the work plan's short- and mid-term activities, the Committee continues to focus on long-term goals, which includes:

- Focusing on data collection and building the data infrastructure to support growth and expansion in Registered Apprenticeships;
- Addressing misperceptions and confusion surrounding apprenticeship;
- Developing an apprenticeship performance framework to measure participant and employer outcomes at the local, regional and state levels through both quantitative and qualitative data;
- Continuing to integrate apprenticeships into state workforce development and economic development policy; and
- Identifying other sources of support for apprenticeships to strengthen the entire apprenticeship pipeline and ensure long-term sustainability for the system.

With the new USDOL SAEF funding, Illinois's focus is to significantly elevate the rate of employer engagement in apprenticeship and work-based learning programs. Despite an abundance of interested individuals seeking apprenticeship opportunities, the shortage of employers offering such programs persists. Paradoxically, these same employers voice their struggles in securing and retaining skilled talent, adversely impacting their productivity and financial outcomes. DCEO and the Apprenticeship Illinois Committee, evaluated the apprenticeship navigator framework and introduced the "Navigator 2.0" concept.

Starting with SAEF funds, the navigator function will be embedded within the local workforce innovation areas' existing business services teams. These teams will utilize the Integrated Business Services Teams framework, created by the IWIB Business Engagement Committee. This involves the creation of supports tailored to encourage employers to utilize work-based learning, apprenticeship, and career pathway models. This entails integrating swift and seamless support for apprenticeship development using the array of existing business services, aiming to embed apprenticeship opportunities within these services to better assist and encourage employers to engage in such programs. Additionally, initiatives will concentrate on devising strategies to incentivize employers to either initiate new apprenticeship programs or enhance existing ones and defining quality. DCEO is providing capacity building opportunities to the integrated business services teams such as Apprenticeship Bootcamps and specific business engagement and creation of industry sector partnerships through additional Talent Pipeline Management academies. For more information, see the attached Illinois Five-Year Apprenticeship Expansion Plan as mandated by the new USDOL SAEF funds.

Efforts are underway to better connect the workforce system to regional offices of k-12 & adult education and to foster the development of teacher apprenticeships to address this developing skill gap. The local workforce areas will use both these strategies during the plan period. The State will analyze the effectiveness of these strategies to develop policy guidance and technical assistance projects.

Each of the public partners is committed to jointly integrating the policy and program recommendations into services. In addition to the efforts of the committee, Illinois has already begun incorporating policy and program enhancements to promote the use of Registered Apprenticeships. In April 2016, WIOA policy letter 15-WIOA-5.3, which pertains to the state's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) was issued. The new policy allows apprenticeship programs registered with the United States Department of Labor (DOL) to bypass certain application requirements and automatically be placed on the ETPL upon notifying a local area of its interest in providing services to Title IB participants.

The State is currently implementing a formal apprenticeship ambassador program and intends to expand its scope during the plan period. Eleven corporate and organized labor partners were designated to serve as ambassadors in 2024, including companies in: Construction, Finance, Healthcare, Hospitality, Insurance, and Manufacturing. The Apprentice Ambassadors will serve as champions for Apprenticeship programs by sharing their success stories and promoting Apprenticeships to career seekers and employers. The Apprentice Ambassadors will collaborate with the IWIB Apprenticeship Illinois Committee to aid in the strengthening of Illinois apprenticeship programs through innovation and creativity.

### 3. TRAINING PROVIDER ELIGIBILITY PROCEDURE

Provide the procedure, eligibility criteria, and information requirements for determining training provider initial and continued eligibility, including Registered Apprenticeship programs (WIOA Section 122).

On April 20, 2016, Illinois transmitted Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Policy 15-WIOA-5.3 (now WIOA ePolicy Chapter 7.3), which set procedures, criteria and information requirements for determining training provider initial and continued eligibility, including Registered Apprenticeship programs. Below is a summary of the requirements of that policy.

*The State acknowledges the required clarifications and corrections to the information provided below from the original plan. State WIOA policy will be updated via the established procedure involving consultation with partners, Local Workforce Areas and the IWIB to address each of the items identified by DOL. Further, the text has been updated to provide clarity on the statewide list of registered apprenticeships.*

#### *Criteria for Initial Eligibility*

Only eligible training providers and their eligible training programs will be included in the state's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). The initial eligibility requirements apply to all organizations providing training services to WIOA adults and dislocated workers. Providers of on-the-job training, customized training, incumbent worker training, internships, and paid or unpaid work experience opportunities, or transitional employment will not be subject to those requirements. To be eligible to receive funds for the provision of training services, the provider must be:

- an institution of higher education that provides a program that leads to a recognized post-secondary credential; this may include programs receiving approval or accreditation by the U.S. Department of Education, Illinois Board of Higher Education, Illinois Community College Board, or Illinois State Board of Education;
- an entity that carries out programs registered under the Act of August 16, 1937 (commonly known as the "National Apprenticeship Act"; 50 Stat. 664, chapter 663; 29

U.S.C. 50 et seq.) as recognized in Illinois by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Office of Apprenticeship; or

- another public or private provider of a program of training services, which may include joint labor-management organizations; eligible providers of adult education and literacy activities under Title II if such activities are provided in combination with occupational skills training; or programs that have been recognized by the industry as meeting the standards necessary for approval or accreditation, when such standards exist.

All Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs registered with DOL, Office of Apprenticeship or a recognized state apprenticeship agency are automatically eligible to be included as an eligible training provider. The following process should be followed:

- Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIBs) must inform all RAPs in their local area via mass email, phone call or other method of the requirements of both the Eligible Training Provider List and WIOA regarding their inclusion on the Statewide ETPL as a training provider and training program.
- A RAP may also contact its LWIA or State of Illinois, Office of Employment and Training, to request inclusion on the Statewide ETPL.
- LWIAs must notify the Illinois Department of Commerce, Office of Employment and Training in writing of all Registered Apprenticeship programs that are requesting to be included on the Statewide ETPL.

#### *Procedure for Initial Eligibility*

Except for Registered Apprenticeships (see above), new training providers must apply for Initial Eligibility in accordance with the following guidance: Applications for Initial Eligibility of Training Providers and Training Programs. Applications for initial eligibility must be submitted according to the geographical location of the training program. A training provider is prohibited from applying for training program eligibility in LWIAs where the program site is not geographically located, unless the LWIA in which the program is located denies eligibility or fails to act on the application within 30 days of the date of application. The LWIA should instruct the training provider as to where they should apply for each training program, as follows:

- Training programs located in a single LWIA must initially apply with the LWIA where its program is geographically located.
- Training programs offered in multiple LWIAs that are identical across each of the LWIAs must initially apply to the LWIA in which the training provider has identified as its headquarters and/or primary location.
- Training programs offered in multiple LWIAs - but the program is not substantially the same across the various LWIAs - must initially apply to each LWIA in which the training program is offered.
- Training programs located out-of-state or not offered at a physical location (e.g., distance learning) must initially apply to the LWIA from which it anticipates receiving the most students. A training provider is prohibited from applying for training program eligibility in LWIAs where the program site is not geographically located, unless the LWIA in which the program is located denies eligibility or fails to act on the application within 30 days of the date of application.

#### Information Requirements:

- Program Name (should match the name found in a course catalog for the training provider, if published);
- Program Description;
- 6-digit CIP code;
- O\*Net code(s) that identifies the occupation of the eligible training program;
- Website link to additional program information;
- How many weeks it typically takes to complete the program;
- The total hours of instruction/classroom/lab time;
- Other than employment, the primary goal of the program (i.e., Associates Degree, Bachelor's Degree, etc.);
- If Certification, License, or Registration, the name of the certifying, licensing, or registering body;
- Identify up to three occupations for which the individual will be qualified to immediately hold after completing this program;
- The program offerings;
- The entry-level requirements of the program;
- The total cost of this program;
- Types of financial aid available; and
- Year the program was established.

All job seekers and program partners will have ready access to the provider list on the Illinois workNet web portal. The information provided on the list will allow local career services staff under the LWIBs and the Illinois Departments of Employment Security and Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services to better coordinate services and allow job seekers to make better-informed decisions when selecting programs of study.

#### *Procedure for Continuing Eligibility*

The continued eligibility policy requires that all training providers (other than Registered Apprenticeships) apply at least every two years for approval, as well as for all training programs, to remain on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). Eligibility is determined based on state and local performance and eligibility criteria, and any other conditions the local board considers necessary. Timelines for applying for continued eligibility as well as approval or denial are outlined within the policy.

Below are the requirements for continued eligibility and continued inclusion on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) for training providers and programs previously approved for initial eligibility and those training providers and programs that were approved for transitional eligibility (as provided under WIOA Transition Policy Letter 7).

- LWIAs must ensure all training providers have their eligible training programs determined for continued eligibility on at least a biennial (at least every two years) basis to maintain their status as an eligible training program.
  - LWIAs may want to inform each training provider of any upcoming continued eligibility dates (i.e., a notice sent to the training provider 90 days prior to the continued eligibility date).
  - Continued eligibility is based on the date entered during the initial eligibility or most recent continued eligibility determination of the training program (as outlined in Section E.4. of this policy letter).
- The LWIA must receive the training provider's intent to apply for continued eligibility of a training program or programs in sufficient time to meet the following continued eligibility timeline requirements.
  - The training provider expresses intent for continued eligibility of a training program by resubmitting the Training Program Basic Information application in IWDS.
- If a training program has had only changes in information that are not significant information (as outlined in Section F.2.a.), the training provider must make such changes in IWDS and save the Training Program Basic Information record.
- If a training program has had no changes in information, the training provider must still save the Training Program Basic Information record.
- Once the Training Program Basic Information record has been saved, the Initial Criteria Status record will change to "Pending Continued Eligibility (recertification)".
- The change to "Pending Continued Eligibility (recertification)" status will prompt the LWIA that they must send the training program to the LWIB for review and determination.
  - A report will be available for the local area to identify any training programs with a "Pending Continued Eligibility" status.
- The frequency of producing these reports will be a local decision.
- The LWIA should utilize due diligence in producing this report routinely throughout the year keeping in mind training programs may be jeopardized if they are not approved for continued eligibility promptly.
- The report is titled "Training Programs Nearing Continued Eligibility (recertification) Date" in IWDS.
- The LWIA should continue to make available and enroll customers in any training program with a "Pending" status.
- The LWIA has 90 days to submit the application(s) to the LWIB for review and approval. The submission to the LWIB should include the following items:
  - A current copy of the Training Program Basic Information record from IWDS;
  - Identification of items that have changed since the initial eligibility or most recent continued eligibility determination;

- Performance data (as outlined in Section J of this policy letter) for the training program; and
  - Any additional information the training provider has submitted for review or the LWIB determines pertinent to the review.
- The LWIB should grant continued eligibility to a training program based on the following:
  - State and local eligibility criteria are still being met;
  - State and local performance criteria have been met;
  - One or more O\*Net codes associated with the training program remain on the current Demand Occupation Training List;
  - The training provider has maintained timely updates in the Illinois Workforce Development System of information on the training program; and
  - Other conditions for which the LWIB considers necessary for continued eligibility.
- The LWIB must determine eligibility of the training program within 30 days of receiving the application from the LWIA.
- LWIBs must notify the LWIA within five (5) business days of their decision to approve continued eligibility as a training program.
  - The LWIA must update the Training Program Basic Information record in IWDS within ten (10) business days of notification by the LWIB. The update should include the following:
    - The Status must be changed from "Pending Continued Eligibility (Recertification)" to "Accept" to indicate an accepted continued eligibility application.
    - The Program Status must be listed as "Approved".
    - The Last Elig./Cert. Date must be listed as the date the LWIB approved the continued eligibility, not the date the entry is made into IWDS.
    - The Next Elig./Cert. Date should be listed as the date for which the next continued eligibility should take place (and should take into consideration the same factors for initial eligibility as outlined in Section C.3. of this policy letter).
- Training programs that are not determined eligible by the LWIB within 30 days of receipt of the application from the LWIA will be removed from the approved program list and may reapply after one year.
- Training programs that are not determined eligible within 120 days of their continued eligibility date will be removed from the approved program list in IWDS. *(Note: The intent of this provision is to automatically clear training programs from IWDS when they have not been approved for continued eligibility in a timely fashion. Such programs will not be available for selection and thus are removed.)*



- LWIAs shall cease to enroll customers in any training program that has been moved to the capture list. Customers who have already been enrolled in training programs that are removed from the capture list shall be allowed to complete such training programs.
- A training provider may reapply for eligibility for any training program that was not determined eligible for any reason other than "for cause" reasons.

Illinois is currently working on two projects centered around the Eligible Training Provider List - an Eligible Training Provider workgroup and ProPath Illinois.

The workgroup is tasked with expanding the scope of information collected from providers, improving the process for information collection and management, increasing the transparency of quality performance data, updating the criteria and listing of demand occupations, enhance the articulation of training programs to career pathway and bridge programs, and ensuring out-of-state training providers meet equivalent criteria to in-state.

ProPath Illinois is a statewide technological platform that can be utilized by both education and workforce partners throughout the state that integrates existing educational and workforce training provider and program data and allows for the ability of agile enhancement to that data. ProPath Illinois builds on the existing state Educational PW20 system, the IL Longitudinal Data System (ILDS), the Centralized Demographic Dataset Administrator (CDDA), the IL Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI), and the IL Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) systems and partners to advance the state forward into the next generation of transparency and accessibility of educational and workforce training information. In addition to creating an interoperable training provider and program data directory, ProPath Illinois will establish a statewide Illinois- Administrative Data Research Facility (I-ADRF) that has the ability to facilitate and accelerate data sharing, exploration, and research into the next generation. The I-ADRF is part of a national data research piloting initiative, the Administrative Data Research Facility (ADRF), which enables secure access to analytical tools, data storage and discovery services, and general computing resources for users to revolutionize evidence-based policymaking and comply with the Evidence-Based Policymaking Commission Act of 2016.

4. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR FOR THE ADULT PRIORITY OF SERVICE REQUIREMENT IN WIOA SECTION 134 (C)(3)(E) THAT REQUIRES AMERICAN JOB CENTER STAFF, WHEN USING WIOA ADULT PROGRAM FUNDS TO PROVIDE INDIVIDUALIZED CAREER SERVICES AND TRAINING SERVICES, TO GIVE PRIORITY OF SERVICE TO RECIPIENTS OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE, LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS, AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT (INCLUDING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS).

All Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) inquirants are asked to identify if they are on public assistance, are low-income, or are basic skills deficient. Inquirants are asked to provide documentation of earning diplomas, degrees and certificates and those without post-secondary credentials and degrees are tested for math and reading skills at intake to determine eligibility for the Adult program. Individuals that become participants in the Adult and Dislocated Worker streams have information on their income, basic skills and enrollment in other social service programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recorded and tracked in the Illinois Workforce Development System (IWDS). IWDS is a web-based client tracking and reporting system that serves as the central repository of data on all WIOA participants. Tracking of participants with these indicators is done routinely at the local and state level to ensure that priority of service requirements are met.

On October 29, 2015, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (Commerce) issued WIOA ePolicy Chapter 4.2 and other related policy letters that outline

Commerce's WIOA Title IB general and funding stream eligibility and documentation requirements. Allowable supporting documentation is listed in the attachment to the policy letter and there are many items that can be used to support eligibility and identification for priority of service. We require the use of TABE and other tests to verify basic skills deficiency. Identifying public assistance registrants is supported by data from the Illinois Department of Human Services systems. Veteran status is documented using the DD214 form.

Additionally, Commerce implemented a policy establishing a Basic Skills Screening Tool for Priority of Service to help identify if an individual is basic skills deficient for the purposes of priority of service.

In Illinois, the state is aligning WIOA Title I policy with the Title II Illinois Adult Education Assessment policy when determining the basic skills levels of customers for enrollment. The adoption of this policy increases the likelihood that customers stay engaged with the WIOA one-stop system. Furthermore, increased collaboration among WIOA partner programs regarding assessment selection decreases the likelihood of customers having to complete multiple assessments to achieve the same purpose and ultimately creates greater efficiency in the overall workforce system. The result is optimal performance outcomes for the entire system. This partnership will extend to ensuring seamless coordination for English Language Learners through an online learning platform.

Commerce continues to update its online monitoring instrument to reflect both state policy, WIOA Final Rules and subsequent guidance. The updated monitoring instrument will provide for a review of general eligibility as well as priority of service based on the new requirements. In addition, the state's monitoring instrument will verify all local areas have established written policies and procedures to ensure priority for public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals, individuals who are basic skills deficient and veterans. Until updates to Commerce's online monitoring instrument are completed, Commerce continues to use WIOA-specific participant file review worksheets to monitor eligibility for participants served in the WIOA Adult program. Commerce conducts on-site programmatic and fiscal monitoring of all local areas at least once annually.

#### 5. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S CRITERIA REGARDING LOCAL AREA TRANSFER OF FUNDS BETWEEN THE ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAMS

The Annual Funding Notice for the Title 1B funds provides that the local workforce areas can transfer up to fifty percent (50%) of funds between the adult and dislocated worker funding streams without approval from the state. The Department will consider requests exceeding the fifty percent (50%) transfer threshold based on the local data and overall performance. The transfer limit will be reassessed at least annually and adjusted as deemed appropriate.

#### 6. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S POLICY ON WIOA AND TAA CO-ENROLLMENT AND WHETHER AND HOW OFTEN THIS POLICY IS DISSEMINATED TO THE LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARDS AND REQUIRED ONE-STOP PARTNERS. TRADE ACT SEC. 239(F), SEC. 235, 20 CFR 618.325, 20 CFR 618.824(A)(3)(I).

Per State of Illinois policy, Trade participants must be co-enrolled in the WIOA Dislocated Worker Program and any other appropriate partner programs. Most participants meet the eligibility criteria of a dislocated worker defined at WIOA sec. 3(15). However, some participants are ineligible for the WIOA dislocated worker program, including those that do not meet the Selective Service registration requirement, and will be exempt from the co-enrollment requirement. Co-enrollment allows for coordination of funds for training and services and can occur at any point. Documentation supporting eligibility for WIOA must be obtained and

verified at time of enrollment. Participants may choose to decline co-enrollment in WIOA. The participant cannot be denied benefits or services under the Trade program based on ineligibility for or declining co-enrollment in WIOA. The Trade policy is available on the Illinois workNet website.

**7. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S FORMAL STRATEGY TO ENSURE THAT WIOA AND TAA CO-ENROLLED PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE NECESSARY FUNDED BENEFITS AND SERVICES. TRADE ACT SEC. 239(F), SEC. 235, 20 CFR 618.816(C)**

Per State of Illinois policy, employment and case management services and necessary referrals are offered to every Trade certified participant. Participants are provided the services and referrals they need based on testing and assessment provided at intake and are evaluated throughout the participant's journey. Additional benefits and services are provided as necessary. The delivery of these services is recorded on the Individual Employment Plan and in our electronic case management system. State merit staff review the provision of these services when approving benefits and services

**8. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PROCESS FOR FAMILIARIZING ONE-STOP STAFF WITH THE TAA PROGRAM. 20 CFR 618.804(J), 20 CFR 618.305**

In Illinois, the Trade program is integrated into the WIOA system. Trade career planners are located in the local areas and in most cases serve as both WIOA and Trade program staff. Trade program training is provided as necessary and as requested. The training is open to all one-stop staff.

**C. YOUTH PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.**

With respect to youth workforce investment activities authorized in section 129 of WIOA, States should describe their strategies that will support the implementation of youth activities under WIOA. State's must-

**1. IDENTIFY THE STATE-DEVELOPED CRITERIA TO BE USED BY LOCAL BOARDS IN AWARDING GRANTS OR CONTRACTS FOR YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES AND DESCRIBE HOW THE LOCAL BOARDS WILL TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE ABILITY OF THE PROVIDERS TO MEET PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES BASED ON PRIMARY INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE FOR THE YOUTH PROGRAM AS DESCRIBED IN SECTION 116(B)(2)(A)(II) OF WIOA.<sup>11</sup> FURTHER, INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE STATE ASSISTS LOCAL AREAS IN DETERMINING WHETHER TO CONTRACT FOR SERVICES OR TO PROVIDE SOME OR ALL OF THE PROGRAM ELEMENTS DIRECTLY.**

<sup>11</sup> Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(i)(V)

Currently, Commerce embeds policy related to youth within the relevant chapters in the ePolicy manual. However, over the next four years, Commerce plans to put into place policy specific youth that will not only be inclusive of WIOA statute and regulations, but also lessons learned through the Governor's Statewide Activities funding that supports youth grants. As part of this policy development, Illinois will put into place a robust technical assistance plan for local areas and youth providers.

Illinois provides guidance to the Local Workforce Innovation Boards in Chapter 3 - Vision, Goals, and Implementation Strategies of the Local/Regional Planning Guidance. Specifically, this Chapter requires the LWIB to describe how they will coordinate, the regional workforce, education and economic development activities with regional activities that are carried out in the local areas. Their responses must illustrate that business, education and workforce

development stakeholders have provided input and are involved with the development of the strategies and to ensure alignment with other plans. These goals and coordinated activities must include youth and show how the LWIB intends to meet performance indicators related to goals. In Chapter 4 Operating Systems and Policies – Local Component, the LWIB must describe how the local area will provide youth activities including assessment, provision of the 14 program elements, activities, and meeting expenditure rates.

The State Workforce Board's Career Pathways for Targeted Populations Committee (CPTP) overall charge expands beyond youth; however, this population remains a primary focus. While the CPTP focuses on creating opportunities to provide funding and technical assistance for local systems in developing Career Pathways, the State of Illinois through the Workforce Readiness through Apprenticeship and Pathways brings together education, workforce, and human services to develop a common framework for career pathways. This framework provides a foundational policy to guide local boards as they develop career pathways within their local areas.

The funding opportunities of the Youth Career Pathways Initiative continues refinement and is another avenue to providing guidance to the local system for creating a robust model for serving youth and creating sustainable career pathways. Technical Assistance offered through these opportunities include engaging business, best practices for dropout prevention, family focused coaching, supportive services, and general case management.

The State acknowledges the requirement to create state-developed criteria for use by local areas in awarding contracts for youth workforce activities. These criteria are embedded in State Policy in the Youth Services and Competitive Procurement of Youth Providers section of the policy manual. This policy outlines the State's vision of program design and the requirements for procurement of the fourteen elements. The policy also addresses how local boards determine to provide services directly or use a service provider. The policy was developed through our established procedure involving consultation with partners, Local Workforce Areas and the IWIB.

## **2. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE ASSISTS LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARDS IN ACHIEVING EQUITABLE RESULTS FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL AND IN-SCHOOL YOUTH. DESCRIBE PROMISING PRACTICES OR PARTNERSHIP MODELS THAT LOCAL AREAS ARE IMPLEMENTING AND THE STATE'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING AND SCALING THOSE MODELS WITHIN THE STATE FOR BOTH IN-SCHOOL AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH.**

Illinois aims to build a strong culture of equity in the Illinois workforce system. In the youth career pathways program, this is no different. One area of emphasis for local workforce boards is tracking disaggregated outcomes and identifying disparities for in-school and out-of-school youth. In addition, diversifying workforce leadership and staff will be a priority. Equitable service delivery is mandatory to ensure resources are used to serve underrepresented populations in communities throughout the state. Youth career pathway programs will provide system-wide training on equity, cultural competence, and cultural awareness that will be scaled statewide.

Illinois' Unified State Plan seeks to frame recommendations for creating sustainable career pathways for youth throughout the state, with a focus on the needs of young people who are not in school and not working, a group we refer to as "Opportunity Youth."

Through the IWIB Youth Committee, Illinois has leveraged the input of the business community, the Illinois P-20 Council, Illinois Learning Exchanges, state boards, agencies and other partners

to create a set of criteria for career pathway programs that meet the needs of Illinois youth that have barriers to employment.

Illinois core WIOA partners blend together various funding streams to support business-led sector initiatives based on career pathways that fully mainstream this youth population, while pointing the way to a sustainable integration of services across agencies and partnerships.

The State issues Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) designed to support career pathway projects focused on a platform of work-based learning, the development of foundational skills, continuous improvement through education and training, and sustainability - all with the support of public-sector and business partners. Ten success elements for workforce pilot programs serving opportunity youth were identified by the task force and are included as the pillars of the NOFO, as well as key activities identified towards the accomplishment of Illinois' goals for youth activities. These elements demonstrate the principles, strategies, and criteria in the WIOA Unified State Plan and how various funding sources may be blended for full regional ownership and sustainability.

The State of Illinois was granted a waiver to allow the use of Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for in-school youth. The waiver is designed to increase program flexibility, enhance informed customer choice, allow all youth to benefit from the services provided by Illinois' certified training providers, and expand training options without requiring Illinois workNet (One-Stop) operators to register in-school youth participants 18 years old or older in the adult program. Additional details are provided in the section on waivers, including recent outcomes.

Using ITAs also allows youth service providers an opportunity to promote and encourage training as another option to enter into an increasingly tough labor market. This waiver allows youth to select approved training programs from Illinois' list of demand occupation training programs.

The Governor recently established the Illinois Workforce Equity & Access Commission. The Commission's charge is to create a vision for an equitable, accessible, and effective future state workforce system grounded in an understanding of user and stakeholder experience, including how racial, social, and geographic inequities inform experience and outcomes across Illinois' federally and state-funded workforce programs.

Three key strategic principles were developed by the commission for the workforce system in Illinois: accessibility, inclusivity and responsiveness. Recommendations within the Accessible Principle focus on improving user experience by creating more points of entry to workforce services, while simultaneously increasing marketing to make potential users more aware of the services available to them and community-level engagement to reach people where they are.

Accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the country's racial reckoning, Illinois' system partners have intentionally moved to develop and adopt more inclusive practices. For example, the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) created the Equity Task Force (ETF) in October 2020 to address equity within the state's workforce development system and ensure that all customers are on pathways to success. The recommendations from this report both echoed and amplified those of the Commission.

Illinois' workforce development system should work for users on every level. This means that staff must be responsive to a full range of user needs, supporting the development of life skills in addition to job skills and providing trauma-informed and culturally competent service delivery. Staff who can show empathy and understanding may be just as important as the career services they can provide. The Workforce Board's Equity Task Force will continue to assess and

recommend equity in service delivery strategies which will be implemented throughout the plan period.

The state also monitors progress when local workforce areas participate in projects with potential to be replicated elsewhere as a best practice. For example, Lake County Workforce Development (LWIA 1) was chosen to participate in the 2023 US DOL Employment and Training Administration Youth Systems Building Academy, selected from over 50 nationwide nominations. The initiative, involving the Lake County Workforce Development Board, College of Lake County, Lake County Regional Office of Education, and International Union of Operating Engineers Local 150, will enhance employment outcomes for youth and young adults.

Leveraging grant awards through the WIOA formula and Illinois General Revenue Funds, Lake County will implement a Youth Action Plan. Efforts will focus on transforming Lake County's youth workforce development system to create a more integrated, efficient, and equitable approach. The goal is to establish a unified voice and seamless access for marginalized young adults, with a community of practice centered around the Youth Development Practitioner Apprenticeship Program, sponsored by Work & Learning and fhi360. The measurable objective is to increase work-based learning opportunities and employment for young adults across key industries and a more integrated, efficient, and equitable system that can better serve and support the diverse needs of young adults.

LWIA 22, in the metro-east region near St. Louis, MO, applied lessons learned from prior iterations to develop an apprenticeship model training program for youth with disabilities. Overcoming initial challenges, this program now successfully matches disability youth with workplace mentors to provide on-the-job skill training. The program was highlighted by St. Louis regional media outlets which led to new interest from prospective employers. This program is likely to become a statewide best practice model and could be supported by local and state WIOA funding.

**3. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE ASSISTS LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARDS IN IMPLEMENTING INNOVATIVE MODELS FOR DELIVERING YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING EFFECTIVE WAYS LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARDS CAN MAKE AVAILABLE THE 14 PROGRAM ELEMENTS DESCRIBED IN WIOA SECTION 129(C)(2); AND EXPLAIN HOW LOCAL AREAS CAN ENSURE WORK EXPERIENCE, INCLUDING QUALITY PRE-APPRENTICESHIP AND REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP, IS PRIORITIZED AS A KEY ELEMENT WITHIN A BROADER CAREER PATHWAYS STRATEGY.**

Illinois will continue to scale innovative models for delivering youth workforce investment activities. One approach will focus on strengthening partnerships between local workforce boards and local education agencies. A model of this begins with backward mapping pathways for at-risk youth, followed by determining the delivery model for high-priority occupations. Pre-apprenticeships and registered apprenticeships are sequenced into the pathway with stackable and accessible industry credentials. The 14 elements are embedded into the pathway, and dual credit opportunities are offered throughout the youth career pathway process. The Career Pathways Dictionary will assist local workforce boards as they are establishing youth work experiences. The purpose of the dictionary is to establish a common language for business sector and education sector stakeholders. The Careers Pathway Dictionary will transform outcomes for youth throughout Illinois. Through an anticipated Youth Summit, Illinois will strive to connect Local Workforce Agencies, Local Education Agencies, Regional Offices of Education, and Education for Employment Agencies. This Summit will expedite partnerships, ensuring youth are prepared for the workforce.

Illinois will maintain programmatic fidelity to WIOA youth policy through a system of robust monitoring, examination of best practices statewide and nationally, and continuous information sharing and technical assistance.

As mentioned in c. 1 Commerce issues policy guidance through its series of policy letters and notices that are posted on the Illinois workNet portal (<https://apps.il-work-net.com/WIOAPolicy/Policy/Home>). There is no standalone youth policy, but rather the policy is woven throughout. In ePolicy Chapter 4 Operating Systems and Policies – Local Component, the LWIB is directed to describe how the local area will provide youth activities including assessment, provision of the 14 program elements, activities, and meeting expenditure rates. Commerce put in place policy specific to youth that includes robust technical assistance strategies to ensure the sound implementation of the 14 elements including pre-apprenticeship.

Additionally, mentioned in other parts of the Unified State Plan, Commerce is in the process of updating its online monitoring instrument to reflect both revised state policy and the WIOA Final Rule. The updated monitoring instrument will provide for a review of general eligibility as well as priority of service based on the new requirements. The state's monitoring instrument will verify all local areas have established and follow written policies and procedures to address providing services to youth. Monitoring will also compliment and inform ongoing program evaluation efforts that review trends in the use of services and customer outcomes for the purposes of continuous improvement.

4. PROVIDE THE LANGUAGE CONTAINED IN THE STATE POLICY FOR “REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO ENTER OR COMPLETE AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT” CRITERION FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(B)(III)(VIII) AND FOR “REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO COMPLETE AN EDUCATION PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT” CRITERION FOR IN-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(C)(IV)(VII). IF THE STATE DOES NOT HAVE A POLICY, DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THAT LOCAL AREAS WILL HAVE A POLICY FOR THESE CRITERIA.

Illinois does not yet have a statewide policy. The Illinois Workforce Investment Board (IWIB) Youth Committee is examining the issue from a statewide policy perspective. The Illinois IWIB created the Disadvantaged Youth Task Force to use the vision of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified State Plan to frame recommendations for creating sustainable career pathways for youth throughout the state. The task force, in turn, created the IWIB Youth Committee to carry on its work. The committee is currently setting an agenda to examine policy issues affecting youth services in the wake of final WIOA regulations. The “Needs Additional Assistance” clauses in both In-School and Out-of-School youth eligibility will be reexamined by the committee for possible statewide policy solutions that are able to fit both our urban and rural dynamics, while leaving the flexibility needed for local areas to design effective local programming. This item presents an opportunity for each of the core partners to help create a cross-program policy definition that will allow their local staff to have consistent definitions. This coordinated policy could be codified through a joint issuance (the preferred method) or could be adopted as policy by each of the core partners. Regardless of the mechanism for issuance, the state partners for Title IB, Title II, Title III and Title IV are committed to improving service delivery through adoption of common policies.

#### D. SINGLE-AREA STATE REQUIREMENTS

In States where there is only one local workforce investment area, the governor serves as both the State and local chief elected official. In such cases, the State must submit any information required in the local plan (WIOA section 106(d)(2)). States with a single workforce area must include—

1. ANY COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD THAT REPRESENT DISAGREEMENT WITH THE PLAN. (WIOA SECTION 108(D)(3).)
2. THE ENTITY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISBURSAL OF GRANT FUNDS, AS DETERMINED BY THE GOVERNOR, IF DIFFERENT FROM THAT FOR THE STATE. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(15).)
3. A DESCRIPTION OF THE TYPE AND AVAILABILITY OF WIOA TITLE I YOUTH ACTIVITIES AND SUCCESSFUL MODELS, INCLUDING FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(9).)

This section does not apply to Illinois.

4. A DESCRIPTION OF THE ROLES AND RESOURCE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE ONE-STOP PARTNERS.

This section does not apply to Illinois.

5. THE COMPETITIVE PROCESS USED TO AWARD THE SUBGRANTS AND CONTRACTS FOR TITLE I ACTIVITIES.

This section does not apply to Illinois.

6. HOW TRAINING SERVICES OUTLINED IN SECTION 134 WILL BE PROVIDED THROUGH INDIVIDUAL TRAINING ACCOUNTS AND/OR THROUGH CONTRACTS, AND HOW SUCH TRAINING APPROACHES WILL BE COORDINATED. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL MEET INFORMED CUSTOMER CHOICE REQUIREMENTS REGARDLESS OF TRAINING APPROACH.

This section does not apply to Illinois.

7. HOW THE STATE BOARD, IN FULFILLING LOCAL BOARD FUNCTIONS, WILL COORDINATE TITLE I ACTIVITIES WITH THOSE ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE II. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE BOARD WILL CARRY OUT THE REVIEW OF LOCAL APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED UNDER TITLE II CONSISTENT WITH WIOA SECS. 107(D)(11)(A) AND (B)(I) AND WIOA SEC. 232.

This section does not apply to Illinois.

8. COPIES OF EXECUTED COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WHICH DEFINE HOW ALL LOCAL SERVICE PROVIDERS WILL CARRY OUT THE REQUIREMENTS FOR INTEGRATION OF AND ACCESS TO THE ENTIRE SET OF SERVICES AVAILABLE IN THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM, INCLUDING COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH ENTITIES ADMINISTERING REHABILITATION ACT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.

This section does not apply to Illinois.

#### E. WAIVER REQUESTS (OPTIONAL)

States wanting to request waivers as part of their title I-B Operational Plan must include a waiver plan that includes the following information for each waiver requested:

1. IDENTIFIES THE STATUTORY OR REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS FOR WHICH A WAIVER IS REQUESTED AND THE GOALS THAT THE STATE OR LOCAL AREA, AS APPROPRIATE, INTENDS



TO ACHIEVE AS A RESULT OF THE WAIVER AND HOW THOSE GOALS RELATE TO THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

2. DESCRIBES THE ACTIONS THAT THE STATE OR LOCAL AREA, AS APPROPRIATE, HAS UNDERTAKEN TO REMOVE STATE OR LOCAL STATUTORY OR REGULATORY BARRIERS;

3. DESCRIBES THE GOALS OF THE WAIVER AND THE EXPECTED PROGRAMMATIC OUTCOMES IF THE REQUEST IS GRANTED;

4. DESCRIBES HOW THE WAIVER WILL ALIGN WITH THE DEPARTMENT'S POLICY PRIORITIES, SUCH AS:

A. SUPPORTING EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT;

B. CONNECTING EDUCATION AND TRAINING STRATEGIES;

C. SUPPORTING WORK-BASED LEARNING;

D. IMPROVING JOB AND CAREER RESULTS, AND

E. OTHER GUIDANCE ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT.

5. DESCRIBES THE INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER, INCLUDING HOW THE WAIVER WILL IMPACT SERVICES FOR DISADVANTAGED POPULATIONS OR INDIVIDUALS WITH MULTIPLE BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT; AND

6. DESCRIBES THE PROCESSES USED TO:

A. MONITOR THE PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE WAIVER;

B. PROVIDE NOTICE TO ANY LOCAL BOARD AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER;

C. PROVIDE ANY LOCAL BOARD AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER AN OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON THE REQUEST;

D. ENSURE MEANINGFUL PUBLIC COMMENT, INCLUDING COMMENT BY BUSINESS AND ORGANIZED LABOR, ON THE WAIVER.

E. COLLECT AND REPORT INFORMATION ABOUT WAIVER OUTCOMES IN THE STATE'S WIOA ANNUAL REPORT.

7. THE MOST RECENT DATA AVAILABLE REGARDING THE RESULTS AND OUTCOMES OBSERVED THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EXISTING WAIVER, IN CASES WHERE THE STATE SEEKS RENEWAL OF A PREVIOUSLY APPROVED WAIVER.

**WAIVER REQUEST - REDUCE OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH EXPENDITURE RATE FROM 75% TO 50%**

**The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the state would like to waive**

*The state must clearly cite the statute and/or regulation(s) in its request and ensure that the citations refer to the specific elements the state wishes to waive.*

The State of Illinois is seeking a waiver from the following Section(s):

Section 129(a)(4)(A) and 20 CFR 681.410, which require not less than 75 percent of funds allotted to states under Section 127(b)(1)(C), reserved under Section 128(a), and available for statewide activities under subsection (b), and not less than 75 percent of funds available to local areas under subsection (c), shall be used to provide youth workforce investment activities for OSY.

Specifically, Illinois is requesting to waive the following requirements:

- A waiver of the requirement to expend 75 percent of funding on the OSY population. Illinois is requesting that this percentage be lowered to 50 percent.
- A waiver of the requirement that local funding must meet the 75 percent minimum expenditure requirement. It is requested to allow a state-level Out-of-School Youth target (See #1 above) instead of requiring individual areas to each meet the minimum expenditure requirement.
- A waiver of the requirement to expend 75 percent of Statewide Activities funding on the OSY population. It is requested to eliminate this percentage to allow flexibility of funding for special projects that meet the vision and mission of the State.
- A waiver of the limitation of only 25 percent of funding to support in-school youth.
- A waiver to use funding over the 25 percent limitation in WIOA to provide pre-apprenticeship program services to this population.

Illinois' current efforts for aligning education, workforce and economic development is laying a solid foundation for promoting leading career pathway models and best practices. Career pathway development in Illinois is being expanded to encompass every level of the education system as well as across the needs of our diverse populations, including those that face multiple barriers to achieving self-sufficiency.

Of importance to the Governor's vision, the IWIB Strategic Plan and the Unified State Plan is the expansion of career pathway systems into the secondary system for opportunity youth. This waiver will allow Illinois to support these visions and provide targeted strategies to youth ages 15-24 living in Illinois, particularly focusing on those who are in poverty and unemployed.

**Actions the state has undertaken to remove state or local statutory or regulatory barriers**

*The state must provide a discussion of the steps it has taken to remove any potential obstacles in the waiver request as appropriate. Quite often, state or local policies do not present a conflict for the request, and a simple statement indicating that there are no state or local barriers is sufficient.*

There are currently no state or local statutory or regulatory barriers to implementing the requested waiver. State of Illinois regulations and policy align with current federal law and regulations.

### **State strategic goal(s)**

*The state must precisely articulate the goals it seeks to achieve by requesting a waiver. The state must also discuss how these goals relate to its Unified or Combined State Plan.*

In the State of Illinois, the Illinois State Career Pathways Dictionary - A Unified State Framework for College and Career Readiness and Success was developed with input from the public and private sector, including education, workforce development, and economic development entities, as well as an extensive base of stakeholders. This college and career pathways approach envisions that Illinois residents, including out-of-school youth, will be enabled to progressively build toward college and career success through aligned education, training, and employment opportunities over their lifetime. This includes partnerships with employers to support participant educational and career advancement through on-the-job training, customized training, corporate training, incumbent worker training, and other work-based training strategies.

In support of the expansion of career pathway systems across the education system, Illinois will use this waiver to provide youth with barriers the necessary support to successfully equip them with the academic and technical skills necessary to improve their employability. Furthermore, Illinois anticipates that this waiver will provide greater opportunity for blending funds at the federal, state, and local levels across the partners to increase innovative strategies for improving career pathway opportunities for youth.

The State of Illinois issues various funding opportunities using Statewide Funds throughout the program year. One such funding opportunity is the Youth Career Pathways grants, which are typically out for proposal once during each program year. This Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) soliciting proposals from eligible organizations (Eligible Applicants) capable of developing a framework that strengthens career pathway systems that will improve youth college and career readiness, create employment opportunities, address equity in underserved communities and expand partnerships between the workforce system, education, and business. Proposals must integrate workforce services, education, and economic development to address the challenges youth face in obtaining marketable and in-demand skills. All projects must include essential employability skills and digital literacy assessment programming. Additionally, applicants must demonstrate how they will implement the program components below as well as address the applicable program requirements.

### **resulting from the implementation of the waiver**

*The state must provide an estimate of how the waiver will improve outcomes or provide other tangible benefits for jobseekers or employers. States have the discretion to determine how to measure a waiver's success and the specific data sources it intends to use to evaluate its impact.*

As a result of this waiver, Illinois expects that:

1. The number of in-school youth (ISY) served will increase; and
2. Performance accountability outcomes for overall WIOA Youth (including both in- and out-of-school youth) will remain steady or increase for the majority of the WIOA Youth performance indicators.

### **Alignment with the Department of Labor's policy priorities**

*Describe how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as:*

- *Supporting employer engagement;*
- *Connecting education and training strategies;*
- *Supporting work-based learning;*
- *Improving job and career results; and*
- *Other priorities as articulated in guidance.*

This waiver aligns with not only the Department of Labor's priorities but also with those of the State of Illinois. Within the Illinois Unified Plan are examples of initiatives demonstrating the importance of ensuring career and work readiness at all levels and how Illinois is moving toward strategies that integrally tie education to workforce development. Expanding the career pathway opportunities across the education and workforce system by allowing additional funds toward in-school youth supports our common goal to expand career pathway opportunities through more accelerated work-based training while aligning and integrating programs of study that lead to industry-recognized credentials and improved employment and earnings. This alignment will truly address the P-20 pipeline by providing the necessary career readiness and occupational skills necessary to succeed in the job market.

As Illinois continues the engagement of educational institutions to create a job-driven education and training system, the state will be making significant and strategic system improvements that address workforce development needs through flexible, responsive, and progressive programs informed by labor market information. Not only will this continue to occur through the 48 comprehensive community colleges and multi-college centers, but the state will also be expanding the reach to integrate meaningful career readiness programs and work-based learning models that focus on high-demand occupations for students and workers at all levels.

The State of Illinois is aligned with the Department of Labor's commitment to providing high-quality services for youth, beginning with career exploration and guidance, continued support for educational attainment, opportunities for skills training, such as pre-apprenticeships or

internships, for in-demand industries and occupations, and culminating with employment, enrollment in postsecondary education, or a Registered Apprenticeship.

Local areas are taking steps to address challenges locating, retaining, and serving out-of-school youth in their WIOA-funded programs, including increasing their recruiting efforts and strengthening partnerships with other WIOA programs such as the adult education program, state and local government agencies, and community-based organizations. Additionally, partners are working together to build career pathways that are a combination of rigorous and high-quality education, training, and support services that align with local skill needs and prepare youth and young adults to be successful in secondary or postsecondary education programs and the labor market.

#### **Individuals, groups, or populations affected by the waiver**

*States must describe the potential impact of a waiver on various system stakeholders, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations, persons with barriers to employment, or businesses.*

Both the education and workforce systems will be able to provide the benefits of this waiver to our youth with barriers. This includes the at-risk youth population, educational entities, American Job Centers (AJC) subcontracted service provider staff, employers, parents, and school counselors.

#### **State plans for monitoring waiver implementation, including collection of waiver outcome information**

*States must describe how they intend to oversee effective waiver implementation and any unique protocols that may be used in their waiver requests.*

The State will use the following approach for monitoring progress in implementation:

- State staff involved with the administration of youth programming will provide ongoing technical assistance and oversight as it relates to the appropriateness and effectiveness of this waiver. This information will be submitted regularly to the IWIB Continuous Improvement Committee.
- Annual WIOA on-site programmatic reviews will include an evaluation of the impact the waivers have on programmatic goals and outcomes.
- Additionally, the IWIB Continuous Improvement Committee will have the responsibility of ensuring the specific goals and outcomes achieved by the waiver are realized. Furthermore, the information gathered from the waiver will inform new or changes to policy as well as provide best practices. The outcomes of the waiver will be reported in the WIOA Annual Report.

This strategy ensures that the goals described above, as well as those outlined in the State's Unified Plan and the IWIB Strategic Plan, are consistent with established objectives of the WIOA and federal and state regulations.

**Assurance of state posting of the request for public comment and notification to affected local workforce development boards**

*WIOA does not prescribe a specific amount of time for states to post a potential waiver for comment, but it does require the state to demonstrate a reasonable opportunity for public review and comment by all stakeholders, including businesses and organized labor. Submit any comments or concerns collected in this manner and the outcome of the state's review of the public comments received. The state must also provide affected local boards with notice and opportunity to comment on the proposed waiver.*

In accordance with the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.135, Illinois is submitting its Unified State Plan, which is subject to the requirements outlined in the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.130(d) for public review and comment. As such, Illinois's waiver request was posted on our website for comment and review by required parties and the public.

Local Boards via Board members and Board staff, WIOA partners, and other interested stakeholders participate in policy development. Additionally, LWIBs receive the opportunity to participate in the public comment period that includes informational webinars.

**Waiver outcomes for existing waivers.**

*The Secretary may require that States provide the most recent data available about the outcomes of the existing waiver in cases where the state seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver.*

Illinois has seen the following as a result of this waiver:

- The number of in-school youth (ISY) served has increased.
  - PY 20 – The state served 1,123 ISY.
  - PY 21 – The state served 1,284 ISY.
  - PY 22 YTD – The state has served 1,228.
- Performance accountability outcomes for overall WIOA Youth (including both ISY and OSY) slightly increased in PY 2021, which is the latest year performance outcomes are available. The majority of the WIOA Youth performance indicators are on track to either remain steady or increase for PY 2022.

Program Year	Employment/Education Rate 2nd Quarter	Employment/Education Rate 4th Quarter	Median Earnings	Credential Rate	Measurable Skill Gains
PY 2019	73.43%	73.07%	\$3,715.41	70.59%	44.25%
PY 2020	71.79%	67.78%	\$4,234.28	69.88%	52.18%
PY 2021	73.67%	69.32%	\$4,668.31	70.72%	54.71%
PY 2022 YTD	74.83%	74.36%	\$5,371.45	70.27%	63.52%

## **WAIVER REQUEST –PROVIDING ITAS TO WIOA IN-SCHOOL YOUTH**

### **The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the state would like to waive**

*The state must clearly cite the statute and/or regulation(s) in its request and ensure that the citations refer to the specific elements the state wishes to waive.*

The State of Illinois is seeking a waiver from the following Section(s):

Illinois requests a waiver on the requirement of providing Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) to only out-of-school youth (OSY) ages 16-24 enrolled in the WIOA Youth program.

20 CFR 681.550 states, “In order to enhance individual participant choice in their education and training plans and provide flexibility to service providers, the Department allows WIOA Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for OSY, ages 16 to 24 using WIOA youth funds when appropriate.”

### **Background**

Using ITAs also allows youth service providers an opportunity to promote and encourage training as another option to entry into an increasingly tough labor market. Approval of this waiver would allow youth to select approved training programs from Illinois’ list of demand occupation training programs.

### **Actions the state has undertaken to remove state or local statutory or regulatory barriers**

*The state must provide a discussion of the steps it has taken to remove any potential obstacles in the waiver request as appropriate. Quite often, state or local policies do not present a conflict for the request, and a simple statement indicating that there are no state or local barriers is sufficient.*

There are currently no state or local statutory or regulatory barriers to implementing the requested waiver. State of Illinois regulations and policy align with current federal law and regulations.

### **State strategic goal(s)**

*The state must precisely articulate the goals it seeks to achieve by requesting a waiver. The state must also discuss how these goals relate to its Unified or Combined State Plan.*

Providing occupational training to youth via an ITA will maximize the service delivery capacity of the WIOA Youth Program by allowing those youth who are focused on employment to have the same access as adults and dislocated workers to the advantages of ITAs. In addition, this waiver will maximize flexibility based on youth customers' assessed needs in terms of training that leads to employment in high-growth industries and occupations.

### **Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from the implementation of the waiver**

*The state must provide an estimate of how the waiver will improve outcomes or provide other tangible benefits for jobseekers or employers. States have the discretion to determine how to measure a waiver's success and the specific data sources it intends to use to evaluate its impact.*

The state estimates that the waiver will improve outcomes and provide other tangible benefits for jobseekers and employers in the following ways:

- Increase in the number of local workforce innovation areas that offer ITAs to in-school youth.
- Increase in the number of youth that utilize an ITA to receive an industry-recognized and/or some other post-secondary credential.
- Increase in performance accountability measures for youth as found in section 116(b)(2)(A)(ii) of WIOA (e.g., increases in credential attainment and measurable skills gains).

### **Alignment with the Department of Labor's policy priorities**

*Describe how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as:*

- *Supporting employer engagement;*
- *Connecting education and training strategies;*
- *Supporting work-based learning;*
- *Improving job and career results; and*



- *Other priorities as articulated in guidance.*

This waiver aligns with not only the Department of Labor's priorities but also with those of the State of Illinois. Within the Illinois Unified Plan are examples of initiatives demonstrating the importance of ensuring career and work readiness at all levels and how Illinois is moving toward strategies that integrally tie education to workforce development. By allowing both in-school and out-of-school youth to use ITAs to access training services, in-school youth will be able to use the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) of approved programs, which include registered apprenticeships. Expanding the training program opportunities for in-school youth will allow them to better connect to training programs that match their interest, support their learning style, and better prepare them for employment and work-based learning. Youth who complete occupational skills or adult education programs may be better prepared to obtain employment. Serving in-school and out-of-school youth with the same policy and procedures allows for a continuity of services for all youth.

### **Individuals, groups, or populations affected by the waiver**

*States must describe the potential impact of a waiver on various system stakeholders, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations, persons with barriers to employment, or businesses.*

The waiver will positively impact the eligible youth population, youth service and eligible training providers, and the workforce system through access to a broader variety of providers for youth pursuing post-secondary education and training opportunities and the flexibility of services offered by those providers. Current eligible training providers will be able to expand the population served by including all eligible youth.

### **State plans for monitoring waiver implementation, including collection of waiver outcome information**

*States must describe how they intend to oversee effective waiver implementation and any unique protocols that may be used in their waiver requests.*

The State will use the following approach for monitoring progress in implementation:

- - State staff who administer youth programming will provide ongoing technical assistance and oversight regarding the appropriateness and effectiveness of this waiver. This information will be submitted regularly to the IWIB Continuous Improvement Committee.
  - Annual WIOA on-site programmatic reviews will include an evaluation of the waivers' impact on programmatic goals and outcomes.

- Additionally, the IWIB Continuous Improvement Committee will ensure the specific goals and outcomes achieved by the waiver are realized. Furthermore, the information gathered from the waiver will inform new or policy changes and provide best practices.

This strategy ensures that the goals described above, as well as those outlined in the State's Unified Plan and the IWIB Strategic Plan, are consistent with established objectives of the WIOA and federal and state regulations.

#### **Assurance of state posting of the request for public comment and notification to affected local workforce development boards**

*WIOA does not prescribe a specific amount of time for states to post a potential waiver for comment, but it does require the state to demonstrate a reasonable opportunity for public review and comment by all stakeholders, including businesses and organized labor. Submit any comments or concerns collected in this manner and the outcome of the state's review of the public comments received. The state must also provide affected local boards with notice and opportunity to comment on the proposed waiver.*

In accordance with the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.135, Illinois is submitting its Unified State Plan, which is subject to the requirements outlined in the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.130(d) for public review and comment. As such, Illinois's waiver request was posted on our website for comment and review by required parties and the public.

Local Boards via Board members and Board staff, WIOA partners, and other interested stakeholders, participate in policy development. Additionally, LWIBs receive the opportunity to participate in the public comment period that includes informational webinars.

#### **Waiver outcomes for existing waivers.**

*The Secretary may require that States provide the most recent data available about the outcomes of the existing waiver in cases where the state seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver.*

Illinois has seen the following as a result of this waiver:

- Increase in the number of local workforce innovation areas that offer ITAs to in-school youth.
  - Through PY 2022, 16 of the state's 22 local workforce innovation areas, spread across eight of the ten Economic Development Regions, have ISY with an ITA, indicating a broad geographic use of the waiver.

- Increase in the number of youth that utilize an ITA to receive an industry recognized and/or some other post-secondary credential.
  - The number of ISY enrolled in ITAs has increased over 12% since the inception of the waiver.
- Increase in performance accountability measures for youth as found in section 116(b)(2)(A)(ii) of WIOA (e.g., increases in credential attainment and measurable skills gains).
  - The outcomes achieved for ISY exiters in PY 2022 that received an ITA are: 23 have received a measurable skills gain, 19 have successfully completed training, 22 have received an industry recognized credential, and 13 have entered employment with an average wage of \$20.87.

### **WAIVER REQUEST – AMEND THE DEFINITION OF INCUMBENT WORKER BY ELIMINATING OR REDUCING THE SIX-MONTH EMPLOYMENT REQUIREMENT**

#### **The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the state would like to waive**

*The state must clearly cite the statute and/or regulation(s) in its request and ensure that the citations refer to the specific elements the state wishes to waive.*

The State of Illinois is seeking a waiver from 20 CFR 680.780 to amend the definition of “incumbent worker” by either reducing or, preferably, eliminating the six-month employment requirement. Several local workforce areas collaborated to jointly ask the State to submit this waiver request.

#### **Actions the state has undertaken to remove state or local statutory or regulatory barriers**

*The state must provide a discussion of the steps it has taken to remove any potential obstacles in the waiver request as appropriate. Quite often, state or local policies do not present a conflict for the request, and a simple statement indicating that there are no state or local barriers is sufficient.*

There are currently no state or local statutory or regulatory barriers to implementing the requested waiver. State of Illinois regulations and policy align with current federal law and regulations.

#### **State strategic goal(s)**

*The state must precisely articulate the goals it seeks to achieve by requesting a waiver. The state must also discuss how these goals relate to its Unified or Combined State Plan.*

The overarching goal is to eliminate an arbitrary barrier to providing incumbent worker training to companies and workers struggling to stay competitive. Removing this barrier aligns

directly with priorities espoused by the Department of Labor, the Governor's Executive Order #3, the Five-Year Economic Development Plan and the WIOA Unified State Plan to:

- Be more responsive to the needs of businesses;
- Support establishing long-term relationships between businesses and the workforce system;
- Promote the expansion of Registered Apprenticeships to more businesses as a means to meet their workforce needs;
- Provide upward mobility for workers into career pathways; and
- Promote increased use of work-based learning that allows workers to learn and earn at the same time.

### **Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from the implementation of the waiver**

*The state must provide an estimate of how the waiver will improve outcomes or provide other tangible benefits for jobseekers or employers. States have the discretion to determine how to measure a waiver's success and the specific data sources it intends to use to evaluate its impact.*

Illinois monitors the impact of the waiver through our Incumbent Worker Tracking System. A system modification was deployed to require local areas to identify if a project includes workers who have been at the company less than six months. We are able to track the companies and their location, sector and the number of workers trained in these projects that otherwise would have been denied.

### **Alignment with the Department of Labor's policy priorities**

*Describe how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as:*

- *Supporting employer engagement;*
- *Connecting education and training strategies;*
- *Supporting work-based learning;*
- *Improving job and career results; and*
- *Other priorities as articulated in guidance.*

Illinois has long been a strong advocate of incumbent worker training as a means of improving the competitive position of workers and businesses. Our Unified State Plan places a strong emphasis on workforce system responsiveness to the needs of employers, and the six-month requirement is an arbitrary barrier to using incumbent worker training to support Registered Apprenticeships, upskilling workers and keeping companies competitive.

A survey conducted by the local workforce boards indicates that in 2019:

- dozens of employer requests for incumbent worker training were denied due to this requirement; and
- Employers expressed frustration with being able to use incumbent worker training for some employees but not others if they are newly hired. (Local areas are aware they have the flexibility to include new hires if they make up a minority of the training cohort.)

### **Individuals, groups, or populations affected by the waiver**

*States must describe the potential impact of a waiver on various system stakeholders, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations, persons with barriers to employment, or businesses.*

Individuals impacted by the waiver potentially include:

- all disadvantaged populations that recently entered the workforce through support from community-based programs funded from sources other than WIOA;
- newly hired workers that wish to enter a Registered Apprenticeship;
- newly hired workers who wish to upskill their talents for improved job security.

### **State plans for monitoring waiver implementation, including collection of waiver outcome information**

*States must describe how they intend to oversee effective waiver implementation and any unique protocols that may be used in their waiver requests.*

The IWIB Continuous Improvement Committee will have the responsibility of ensuring the specific goals and outcomes achieved by the waiver are realized. Furthermore, the information gathered from the waiver will inform new or changes to policy as well as provide best practices. The outcomes of the waiver will be reported in the WIOA Annual Report.

### **Assurance of state posting of the request for public comment and notification to affected local workforce development boards**

*WIOA does not prescribe a specific amount of time for states to post a potential waiver for comment, but it does require the state to demonstrate a reasonable opportunity for public review and comment by all stakeholders, including businesses and organized labor. Submit any comments or concerns collected in this manner and the outcome of the state's review of the public comments received. The state must also provide affected local boards with notice and opportunity to comment on the proposed waiver.*

In accordance with the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.135, Illinois is submitting its Unified State Plan, which is subject to the requirements outlined in the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.130(d) for public review and comment. As such, Illinois's waiver request was posted on our website for comment and review by required parties and the public.

Local Boards via Board members and Board staff, WIOA partners, and other interested stakeholders participate in policy development. Additionally, LWIBs receive the opportunity to participate in the public comment period that includes informational webinars.

**Waiver outcomes for existing waivers.**

*The Secretary may require that States provide the most recent data available about the outcomes of the existing waiver in cases where the state seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver.*

Illinois has seen the following as a result of this waiver:

Overall, 100% of LWIAs were successful in utilizing this waiver to help their employees gain valuable skills through IWT. Participating companies are in sectors such as healthcare, manufacturing, transportation & distribution, and hospitality.

**-PLANNING REGION ALIGNMENT**

**The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the state would like to waive**

*The state must clearly cite the statute and/or regulation(s) in its request and ensure that the citations refer to the specific elements the state wishes to waive.*

The State of Illinois is seeking a waiver from the following Section(s):

WIOA Sec. 106(a)(2) and 20 CFR § 679.210 (preamble)

“In accordance with WIOA Section 106(a)(2), a single local area may not be split across two planning regions. Local areas must be contiguous to be a planning region and effectively align economic and workforce development activities and resources.”

Illinois has been proactive in coordinating regional planning with the implementation of the WIOA requirements. These efforts led to the state identifying meaningful planning regions that resulted in the 10 Economic Development Regions (EDRs). To support this process, Illinois coordinated regional planning, including guidelines, regional and statewide planning events, as well as coordinated technical assistance resources as part of the development of the initial regional plans in 2016. With the release of the final WIOA rules, planning resources were

updated in 2017 and then again in early 2018 to garner consultation with local chief elected officials, local workforce board members and other interested stakeholders for the purposes of subsequent designation and alignment with planning regions.

Under WIOA Sec. 106(b)(2), 20 CFR § 679.250(a), and TEGL 27-14, the Governor must approve a request for initial local area designation from any area that was one under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) for the 2-year period preceding the date of enactment of WIOA; provided the local area had performed successfully and sustained fiscal integrity during that two-year period. All twenty-two of Illinois' Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIA) met the requirements for initial designation based on an analysis of fiscal integrity and WIOA performance. Illinois identified ten planning regions that meet the requirements of WIOA Sec. 106(a)(2) and 20 CFR § 679.210.

Five of the 22 LWIAs (4/Ogle, 11/Livingston, 19/DeWitt, 21/Calhoun, Jersey and 23/Douglas) meet the requirements for designation crossover between planning regions. Furthermore, WIOA Sec. 106(b)(2) and 20 CFR § 679.250(a) states the Governor may not reconfigure Illinois' initially-designated local areas for subsequent designation without consultation with local area chief elected officials, Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIBs), and other interested stakeholders. Given these LWIAs, as designated, have sustained fiscal integrity and met performance, the Governor is unable to reconfigure these areas without consultation.

While these LWIAs meet the requirements within statute and regulation, the Governor did undertake an extensive process to consult with the local boards and elected officials to identify a regional planning structure that would not result in any single local area split between two or more regions. This consultative process provided the opportunity for these stakeholders to voice their concerns over realignment and demonstrate why the configurations should remain.

The local feedback expressed concerns that *focusing the realignment decision on labor market information is a "one-size-fits-all" approach that does not focus on the complete composition of the counties and communities*. The State also received feedback expressing concern about the *administrative burden of realigning the counties and that this process would divert time and resources from serving job seekers and businesses in the community*.

The impacted counties and local workforce areas have demonstrated that they have been successful in planning and delivering services in the context of the current regional and local workforce area boundaries. Based on this fact and in response to feedback obtained from the consultation process, Illinois is pursuing this waiver to ensure the continuity of service in the impacted counties. This waiver removes a barrier that impedes the State's efforts to improve the workforce, education, and economic development systems in Illinois.

#### **Actions the state has undertaken to remove state or local statutory or regulatory barriers**

*The state must provide a discussion of the steps it has taken to remove any potential obstacles in the waiver request as appropriate. Quite often, state or local policies do not present a conflict for the request, and a simple statement indicating that there are no state or local barriers is sufficient.*

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) and WIOA Core partners established a working group to develop a plan of action to address this issue. The working group reviewed the regional planning data, identify a compliant regional planning structure, and develop a local consultation process with the Governor's Office, WIOA state agencies, state board, state legislature, chief elected officials, local board members, and other interested stakeholders.

Illinois' regional data has been updated and based on regional economic and labor market data that includes:

- - commuting patterns;
  - numbers of employers and jobs supported regionally;
  - projections of regional job growth; and
  - targeted industry growth patterns.

A state-level team on behalf of the Governor convened workshops in the impacted counties. , and others attended these public meetings. Each session provided local chief elected officials and other interested parties with the labor market data, that demonstrated the alignment of the county with the appropriate regional planning area. In addition, the sessions outlined steps and technical assistance available to support the realignment.

The State of Illinois documented the feedback from the consultation workshops. In addition, the State has received and reviewed additional written comments expressing questions, concerns, and objections to the realignment process. Two of the impacted counties have expressly objected to the realignment requirement.

This waiver will provide Illinois with the flexibility to remove a regulatory barrier for counties that have demonstrated the ability to plan and deliver services in the context of the current local workforce area and regional planning area boundaries.

### **State strategic goal(s)**

*The state must precisely articulate the goals it seeks to achieve by requesting a waiver. The state must also discuss how these goals relate to its Unified or Combined State Plan.*

The strategies and activities listed below are part of six policy priorities within the Illinois WIOA Unified Plan and speak specifically to regional alignment as identified in this waiver request and provide support for planning and sector partnerships.



Strategy 1: Coordinate Demand-Driven Strategic Planning at the State and Regional Levels.

Activity 1.1: Develop Strategic Indicators, Benchmarks and Related Planning Data Resources

Activity 1.2: Establish Regional Planning Areas

Activity 1.3: Conduct Integrated Regional Planning

Strategy 2: Support Employer-Driven Regional Sector Initiatives

Activity 2.1: Promote Employer-Driven Regional Sector Partnerships

Activity 2.2: Promote Sector-Based Business Services and Employer Initiatives

### **Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from the implementation of the waiver**

*The state must provide an estimate of how the waiver will improve outcomes or provide other tangible benefits for jobseekers or employers. States have the discretion to determine how to measure a waiver's success and the specific data sources it intends to use to evaluate its impact.*

A waiver from realigning the LWIAs with regional planning areas allows Illinois to comply with WIOA statute and regulations for complying with the Governor's need to allow LWIAs that maintain fiscal sustainability and performance accountability to stay intact.

The intent of the waiver is to not impose an unviable mandate on local Chief Elected Officials (CEOs) and workforce boards not able to restructure their county alignment at this time. The projected outcome of the waiver is to avoid creating a dysfunctional and disorganized environment that ultimately would have a negative impact on service delivery and customer outcomes if realignment were forced on local CEOs.

### **Alignment with the Department of Labor's policy priorities**

*Describe how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as:*

- *Supporting employer engagement;*
- *Connecting education and training strategies;*
- *Supporting work-based learning;*
- *Improving job and career results; and*
- *Other priorities as articulated in guidance.*

Illinois' current regional and local structure align with the four identified purposes of Title I of WIOA priorities involving activities at the regional level, which include:

- enhancing the strategic role of states and elected officials, and Local Workforce Innovation Boards in the public workforce system by increasing flexibility to tailor services to meet employer and worker needs at State, regional, and local levels;
- supporting the alignment of the workforce investment, education, and economic development systems in support of a comprehensive, accessible, and high-quality workforce development system at the Federal, state, and local and regional levels;
- improving the quality and labor market relevance of workforce investment, education, and economic development efforts by promoting the use of industry and sector partnerships, career pathways, and regional service delivery strategies; and
- increasing the prosperity and economic growth of workers, employers, communities, regions, and States.

#### **Individuals, groups, or populations affected by the waiver**

*States must describe the potential impact of a waiver on various system stakeholders, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations, persons with barriers to employment, or businesses.*

This waiver benefits the entire state workforce system, reduces unnecessary administrative expenses caused by realignment, and keeps consistent with current Local Workforce Innovation Area structures. Those specifically impacted include:

- Employers;
- Job seekers, including WIOA priority population groups;
- Local area one-stop partners and delivery systems;
- LWIBs;
- Economic development entities;
- the IWIB; and
- WIOA state agency staff, including planning, performance, policy, reporting, and fiscal.

#### **State plans for monitoring waiver implementation, including collection of waiver outcome information**

*States must describe how they intend to oversee effective waiver implementation and any unique protocols that may be used in their waiver requests.*

The State will use the following approach for monitoring progress in implementation:

- State staff involved with the administration governance provisions will provide ongoing technical assistance and oversight as it relates to the appropriateness and effectiveness of this waiver. This information will be submitted regularly to the IWIB Evaluation and Accountability Committee.
- Annual WIOA on-site programmatic reviews will include an evaluation review of the impact the waivers have on programmatic goals and outcomes.
- Additionally, the IWIB Evaluation and Accountability Committee will have the responsibility of ensuring the specific goals and outcomes achieved by the waiver are realized. Furthermore, the information gathered from the waiver will inform new or changes to policy as well as provide best practices to assist in preparing for the Program Year 2024 planning process.

This strategy ensures that the goals described above, as well as those outlined in the State's Unified Plan and the IWIB Strategic Plan, are consistent with established objectives of the WIOA and federal and state regulations.

**Assurance of state posting of the request for public comment and notification to affected local workforce development boards**

*WIOA does not prescribe a specific amount of time for states to post a potential waiver for comment, but it does require the state to demonstrate a reasonable opportunity for public review and comment by all stakeholders, including businesses and organized labor. Submit any comments or concerns collected in this manner and the outcome of the state's review of the public comments received. The state must also provide affected local boards with notice and opportunity to comment on the proposed waiver.*

In accordance with the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.135, Illinois is submitting its Unified State Plan, which is subject to the requirements outlined in the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.130(d) for public review and comment. As such, Illinois's waiver request was posted on our website for comment and review by required parties and the public.

Local Boards via Board members and Board staff, WIOA partners, and other interested stakeholders participate in policy development. Additionally, LWIBs receive the opportunity to participate in the public comment period that includes informational webinars.

**Waiver outcomes for existing waivers.**

*The Secretary may require that States provide the most recent data available about the outcomes of the existing waiver in cases where the state seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver.*

Illinois has seen the following as a result of this waiver:

To date the burden of contributing to multiple regional plans has not risen to the level of the locally perceived burden of realignment. As mentioned previously, Illinois successfully brokered realignment of several counties during the current planning cycle. Our position is to continue to encourage local areas to consider realignment and offer technical assistance to implement but stopping short of imposing this requirement on local CEOs determined to maintain the status quo.

The local areas that were allowed not to realign have continued to effectively plan and deliver services while maintaining fiscal sustainability and performance accountability under the current local workforce area and regional planning boundaries.

### **WAIVER REQUEST –INCREASE ON-THE-JOB TRAINING REIMBURSEMENT**

#### **The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the state would like to waive**

*The state must clearly cite the statute and/or regulation(s) in its request and ensure that the citations refer to the specific elements the state wishes to waive.*

Illinois currently has the authority under WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(H)( ) to provide reimbursements to employers of on-the-job training programs up to 75 percent and is seeking expansion of the authority to the current allowable employer reimbursement for the wage rate of an On-the-Job Training (OJT) participant for the extraordinary costs of providing training and additional supervision related to the OJT as described in WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(H)(i) and further outlined at 20 CFR 680.720 (b).

Illinois is proposing a sliding reimbursement scale to the employer based on its size and capability. Under this waiver, employers with fifty (50) or fewer employees would be reimbursed up to ninety percent (90%), those with between 51 and 250 employees up to seventy-five (75%) reimbursement and all other employers up to the statutory limit of 50%. Further, Illinois has developed a policy as documentation of the factors used when deciding to increase the wage reimbursement level above 50 percent (50%) as required under WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(H)(i)(I) and 680.730.

This waiver is being requested to apply for all OJT contracts supported by WIOA formula funds, including Adult, Dislocated Workers, and Youth, as appropriate.

Many small businesses are facing unprecedented demands to keep their doors open and avoid layoffs. Extra incentives such as the increased wage reimbursement are a tool to support a strengthened recovery strategy. Illinois needs to have the flexibility to provide an increased incentive to establish new on-the-job training opportunities during a time of uncertainty and recovery.

#### **Actions the state has undertaken to remove state or local statutory or regulatory barriers**

*The state must provide a discussion of the steps it has taken to remove any potential obstacles in the waiver request as appropriate. Quite often, state or local policies do not present a conflict for the request, and a simple statement indicating that there are no state or local barriers is sufficient.*

There are no State or Local barriers to implementing the provisions requested within this proposed waiver.

### **State strategic goal(s)**

*The state must precisely articulate the goals it seeks to achieve by requesting a waiver. The state must also discuss how these goals relate to its Unified or Combined State Plan.*

This waiver is consistent with a national focus to develop the workforce system that is more responsive to the needs of business and individual customers and with Illinois' strategic direction, goals and priorities as outlined within its Unified State Plan, for which it is awaiting approval, the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board's Strategic Plan, and the preliminary priorities of a new IWIB standing committee of business engagement. OJTs are a proven model for providing individual customers with information, instruction and training needed to meet the unique needs of businesses that have prepared them to be retained upon successful completion. It would allow for more flexibility for smaller businesses experiencing limited resources. This is especially true during times of recovery following a disaster.

### **Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from the implementation of the waiver**

*The state must provide an estimate of how the waiver will improve outcomes or provide other tangible benefits for jobseekers or employers. States have the discretion to determine how to measure a waiver's success and the specific data sources it intends to use to evaluate its impact.*

The state estimates that the waiver will improve outcomes and provide other tangible benefits in the following ways:

- Increase in the number of OJT placements.
- Increase in the number of OJT placements in targeted sectors and occupations.
- Increase in the employment retention rates in the OJT-related industry 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarters following exit.
- Increase in the number of unique employer work sites using OJT.

### **Alignment with the Department of Labor's policy priorities**

*Describe how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as:*

- *Supporting employer engagement;*
- *Connecting education and training strategies;*
- *Supporting work-based learning;*
- *Improving job and career results; and*
- *Other priorities as articulated in guidance.*

This waiver aligns with not only the Department of Labor's priorities but also with those of the State of Illinois. Within the Illinois WIOA Unified State Plan are examples of initiatives demonstrating the importance of work-based learning and how critical it is to meet the needs of businesses.

### **Individuals, groups, or populations affected by the waiver**

*States must describe the potential impact of a waiver on various system stakeholders, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations, persons with barriers to employment, or businesses.*

The waiver would benefit employers and individual customers. It would be especially beneficial to small businesses, including new start-ups, as a cost-effective incentive to utilize the proven method of utilizing OJTs to hire and train new workers. It will allow Illinois businesses to quickly adapt to the changing landscape by improving capacity and remain competitive. Individuals, such as dislocated workers transitioning to new occupations or industries, long-term unemployed attempting to return to the workforce and be introduced to new skills or entry-level workers such as youth will be seeking to start careers in a weak economic climate. This waiver would expand the potential training options for WIOA-eligible job seekers and workers.

### **State plans for monitoring waiver implementation, including collection of waiver outcome information**

*States must describe how they intend to oversee effective waiver implementation and any unique protocols that may be used in their waiver requests.*

The state will use the following approach for monitoring progress in implementation:

State staff who administer programming will provide ongoing technical assistance and oversight as it relates to the appropriateness and effectiveness of this waiver. This information will be submitted regularly to the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) Continuous Improvement Committee. Furthermore, the information gathered from the waiver will inform new or changes to policy as well as provide best practices.

Annual WIOA on-site programmatic reviews will include an evaluation of the impact the waivers have on programmatic goals and outcomes.

**Assurance of state posting of the request for public comment and notification to affected local workforce development boards**

*WIOA does not prescribe a specific amount of time for states to post a potential waiver for comment, but it does require the state to demonstrate a reasonable opportunity for public review and comment by all stakeholders, including businesses and organized labor. Submit any comments or concerns collected in this manner and the outcome of the state's review of the public comments received. The state must also provide affected local boards with notice and opportunity to comment on the proposed waiver.*

In accordance with the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.135, Illinois is submitting its Unified State Plan, which is subject to the requirements outlined in the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.130(d) for public review and comment. As such, Illinois's waiver request was posted on our website for comment and review by required parties and the public.

Local Boards via Board members and Board staff, WIOA partners, and other interested stakeholders participate in policy development. Additionally, LWIBs receive the opportunity to participate in the public comment period that includes informational webinars.

**Waiver outcomes for existing waivers.**

*The Secretary may require that States provide the most recent data available about the outcomes of the existing waiver in cases where the state seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver.*

Illinois has seen the following as a result of this waiver:

The number of OJT placements (including those in apprenticeships) and the number of unique OJT employer worksites has steadily increased each program year. Additionally, the overwhelming majority of the OJT placements have been in the manufacturing sector.

	OJT Placements	Unique OJT Work Sites	OJT Participants w/ Training Related Job at Exit
PY 2019	343	134	320
PY 2020	353	162	232
PY 2021	424	162	170

	OJT Placements	Unique OJT Work Sites	OJT Participants w/ Training Related Job at Exit
PY 2022	488	206	258

For PY 2021, which is the latest year performance outcomes are available, employment retention rates for OJT participants that exited with a job in a related industry in which they were trained in the second (2nd) and fourth (4th) quarters following exit have increased to reach pre-pandemic numbers.

## **WAIVER REQUEST –USE OF STATEWIDE FUNDS FOR QUALIFYING EVENTS**

### **The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the state would like to waive**

*The state must clearly cite the statute and/or regulation(s) in its request and ensure that the citations refer to the specific elements the state wishes to waive.*

Specifically, the State of Illinois is requesting from the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) a waiver to allow flexibility in the use of the funds reserved by the Governor for use to provide statewide rapid response activities (i.e., WIOA section 134(a)(2)(A)), and for use to provide statewide employment and training activities (i.e. WIOA section 134(a)(2)(B) and (3)) in order to provide comprehensive Disaster Recovery assistance to affected areas as described in WIOA 170(d) and 20 CFR 687.100(b). The state may continue to apply for applicable grants as they may be made available.

Additionally, this waiver requests approval to exclude individuals from the calculation of state and local performance measures found in WIOA §§ 116(b) and (c). Specifically, the exclusion request is for participants who receive only disaster relief employment and no other allowable career and training services through the grant or through co-enrollment in another WIOA core or partner program. This request is consistent with the performance allowance in TEGL 12-19. The state understands that it must include these participants in various reports and the state's annual Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) submissions, using the "Special Project ID field. In addition, Illinois will segregate the *Disaster Recovery* projects from other Statewide Rapid Response grants. The services to the participants will be limited to the time that is needed to respond and recover from the disaster.

Under this waiver allowance, permitted WIOA statewide fund use includes, but is not limited to:

- Expeditionary allocation of funds to a local workforce innovation board so they may respond quickly to a disaster, emergency, or other qualifying event as described at 20



CFR 687.100(b). Only those events and cascading events caused by a qualifying event that have been declared as an emergency or disaster by qualify for the use of WIOA statewide funds.

- To alleviate the effects that a qualifying event causes within affected local area(s) and/or planning regions, WIOA statewide funds will allow comprehensive disaster relief employment and/or employment and training activities, and the provision of needed humanitarian resources and services, including other services or resources deemed necessary as described at 20 CFR 687.180(b)(1).
- State Disaster grant policies and procedures will mirror those of Disaster Recovery National Dislocated Worker Grants (DWG) in terms of eligibility, allowable services, wage and health and safety requirements, etc. to ensure continuity of services between the State and Federal Disaster grants as necessary.
- An individual's disaster relief employment is limited to 12 months or 2080 hours for work related to recovery from a single emergency or disaster. OET may extend an individual's disaster relief employment for up to an additional 12 months or 2080 hours if requested and sufficiently justified by the local board.
- Supportive services may be provided to enable individuals to participate in disaster relief employment and employment and training activities, including such costs as transportation, childcare, and personal safety equipment and clothing consistent with local policies.
- Individuals shall be eligible to be offered disaster relief employment and employment and training services if such individual is a dislocated worker; is a long-term unemployed individual as defined by the State; is temporarily or permanently laid off as a consequence of the emergency or disaster; or in the case of an individual who is self-employed, becomes unemployed or significantly underemployed as a result of the emergency or disaster.

#### **Actions the state has undertaken to remove state or local statutory or regulatory barriers**

*The state must provide a discussion of the steps it has taken to remove any potential obstacles in the waiver request as appropriate. Quite often, state or local policies do not present a conflict for the request, and a simple statement indicating that there are no state or local barriers is sufficient.*

The state established the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) to act as the lead agency in the event of an emergency and/or disaster when a county is declared a disaster area by the Governor. Within all Illinois local workforce innovation areas or local areas, there are responsible entities marshaled by local government or its agents should a qualifying event occur. The state works in concert with these entities to provide resources and expertise.

Illinois's WIOA Unified State Plan articulates many of the WIOA-related statewide activities it does or can do when facing a qualifying event. For example, the Office of Employment and Training is responsible for applying and administering applicable National Dislocated Worker Grants (NDWG), consistent with WIOA Sec. 170 and its corresponding regulatory requirements. These grants are helpful once allocated, but in the time between the event and allocation, aid is

urgently needed and there is much work to be done. If months pass before the NDWG allocation occurs, damage can be exacerbated, and work is not completed. The state is mindful of this time gap and strives to apply as soon as the state is eligible for NDWG funding assistance, as appropriate. The efficient use of time right after a qualifying event occurs is a critical variable in how well recovery is measured. This is a serious barrier the state wants to reduce.

The State of Illinois' waiver request to allow flexibility in the use of the funds reserved by the Governor for use to provide statewide rapid response activities (i.e., WIOA section 134(a)(2)(A)), and for use to provide statewide employment and training activities (i.e. WIOA section 134(a)(2)(B) and (3)) in order to provide comprehensive Disaster Recovery assistance to affected areas as described in WIOA 170(d) and 20 CFR 687.100(b) was approved in 2019; however, the approval did not address the State's request regarding the performance requirements for individuals that are only provided with disaster recovery employment.

### **State strategic goal(s)**

*The state must precisely articulate the goals it seeks to achieve by requesting a waiver. The state must also discuss how these goals relate to its Unified or Combined State Plan.*

This waiver will allow the State of Illinois to efficiently and effectively respond to disasters by aligning the program requirements of a disaster recovery project regardless of if they are funded with WIOA Statewide Rapid Response funds or the National Dislocated Worker Grant Program.

The objective of improved outcomes, varied as they may be, is best served when available funding is put to quick and effective use for all parties involved. Illinois' WIOA Unified State Plan articulates that the Governor's WIOA statewide funds will generally be used to promote a vision of jobs that pay, schools that teach, and government that works. To that end, in the case of a qualifying event, the state intends to use WIOA statewide funds so that relevant workforce development responses are provided in a timely manner. WIOA statewide funds may be provided to local areas deemed in need of financial resources as a result of being affected by a qualifying event.

The use of WIOA statewide funds associated with this waiver supports the state's goal of local WIOA-based programs and activities that better serve targeted groups of workforce development system customers. The use of WIOA statewide funds offers greater flexibility so that the state and local governing entities can expand their ability to coordinate resources, services and activities for individuals, workers and employers affected by the qualifying emergency and/or disaster event. The state will use WIOA statewide funds to ensure that critical, time-sensitive work can be performed and the potential participant pool is widened. The waiver flexibility permits local areas the latitude to marshal available labor, conduct appropriate training, enable required resources to be requisitioned quickly, and provide immediate and comprehensive disaster recovery assistance, including efforts to minimize further disaster impacts.

### **Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from implementation of the waiver**

*The state must provide an estimate of how the waiver will improve outcomes or provide other tangible benefits for jobseekers or employers. States have the discretion to determine how to measure a waiver's success and the specific data sources it intends to use to evaluate its impact.*

The state estimates that the waiver will improve outcomes and provide other tangible benefits in the following ways:

- Increase statewide and local area workforce development response times to a qualifying event;
- Increase public safety and help support humanitarian activities;
- Availability of disaster relief employment will provide grant participants with access to employment and training activities;
- Increasing eligible grant participants' employment and training activities will lead to a higher probability of securing unsubsidized employment; and
- Alleviation of some of the time-sensitive variables arising from a qualifying event affecting an employer and lessening the severity of possible layoffs or business closings.

### **Alignment with the Department of Labor's policy priorities**

*Describe how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as:*

- *Supporting employer engagement;*
- *Connecting education and training strategies;*
- *Supporting work-based learning;*
- *Improving job and career results; and*
- *Other priorities as articulated in guidance.*

This waiver aligns with not only the Department of Labor's priorities but also with those of the State of Illinois. Within the Illinois Unified Plan are examples of initiatives demonstrating the importance of ensuring career and work readiness at all levels. This will allow the state to temporarily expand service capacity at the local level through time-limited funding assistance in response to significant disasters.

Expanding the ability of the state to provide disaster-related employment opportunities through statewide funding allows participants to develop skills that will better prepare them to obtain permanent employment.

### **Individuals, groups, or populations affected by the waiver**

*States must describe the potential impact of a waiver on various system stakeholders, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations, persons with barriers to employment, or businesses.*

The waiver will positively impact:

- All eligible participants as identified in WIOA section 170 and 20 CFR 687.170, which include dislocated workers, long-term unemployed individuals as defined by the State, temporarily or permanently laid off workers as a consequence of the emergency or disaster, or in the case of an individual who is self-employed, becomes unemployed or significantly underemployed as a result of the emergency or disaster; and
- Non-WIOA eligible recipients include affected businesses and employers, residents and other individuals that benefit from the qualifying event clean-up, restoration and humanitarian activities, and resources provided.

### **State plans for monitoring waiver implementation, including collection of waiver outcome information**

*States must describe how they intend to oversee effective waiver implementation and any unique protocols that may be used in their waiver requests.*

The state will use the following approach for monitoring progress in implementation:

OET workforce development leadership will determine if the qualifying event requires the use of WIOA statewide funds and will approve parameters for the project, be the operational lead, and be tasked with WIOA fund administration and project management or activities. Applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, policies and procedures will be used to ensure fiscal accountability. Unless otherwise authorized in this waiver, the financial and administrative rules contained in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; Final Rule (i.e., 20 CFR 683) will apply.

At a minimum, the funding recipient will supply the OET with the following information for review:

- Completed Request for Funds form with local board signatory authorizing request;
- Official declaration documenting the emergency and/or disaster event;
- Narrative will include, at a minimum, a summary of the event, a preliminary assessment of the clean-up, and humanitarian needs of the affected areas, and will demonstrate whether there is a sufficient population of eligible individuals to conduct the planned work;
- Budget and budget justification; and

- Completed worksite summary.

The OET will receive monthly project status reports and will host teleconferences with project stakeholders as necessary to monitor project status. At a minimum, funding recipients will provide the OET with the following information for review:

- Revised narrative and associated attachments when a modification is required;
- Monthly Financial Status Reports;
- Monthly project status report of project activities; and
- Data entry for all participant services in the Illinois Workforce Development System (IWDS).

Only local boards will be the recipient of WIOA statewide funding for qualifying events. If a qualifying event occurs in a local area, the state requires the respective local board to collaborate with local governments and other recognized entities to determine whether workforce development-oriented services and activities are warranted. Local boards may work with their respective local area fiscal agents to complete and submit the funding request to OET. Local boards will work with the one-stop operator(s) to communicate the funding parameters to workforce development system partners and other service providers. Participant activity is to be recorded in the state system of record, the IWDS. All funds obligated will be accounted for in the financial management system, the GRS. Case management and related source documentation associated with the emergency and/or disaster must include the qualifying event as a point of reference.

State staff who administer programming will provide ongoing technical assistance and oversight as it relates to the appropriateness and effectiveness of this waiver. This information will be submitted regularly to the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) Continuous Improvement Committee.

Annual WIOA on-site programmatic reviews will include an evaluation of the impact the waivers have on programmatic goals and outcomes.

Additionally, the IWIB Continuous Improvement Committee will have the responsibility of ensuring the specific goals and outcomes achieved by the waiver are realized. Furthermore, the information gathered from the waiver will inform new or changes to policy as well as provide best practices.

#### **Assurance of state posting of the request for public comment and notification to affected local workforce development boards**

*WIOA does not prescribe a specific amount of time for states to post a potential waiver for comment, but it does require the state to demonstrate a reasonable opportunity for public review*

*and comment by all stakeholders, including businesses and organized labor. Submit any comments or concerns collected in this manner and the outcome of the state's review of the public comments received. The state must also provide affected local boards with notice and opportunity to comment on the proposed waiver.*

In accordance with the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.135, Illinois is submitting its Unified State Plan, which is subject to the requirements outlined in the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.130(d) for public review and comment. As such, Illinois's waiver request was posted on our website for comment and review by required parties and the public.

Local Boards via Board members and Board staff, WIOA partners, and other interested stakeholders participate in policy development. Additionally, LWIBs receive the opportunity to participate in the public comment period that includes informational webinars.

**Waiver outcomes for existing waivers.**

*The Secretary may require that States provide the most recent data available about the outcomes of the existing waiver in cases where the state seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver.*

Illinois has seen the following as a result of this waiver:

All disaster activity has concluded, and no grants were active in PY22.

**WAIVER REQUEST –Eliminate the requirement for WIOA applicants to comply with the Military Selective Service Act.**

**The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the state would like to waive**

*The state must clearly cite the statute and/or regulation(s) in its request and ensure that the citations refer to the specific elements the state wishes to waive.*

The State of Illinois is seeking a waiver from the following Section(s):

Section 189(h) and 20 CFR 683.225, which require all participants receiving assistance or benefits under WIOA to comply with Selective Service registration requirements under the Military Selective Service Act (MSSA). Section 3(a) of the MSSA requires male citizens of the United States who are born on or after January 1, 1960, and who are ages 18 through 25 years of age to register for Selective Service.

### **Actions the state has undertaken to remove state or local statutory or regulatory barriers**

*The state must provide a discussion of the steps it has taken to remove any potential obstacles in the waiver request as appropriate. Quite often, state or local policies do not present a conflict for the request, and a simple statement indicating that there are no state or local barriers is sufficient.*

There are currently no state or local statutory or regulatory barriers to implementing the requested waiver. State of Illinois regulations and policy align with current federal law and regulations.

### **State strategic goal(s)**

*The state must precisely articulate the goals it seeks to achieve by requesting a waiver. The state must also discuss how these goals relate to its Unified or Combined State Plan.*

The Governor's Commission on Workforce Equity & Access ("Commission") was convened by the State of Illinois Governor's Office to review and improve the state's workforce development system. Formed in September 2021, the Commission was led by Senate Majority Leader Kimberly Lightford and Illinois Deputy Governor Andy Manar and consisted of multiple education and workforce development system stakeholders and advocates from across the state. The Commission was tasked with creating a vision for an equitable, accessible, and effective future state workforce development system grounded in an understanding of user and stakeholder experience, including how racial, social, and geographic inequities inform experience and outcomes across Illinois' federally and state-funded workforce programs. In April 2023, the Commission released its report titled *Strategic Recommendations for an Accessible, Inclusive & Responsive Workforce Development System in Illinois*. This report and the recommendations will be included in the 2024 State Unified Plan.

The Commission found that users still may experience an unwelcoming, burdensome, and, in some cases, re-traumatizing environment when they attempt to access Illinois' workforce development services. Under the Inclusive Principle, the report recommends that practices that are redundant and burdensome and that re-traumatize users (e.g., continuously recounting personal circumstances to demonstrate eligibility and worthiness of support, resubmitting the same documents repeatedly, etc.) should be eliminated.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Section 189(h) and 20 CFR 683.225 requires all participants receiving assistance or benefits under WIOA to comply with Selective Service registration requirements under the Military Selective Service Act (MSSA). Section 3(a) of the MSSA requires male citizens of the United States who are born on or after January 1, 1960, and who are ages eighteen (18) through twenty-five (25) years of age to register for Selective Service at [www.sss.gov](http://www.sss.gov). These requirements apply to both formula and discretionary grants awarded by the Employment and Training Administration under WIOA.

The Selective Service System was established in 1917 to administer the draft and maintain an updated database of potential service members in times of no draft. It was meant to be a simple system in which men registered, and women were exempt. This thinking, however, largely fails to account for the transgender experience.

Selective Service bases the registration requirement on gender assigned at birth and not on gender identity or on gender reassignment. Individuals who are born male and changed their gender to female are still required to register. Individuals who are born female and changed their gender to male are not required to register.

Currently, all citizens whose birth-assigned sex was male must register within thirty days of their eighteenth birthday. Failure to do so is punishable by up to five years in prison and \$250,000 in fines, though individuals have rarely been prosecuted. Applications for federal financial aid for higher education, federal employment, United States citizenship and other government benefits have been made contingent upon Selective Service registration in order to encourage compliance. Therefore, when applying for government benefits, transgender people can often face particular difficulties in regard to their Selective Service registration status.

*Illinois, along with a growing number of states and the District of Columbia, are creating or amending laws to address gender identity. The Illinois Vital Records Act was amended to make it possible for many transgender and intersex people to correct the sex designation on their birth certificates. The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) keeps the old birth certificate under seal and cannot be released unless the individual requests it or a court orders it.*

Even though people who are assigned male at birth and who are required to register are also required to inform the Selective Service of any legal name change or change in other record information, such as an address, up until their twenty-sixth birthday, this does not include change of gender, as the Selective Service policy is entirely based on birth-assigned sex. For trans women and others who were assigned male at birth and have registered with the Selective Service, notification of a name change is legally required within ten days.

Grantees must verify whether the individual has complied with the MSSA requirements and place documentation in the case file. For men born on or after January 1, 1960, verification of registration can be done online using their social security number. Men who are 26 years old or older and did not register with Selective Service must request an official response, or Status Information Letter (SIL), from the Selective Service indicating if they were or were not required to register. There are a few cases when a man is exempt from the registration requirement and, therefore, will not have a Selective Service registration number.

Since the gender on an Illinois birth certificate may be corrected and not reflect the gender assigned at birth, a WIOA staff person may not be aware of an individual's requirement under the MSSA.



Because all WIOA services beyond basic, non-staff assisted career services must be provided to an individual who is compliant with the MSSA, costs incurred by the grantee in providing services to an individual who is non-compliant will be considered disallowed costs.

TEGL 11-11, Change 2 *Selective Service Registration Requirements for Employment and Training Administration Funded Programs* states the state/local policy may either (1) request a Status Information Letter from a potential participant before making a determination of knowing and willful failure to register, or (2) initiate the process to determine if the potential participant's failure to register was knowing and willful without the first requesting a Status Information Letter.

It would be overly burdensome for local WIOA staff to request a Status Information Letter for every individual in need of WIOA services. Since the Status Information Letter may take up to four to six (4-6) weeks, grantees are reluctant to enroll individuals. This creates an unnecessary barrier to serving the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) community, as well as an unwelcoming, burdensome, and in some cases re-traumatizing environment when they attempt to access Illinois' workforce development services.

#### **Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from the implementation of the waiver**

*The state must provide an estimate of how the waiver will improve outcomes or provide other tangible benefits for jobseekers or employers. States have the discretion to determine how to measure a waiver's success and the specific data sources it intends to use to evaluate its impact.*

A waiver from compliance with the Selective Service registration requirements under the Military Selective Service Act (MSSA) to obtain WIOA services will eliminate an unnecessary burden on customers and WIOA staff.

The projected outcome of the waiver is to avoid creating a needless barrier to program participation for populations with barriers to obtaining eligibility and reporting documents.

#### **Alignment with the Department of Labor's policy priorities**

*Describe how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as:*

- *Supporting employer engagement;*
- *Connecting education and training strategies;*
- *Supporting work-based learning;*
- *Improving job and career results; and*
- *Other priorities as articulated in guidance.*

On June 15, 2022, the Biden administration released Executive Order 14075, *Advancing Equality for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Individuals*. The Executive Order states:

“Our Nation has made great strides in fulfilling the fundamental promises of freedom and equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) Americans, owing to the leadership of generations of LGBTQI+ individuals. In spite of this historic progress, LGBTQI+ individuals and families still face systemic discrimination and barriers to full participation in our Nation’s economic and civic life. These disparities and barriers can be the greatest for transgender people and LGBTQI+ people of color.

It is, therefore, the policy of my Administration to combat unlawful discrimination and eliminate disparities that harm LGBTQI+ individuals and their families, defend their rights and safety, and pursue a comprehensive approach to delivering the full promise of equality for LGBTQI+ individuals, consistent with Executive Order 13988 of January 20, 2021 (Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation).”

The Department of Labor released Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 9-22 on March 2, 2023. Attachment 1 to the TEGL titled *ETA Priorities for Youth Workforce Development: Equity, Job Quality, Mental Health, and Youth Voice* outlines the vision and priorities for the Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration.

One of the priorities listed is “Advancing equity to ensure youth have equal access to and outcomes in high-quality education and training is a key priority for the Department. Equity must be integrated into everything programs do, from outreach and recruitment to service delivery strategies to partnership development and to using data to inform decision-making. Equity in the WIOA Youth program means that not only do youth have equitable access to services and supports but also that youth are achieving equitable outcomes.”

Additionally, the TEGL reiterates, “As stated in TEGL 23-19, Change 1, ETA encourages grant recipients to consider the impacts on equity and accessibility when developing their source documentation policies and procedures. For example, grantees considering restrictions on the use of self-attestation should consider that while other documentation sources are preferred when practical, self-attestation is an important option for populations with barriers to obtaining eligibility and reporting documents (such as disconnected youth, American Indian and Alaska Native populations, individuals experiencing homelessness, justice-involved individuals, refugees, disaster impacted individuals, and others) and help ensure such populations are able to equitably access services. As a best practice, once enrolled, programs should assist the participant in obtaining the required documents through the use of supportive service funds as these documents are likely needed for employment and training-related activities.”

Executive Order 14075 required that the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall conduct a study on the impact that current Federal statutory and regulatory eligibility standards have on

the ability of LGBTQI+ and other households, as determined by the Secretary, to access Federal benefits and programs for families, and shall produce a public report with findings and recommendations that could increase LGBTQI+ and such other households' participation in and eligibility for Federal benefits and programs for families.

On December 27, 2020, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Simplification Act was enacted into law as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act 2021. Among other things, that law eliminated the requirement for male students to register with the Selective Service before the age of 26 to be eligible for Title IV aid. For the 2021-2022 award year, therefore, failing to register with the Selective Service will no longer impact a student's Title IV aid eligibility.

The Department of Labor should follow suit and advance policies that help prevent discrimination against the LGBTQI+ community by not requiring proof of compliance with the Selective Service requirement.

**Individuals, groups, or populations affected by the waiver**

*States must describe the potential impact of a waiver on various system stakeholders, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations, persons with barriers to employment, or businesses.*

Approval of this waiver request will provide lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) Americans with equitable access to services, but more importantly, eliminates an individual from having to "out" themselves for WIOA eligibility purposes.

**State plans for monitoring waiver implementation, including collection of waiver outcome information**

*States must describe how they intend to oversee effective waiver implementation and any unique protocols that may be used in their waiver requests.*

The State will use the following approach for monitoring progress in implementation:

- State staff involved with the administration of programming will provide ongoing technical assistance and oversight as it relates to the appropriateness and effectiveness of this waiver. This information will be submitted regularly to the IWIB Continuous Improvement Committee.
- Annual WIOA on-site programmatic reviews will include an evaluation of the impact the waiver has on programmatic goals and outcomes.

- Additionally, the IWIB Continuous Improvement Committee will have the responsibility of ensuring the specific goals and outcomes achieved by the waiver are realized. Furthermore, the information gathered from the waiver will inform new or changes to policy as well as provide best practices. The outcomes of the waiver will be reported in the WIOA Annual Report.

This strategy ensures that the goals described above, as well as those outlined in the State's Unified Plan and the IWIB Strategic Plan, are consistent with established objectives of the WIOA and federal and state regulations.

**Assurance of state posting of the request for public comment and notification to affected local workforce development boards**

*WIOA does not prescribe a specific amount of time for states to post a potential waiver for comment, but it does require the state to demonstrate a reasonable opportunity for public review and comment by all stakeholders, including businesses and organized labor. Submit any comments or concerns collected in this manner and the outcome of the state's review of the public comments received. The state must also provide affected local boards with notice and opportunity to comment on the proposed waiver.*

In accordance with the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.135, Illinois is submitting a modification to its Unified State Plan, which is subject to the requirements outlined in the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.130(d) for public review and comment. As such, Illinois's waiver request is posted on our website for comment and review by required parties and the public.

Local Boards via Board members and/or Board staff, as well as WIOA partners and other interested stakeholders, participate in policy development. Additionally, LWIBs receive the opportunity to participate in a public comment period that includes webinars.

**TITLE I-B ASSURANCES**

The State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The State has implemented a policy to ensure Adult program funds provide a priority in the delivery of training services and individualized career services to individuals who are low income, public assistance recipients and basic skills deficient;	Yes
2. The State has implemented a policy to ensure local areas have a process in place for referring veterans with significant barriers to employment to career services provided by the JVSG program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
(DVOP) specialist;	
3. The State established a written policy and procedure that set forth criteria to be used by chief elected officials for the appointment of local workforce investment board members;	Yes
4. The State established written policy and procedures to ensure local workforce investment boards are certified by the governor every two years in accordance with WIOA section 107(c)(2);	Yes
5. Where an alternative entity takes the place of a State Board, the State has written policy and procedures to ensure the alternative entity meets the definition under WIOA section 101(e) and the legal requirements for membership;	No
6. The State established a written policy and procedure for how the individuals and entities represented on the State Workforce Development Board help to determine the methods and factors of distribution, and how the State consults with chief elected officials in local areas throughout the State in determining the distributions;	Yes
7. The State will not use funds received under WIOA Title I to assist, promote, or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA section 181(b)(7);	Yes
8. The State distributes adult and youth funds received under WIOA equitably throughout the State, and no local area suffers significant shifts in funding from year-to-year during the period covered by this plan;	Yes
9. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I;	Yes
10. The State agrees to report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in its WIOA	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
Annual Report.	
11. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance under section WIOA 184(a)(3);	Yes

#### ADULT PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

#### Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as “baseline” indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A “baseline” indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, “baseline” indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as “baseline” based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);

- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as “baseline” for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as “baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA.” The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as “baseline” for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as “baseline” for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as “baseline.” Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state’s plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	75.5%	TBD	75.5%	TBD

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	76.0%	TBD	76.0%	TBD
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$8,400	TBD	\$8,400	TBD
Credential Attainment Rate	73.5%	TBD	73.5%	TBD
Measurable Skill Gains	60.0%	TBD	60.0%	TBD
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.*

#### DISLOCATED PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

##### Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as “baseline” indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A “baseline” indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, “baseline” indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as “baseline” based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);



- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as “baseline” for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as “baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA.” The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as “baseline” for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as “baseline” for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the

core programs not listed as “baseline.” Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state’s plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	79.5%	TBD	79.5%	TBD
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	79.5%	TBD	79.5%	TBD
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$11,300	TBD	\$11,300	TBD
Credential Attainment Rate	74.0%	TBD	74.0%	TBD
Measurable Skill Gains	61.0%	TBD	61.0%	TBD
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.*

## YOUTH PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

### Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as “baseline” indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A “baseline” indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, “baseline” indicators were not used in the end of the year

adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as “baseline” based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as “baseline” for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as “baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA.” The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as “baseline” for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a

holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as “baseline” for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as “baseline.” Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state’s plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	74.5%	TBD	74.5%	TBD
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	74.0%	TBD	74.0%	TBD
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$4,300	TBD	\$4,300	TBD
Credential Attainment Rate	70.5%	TBD	70.5%	TBD
Measurable Skill Gains	56.5%	TBD	56.5%	TBD
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.*

#### PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR WAGNER-PEYSER PROGRAM (EMPLOYMENT SERVICES)

All Program-Specific Requirements provided for the WIOA core programs in this section must be addressed for either a Unified or Combined State Plan.

##### A. EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL STAFF THE PROVISION OF LABOR EXCHANGE SERVICES UNDER THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT, SUCH AS THROUGH STATE EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO STATE MERIT STAFF EMPLOYEES, STAFF OF A SUBRECIPIENT, OR SOME COMBINATION THEREOF.

The State of Illinois will continue to staff the provision of labor exchange services under the Wagner-Peyser Act through state merit employees.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL UTILIZE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF TO ENSURE STAFF IS ABLE TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES TO BOTH JOBSEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS

Professional development activities have been and will continue to be utilized by the Employment Services program to ensure staff are able to provide high quality services to both job seekers and employers. Employment Services staff participate in federally sponsored professional opportunities offered by the Employment and Training Administration's Workforce GPS, viewing the webinars, and then using the information for discussion topics during program meetings. In addition, Employment Services staff participate in the State Monitor Advocate webinars hosted by the National Monitor Advocate to ensure staff receive training regarding how to best serve the Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers population as well as other topics that impact both MSFW population and other populations who may receive services through the Employment Services program. Employment Services staff are encouraged to participate in National Veterans Training Institute training opportunities as appropriate where staff are provided with information regarding working with veterans as well as other special populations.

At the state level, the Employment Services staff have participated and will continue to participate in Clear Language training opportunities to help ensure clear communication with those seeking employment services. In addition, regular Illinois Workforce Academy webinars are made available to all workforce staff. These webinars include topics including but not limited to: trauma informed service delivery; human centered design; program-specific information; collaboration between workforce partners; workforce system procedure updates; best practices for working with special populations such as the disabled, migrant, and LGBTQ+ communities; and accommodations and universal design. The Illinois Workforce Academy, along with the four core WIOA partners hold a WIOA Summit each year to bring staff together to learn about various workforce-related topics as well as provide networking opportunities for staff from across the state. In addition, the RESEA program will procure a contract for training development services. The trainings developed will not only benefit the RESEA staff and participants but will also be made available to all Employment Services staff to use with individuals daily.

Wagner Peyser staff from the Business Services Team (BST) will continue to seek opportunities to participate in professional training opportunities with state agency partners and professional development training providers. The IDES BST has identified cross-training on partner programs as an essential priority in delivering efficient and comprehensive employer services. The BST will continue to seek opportunities to train with business service teams in the 22 identified local workforce areas. IDES BST staff will effort to build upon the experience and knowledge gained through participation in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) Academy. This course provided the fundamental elements in creating employer-led talent pipeline initiatives. This will include assistance and training provided by program partner collaboratives that are designed to be developed and led by private sector employers. A special emphasis will be placed on sectors identified in local

planning. The BST will receive training internally from IDES' Labor Market Experts (LMEs). This training will illustrate to use of data in building resources for gaining valuable insights employers can use for making hiring decisions. The BST will continue to work with other internal partners to be up to date on new developments in employment service programs. The BST will also continue to support community resource groups promoting the training and hiring of justice impact citizens throughout the state, utilizing program essentials such as federal bonding and the Work Opportunity Tax Credits to further assist the hiring of underserved populations.

Wagner Peyser employment services staff who provide workforce resources to both job seekers and employers, attended the DCEO sponsored Apprenticeship Bootcamp. Staff attending the Bootcamp are all part of workforce integrated Business Service Teams (BST) that promote, market, connect, and provide access to initiatives that allow businesses to interact and implement available workforce programs and services applicable to their needs. The Illinois Apprenticeship Illinois program directly supports the creation of industry sector partnerships using the TPM framework described previously, and apprenticeships are vetted to ensure alignment with industry standards for apprentices to train in highly skilled, in-demand occupations.

### 3. DESCRIBE STRATEGIES DEVELOPED TO SUPPORT TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACROSS CORE PROGRAMS AND THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) PROGRAM AND THE TRAINING PROVIDED FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND WIOA STAFF ON IDENTIFICATION OF UI ELIGIBILITY ISSUES AND REFERRAL TO UI STAFF FOR ADJUDICATION

All Wagner-Peyser Employment Services staff are trained in both the Unemployment Insurance program as well as Employment Services program. Employment Services staff are trained to identify Unemployment Insurance claimant eligibility issues regarding claimants' able and available status as well as conducting proper work searches. Staff are trained to assist claimants with their work search efforts, explaining to the claimants what constitutes an appropriate work search, what information is required, and how/where to document those efforts. Eligibility issues that come to the attention of Employment Service staff are referred to Unemployment Insurance program by ES staff posting issues in the UI system (IBIS) for adjudication.

Cross training Employment Services staff in UI eligibility provides onsite knowledgeable staff in all American Job Centers who can assist other program partners by answering general UI eligibility questions and concerns, and if appropriate posting issues in IBIS for adjudication.

### B. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE WILL PROVIDE INFORMATION AND MEANINGFUL ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUALS REQUESTING ASSISTANCE IN FILING A CLAIM FOR UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION THROUGH ONE-STOP CENTERS, AS REQUIRED BY WIOA AS A CAREER SERVICE

Meaningful assistance to individuals requesting guidance in filing a claim for unemployment insurance benefits through comprehensive one-stop centers will be provided by the Employment Service staff located at those centers. ES staff members have knowledge of UI program, UI eligibility issues, and the claim-filing process. Onsite ES staff may answer general questions about the UI program. Direct linkage which provides on-demand, real-time access to additional agency staff is also available in comprehensive one-stop centers that lack full-time UI staff. The direct linkage line is available to assist with specific UI inquiries.

**C. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S STRATEGY FOR PROVIDING REEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE TO UI CLAIMANTS AND OTHER UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS**

Strategies utilized to provide reemployment assistance to both UI claimants and all other unemployed individuals include encouraging non-UI customers to register with the employment service system and requiring UI claimants to register with the employment service labor exchange system as an eligibility requirement to receive benefits. Immediately after filing a claim for benefits and registering with the employment service system, easily accessible online training, educational, labor market and career information resources are made available for individuals who are job-ready and seeking to explore new career options. The Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment program is a UI program funded by the U.S. Dept. of Labor to assist unemployment insurance claimants who have been identified as those individuals with the highest propensity for exhausting UI benefits, return to work faster. Those identified as participants in the program are required to participate in a one-on-one appointment which includes an orientation to American Job Center services, the development of an individual employment plan, the review of UI eligibility such as being able, available, and actively seeking work, reviewing customized labor market information, and assistance with resume development and other work search activities. All RESEA participants are referred to local Title I Dislocated Worker program services, and referrals are made to other program partners and community services as appropriate. Follow up services for RESEA participants are provided by Employment Services staff. During the follow up, ES staff discuss how goals included in the reemployment plan are going and inquire about new or promising employment opportunities.

**D. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE W-P FUNDS TO SUPPORT UI CLAIMANTS, AND THE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN W-P AND UI, AS APPROPRIATE INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:**

**1. COORDINATION OF AND PROVISION OF LABOR EXCHANGE SERVICES FOR UI CLAIMANTS AS REQUIRED BY THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT;**

Coordination between Wagner-Peyser and Unemployment Insurance programs begins with the requirement that all UI claimants register with the employment service system, Illinois JobLink, to fulfill the UI eligibility requirement. A key component of employment service registration is that claimants must have at least one resume created or uploaded in their Illinois JobLink account. Regardless of the claim filing method via online, by phone or in person, the claimant is immediately transitioned to Wagner Peyser Employment Service by being informed of the requirement to register with employment services before benefits are issued. As a result of UI claimants being registered in Illinois JobLink, the ES staff can target claimants, conduct outreach, and provide labor exchange services Outreach to UI claimants is conducted via phone calls and emails by the employment service staff, through e-mail blast notifications, and through social media.

**2. REGISTRATION OF UI CLAIMANTS WITH THE STATE'S EMPLOYMENT SERVICE IF REQUIRED BY STATE LAW;**

Section 500A of the Illinois Unemployment Insurance Act states: An unemployed individual shall be eligible to receive benefits with respect to any week only if the Director finds that: He [or she] has registered for work at and thereafter has continued to report at an employment office in accordance with such regulations as the Director may prescribe, except that the Director may, by regulation, waive or alter either or both of the requirements of this subsection as to individuals attached to regular jobs, and as to such other types of cases or situations with

respect to which he [or she] finds that compliance with such requirements would be oppressive or inconsistent with the purposes of this Act, provided that no such regulation shall conflict with Section 400 of this Act. A process is established in which an eligibility issue will automatically be created after a designated amount of time for those individuals who fail to fully register with employment services after filing an initial claim for benefits.

3. ADMINISTRATION OF THE WORK TEST FOR THE STATE UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION SYSTEM, INCLUDING MAKING ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENTS (FOR REFERRAL TO UI ADJUDICATION, IF NEEDED), AND PROVIDING JOB FINDING AND PLACEMENT SERVICES FOR UI CLAIMANTS; AND

Section 500C of the Illinois Unemployment Insurance Act states: An unemployed individual shall be eligible to receive benefits with respect to any week only if the Director finds that: He is able to work and available for work; provided that during the period in question he was actively seeking work and he has certified such. UI claimants who are determined to be unable, unavailable, and not actively seeking work will not be eligible to receive benefits. UI claimants that are required to register and receive employment services and the population of UI claimants identified through the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment program will be required to comply with the above section of the UI Act. Failure to participate in reemployment activities as required will be documented in Illinois JobLink and trigger the posting and scheduling of an adjudication issue in the UI benefits system. If an eligibility issue arises while providing employment services, the case will either be investigated and determined by the employment service staff or be referred to the UI staff for immediate resolution.

4. PROVISION OF REFERRALS TO AND APPLICATION ASSISTANCE FOR TRAINING AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES.

Individuals that may require additional assistance with his/her reemployment efforts may be identified through various means including participation in the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program; agency correspondence; in-person contact at an American Job Center; contact by phone; e-mail; or through an automated self-assessment process. It is through these methods that requests are made to targeted individuals to participate in a self-assessment and development of an Individual Reemployment Plan, with assistance from the Wagner-Peyser Employment Services staff. The self-assessment and development of an Individual Reemployment Plan will assist in identifying the existence of any barriers to obtaining and maintaining meaningful employment. The barriers identified in the assessment will be the basis in which the individual is referred to additional services that will assist with reemployment efforts including, but not limited to, workshops that focus on specific employment needs, job training, adult education or literacy programs, trade assistance, supportive services, veteran outreach services, youth services, career pathways or vocational rehabilitation services. Wagner-Peyser Employment Service staff continue to collaborate with core and required partner staff to ensure proper referrals are made. All RESEA participants are referred to Title I Dislocated Worker program services.

E. AGRICULTURAL OUTREACH PLAN (AOP). EACH STATE AGENCY MUST DEVELOP AN AOP EVERY FOUR YEARS AS PART OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN REQUIRED UNDER SECTIONS 102 OR 103 OF WIOA. THE AOP MUST INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF NEED. AN ASSESSMENT NEED DESCRIBES THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS IN THE AREA BASED ON PAST AND PROJECTED AGRICULTURAL AND FARMWORKER ACTIVITY IN THE STATE. SUCH NEEDS MAY INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO: EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND HOUSING.



**1. ASSESSMENT OF NEED. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS IN THE AREA BASED ON PAST AND PROJECTED AGRICULTURAL AND FARMWORKER ACTIVITY IN THE STATE. SUCH NEEDS MAY INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO: EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND HOUSING.**

Migrant and seasonal farmworkers, as seen in many agricultural regions, have specific needs and challenges that prevent them from making full use of the services and resources available from IDES, its workforce partners in the American Job Centers (AJCs), and other government agencies such as the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), the Illinois Department Healthcare and Family Services (IDHFS), or the Illinois Department of Labor (IDOL).

In Illinois, due to the state's distinct seasons, MSFWs experience loss of employment during the late fall and winter months, negatively impacting their income and requiring MSFWs to secure alternative employment during the off season or relying on Unemployment Insurance until the spring months when agricultural employment is available again.

Migrant farmworkers and their families, as opposed to some local seasonal farmworkers, experience additional challenges due to their movement within Illinois or between states in search of work as the harvest season move from one crop to another. Migrant farmworkers have issues accessing affordable and safe housing, as well as having access to reliable and adequate transportation to commute to work, especially in rural areas. Housing and transportation often times impact the children of MSFWs such as lack adequate space for learning, lack of internet access for accessing learning tools, and inconsistent transportation to school, other education programs, or childcare.

MSFWs come from diverse backgrounds, are primarily from Spanish-speaking countries and often have limited English proficiency, and/or some lack proper work or immigration documentation. These language, cultural, and legal barriers can have an impact their willingness to access social services, including food, healthcare, and legal support. Even with the on-the-job training, presentations, and informational handouts, provided through employers and from government agency representatives, many MSFWs are unaware of the basic safety and health standards and labor rights required in agriculture workplaces. As a result, MSFWs can be hesitant to report housing, worksite, or labor law violations to IDES or other enforcement agencies, necessitating constant monitoring to ensure that IDES and other organizations can identify when laws and regulations are being violated.

Even though training and employment opportunities continue to be available year-round through IDES and its workforce partners in the AJCs, many MSFWs decline such training and employment opportunities because of limited English language proficiency, low or non-existent computer literacy, lack of specific job skills even when the public system can help them to overcome those barriers. This failure to access services is due to a combination of factors including limited access to transportation or permanent low-cost housing; constant movement in search of work; the time commitment required for training or education; lack of childcare, or because they prefer to recover in off season months from the physically demanding and hazardous working conditions in agriculture.

**2. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY IN THE STATE MEANS: 1) IDENTIFYING THE TOP FIVE LABOR-INTENSIVE CROPS, THE MONTHS OF HEAVY ACTIVITY, AND THE GEOGRAPHIC AREA OF PRIME ACTIVITY; 2) SUMMARIZE THE AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS' NEEDS IN THE STATE (I.E. ARE THEY PREDOMINANTLY HIRING LOCAL OR FOREIGN WORKERS, ARE THEY EXPRESSING THAT THERE IS A SCARCITY IN THE AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE); AND 3) IDENTIFYING ANY ECONOMIC, NATURAL, OR OTHER FACTORS THAT**

ARE AFFECTING AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE OR ANY PROJECTED FACTORS THAT WILL  
AFFECT AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE

**Top five labor-intensive crops in Illinois**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service reports corn, soybeans, wheat, hay, and pumpkins as Illinois' top 5 major labor-intensive crops in 2022.[i] According to the State Agriculture Overview, of the 27 million acres of farm operations, approximately 23 million of the harvested acres were of the before-mentioned crops. Of that amount, corn, and soybeans (combined) yield 21 million acres of crop.

**Geographic area of prime activity**

The central and northern counties are Illinois' geographic area of prime activity.[ii] These regions see cold, fairly dry winters and warm, humid summers with ample rainfall that allows the land to support many kinds of crops and livestock. The range of temperatures in Illinois generally vary by 10 to 12 degrees from one end of the state to the other. About 89 percent of the state's cropland is considered prime farmland, ranking the state third nationally in total prime farmland acreage.

The central and northern counties (about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the state) have the highest reported yield estimates for corn and soybeans. The highest concentrated areas of corn and soybean are in the centermost region of Illinois, where Macon, Sangamon, Tazewell, McLean, Woodford, Stark, DeWitt, and Logan counties have some of the highest yields for both crops. The hilly areas in the northwest and south are primarily used as pasture for livestock.

**Months of heavy activity**

An overview of Illinois' major crop activity, based on The University of Illinois Extension Service - Summary of Illinois Specialty Growers Association, lists the following crops with their respective months of agricultural activity:[iii]

- Asparagus (April to June)
- Strawberries (Late May to Early June)
- Apricots and Cherries (June to July)
- Blueberries (June to August)
- Beans, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cauliflower and Peas (June to October)
- Fresh Herbs (June to October)
- Raspberries (June to November)
- Summer Apples, Blackberries, Peaches, Nectarines (July to August)
- Beets, Corn, Cucumbers, Pickles & Plums (July to September)
- Peppers and Tomatoes (July to October)
- Thornless Blackberries (August)
- Grapes, Muskmelons and Watermelons (August and September)
- Eggplants and Greens (August and November)
- Turnips (September to November)

- Fall Winter Apples (September to November)
- Pumpkins, Squash and Gourds (November to December)

### **Agricultural employers' needs in Illinois:**

Agricultural employers in Illinois have several key needs that are influenced by various factors, primarily, the availability of a reliable workforce, immigration policies, education and training, and regulatory compliance.

Employers report that they struggle to maintain a consistent and reliable labor force to meet seasonal demands for planting, harvesting, and processing crops. This need is particularly pronounced in sectors like fruit and vegetable farming, where labor-intensive tasks are common. As a consequence, many agricultural employers in Illinois rely on immigrant and non-immigrant labor, and they have concerns regarding immigration policies, such as the availability of H-2A visas for temporary agricultural workers and the increasing costs associated with such temporary foreign labor programs.

Employers must also navigate a complex regulatory landscape related to environmental regulations, labor laws, and food safety standards, which oftentimes means they are not fully in compliance. As a result, employers look to agricultural organizations, government agencies, and educational institutions for resources and guidance to remain compliant which, unfortunately, are not always available. However, both farm owners and farmworkers state that they would welcome ongoing training and educational programs that are crucial to stay updated on best practices, safety measures, labor laws, and new technologies in agriculture.

### **Economic, natural, and/or other factors affecting agriculture in Illinois:**

Over the course of the previous AOP, from 2020 to 2023, Illinois also experienced severe weather conditions including precipitation, temperature, and extreme events like droughts and floods, which had a direct and immediate impact on crop yields and overall agricultural productivity.

[i][United States Department of Agriculture: National Agricultural Statistics Service. \(2022\) Illinois Agricultural Overview. USDA/NASS 2022 State Agriculture Overview for Illinois \(Retrieved on 8/23/2023\)](#)

[ii][About Illinois Agriculture. https://agr.illinois.gov/about/facts-about-illinois-agriculture.html#faq-5howdoesagriculturebenefitfromthestatesgeographyandclimate-faq](https://agr.illinois.gov/about/facts-about-illinois-agriculture.html#faq-5howdoesagriculturebenefitfromthestatesgeographyandclimate-faq) (Retrieved on 8/24/2023)

[iii]<https://extension.illinois.edu/sites/default/files/cjmmwhatsinseason.pdf>

3. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS MEANS SUMMARIZING MIGRANT AND SEASONAL FARM WORKER (MSFW) CHARACTERISTICS (INCLUDING IF THEY ARE PREDOMINANTLY FROM CERTAIN COUNTRIES, WHAT LANGUAGE(S) THEY SPEAK, THE APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF MSFWs IN THE STATE DURING PEAK SEASON AND DURING LOW SEASON, AND WHETHER THEY TEND TO BE MIGRANT, SEASONAL, OR YEAR-ROUND FARMWORKERS). THIS INFORMATION MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT DATA SUPPLIED BY WIOA SECTION 167 NATIONAL FARMWORKER JOBS PROGRAM (NFJP) GRANTEES, OTHER MSFW ORGANIZATIONS, EMPLOYER ORGANIZATIONS, AND STATE AND/OR FEDERAL AGENCY DATA SOURCES SUCH AS THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR (DOL) EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (Quickstats) lists the number of laborers in Illinois as 55,584 in 2017.

According to the National Center for Farmworker Health (NCFH), there were 57,857 farmworkers (this is a combination of: full-time, year-round; full-time, seasonal; and full-time, migrant) in Illinois in 2017. The Illinois counties with the highest number of farmworkers were McHenry, Champaign, Bureau, Kane, and Stephenson. Of the counties with more specific crop production data, 85% of crop production workers are seasonal, and 15% are migratory. For Illinois counties (with data available by farmworker category), 23% of farmworkers were animal production workers. Animal and crop production are intrinsically linked because using animals within agroecosystems can benefit plant life (e.g., soil enrichment).[i]

In 2022, the number of H-2A farmworkers certified in Illinois was 4,412. The jobs associated with the H-2A visa program are considered temporary/seasonal, lasting ten months or less.

The data from the National Center for Farmworker Health is used for this report because it compiles the most recent (2017), comprehensive, and reliable Illinois data sets with an accompanying explanation of the estimation methodology.[ii] There are no current U.S. Census Bureau data available with this specific information about Illinois agricultural workers.

The 2019-2020 National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) details the *national* survey data for farmworkers' demographic information, but the same information is unavailable at a state level.

- According to NAWS, 70% of agricultural workers are foreign-born. Agricultural workers were born in countries such as Mexico, the U.S. (including Puerto Rico), and Central America at a rate of 63%, 30%, and 5%, respectively.
- The majority (78%) of respondents identify as Hispanic, with 68% of workers reporting that they speak "a little" or no English "at all." Approximately 62% of farmworkers are most comfortable speaking Spanish.
- Nearly one-third identify as White. Black or African Americans represent less than one percent of the respondents.
- Approximately two out of every three crop workers are male.
- Regarding the average age of farmworkers (41), 44% of workers fall between the 35 – 54 age range.

[i]Farmworker population estimates are from NCFH and JBS International's 2020 Estimates based on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Census of Agriculture (2017) and the 2015-2018 National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS).

[ii]<https://www.ncfh.org/number-of-ag-workers.html>

#### 4. OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

The local offices outreach activities must be designed to meet the needs of MSFWs in the State and to locate and contact MSFWs who are not being reached through normal intake activities. Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:

##### A. CONTACTING FARMWORKERS WHO ARE NOT BEING REACHED BY THE NORMAL INTAKE ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED BY THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE OFFICES

Farmworkers who are not reached by normal intake activities by IDES, will be reached by MSFW Outreach Staff, with guidance from the MSFW Outreach Manager, by conducting vigorous outreach throughout Illinois and providing information on services and resources available at American Job Centers. IDES, as the SWA of a non-significant MSFW state, employs full-time, year-round staff with MSFW responsibilities, including outreach. In addition to those full-time staff, IDES will temporarily assign one Spanish-speaking Employment Services staff member from each significant office (North Aurora, Peoria, Champaign, Springfield, Mt. Vernon) to serve as full-time MSFW Outreach Staff during the peak season months of June through October. In the off-season months of November through May, the full-time, year-round staff, also trained in MSFW Outreach, that will be available to MSFWs and to conduct outreach when needed.

MSFW Outreach Staff will provide informational handouts and oral presentations to MSFWs, in both English and Spanish, as part of their outreach. Outreach efforts will involve in person contacts with agricultural employers at their worksite or office locations, attendance at events where MSFWs might be present, visiting farmworkers at their housing and worksite locations, frequenting MSFW gathering locations such as churches, laundromats, and grocery stores, and contacting organizations that provide social services.

The MSFW Outreach Manager, MSFW Outreach Staff, and State Monitor Advocate will continue to reach out to state agencies and community-based organizations to develop working relationships in an effort to locate farmworkers that live in remote and often isolated areas.

To ensure MSFWs are fully informed of the services and resources available through IDES, information will be presented verbally and provided in an outreach packet to all MSFWs in English or the language in which the MSFWs are fluent in.

All outreach packets provided to MSFWs will include:

- Illinois Job Link Registration Form
- Statewide Complaint System Information
- American Job Center locations and information about IDES and workforce partner services
- IDES MSFW Staff Contact List
- Farmworker Fact Sheet
- Information about the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act and relevant federal and state labor and employment laws
- U.S. Department of Labor Contact Information
- Community Resource Guide
- Locations of Nearby State Agencies and Services/Resources Available

**B. PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO OUTREACH STAFF. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MUST INCLUDE TRAININGS, CONFERENCES, ADDITIONAL RESOURCES, AND INCREASED COLLABORATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS ON TOPICS SUCH AS ONE-STOP CENTER SERVICES (I.E. AVAILABILITY OF REFERRALS TO TRAINING, SUPPORTIVE SERVICES, AND CAREER SERVICES, AS WELL AS SPECIFIC EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES), THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE AND EMPLOYMENT-RELATED LAW COMPLAINT SYSTEM ("COMPLAINT SYSTEM" DESCRIBED AT 20 CFR 658 SUBPART E), INFORMATION ON THE**

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS SERVING MSFWs IN THE AREA, AND A BASIC SUMMARY OF  
FARMWORKER RIGHTS, INCLUDING THEIR RIGHTS WITH RESPECT TO THE TERMS AND  
CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT.

The MSFW Outreach Manager, with support from the State Monitor Advocate, is responsible for providing training and technical assistance on all topics directly related to MSFWs to all IDES staff, as needed.

Topics covered during training consist of:

- - The background and history of the MSFW program and the Judge Richey Court Order
  - Overview of core programs, services, and resources available in office/region
  - UI program and general identification of UI eligibility issues
  - Proper informative presentation of services to MSFWs
  - Service delivery while conducting outreach
  - Observation and documentation of complaints and violations
  - Record keeping of outreach activities and complaints
  - Federal and State Labor Laws
  - The Employment Services Complaint System and enforcement agencies
  - Federal code of regulations governing the MSFW and H-2A programs
  - The Agricultural Recruitment System
  - Housing inspections and OSHA standards
  - Field checks and field visits

Permanent and temporary MSFW Outreach Staff receive training in April/May, prior to the start of the agricultural peak season months of June through October. Staff also attend virtual training sessions by USDOL, meetings with MSFW organizations, and virtual meetings with outreach staff from other states to discuss best practices, suggestions, and answer questions in an informal setting.

IDES also provides information on the MSFW requirements under Wagner-Peyser as part of the training for all IDES Employment Services staff.

C. INCREASING OUTREACH WORKER TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACROSS CORE PROGRAMS  
INCLUDING THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) PROGRAM AND THE TRAINING ON  
IDENTIFICATION OF UI ELIGIBILITY ISSUES

Outlined above is the training provided to all outreach workers. In addition, all IDES Staff, including outreach workers, will have in-person training, webinars, access to online modules, and resources to ensure staff are aware of the different core programs and services, including

UI, that are available through IDES. IDES staff also have access to trainings provided by partners through the Workforce Wednesday webinar series and the annual WIOA Summit. In addition, outreach staff have access to weekly training and technical assistance provided by the IDES Labor Exchange trainer.

#### D. PROVIDING STATE MERIT STAFF OUTREACH WORKERS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES TO ENSURE THEY ARE ABLE TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES TO BOTH JOBSEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS

Outlined above is the training provided to all outreach workers. In addition, all IDES Staff, including outreach workers, will have in-person training, webinars, access to online modules, and resources to ensure staff are aware of the different core programs and services, including UI, that are available through IDES. IDES staff also have access to trainings provided by partners through the Workforce Wednesday webinar series and the annual WIOA Summit. In addition, outreach staff have access to weekly training and technical assistance provided by the IDES Labor Exchange trainer.

#### E. COORDINATING OUTREACH EFFORTS WITH NFJP GRANTEE AS WELL AS WITH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COMMUNITY SERVICE AGENCIES AND MSFW GROUPS

The Illinois Department of Employment Security will coordinate with WIOA Title I D Section 167 NFJP Grantee, United Migrant Opportunity Services (UMOS), to identify MSFW needs and to facilitate or provide services and information on available resources. This will be facilitated by a Memorandum of Understanding which outlines a quarterly meeting schedule between the SMA and UMOS. Both IDES management and outreach staff prioritize this working relationship, which includes regular meetings and exploration of coordinated outreach. The MSFW Program Manager, in addition to the SMA, will focus on having ongoing coordination at both a management and local outreach level. IDES will also add regular involvement of its ES program manager and regional ES Program managers as appropriate. IDES will also work with other MFSW organizations, such as Community Health Partnership of Illinois, Legal Aid Chicago, and Illinois Department of Human Services for the purpose of identifying and assisting MSFWs and promoting the Statewide Complaint System. The IDES Deputy Director also serves on the External Advisory Committee of the new Great Lakes Center for Farmworker Health and Well-Being at the University of Illinois.

Outreach efforts will involve in person contacts with agricultural employers at their worksite or office locations, attendance at events where MSFWs might be present, visiting farmworkers at their housing and worksite locations, frequenting MSFW gathering locations such as churches, laundromats, and grocery stores, and contacting organizations that provide social services. All interested parties who can provide a beneficial service or resource to MSFWs will be informed by phone, text, email, or at in-person or online meetings and invited to join IDES for outreach.

IDES will also explore how to leverage relationships with MSFW program staff in states from which workers travel to IL (“supply” states) to improve MSFW awareness of the public workforce system and job opportunities in those states. We believe that this could improve employment stability for some workers.

Finally, IDES will use data and information collected each year to adjust outreach strategies in subsequent year—for example, using information from outreach logs, SNAP recipients, and MSFW Head Start.

#### 5. SERVICES PROVIDED TO FARMWORKERS AND AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS THROUGH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM

Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:

A. PROVIDING THE FULL RANGE OF EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICES TO THE AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY, BOTH FARMWORKERS AND AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS, THROUGH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM. THIS INCLUDES:

I. HOW CAREER AND TRAINING SERVICES REQUIRED UNDER WIOA TITLE I WILL BE PROVIDED TO MSFWs THROUGH THE ONE-STOP CENTERS

II. HOW THE STATE SERVES AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS AND HOW IT INTENDS TO IMPROVE SUCH SERVICES

IDES will ensure that MSFWs are offered services that are qualitatively equivalent and quantitatively proportionate to the services provided to non-MSFWs at all American Job Centers. To maintain compliance with federal regulations, the State Monitor Advocate conducts on-site monitoring reviews to all local offices where significant MSFW activity is expected. During these monitoring visits, the SMA determines whether American Job Centers are operating in the best interests of MSFWs and ensures that staff can properly identify and service MSFWs.

Services Available at American Job Centers will include:

- Assisting job seekers in completing full, quality registrations and resumes in the state's labor exchange system, Illinois JobLink
- Information on the Employment Service Complaint System and Assistance in filing a complaint and summary of farmworkers rights and employment laws.
- Translation Services
- Basic Career Services from IDES Employment Services staff, including resume preparation; job search assistance; labor market information; and assistance with filing an unemployment insurance claim.
- Employment services for special populations from IDES Employment Services staff including customized services for returning citizens and for veterans with significant barriers to employment.
- Referral to services provided by NFJP grantees (UMOS), as well as community organizations that specialize in working with MSFWs.
- Referrals to workforce partner services, including Title I job training and supportive services; Title II ESL and Adult Education; TANF, SNAP and Vocational Rehab provided by the IL Dept of Human Services.
- Referrals to employment opportunities through online job postings in Illinois Job Link; hiring and recruitment events (in person and virtual); and individual job development and referrals to employers.

Services provided to agricultural employers through the American Job Center Network:

Illinois' online labor exchange system, Illinois Job Link, serves as the state's Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) and provides needed services to workers located in the U.S. and to agricultural and food processing employers. Illinois Job Link serves employers by locating, screening, and referring qualified workers from other areas when qualified workers are not available. Through this system, states with an adequate supply of agricultural workers can be



referred to employment opportunities in Illinois where agricultural labor is in demand. Similarly, other states can request permission to post-agricultural job opportunities on Illinois Job Link to bring workers into their state. The State Monitor Advocate and outreach workers promote the ARS whenever they conduct outreach or are in communication with agricultural employers.

IDES provides the following Wagner-Peyser-funded services to agricultural employers:

- Agricultural Recruitment System (Local, Intrastate, Interstate) through the Illinois Job Link platform that includes either self-service or staff-assisted job orders, and referrals of qualified workers to agricultural job openings in Illinois and other states.
- Housing inspections
- Field checks and visits
- IDES participation in new employee orientation meetings
- Farm Labor Contractor applications and information
- Informational Meetings on: Foreign Labor Certification process; Unemployment Insurance, Wage/Hour, Migrant Law, Worker's Compensation, OSHA and Migrant Camp licensing, etc.
- Informational resources available to all employers: Labor Market Information; referrals to agencies offering business programs or services; assistance with job fairs and hiring events; conference room for recruitment purposes; and WOTC Tax Credit information and certification of request.

IDES will improve services to employers in two ways, first filling an employer-support position to assist with foreign labor certification work which we expect to result in improvement to the of agricultural employers in IL and expand our ability to bring necessary information to those employers; and, second, by improving coordination between the MSFW Outreach Program manager and IDES' five Business Services Managers who can ensure that the same information and access to assistance is available for agricultural employers.

#### **B. MARKETING THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE COMPLAINT SYSTEM TO FARMWORKERS AND OTHER FARMWORKER ADVOCACY GROUPS**

The MSFW Outreach Manager, State Monitor Advocate, and MSFW Outreach Staff promote the Statewide Complaint System to farmworkers and farmworker advocacy groups during outreach, employer orientations, conferences, training sessions, meetings, and whenever it is needed or requested. An overview of the Statewide Complaint System is provided as a presentation and as part of an informational packet to farmworkers and farmworker advocacy groups.

#### **C. MARKETING THE AGRICULTURAL RECRUITMENT SYSTEM FOR U.S. WORKERS (ARS) TO AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS AND HOW IT INTENDS TO IMPROVE SUCH PUBLICITY.**

A goal for the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) and United Migrant Opportunity Services (UMOS) is to strengthen employer relationships by informing agricultural employers of the services available to them. Employers will be advised on staff-assisted services such as on-site hiring and recruiting events that could include local training providers and workforce partners. The MSFW Outreach Manager, SMA, and outreach staff will encourage the use of the Agricultural Recruitment System (Illinois Job Link) by promoting it at outreach

events, employer orientations, employer round table meetings, agricultural associations, conferences, and with print advertisements.

## 6. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

### A. COLLABORATION

Describe any collaborative agreements the state workforce agency (SWA) has with other MSFW service providers including NFJP grantees and other service providers. Describe how the SWA intends to build upon/increase collaboration with existing partners and in establishing new partners over the next four years (including any approximate timelines for establishing agreements or building upon existing agreements).

The Illinois Department of Employment Security will coordinate with WIOA Title I D Section 167 NFJP Grantee, United Migrant Opportunity Services, to identify MSFW needs and to facilitate or provide services and information on available resources. This will be facilitated by a Memorandum of Understanding.

The MSFW Outreach Manager has informal cooperative agreements with several public and private social service agencies but hopes to establish more MOUs with organizations whose focus is MSFWs. IDES will also coordinate with the Illinois Department of Health and Illinois Department of Labor to share information related to MSFWs to support the outreach efforts of our programs and our community partners.

### B. REVIEW AND PUBLIC COMMENT

In developing the AOP, the SWA must solicit information and suggestions from NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations. In addition, at least 45 calendar days before submitting its final AOP, the SWA must provide a proposed plan to NFJP grantees, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other organizations expressing an interest and allow at least 30 days for review and comment. The SWA must: 1) Consider any comments received in formulating its final proposed AOP; 2) Inform all commenting parties in writing whether their comments have been incorporated and, if not, the reasons therefore; and 3) Transmit the comments and recommendations received and its responses with the submission of the AOP.

The AOP must include a statement confirming NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations have been given an opportunity to comment on the AOP. Include the list of organizations from which information and suggestions were solicited, any comments received, and responses to those comments.

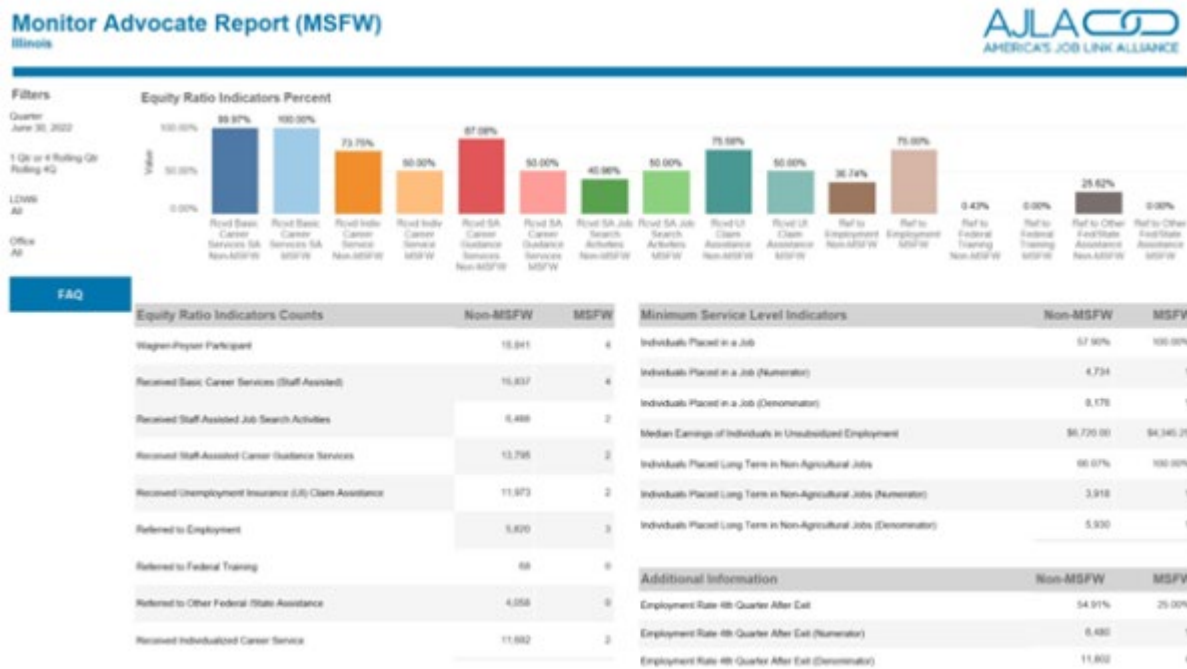
As part of the full state WIOA plan, the AOP, the plan is available for public comment and the MSFW Manager sent it to partner organizations to ensure that they had an opportunity to comment.

### C. DATA ASSESSMENT



## PY 2021 Data 7/1/2021 to 6/30/2022

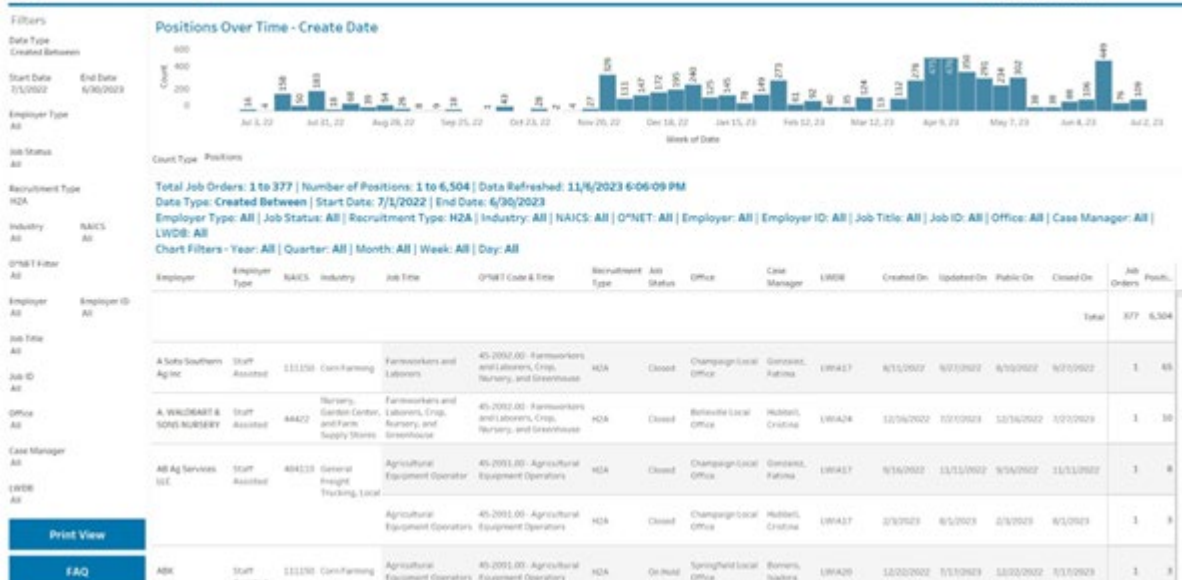
IDES received a total of 271 agricultural job orders with 4667 openings available. 4 MSFWs were registered for Wagner-Peyser Services, 4 received a Basic Career Service, 2 received a Job Search Activities Service, 2 received a Career Guidance Service, 2 received an Unemployment Insurance Assistance Service, 3 received a Referral to Employment, and 2 received an Individualized Career Service. MSFW Outreach and Foreign Labor Certification Staff reported 595 contacts with MSFWs through MSFW Field Checks, MSFW Field Visits, MSFW Outreach, H2A Field Checks, and H2A Field Visits.



## PY 2022 Data 7/1/2022 to 6/30/2023

IDES received a total of 377 agricultural job orders with 6504 openings available. 50 MSFWs were registered for Wagner-Peyser Services, 50 received a Basic Career Service, 1 received a Job Search Activities Service, 49 received a Career Guidance Service, 6 received an Unemployment Insurance Assistance Service, 1 received a Referral to Employment, 36 were Referred to other Federal/State Assistance, and 45 received an Individualized Career Service. MSFW Outreach and Foreign Labor Certification Staff reported 687 contacts with MSFWs through MSFW Field Checks, MSFW Field Visits, MSFW Outreach, H2A Field Checks, and H2A Field Visits.

## Agricultural Jobs Report Illinois



## Monitor Advocate Report (MSFW) Illinois

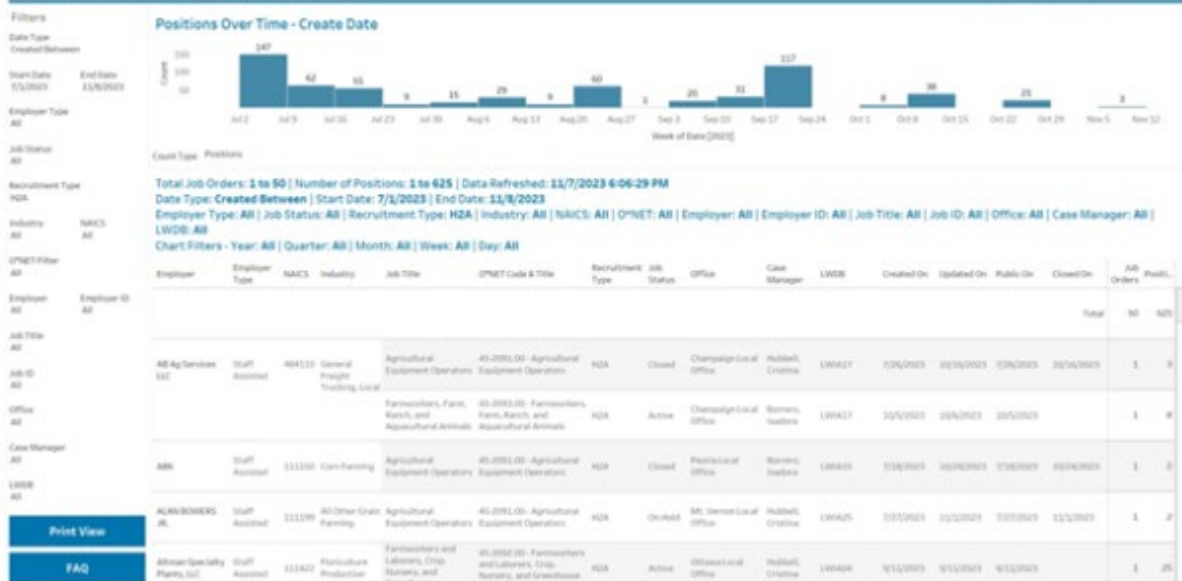


## PY 2023 Data 7/1/2023 to 11/8/2023 (Most Recent Date)

As of 11/8/2023, IDES received a total of 50 agricultural job orders with 625 openings available. 116 MSFWs were registered for Wagner-Peyser Services, 116 received a Basic Career Service, 116 received a Career Guidance Service, 74 were Referred to other Federal/State

Assistance, and 115 received an Individualized Career Service. The number of MSFWs contacted during the 7/1/2023 to 9/30/2023 quarter is currently pending.

## Agricultural Jobs Report Illinois



## Monitor Advocate Report (MSFW)

Illinois







## D. ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

The plan must include an explanation of what was achieved based on the previous AOP, what was not achieved and an explanation as to why the State believes the goals were not achieved, and how the State intends to remedy the gaps of achievement in the coming year.

The goals of the previous AOP were not met due to several factors:

- The COVID pandemic resulted in MSFW outreach staff not being cleared for in person activities and experiencing some technological limitations that impeded full participation in virtual activities.
- Lack of qualified applicants to fill key outreach positions, and vacancies in key ES positions.
- The State Monitor Advocate position was without a permanent staff person with the exception of Dec. 2020 through June 2021 and then again from May 2022 through July 2022. This was a major deficit in monitoring and guidance. The SMA position has a permanent staff person since May 2023.
- COVID disruptions to community organizations, included the NFJP provider meant that when in-person outreach expanded again, many of our community contacts were gone or we had to restart with our new staff.

However, IDES has worked on several fronts to remedy the situation.

First, the person who was the permanent SMA from December 2020 through June 2021 was able to complete full training of key ES staff, launch an MOU process with the new NFJP provider, conduct local office monitoring, and on-board two new outreach staff.

Second, management split the former SMA position into two positions to ensure that the SMA activities are separate from MSFW Outreach and FLC activities and to have an MSFW/FLC manager to focus on improving a robust outreach strategy.

Third, a new statewide ES Manager has been trained and given the responsibility of ensuring the self-monitoring of ES services at the agency, as well as training all ES staff on the agency's MSFW responsibilities.

Finally, agency leadership has reinforced that filling all MSFW positions is an agency priority, one result of which was the hiring of a new SMA and also deploying temporary ES staff to expand the MSFW outreach capacity from May through October.

#### E. STATE MONITOR ADVOCATE

The plan must contain a statement confirming the State Monitor Advocate has reviewed and approved the AOP.

Kynda Buenrostro is the Illinois State Monitor Advocate. She has been given an opportunity to review and comment on this Agricultural Outreach Plan. She approves of this plan.

#### WAGNER-PEYSER ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service is co-located with one-stop centers or a plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time (sec 121(e)(3));	Yes
2. If the State has significant MSFW one-stop centers, the State agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111, State Workforce Agency staffing requirements;	Yes
3. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser Act services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and	Yes
4. SWA officials: 1) Initiate the discontinuation of services; 2) Make the determination that services need to be discontinued; 3) Make the determination to reinstate services after the services have been discontinued; 4) Approve corrective action plans; 5) Approve the removal of an employer's clearance orders from interstate or intrastate clearance if the employer was granted conditional access to ARS and did not come into compliance within 5 calendar days;	Yes



The State Plan must include	Include
6) Enter into agreements with State and Federal enforcement agencies for enforcement-agency staff to conduct field checks on the SWAs' behalf (if the SWA so chooses); and 7) Decide whether to consent to the withdrawal of complaints if a party who requested a hearing wishes to withdraw its request for hearing in writing before the hearing.	
5. The SWA has established and maintains a self-appraisal system for ES operations to determine success in reaching goals and to correct deficiencies in performance (20 CFR 658.601).	Yes

#### WAGNER PEYSER PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

##### Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as “baseline” indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A “baseline” indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, “baseline” indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as “baseline” based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a

reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as “baseline” for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as “baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA.” The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as “baseline” for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as “baseline” for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as “baseline.” Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state’s plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
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Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	65.0%	TBD	65.0%	TBD
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	66.0%	TBD	66.0%	TBD
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$8,100	TBD	\$8,100	TBD
Credential Attainment Rate	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Measurable Skill Gains	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

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*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.*

## PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAMS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a description of the following as it pertains to adult education and literacy programs and activities under title II of WIOA, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA).

### A. ALIGNING OF CONTENT STANDARDS

Describe how the eligible agency has aligned its content standards for adult education with State-adopted challenging academic content standards, as adopted under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(1)).

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) is the eligible agency in the State with the responsibility of administering the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 – Title II Adult Education and Literacy Act.

The ICCB Division of Adult Education and Literacy requires all Adult Education Providers to base their instruction on the rigorous Illinois Adult Education Content Standards. The Adult Education (Adult Basic Education and Adult Secondary Education) Content Standards and English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards combine the College and Career Readiness (CCR) standards and the Illinois Essential Employability Skills Content Standards to prepare adult learners for transition to postsecondary education, training, or the workplace. To further aid in program utilization of the Illinois Adult Education Content Standards, the Adult Education Professional Development Network (PDN) developed the following model standards-aligned: 1)

Career Pathways Contextualized Bridge Curriculum, 2) Entrepreneurial Contextualized Bridge Curriculum, 3) Healthcare Contextualized Bridge Curriculum, 4) Information Technology Bridge Curriculum, 5) Manufacturing Contextualized Bridge Curriculum, and 6) Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics (TDL) Contextualized Bridge. These models illustrate how to utilize the Illinois Adult Education Content Standards with work-based learning. All Illinois AEFLA Content Standards can be located here: <https://excellenceinadulted.org/resources/iccb-statewide-contextualized-curricula>. Additionally, comprehensive professional development and technical assistance is provided to adult education professionals by the PDN as they provide targeted, engaging, relevant, and standards aligned classroom instruction. Finally, the AEFLA Competition Submissions or Continuation Plans requires program administrators to address how their Title II program will implement content standards in the classroom at the local level.

## B. LOCAL ACTIVITIES

Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund each eligible provider to establish or operate programs that provide any of the following adult education and literacy activities identified in section 203 of WIOA, including programs that provide such activities concurrently. The Unified or Combined State Plan must include at a minimum the scope, content, and organization of these local activities.

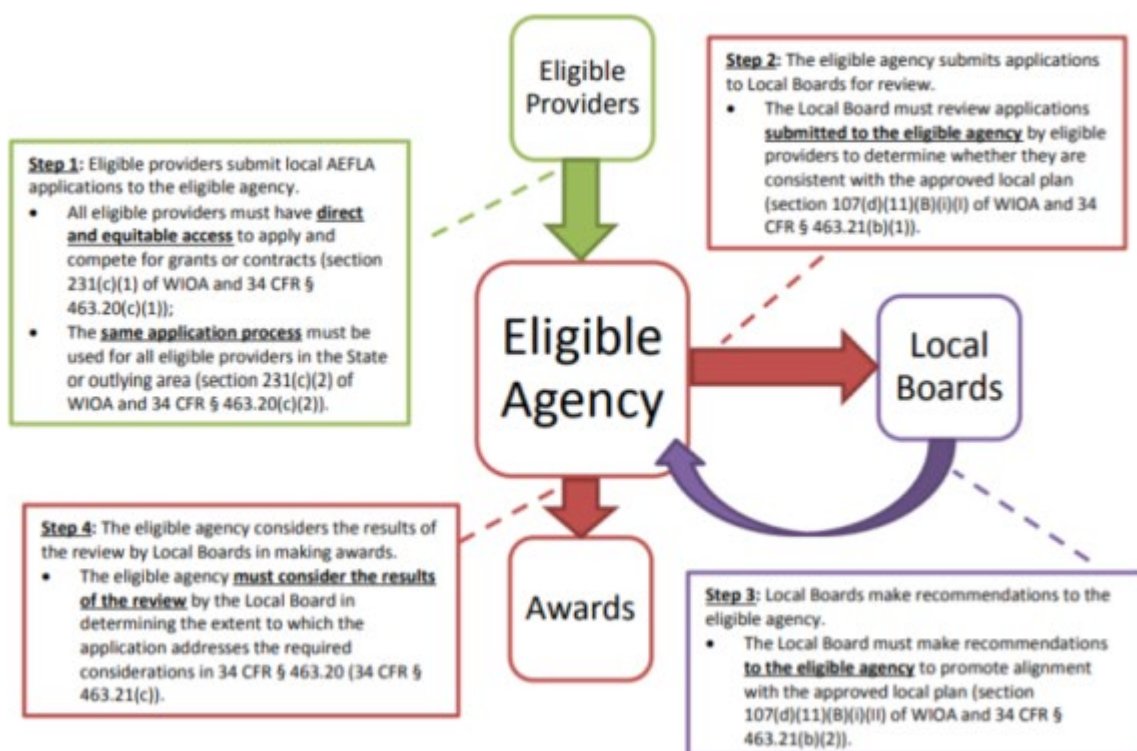
### ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY ACTIVITIES (SECTION 203 OF WIOA)

- Adult education;
- Literacy;
- Workplace adult education and literacy activities;
- Family literacy activities;
- English language acquisition activities;
- Integrated English literacy and civics education;
- Workforce preparation activities; or
- Integrated education and training that—
  1. Provides adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster, and
  2. Is for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

**Special Rule.** Each eligible agency awarding a grant or contract under this section shall not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that such agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

The Illinois Community College Board publishes and broadly distributes a Request for Proposals for Adult Education and Family Literacy and Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education funds to solicit statewide eligible providers to apply for funding to provide Title II Adult Education and Literacy services that reflect the goals and activities outlined in the Illinois Unified State Plan, Perkins V, and the Workforce Education Strategic Plan. Program Memorandum OCTAE 17-1: Clarifications Regarding Competition and Award of Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Funds to Eligible Providers under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/octae-program-memo-17-1.pdf>) outlines the process ICCB uses for Adult Education and Family Literacy Competitions.

**Figure A**



During a competitive year, to be considered for funding an applicant of demonstrated effectiveness must: meet the following criteria, as outlined in the Determining Applicant Eligibility When Conducting a State Competition for Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Funds, a Technical Assistance Guide. A program must:

- provide data on improving skills of eligible individuals in the following content domains, as appropriate to the services being sought in the application:
  - Reading
  - Writing
  - Mathematics
  - English language acquisition

- Other subject areas relevant to the application for funds
- provide information on outcomes of participants for:
  - Employment
  - Attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and
  - Transition to postsecondary education and training

The past effectiveness of an eligible applicant in improving the literacy skills of eligible adults is a strong factor in the delivery of adult education instruction and supportive services. Grant proposals will be considered based on the following criteria as outlined in WIOA Title II the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

The ICCB recognizes the following activities are allowable under Adult Education and Literacy under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

- Adult education;
- Literacy;
- Workplace adult education and literacy activities;
- Family literacy activities;
- English language acquisition activities;
- Integrated English literacy and civics education;
- Workforce preparation activities; or
- Integrated education and training.

The ICCB will consider the success of a funded provider in meeting or exceeding such performance measures as identified by the federal National Reporting System (NRS). The ICCB also recognizes the need to build a career pathway system for adult learners that will enhance education and employment opportunities. Furthermore, all submitted applications will be reviewed by the Local Workforce Development Boards for alignment with local plans.

The program/applicants will be required to address the thirteen considerations under federal law and one state consideration. Applications will be evaluated using a rubric that assigns point values for each proposed activity as outlined in the proposal.

1. The documented need of the eligible applicant to serve individuals in the community who are most in need of adult education and literacy services and those who are in need of career pathway services, including individuals who have literacy skills or who are English language learners (i.e., literacy statistics, regional and local needs as identified under the Unified State Plan, etc.).
2. The applicant demonstrates the ability to serve eligible individuals with disabilities, including those with learning disabilities.
3. The past effectiveness of an eligible applicant in improving the literacy skills of adults, including those with low literacy levels; and demonstrates the ability to meet or exceed the levels of performance.

4. The applicants proposed adult education services and activities demonstrate an alignment with local plans and services and with local one-stop partners.
5. The applicant demonstrates the use of instructional practices and activities that research has proven to be effective in teaching to achieve learning gains, is of sufficient intensity and duration, is built on a strong foundation of research and effective educational practice and includes the essential components of reading.
6. The applicant demonstrates the effectiveness in providing instruction in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics and English language acquisition and is based on best practices, scientific valid research and the state standards.
7. The program activities effectively employ advances in technology including the use of computers as a part of instruction including distance education to increase the quality of learning which leads to improved performance.
8. The applicant proposes activities that provide contextualized learning including integrated education and training as well as bridge programs to ensure that an individual has the skills needed to compete in the workplace, transition to post-secondary education and training, advance in employment and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
9. The applicant proposes activities that are delivered by well-trained instructors, counselors, support staff and administrators who meet state guidelines, have access to high quality professional development.
10. The applicant's activities coordinate with other available education, training, and social service resources in the community, such as by establishing strong links with elementary schools and secondary schools, post-secondary educational institutions, institutions of higher education, local workforce investment boards, one-stop centers, job training programs, and social service agencies, business, industry, labor organizations, community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations and intermediaries, for the development of career pathways.
11. The applicant offers flexible schedules and supportive services (such as childcare and transportation) that are necessary to enable individuals, including individuals with disabilities or other special needs, to attend and complete programs.
12. The applicant maintains a high-quality information management system, as determined by the ICCB and has the capacity to report participant outcomes and to monitor program performance measures.
13. The local communities have a demonstrated need for additional English literacy programs and civic education programs.
14. The proposed budget is consistent with the eligible provider's activities, is cost-efficient within administrative guidelines and places emphasis on serving the target populations. (Illinois consideration)

Title II Adult Education and Literacy Providers must provide at minimum one of the following educational activities through direct instruction in a traditional classroom, distance learning, or hybrid learning. Each level of instruction is grounded on the Illinois Adult Education Content Standards or the English Language Proficiency Standards and includes an expectation of technology integration that builds on the digital literacy skills; workforce/employability skills;

life skills; career exploration/awareness skills; workplace literacy; and family literacy/parenting are contextualized to meet the diverse needs of eligible adult learners.

Instruction must include contextualization that integrates basic reading, math and language skills and industry/occupational knowledge and career development that includes career exploration, career planning within a career area, and understanding the world of work. Title II providers must include instructional programming in at least one of the following categories.

- Adult Basic Education (ABE) curriculum consists of approved courses designed to bring a student from grade zero through the eighth-grade competency level, as determined by standardized testing. This curriculum and instruction must increase a student's ability to read, write, and perform mathematics. This should also lead to the attainment of a secondary school diploma or high school equivalency; and transition to post-secondary education and training; or employment. Beginning level courses cover grade zero through the third-grade competency level. The intermediate level courses cover fourth-grade competency through the eighth-grade competency.
- Adult Secondary Education (ASE) curriculum consists of approved instruction designed to bring a student from grade nine through the twelfth-grade competency level, as determined by standardized testing. This curriculum and instruction must increase a student's ability to read, write, and perform mathematics. This should also lead to the attainment of a secondary school diploma or high school equivalency; and transition to post-secondary education and training; or employment.
- English Language Acquisition (ELA) curriculum consists of approved instruction designed to include instruction in English Language Acquisition for those whose native language is not English. The curriculum and instruction are designed to help eligible individuals who are English Language Learners achieve competence in reading, speaking, comprehension and mathematics skills that lead to attainment of a secondary school diploma or high school equivalency; and transition to post-secondary education and training; or employment. Student levels are based on proficiency as measured by ICCB-approved standardized tests.
- Workforce Preparation includes Bridge Programming, Integrated Education and Training, Vocational Education, and Workplace Learning.
  - Bridge Programming is a transitional program moving adult learners from Adult Basic Education, typically NRS levels 3 and 4. Core elements of Bridge programming includes contextualized instruction, career development, and transition services. Bridges are often used to prepare adult learners for the Integrated Career & Academic Preparation System (ICAPS) and incorporates the following:
    - industry knowledge such as math skills needed in a particular field,
    - career expectations such as types of credentials necessary and how long those credentials take to earn, and
    - transition skills such as resume writing, interviewing, and college success.
  - The Integrated Career & Academic Preparation System (ICAPS) is a quality instructional framework in Illinois for the implementation of Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs, as defined by the Workforce Innovation



and Opportunity Act (WIOA). ICAPS provides an accelerated pathway to an industry-recognized credential through training partnerships– such as Career and Technical Education or an approved training provider- to serve adult education students, including English Language Learners, at the same time they are completing their Illinois High School Diploma and/or improving their English Language. Instruction and training are supplemented by support courses, comprehensive student support services, and augmented by collaborative teaching practices between workforce training instructors and basic skills instructors. Planning resources can be found here:  
<https://www.icapsillinois.com/>

- ICAPS Model 1 utilizes partnerships between Adult Education providers and college and university workforce and career training programs that may not be funded through Perkins or the Illinois Community College Board. This model also provides concurrent enrollment and instruction in a team-taught environment with comprehensive student supports resulting in skill level gains, high school equivalency certifications, college credit, and college and industry-recognized credentials.
  - The ICAPS Model 2 also utilizes partnerships between Adult Education providers and workforce and career training programs that may or may not be tied to a specific postsecondary institution. This model allows for the participation of community-based and faith-based organizations, local school districts and educational authorities, regional offices of education, and other state-funded Adult Education providers and partnership with corporate and continuing education divisions at community colleges, Local Workforce Innovation Boards, independent and governmental workforce training agencies, as well as individual employers and industry-based training programs. This model also provides integrated instruction and comprehensive student supports resulting in skill level gains, high school equivalency certifications, and industry-recognized credentials as well as the option for employer-specific training programs.
- Vocational Skills Training (VOC) consists of an ICCB AEFL–approved course that is short-term in nature and is used primarily for High School Credit Recovery Programs completing vocational education requirements or as a required component of an ICCB approved ICAP, Bridge, or Workplace Learning program.
  - Workplace Adult Education and Literacy may include coordination of workplace education projects that are designed to meet the unique needs of participating workers and employers. Workplace Adult Education and Literacy refers to an individual’s ability to read, write, speak, compute, and otherwise solve problems with enough proficiency to meet everyday needs on the job and to pursue professional goals. This includes a knowledge of phonics, word identification and comprehension, which enables the employee to read technical information and complex manuals. Workplace Adult Education and Literacy also refers to the ability of an individual to function in job situations involving higher order thinking and the capacity to evaluate work situations and processes. An employee who is workplace literate has increased job success, experiences fewer frustrations in the workplace, has higher self-esteem and has less need for retraining as the job and technology change. Workplace literacy can be funded

with Adult Education and Literacy funds. All other rules of the AEL grant apply as well. The ICCB will continue to work to align new terminology with the requirements of the federal law (e.g., Workplace Literacy to Workforce Education).

- Family literacy is an integrated, intensive service for at-risk families that must include, but is not limited to, the four components—adult education, parenting education, parent/child activities and child education—of family literacy. Each component is defined as:
  - Parenting education includes information and support for parents on issues such as childbirth, development and nurturing of children, child-rearing, family management, support for children learning, effective advocacy strategies for the rights of all children, and parent involvement in their child’s education.
  - Parent/child activities include regularly scheduled, interactive literacy- based learning activities for parents and children.
  - Literacy coordination may include coordination, tutor training, tutor scheduling and other support activities that promote student learning gains and may include volunteer literacy. Literacy services must be in conjunction with Adult Education and Literacy instructional programming provided by trained volunteers to target population students. Literacy services support classroom instruction and increasing student learning gains. Trained volunteers may work with students during classroom instruction under the supervision and coordination of a paid instructor in an AEL funded class. Instructional hours may not be claimed for services provided by volunteer tutors.

Transition services provide students with the information and assistance they need to successfully navigate the process of moving from adult education to credit or occupational programs. Services may include (as needed and available) academic advising, study skills, coaching, referrals to individual support services, e.g., transportation and childcare.

- Student transportation services are for students enrolled in Adult Education and Literacy eligible activities. Every effort should be made to coordinate these services with other entities within the community.
- Childcare is the care of children during the time an adult education student is engaged in eligible adult education and literacy instructional activities. The student must be the primary caregiver of the child. Every effort should be made to coordinate these services with other entities within the community.
- Guidance and counseling are activities with students which may include:
  - Learning styles inventories,
  - Evaluating the abilities of students,
  - Assisting students to make their own educational and career pathway choices, including career awareness and development activities, etc.
  - Assisting students in personal and social development,
  - Assisting staff members in planning and conducting guidance programs. and

- Providing transition services that will lead to post-secondary education and training, bridge programs, integrated education and training programs, employment, and other activities of statewide significance.
- Social work activities include:
- Improvement of students' attendance,
- Interventions to assist students dealing with the problems involving home, school, and community,
- Provision of referral assistance. and
- Retention strategies.
- Additional allowable services include the following:
  - Assistive and adaptive equipment or special printed materials are for adult education and literacy students with special learning needs.
  - Assessment and testing are activities to measure skill gains of individual students enrolled in eligible adult education and literacy activities using the approved assessments for Illinois Adult Education and Literacy. However, other diagnostic assessments designed to place students in appropriate and eligible adult education and literacy instruction are allowable.

Special Rule: Each eligible agency awarding a grant or contract under this section shall not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that such agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

#### C. CORRECTIONS EDUCATION AND OTHER EDUCATION OF INSTITUTIONALIZED INDIVIDUALS

Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund eligible providers to establish or operate programs that provide any of the following correctional educational programs identified in section 225 of WIOA:

- Adult education and literacy activities;
- Special education, as determined by the eligible agency;
- Secondary school credit;
- Integrated education and training;
- Career pathways;
- Concurrent enrollment;
- Peer tutoring; and

- Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.

Each eligible agency using funds provided under Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution must give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within 5 years of participation in the program.

The state agency allocates funds to eligible correctional institutions using the same grant process criteria as the other eligible providers under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and carries the same provisions for direct and equitable access. Eligible applicants must have demonstrated effectiveness in providing instruction in Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE) and English Language Acquisition (ELA). Other required services include Integrated Education and Training, Work-based Training, and Career Pathways instruction.

The same criterion used to determine an applicant's eligibility under Section 231 also applies to all applicants of demonstrated effectiveness listed under Section 225, including Correctional Education Institutions. Applicants will be evaluated using the same criteria of the AEFLA grants under Sec. Priority will be given to applicants who provide services to incarcerated individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of enrolling in the instructional program.

Eligible instructional activities and services are provided in correctional institutions throughout the state. The services provided include an assessment of an individual's educational functioning levels to determine adult education and literacy instructional programming needed in reading, writing, math and speaking to earn the Illinois High School Diploma or High school credit as well as the acquisition of the English language.

The ICCB funds adult education in correctional institutions and is designed to provide incarcerated individuals with basic skill instruction as well as career pathway preparation. Given the low skill levels of many offenders, the ICCB adult/correctional education model understands that most participants' re-entry preparation will begin with adult education. Adult education is designed to help individuals strengthen their basic skills, earn their high school credential, and transition to further education and training such as career and technical education or other post-secondary education programs. Illinois' adult education programs within a correction framework may provide the following core services that are consistent with the requirements for all statewide adult education programs. The ICCB will work with Correctional programs to establish a process for individuals to transition to re-entry initiatives and other post-release services with the goal of reducing recidivism. The ICCB will, in conjunction with the Correctional programs, develop a process of referral to adult education programs in release and to the local community college. Special Note: Secondary School Credit programming is not currently provided through correctional education with AEFL funds; however, this provision may be considered in the future.

Through partnerships, adult education programming will align its educational services with the labor market needs to determine jobs without criminal history restrictions. Using effective models of re-entry and workplace skills instruction like the Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center and Logan Correctional Center, the ICCB will work with the Illinois Department of Corrections to develop and scale effective instructional practices to prepare returning citizens for employment upon release. The ICCB will work with core and required partners under WIOA to

provide extensive wrap-around services to ensure successful recruitment, retention, re-entry, transition into post-secondary education, career training and workforce preparation to incarcerated individuals to reduce recidivism.

#### D. INTEGRATED ENGLISH LITERACY AND CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund eligible providers to establish or operate Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) programs under section 243 of WIOA. Describe how adult English language learners, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, are served in IELCE programs.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be offered in combination with integrated education and training activities found in 34 CFR section 463.36.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.

Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) includes education to immigrants and other limited English proficient populations and is designed to prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency; and integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program, in combination with Integrated Education and Training programming. Adults include professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries. To achieve the goals of the IELCE, the ICCB providers program leadership through the Director of Integrated in English Literacy and Civics Education. The ICCB AEFLA Director for IELCE represents the IELCE program with core WIOA partners through system webinars and conferences.

This position has responsibility to coordinate professional development with the PDN and collaborate with the Director of Workforce Education to develop technical assistance to programs with the implementation of IELCE. This partnership ensures IELCE programs are included in all ongoing professional development on the implementation competencies in the instruction and the inclusion of work-based and workplace learning. The Director for IELCE will use the resources in the Enhancing Access for Refugees and New Americans as a guiding resource. Information on the EARN project can be found here: <https://lincs.ed.gov/state-resources/federal-initiatives/refugeesandnewamericans> Programs will also be required to integrate with the local workforce development system building on the IELCE Immigrant Integration Framework ([https://lincs.ed.gov/sites/default/files/IELCE\\_Framework.pdf](https://lincs.ed.gov/sites/default/files/IELCE_Framework.pdf)) and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.

Curriculum for this instructional category assists participants to effectively engage in the education, work, and civic opportunities of the United States of America. The Illinois IELCE competencies consist of seven thematic units (components) of civics development and more than 40 practical and immediately relevant activities for immigrant integration and success. The seven thematic units include: Consumer Economics (CE), Community Resources (CR), Democratic Process (DP), Employment (EM), Health Services (HE), Housing (HO) and U.S. School System (SS). Throughout a combination of classroom instruction and community connections, these competencies will enable participants to effectively engage in education, work, civics opportunities and rights and responsibilities of citizenship while continuing to build their English language and literacy skills. The competencies may be used at each level of ELA instruction; however, a program should increase the level of difficulty as the student progresses.

The IELCE will be competed on a multi-year schedule. The same criterion used to determine an applicant's eligibility under Section 231 also applies to all applicants of demonstrated effectiveness. Each applicant will be evaluated using a rubric and scoring process that is in accordance with the activities established under Section 243 and will also include the thirteen considerations under law as well as one consideration under state guidelines.

The state will evaluate the applications under Section 243 based upon the ability to deliver blended English Language Acquisition (ELA)/Civics as a part of instruction as well as each applicant must address the required competencies and concurrent enrollment in an Integrated Education and Training (including Workforce Preparation Skills) instruction.

#### E. STATE LEADERSHIP

##### 1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT THE REQUIRED STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) will utilize State Leadership funds in alignment with the goals identified in the Unified State Plan, Perkins V, and the Workforce Education Strategic Plan to prepare learners for credential attainment and sustainable employment. The strategic deployment of services to Title II programs will ensure both innovation and continuous improvement leading to system integration with Core Partners. The ICCB will address the four required State Leadership Activities.

1. *Alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other one-stop required partners to implement the strategies of the Unified State Plan as described in section 233(a)(1)(A).*

The ICCB will assist Title II programs in the coordination and delivery of key services within the one-stop delivery system ensuring integrated service delivery and employment engagement. To achieve this, ICCB will actively engage in strategic and coordinated partner planning in the following Illinois Workforce Innovation Board: 1) The Interagency Technical Assistance Team, 2) The Continuous Improvement Committee, 3) The WIOA Performance Work Group, 3) The Evaluation Work Group, 4) The Service Integration Work Group, 5) The WIOA Professional Development Work Group, and 6) any future committees or workgroups deemed relevant to system and service integration. ICCB Title II staff will engage in the MOU process from disseminating guidance to the Local Workforce Innovation Boards to reviewing all submitted MOUs.

The ICCB will also provide technical assistance to all core partners in understanding the adult education system and more specifically, training in appropriate administration of educational assessments to adult learners.

2. *Establishment or operation of a high-quality professional development program as described in section 233(a)(1)(B).*

The ICCB will oversee the annual scope of work and all deliverables of the Professional Development Network (PDN) in the development and dissemination of high-quality professional development related to the goals identified in the Unified State Plan. Focus areas include 1) utilizing standards-based instruction in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language acquisition, 2) civics and IELCE competencies, 3) distance education and technology integration, and 4) proper assessment strategies with NRS approved assessments.

Significant efforts will be placed professional development on the integration of career pathways with adult education instruction, the implementation of work-based training such as the Bridge and Integrated Education and Training Programs, and workplace training.

Professional development will extend beyond working with instructors and training specifically designed for Career Navigators and Transition Coordinators will assist adult education professionals in the design of effective transition programs moving students from enrollment to credential attainment.

Finally, the PDN will provide training and supports in diversity, equity, inclusion, and access, American with Disabilities Act training, and special topics such as improving outreach and retention, and understanding and using data for continuous improvement.

Training is offered via online, on demand courses, virtual learning communities, on-site/ in-person professional development, and includes the sharing of promising practices from high impact programs.

3. *Provision of technical assistance to funded eligible providers as described in section 233(a)(1)(C).*

The ICCB utilizes a statewide Management Information System, Data and Information System Illinois (DAISI) to monitor the performance of all Title II-funded adult education and literacy providers and guide technical assistance. ICCB AEFLA program support staff review data collected in DAISI on a continuous schedule and analyze and use the data to evaluate the quality and improvement of adult education and literacy activities by assessing the performance of providers through their educational functioning level increases or measurable skills gains.

Technical assistance to Title II providers occurs through a combination of support from the Professional Development Network and ICCB AELFA Staff, and ICCB Workforce Education Staff. Coordinated support includes reviewing DAISI data and reviewing monthly data analytics sent to all staff. The report indicates the posttest rate of a program, the number of learners enrolled in Bridge or IET programs, and overall enrollment. Trends in data alert AEFLA staff to programs who may need additional support.

Using this data, targeted technical assistance for Title II programs is planned, often in partnership with the PDN and the Division of Workforce Education. Technical assistance is facilitated through meetings, on-site visits, monthly Q & A virtual meetings with ICCB Staff, and specialized professional development.

Finally, information about models and proven or promising practices are disseminated to providers throughout the state using electronic mailing lists, websites such as the Excellence in Adult Education (<https://excellenceinadulthood.org/>) and also at annual Administrators' Meetings.

4. *Monitoring and evaluation of the quality and improvement of adult education activities as described in section 233(a)(1)(D).*

Monitoring and evaluation begins as early as the grant application / award process. Each provider must complete fiscal/administrative and programmatic risk assessments which determine whether a program should have increased requirements for reporting and monitoring. While technical assistance is based on program data, monitoring and evaluation also includes desktop monitoring of DAISI data.

A variety of monitoring activities will be used to ensure programs' ability to achieve outcomes as well as the use of corrective action plans for those programs who are low performing. On-site monitoring for programs identified high-risk through a standardized monitoring tool ensures comprehensive programmatic monitoring is meaningful and relevant. ICCB AEFLA staff engage with program staff through on-site or virtual visits with all Title II programs to ensure programmatic and fiscal compliance and to provide technical assistance. Detailed internal reports are maintained for each funded provider and reviewed quarterly to ensure quality and compliance. Annual review of program data could place a program on a Watch or Probation list. The watch list is designed to identify and assist struggling programs to improve performance and student outcomes. Probation is designed to monitor programs who fail to meet compliance with required program activities, performance benchmarks, and/or fiscal and administrative rules.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT PERMISSIBLE STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA, IF APPLICABLE

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) will carry out the following permissible state Leadership Activities. The ICCB will...

- continue to assist local programs implement career pathway instruction through the development and dissemination of toolkits and resources such as the Career Pathway Dictionary <https://pathwaysdictionary.org/>
- develop and disseminate tools and resources designed to promote collaboration between local Title II providers and local employers.
- Explore the development of a Pre-apprenticeship bridge program and/or a Competency-Based Education instruction. For the Pre-apprenticeship bridge program, the ICCB will develop an ICAPS program that will enable adult learners to transition from the adult education classroom to an apprenticeship. The agency is investigating the creation of a competency-based education model that uses a combination of pre-existing adult education and IET coursework.
- The ICCB will also assist programs with incorporating technology into instruction by supporting the development and delivery of a rigorous preparation curriculum, establish a quality assurance and approval process for web based curriculum; research and develop distance education tools that may be used to enhance instruction;
- identify and implement the most recent research in reading, writing, math ELA, and transitions; and develop standards for implementation into instruction.
- work with state workforce board and one-stop system to determine appropriate training needed across partner organizations;



- host a variety of regional planning summits/forums/workshops for all partners to enhance and align partnerships in the delivery of services;
- continue to participate in studies and research projects that are designed to provide a better understanding of how to enhance Illinois adult education. A current example is the research project partnership with the American Institute for Research on the equity in services with Illinois Bridge programming;
- lead the Illinois Adult Education Advisory Council as a field directed opportunity to have voice in the policy development for Title II;
- add additional Integrated Education and Training (IET), Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE), Workforce Preparation, and bridge programs through ongoing technical assistance via the Transitions Academy. The academy is a year-long process to assist programs in the development of their career pathway programs;
- facilitate a statewide Assessment Hub to assist Title II programs assess adult learners;
- partner with businesses, state agencies, Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, post-secondary education throughout the state in the development of a Health Care, Technology, Manufacturing, Transportation, Distribution and Logistic (TDL), as well as other high demand curricula;
- identify curriculum frameworks and aligning rigorous content standards and identify the knowledge and skills needed of students. The ICCB will continue to revise and enhance the content standards developed in Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE) and ELA; and will continue to develop a crosswalk of student knowledge and skills to other post-secondary education areas and occupational programs;
- provide comprehensive training on equity and Special Learning Needs;
- collaborate with Career and Technical Education, business and industry and the state workforce board to develop and connect workforce activities within the state;
- Explore the potential of a statewide Entrepreneurship IET for IELCE learners.

#### F. ASSESSING QUALITY

Describe how the eligible agency will assess the quality of providers of adult education and literacy activities under title II. Describe how the eligible agency will take actions to improve such quality, including providing the activities described in section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA. Describe how the eligible agency will use evaluations, data analysis, program monitoring, or other methods to improve the quality of adult education activities in the State.

The Illinois Community College Board provides annual comprehensive analysis and programmatic monitoring to evaluate 100% of Title II local program compliance and performance with all applicable governing laws and grant deliverables as outlined in the Notice of Funding Opportunity/Grant Application. These deliverables include ensuring programs use labor market information to implement education and training programs that are aligned with local workforce innovation boards. Additionally, all performance metrics are reviewed through a combination of continuous monitoring using the Title II data system, facilitating on site or virtual meetings with program staff and reviewing required quarter performance and expenditure reports to ensure programs are on track to meet all performance indicators.

Programs not achieving their expected outcomes are placed on a watch list or corrective action plan and provided ongoing and targeted technical assistance.

ICCB funded Adult Education and Literacy Programs will be monitored to determine:

- program improvement;
- the degree to which the programs comply with ICCB, state and federal policies and guidelines;
- information needed in local program planning efforts; and
- the ability to achieve state and federal requirements.

#### ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM CERTIFICATIONS

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan;	Yes
2. The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program;	Yes
3. The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan;	Yes
4. All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law;	Yes
5. A State officer, specified by title in the certification, has authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the plan;	Yes
6. The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan;	Yes
7. The agency that is submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan; and	Yes
8. The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program;	Yes

#### ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The eligible agency will expend funds appropriated to carry out title II of the Workforce	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with fiscal requirements under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding the supplement-not-supplant requirement);	
2. The eligible agency will ensure that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA;	Yes
3. The eligible agency will not use any funds made available under title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not "eligible individuals" within the meaning of section 203(4) of WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA;	Yes
4. Using funds made available under title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.	Yes
5. The eligible agency agrees that in expending funds made available under Title II of WIOA, the eligible agency will comply with sections 8301 through 8303 of the Buy American Act (41 U.S.C. 8301-8303).	Yes

AUTHORIZING OR CERTIFYING REPRESENTATIVE

CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements

The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

(2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of

Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions.

(3) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subcontracts, subgrants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly. This certification is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was made or entered into. Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required certification shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

#### Statement for Loan Guarantees and Loan Insurance

The undersigned states, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions. Submission of this statement is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

Please download and sign the forms below. Please scan and return the forms to [wioa@ed.gov](mailto:wioa@ed.gov) at the same time you submit your State Plan via the portal.

1. SF424B - Assurances – Non-Construction Programs  
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)
2. Grants.gov - Certification Regarding Lobbying  
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)
3. SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (required, only if applicable)  
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)

<b>APPLICANT'S ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>Enter information in this column</b>
Applicant's Organization	Illinois Community College Board
<b>PRINTED NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE</b>	<b>Enter information in this column</b>
First Name	Brian
Last Name	Durham
Title	Executive Director
Email	Brian.Durham@illinois.gov

#### SECTION 427 OF THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISIONS ACT (GEPA)

## **EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES**

OMB Control Number 1894-0005 Expiration 02/28/2026

**Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)** (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity. The State applicant is also responsible for ensuring that its subrecipient applicants complete the GEPA Section 427 form or a State developed form that sufficiently meets the GEPA Section 427 requirement for any local-level-project and activity and maintains the subrecipients' responses in the State office.

### **GEPA Section 427 Form Instructions for State Applicants**

#### **State applicants must respond to the following four questions:**

1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.
2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?
3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?
4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

- Applicants identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.

- Applicants use the associated text box to respond to each question. However, applicants might have already included some or all this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) in their State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.

- Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity to apply.

- Applicants that have already undertaken steps to address barriers must still provide an explanation and/or description of the steps already taken in each text box, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.

- Applicants that believe no barriers exist must still provide an explanation and/or description to each question to validate that perception, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.

### **GEPA Section 427 Instructions to State Applicants for their Subrecipient Applicants**

The State grantee provides a subrecipient applicant seeking Federal assistance instructions and guidance for how it must comply with the GEPA Section 427 requirement. The State grantee determines the form and content of the information a subrecipient applicant must include in its application regarding the steps it proposes to take to ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, its local-level project or activity. For example:

- The State grantee may require its subrecipient applicant to use and submit the GEPA Section 427 form that it is required to submit to the Department; or
- The State grantee may use a State-developed form that is sufficient to meet the GEPA Section 427 requirement.
- The State grantee maintains the subrecipient applicants' responses in the State office.

Please refer to GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for AEFLA Application Package

1. DESCRIBE HOW YOUR ENTITY'S EXISTING MISSION, POLICIES, OR COMMITMENTS ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO, AND EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION IN, THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY.

***Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity. The State applicant is also responsible for ensuring that its subrecipient applicants complete the GEPA Section 427 form or a State developed form that sufficiently meets the GEPA Section 427 requirement for any local-level-project and activity and maintains the subrecipients' responses in the State office.***

*GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for AEFLA Application Package*

***State applicants must respond to four questions.***

***The first of four questions is:***

*Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.*

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) has several provisions under the State of Illinois Grant Agreement and requires, "the grantee, its employees and subcontractors under subcontract made pursuant to this Agreement, shall comply with all applicable provision of State and Federal laws and regulations pertaining to nondiscrimination, sexual harassment and equal employment opportunity including laws and regulations and subsequent amendments, "as well as adding to this agreement Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA).

The ICCB will also require each grant recipient to maintain documentation to ensure compliance with Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA). The following information is included in the grant application for federal and state funding:

- The ICCB shall require the Grantee shall certify that they prohibit and covenant that they will continue to prohibit discrimination and certify that no person, otherwise qualified, is denied employment, services, or other benefits on the basis of:

- political or religious opinion or affiliation, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identification, race, color, creed, or national origin;
- sex or age, except when age or sex constitutes a bona fide occupational qualification; or the physical or mental disability of a qualified individual with a disability.
- In addition, the ICCB requires the Grantee to specifically agree to comply fully with the non-discrimination and equal opportunity provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 USC 12101 et seq); the Nontraditional Employment for Women Act of 1991; title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended; section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; the Age Discrimination Act of 1967, as amended; title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended; and with all applicable requirements.

Programs and projects funded in total or in part through this grant will operate in compliance with State and Federal Regulations (CFR) 34, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA), the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Three examples of the GEPA provision:

1. The ICCB endorses the principles of equal opportunity, affirmative action, and diversity. ICCB fully supports affirmative action objectives and strives to achieve a diverse workforce at all levels of the agency which reflects the communities the ICCB serves. The ICCB is committed to equal opportunity without regard to race, religion, color, gender, sexual orientation, age, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, marital status, order of protection status, military status, disability, pregnancy, or any other basis of discrimination prohibited by applicable local, state, or federal law. In addition to compliance with federal EEO statutes, ICCB complies with applicable State and local laws governing nondiscrimination. This policy applies to all terms and conditions of employment, including but not limited to the following:
  - Recruitment, hiring, placement, transfer, promotion, and demotion
  - Training, development, and educational assistance
  - Compensation and benefits
  - Educational, social, and recreational programs
  - Discipline
  - Termination of employment
  - Employment decisions, subject to the legitimate business requirements of ICCB, are based solely on the individual's qualifications, merit, behavior, and performance. This commitment to diversity is also characterized by an inclusive culture where ICCB and its employees value each employee's contributions and strive to develop the talents of all employees. The development of a diverse workforce enables ICCB and its employees to draw upon a wide spectrum of ideas for achieving and exceeding agency goals.
2. The Illinois Community College Board will ensure that the grantee maintains documentation as to how they will make available to adults with limited English proficiency information that describes the programs and services; and how the grantee

will communicate this information clearly and concisely in a manner that is understandable to an individual who is potentially enrolling in the program. The Illinois Community College Board will ensure that all program applicants have an ICCB trained ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) coordinator onsite. The ICCB will further require all grantees to provide evidence of program strategies, keep and maintain written procedures and auditable records for the delivery of support services to individual with disabilities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), and (WIOA Sec. 121(c)(2)(A)(iv)). Programs are responsible for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

3. The ICCB requires the following.

- Each program must have an established grievance policy.
- Each program must conduct a self-evaluation.
- Each program must develop a transition plan regarding accessibility.
- An ADA Coordinator Manual is available to ADA Coordinators who have completed the training.
- Adult Education and Literacy programs must provide “reasonable accommodations” to qualified persons with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations (sometimes called auxiliary aids and services) are accommodations that make the program accessible to individuals with a disability. Such accommodations must be afforded to a qualified individual with a disability unless the service provider can demonstrate that the accommodation would impose “undue hardship” on the program or constitute a substantial alteration in the nature of the program. Examples of accommodations that educational programs may provide for adults with learning disabilities, depending on the particular disability and need for accommodation, include, but are not limited to:
  - Extended time for completing tasks.
  - Books on tape.
  - Reduced visual or auditory distractions, such as a private room for tests.
  - Auxiliary aids and assistive technology, such as calculators, highlighters, and computers.
  - Large print materials.
  - Alternative format for instructions, such as audiotape instructions in addition to printed instructions for taking a test.
  - Note takers.

2. BASED ON YOUR PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY, WHAT BARRIERS MAY IMPEDE  
EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, OR OTHER  
BENEFICIARIES?

***Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)*** (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity. The



*State applicant is also responsible for ensuring that its subrecipient applicants complete the GEPA Section 427 form or a State developed form that sufficiently meets the GEPA Section 427 requirement for any local-level-project and activity and maintains the subrecipients' responses in the State office.*

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for AEFLA Application Package

***State applicants must respond to four questions.***

***The second of four questions is:***

*Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?*

The Illinois Community College Board strives to ensure equitable access and participation of students, educators, and all system beneficiaries in all appropriate services. Barriers that may impede beneficiary access include the limitation of resources, both financial and professional staffing. This national trend includes instructor shortages and may impact student access to instructional services. While programs across the system are identifying critical staff shortages, the ongoing demands of the immigration crisis are stretching programs beyond capacity.

3. BASED ON THE BARRIERS IDENTIFIED, WHAT STEPS WILL YOU TAKE TO ADDRESS SUCH BARRIERS TO EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION IN THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY?

***Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity. The State applicant is also responsible for ensuring that its subrecipient applicants complete the GEPA Section 427 form or a State developed form that sufficiently meets the GEPA Section 427 requirement for any local-level-project and activity and maintains the subrecipients' responses in the State office.***

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for AEFLA Application Package

***State applicants must respond to four questions.***

***The third of four questions is:***

*Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?*

The Illinois Community College Board will convene an Adult Education Advisory Board tasked with making recommendations on agency policy and support strategies to address the critical staffing shortage. Additionally, the ICCB team will actively engage in all WIOA Partner meetings, collaborating on programmatic activities such as Work-based learning to support adult learners. Finally, the ICCB will provide ongoing Technical Assistance to Adult Education partners as they implement the Ability to Benefit options that support adult learners access financial aid to continue their postsecondary education.

4. WHAT IS YOUR TIMELINE, INCLUDING TARGETED MILESTONES, FOR ADDRESSING THESE IDENTIFIED BARRIERS?

***Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity. The State applicant is also responsible for ensuring that its subrecipient applicants complete the GEPA Section 427 form or a State developed form that sufficiently meets the GEPA Section 427 requirement for any local-level-project and activity and maintains the subrecipients' responses in the State office.***

*GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for AEFLA Application Package*

***State applicants must respond to four questions.***

***The final of four questions is:***

*What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?*

The Adult Education Advisory Council will meet quarterly and provide policy recommendations and strategies to be implemented in State Fiscal Year 2025.

The ICCB will will develop a plan to operationalize recommendations in the first quarter of SFY25. Through the second and third quarters, the ICCB Division of Adult Education will use data provided through the State data system to identify increased staff and student enrollment and identify any ongoing issues that impact access to services.

Finally, the ICCB Executive Leadership and Adult Education and Literacy staff will actively engage in all Illinois Workforce Board meetings and committees to represent the needs of Title II system learners and staff.

#### ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

##### **Performance Goals for the Core Programs**

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as “baseline” indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A “baseline” indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, “baseline” indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as “baseline” based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available

to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as “baseline” for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as “baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA.” The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as “baseline” for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as “baseline” for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as “baseline.” Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state’s plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	27.0%	TBD	26.0%	TBD
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	27.6%	TBD	25.0%	TBD
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$4,926	TBD	4,927.00	TBD
Credential Attainment Rate	30.9%	TBD	28.9%	TBD
Measurable Skill Gains	37.1%	TBD	37.2%	TBD
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

1

*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.*

#### PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL)

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA.

##### A. STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL.

1. ALL VR AGENCIES, EXCEPT FOR THOSE THAT HAVE AN INDEPENDENT CONSUMER-CONTROLLED COMMISSION, MUST HAVE A STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL (COUNCIL OR SRC) THAT MEETS THE CRITERIA IN SECTION 105 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPLICABLE, HAS:

Select A or B:

(A) is an independent State commission

(B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council

(B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council

2. IN ACCORDANCE WITH ASSURANCE (A)(1)(B), IF SELECTED, PLEASE PROVIDE INFORMATION ON THE CURRENT COMPOSITION OF THE COUNCIL BY REPRESENTATIVE TYPE, INCLUDING THE TERM NUMBER OF THE REPRESENTATIVE, AS APPLICABLE, AND ANY VACANCIES, AS WELL AS THE BEGINNING DATES OF EACH REPRESENTATIVE'S TERM.

Select 'Edit' to edit the narrative.

Note, please do not edit the table header or formatting. Only edit the table contents.

If you accidentally edit the table headers and structure, open this link to the blank table. You can copy and paste the table into the narrative field, and start over if needed.

Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)	1	8/2023
Parent Training and Information Center	1	12/2023
Client Assistance Program	1	1/2023
Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor (Ex Officio if Employed by the VR Agency)	1	7/2020
Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider	1	7/2023
Business, Industry, and Labor	1	1/2023
Business, Industry, and Labor	1	11/2023
Business, Industry, and Labor	1	11/2023
Business, Industry, and Labor	Vacant	N/A
Disability Advocacy Groups	1	10/2023
Current or Former Applicants for, or Recipients of, VR services	1	8/2023
Section 121 Project Directors in the State (as applicable)	None	N/A
State Educational Agency Responsible for Students with Disabilities Eligible to Receive	Vacant	N/A

Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
Services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)		
State Workforce Development Board	None	N/A
VR Agency Director (Ex Officio)	None	N/A
Disability Advocacy Groups	1	8/2023
Disability Advocacy Groups	2	8/2021

3. IF THE SRC IS NOT MEETING THE COMPOSITION REQUIREMENTS IN SECTION 105(B) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT AND/OR IS NOT MEETING QUARTERLY AS REQUIRED IN SECTION 105(F) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, PROVIDE THE STEPS THAT THE VR AGENCY IS TAKING TO ENSURE IT MEETS THOSE REQUIREMENTS.

N/A

4. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS IN SECTION 101(A)(21)(A)(II)(III) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, INCLUDE A SUMMARY OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT (INCLUDING HOW IT WAS OBTAINED) INTO THE STATE PLAN AND ANY STATE PLAN REVISIONS, INCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COUNCIL'S ANNUAL REPORTS, THE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER SATISFACTION AND OTHER COUNCIL REPORTS.

The SRC held a special session to discuss the results of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs assessment. Members engaged in dialogue throughout the session to discuss relevancy and how to incorporate results into the state plan. The Executive Committee developed a draft version of the Illinois Department of Human Services-Division of Rehabilitation Services (IDHS-DRS) goals in conjunction with the DRS Liaison. The Council at large was provided an opportunity to provide input and feedback on the proposed goals via electronic communication. The draft goals and SRC feedback were presented to DRS leadership for review and consideration.

**SRC Comment:** The SRC is the advisory and oversight body for the DRS. The SRC in collaboration with the DRS makes recommendations for the planning and implementation of identified priorities. Informed by the results of the 2023 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), the SRC recommends the goals which respond to the CSNA results. The DRS goals in the Unified State Plan should include:

- Improved methods of communication with agency stakeholders, especially customers, potential customers, and employers,
- Increased collaboration and partnership among workforce partners and employment service providers,
- Expand and extend engagement with employers,
- Increase and simplify customer access,
- Address statewide transportation deficits,

- Develop collaborative partnerships to augment programs for transition age youth and adult workers (> 25), and
- Upgrade programs and policies to facilitate competitive integrated employment, including self-employment.

The SRC would like DRS to report to the SRC on current strategies and the development and implementation of new approaches to address the CSNA results at the beginning of each quarter.

## **STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES**

The designated State unit must:

### **IDENTIFY IF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES WERE JOINTLY DEVELOPED AND AGREED TO BY THE STATE VR AGENCY AND THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, IF THE STATE HAS A COUNCIL, AND JOINTLY AGREED TO ANY REVISIONS**

The goals and priorities in this Plan were jointly developed and agreed to by the DRS and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). All goals were developed in response to and on the basis of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. Any revisions to the goals and priorities were jointly reviewed and agreed to by DRS and the SRC. The DRS will identify strategies and methods to achieve each of the goals as required in Section 101(a)(15)(D), (18), and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act. Those goals and priorities include the following:

1. DRS will develop a system to obtain real-time, direct customer feedback throughout the VR process while supporting a range of communication modality preferences.
2. DRS will develop an accessible communication plan to educate customers and potential customers on how to access DRS offices and services regardless of their personal barriers such as technology, transportation, mode of communication, disability type, race, gender, language, justice system involvement, etc.
3. DRS will participate in WIOA core partners' work toward equity and access to ensure the needs of the disability community are represented and incorporated into plans and programs.
4. DRS will develop an accessible communication plan to expand and build partnerships with employment service providers including community rehabilitation providers, Centers for Independent Living, benefits planners, and other providers who support people with disabilities.
5. DRS will expand and extend engagement with employers, including:
  - Developing an accessible communication plan to educate employers on vital programs offered by DRS.
  - Simplifying and communicating how employers can best access and engage DRS offices and services.
  - Educating employers on how to increase quality work opportunities for disabled persons through innovative programs, such as "Earn while you learn" opportunities, apprenticeships, paid work-based learning opportunities, and on the job training experiences.

6. DRS will develop a comprehensive model to increase and simplify customer access to services such as offering community or home-based appointments, expanded office hours, and ways to connect virtually.

7. DRS will work to address transportation deficits throughout the state by assessing needs and formulating strategies to mitigate transportation barriers for customers seeking employment, such as engaging employers on or near transit routes or paratransit routes, offering incentives to rural transportation providers, collaborating with other providers to offer transit training, and addressing staffing shortages within DRS certified orientation and mobility staff and Regional Coordinators of the Deaf.

8. DRS will develop and augment programs to support adult workers (>25) with disabilities in job retention and placement services.

9. DRS will develop collaborative partnerships between VR, State and local educational agencies, and centers for independent living to help individuals with disabilities seamlessly transition to life after high school, preparing them for independent living, competitive integrated employment, and community integration.

10. DRS will upgrade programs and policy to increase Self-employment opportunities for customers.

11. DRS will promote alternative business models for 14(c) certificate holders to reduce Subminimum Wage work and support Competitive Integrated Employment through the Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment (SWTCIE) grant project.

**5. PROVIDE THE VR AGENCY'S RESPONSE TO THE COUNCIL'S INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS, INCLUDING AN EXPLANATION FOR THE REJECTION OF ANY INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS.**

List each recommendation/input followed by the VR agency response

**THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S RESPONSE TO THE COUNCIL'S INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**DRS Response:** The DRS agrees and will develop goals in response to and congruent with the results of the CSNA. The DRS will continue to provide quarterly updates to the Council on performance, staffing, and budget items affecting DRS funding. The DRS is open to suggestions and input from the Council at any time.

**THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S EXPLANATIONS FOR REJECTING ANY OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT OR RECOMMENDATION**

**DRS Response:** The DRS did not reject any of the input provided by the Council.

**B. COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT (CSNA).**

Section 101(a)(15), (17), and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to provide an assessment of:

**1. THE VR SERVICES NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING WITHIN THE STATE, INCLUDING:**

**A. INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES AND THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT;**

Individuals with the most significant disabilities and their need for Supported Employment;



The DRS identifies and addresses the needs of students and youth with disabilities through multiple means. DRS believes it is capable of meeting the essential needs of students with disabilities through ongoing expansion of its existing program options.

The DRS has entered an Interagency agreement with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). In the most recent state fiscal year DRS served nearly 12,000 students with disabilities. ISBE and DRS will collaboratively provide training and information sessions. The agreement is based upon the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act, 5 ILCS 220/1, which states that the two agencies must collaborate. The purpose is to promote the delivery of Vocational Rehabilitation services, including Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to students with disabilities. The partnership will focus on service provision, roles and responsibilities of each entity, and collaboration planning between the two agencies.

The DRS was awarded the Pathways to Partnership grant to fund a five-year project to pilot, refine, and implement programs to improve transition outcomes, competitive integrated employment (CIE), and independent living outcomes for students with disabilities ages 10- 24 across the State. The program will begin transition support as early as age 10 and follow students through school, providing them with an age-appropriate curriculum implemented by the Centers for Independent Living in Illinois. The model will improve postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities, particularly students of color. The proposed innovative pre-ETS model program will employ a comprehensive system of integrated resources, trainings, technical assistance, and supports utilizing coordinated expertise from all four partners that will focus on the following three major domain areas: 1) Pre-ETS to CIE, (2) independent living, and (3) professional. The project will also work with high-demand employers and other community and state agencies to maximize the implementation of the statewide model and build statewide capacity and partnerships to support CIE and independent living for Illinois students with disabilities.

The Illinois Center for Transition and Work (ICTW) at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign is a statewide training and technical assistance center specifically focused on transition from school to work for students with disabilities who have extensive support needs (i.e., intellectual disability, autism, multiple disabilities). The ICTW is funded through a grant from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). The Transition School to Work Study Group examined how DRS and Special Education teachers across the state can work more collaboratively regarding the transition from school to work. The group developed a resource that clearly outlines each party's roles and responsibilities: the ICTW Transition Guide. The Guide provides information and links to resources surrounding transition issues, including an overview of the transition process and appropriate timelines, a description of the Individualized Education Plan and its development, laws that impact transition, the PUNS list, and access to Medicaid waiver services for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and an exhaustive list of related resources at the local, state and national level. The Guide is primarily an online resource available to anyone (parent, student, school, DRS office staff, etc.).

DRS continues to meet four times a year with the STEP Advisory Council, a group representing school districts contracted by DRS to provide pre-employment transition services through the STEP program. This group helps identify issues and concerns about transition services as they are experienced at the local level. DRS believes that this mechanism is very important for managing the program and gaining an understanding of ongoing needs.

**B. INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES AND INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM;**

Individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;

- Data from the most recent Disability Statistics Compendium shows a 35.3%-point (pt) employment gap for all Illinoisans 18-64 between those with and without a disability. However, that is not the same experience across races and ethnicities.
- Among white working-age persons with disabilities, the gap is 36.9% pts and for African American Illinoisans the gap stands at 34.1% pts.
- The gap for working-age Latino or Hispanic Illinoisans with disabilities is 27.4% pts and 32.4% pts of working-age Asian Illinoisans with disabilities.

#### C. INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM; AND

The sister titles in the workforce development system serve individuals with disabilities and

- DRS maintains an ongoing effort to identify and serve deaf-blind individuals. This effort is coordinated by the DRS deaf services unit with the assistance of the Bureau of Blind Services. DRS works with audiologists and vision professionals to develop referrals for VR services. In recent years the number of deaf-blind individuals served at the Chicago training facility for the blind has grown significantly.
- While the overall number of deaf-blind individuals remains small, DRS believes that it will continue to increase the proportion of those individuals who receive VR services through its outreach efforts. DRS meets regularly with the Illinois Advisory Board on Deaf-Blindness, a group composed primarily of individuals who are deaf-blind. This group offers assistance to DRS in expanding services to this low-incidence population.
- The DRS is involved in an ongoing system of individual placement services (IPS) programs for individuals with serious mental illness and living in congregate settings. Based on the success of the IPS model, DRS has initiated the gradual expansion of IPS services as funding allows those with the most significant disabilities. This program will expand IPS services to individuals with developmental disabilities including individuals with autism and autism spectrum disorder.
- IPS research indicates that the model has great potential in helping individuals with a variety of disabilities. In the last decade, the number of students in special education with these diagnoses has grown significantly, which has led to a gradual increase in autism cases in the DRS VR program. DRS works with advocacy groups and service-providing agencies to identify service options and job placement strategies that will meet the needs of this group.

#### D. YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR NEED FOR PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES. INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES FOR TRANSITION CAREER SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH SUCH SERVICES ARE COORDINATED WITH TRANSITION SERVICES PROVIDED UNDER IDEA.

Youth with disabilities, including students with disabilities and their need for pre-employment transition services. Include an assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities for

transition career services and pre-employment transition services, and the extent to which such services are coordinated with transition services provided under IDEA.

**Who are youth with disabilities and students with disabilities, including, as appropriate, their need for pre-employment transition services or other transition services:**

- According to the 2023 Compendium, Illinoisans with disabilities aged 6-21 and served under the IDEA, Part B in the Fall of 2020 numbered 268,467 or 10.2% of the total 6-21 population.
- Those served aged 3 to 5: 22,904, served aged 6 to 11: 129,128, served aged 12 to 17: 124,043, served aged 18 to 21: 15,296.
- Of those students served 6 to 21, 97,003 reported to have a specific learning disability; 38,926 reported to have a speech or language impairment; 13,980 reported to have an intellectual disability; 17,797 were reported to have had an emotional or social disorder; 2,727 reported to have multiple disabilities; 2,770 reported to have a hearing impairment. 766 reported to have an orthopedic impairment, 38,873 reported to have some other health impairment; 921 reported to have a visual impairment; 26,948 reported to have Autism; 30 reported to have deaf-blindness; 531 reported to have a traumatic brain injury; and 27,195 reported to have a developmental delay.

**2. IDENTIFY THE NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP, OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE.**

**COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS**

Describe the manner in which the designated State agency establishes cooperative agreements with private non-profit VR service providers.

The DRS has contractual agreements with non-profit rehabilitation providers to provide services to VR customers. DRS works with the Facilities Advisory Council consisting of provider representatives to discuss issues and identify service needs in an ongoing manner. DRS conducts ongoing reviews of the effectiveness of service contracts with community agencies as part of a larger state-level effort to establish greater consistency in human service contracting. DRS contracts specify the responsibilities of the service providing agency, the performance basis of the contract, and the rates to be paid to the provider.

The DRS has contracts with around 118 not-for-profit community rehabilitation programs, which serve about 5,000 VR customers each year, providing job placement and supported employment services. DRS maintains working relationships with the Statewide Independent Living Council, as well as the Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living. DRS also has contracts with Centers for Independent Living to provide a variety of rehabilitation services, including pre-employment transition services under the Fast Track Transition program described elsewhere in this plan.

The DRS develops community service contracts based on an assessment of need at the local level. Counselors and office supervisors work with regional administrators to identify specific areas of need and potential provider agencies qualified to provide services. To the extent possible, DRS has utilized one-time funding to establish new service contracts with providers. Illinois emphasizes performance-based or outcome-based funding for human services programs and this logic is applied to all new providers.

## ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

**Describe the designated State agency's efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services and extended employment services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities. (Formerly known as Attachment 4.8(b)(4)).**

For many years, DRS has had a number of contracts and cooperative working agreements with community provider agencies to provide both supported employment and extended services to individuals with most significant disabilities. DRS has a standing committee of community rehabilitation programs known as the Facility Advisory Committee which meets regularly to discuss service arrangements, including but not limited to, supported employment. DRS believes that this group is the best mechanism for communicating with provider agencies and maintaining a grasp of the demand for these services.

### C. GOALS, PRIORITIES, AND STRATEGIES

Section 101(a)(15) and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe the goals and priorities of the State in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs. The goals and priorities are based on (1) the most recent CSNA, including any updates; (2) the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of Section 116 of WIOA; and (3) other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the SRC and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under Section 107 of the Rehabilitation Act. VR agencies must—

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE SRC AND THE VR AGENCY JOINTLY DEVELOPED AND AGREED TO THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES AND ANY REVISIONS; AND

**Goals, Priorities, and Strategies.**Section 101(a)(15) and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe the goals and priorities of the State in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs. The goals and priorities are based on (1) the most recent CSNA, including any updates; (2) the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA; and (3) other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the SRC and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107 of the Rehabilitation Act. VR agencies must—

- (1) Describe how the SRC and the VR agency jointly developed and agreed to the goals and priorities and any revisions; and

#### **2023 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) Online Survey.**

DRS committed to a large-scale study to incorporate a variety of methods to ensure participation by people with disabilities across the state, including those from targeted communities and individuals with the most significant disabilities. The Illinois Department of Human Service Division of Rehabilitation Services elected to subcontract the 2023 Satisfaction with Customer Service and the Needs Assessment Surveys. Both surveys were conducted concurrently using online methodology. Three customer groups (disabled persons, providers, and employers) were surveyed. More than 19,000 respondents between all three customer

groups completed the survey, a stark increase from the 2018 needs assessment, where DRS only collected 1,000 valid responses.

Based on feedback from all three customer groups, the top five responses from all three groups were scored and weighted by priority of each group. The already implied responses were added for a total weighted score of priorities. This is the weighted priority order for all three groups:

1. Making the referral process easier
2. Virtual access to counselors
3. Online access to applications
4. Cross-training of staff on services provided by the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS)
5. Information about transition programs on DRS website
6. Better accessibility to other state workforce programs
7. Coordinating funding and staffing
8. Disability awareness training
9. Increased DRS presence in the Illinois Workforce Development Systems
10. Extended hours at in-person offices
11. Accessible equipment in Workforce Development Centers
12. Interpretation services for primary languages

The survey design incorporated feedback from collaboration with the Division of Rehabilitation Services State Rehabilitation Council (DRS-SRC) and a review of town hall meetings held by the Director of the DRS in 2022. The SRC indicated the following top priorities for the survey: statistically significant response rate, accessibility, readability, and translation into multiple languages. Analysis of the town hall transcripts revealed the following areas of concern: transportation, technology infrastructure, limited access to the DRS team, and the need for skills training.

(2) Identify measurable goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs and the basis for selecting the goals and priorities (e.g., CSNA, performance accountability measures, SRC recommendations, monitoring, other information). As required in section 101(a)(15)(D), (18), and (23), describe under each goal or priority, the strategies or methods used to achieve the goal or priority, including as applicable, description of strategies or methods that—

- Support innovation and expansion activities;
- Overcome barriers to accessing VR and supported employment services;
- Improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities, including the coordination of services designed to facilitate the transition of such students from school to postsecondary life (including the receipt of VR services, post-secondary education, employment, and pre-employment transition services); and
- Improve the performance of the VR and Supported Employment programs in assisting individuals with disabilities to achieve quality employment outcomes.

2. IDENTIFY MEASURABLE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IN CARRYING OUT THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS AND THE BASIS FOR SELECTING THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES (E.G., CSNA, PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES, SRC RECOMMENDATIONS, MONITORING, OTHER INFORMATION). AS REQUIRED IN SECTION 101(A)(15)(D), (18), AND (23), DESCRIBE UNDER EACH GOAL OR PRIORITY, THE STRATEGIES OR METHODS USED TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL OR PRIORITY, INCLUDING AS APPLICABLE, DESCRIPTION OF STRATEGIES OR METHODS THAT—

A. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES;

B. OVERCOME BARRIERS TO ACCESSING VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

C. IMPROVE AND EXPAND VR SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE COORDINATION OF SERVICES DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF SUCH STUDENTS FROM SCHOOL TO POSTSECONDARY LIFE (INCLUDING THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES); AND

D. IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS IN ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES TO ACHIEVE QUALITY EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES.

List and number each goal/priority, noting the basis, and under each goal/priority, list and number the strategies to achieve the goal/priority

EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS

**AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE VR PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE APPROVED VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:**

**IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS**

Goal: 1      Achieve and exceed 6,000 competitive employment outcomes annually

The DRS believes it is reasonable to establish a consistent metric of 6,000 competitive employment outcomes per year. In the last five years, DRS has averaged 5,251 outcomes with a high of 5,538 and a low of 4,990. To attain the 6,000-outcome level, the following draft targets are established: 5,750 competitive employment outcomes in PY 2020 (FY 2021); 6,000 in PY 20201 (FY 2022); 6,250 in PY 2022 (FY 2023); and 6,500 in PY 2023 (FY 2024). DRS finished the most recent fiscal year with 5,100 outcomes and it can target 5,500 in the current fiscal year.

Goal: 2      Transition minimally 100 individuals per year from 14(c) employment into competitive integrated employment

DRS' goal is to make consistent progress on creating competitive integrated employment opportunities for individuals working in subminimum wage settings. This will be accomplished using a variety of strategies, including the following: use of supported employment models; use of customized employment models; and development of new business models for agencies currently acting as 14(c) employers. The numerical targets are modest, but the main focus is on building a successful system for creating employment opportunities. The draft targets are:

Transitioning 100 individuals from 14(c) to competitive integrated employment in PY 2020 (FY 2021); 150 in PY 20201 (FY 2022); 200 in PY 2022 (FY 2023); and 250 in PY 2023 (FY 2024)

Goal: 3 By the conclusion of PY 2023 (state FY 2024), DRS, working in partnership with the ISBE and local education authorities, will ensure that 100,000 students with disabilities engage in Pre-ETS during their time in school

WIOA requires all students with disabilities to receive Pre-ETS. This requirement does not fall entirely on the VR agency. Rather, the State government as a whole is given responsibility, including state and local education authorities as well as the VR agency.

DRS envisions at least three levels of engagement with Pre-ETS. The first is participation in the STEP program, which involves individuals determined eligible for VR services and who have an active IPE that includes Pre-ETS. This program served 11,126 students in the most recent program year.

The second mode of engagement is the provision of services to potentially eligible students with disabilities through the Fast Track Transition program. This program is operated by vendor agencies under contract to DRS. In FY 2019 the Fast Track program served 659 students.

The third mode of engagement will involve an improved level of coordination with local school systems. DRS will work with local schools and ISBE to enhance the understanding of Pre-ETS on the part of teachers and school administrators. DRS believes that most students with disabilities receive some form of Pre-ETS through participation in the transition plan developed beginning at age 14. The Illinois transition plan requires schools to address goals in the areas of employment; post-secondary education; and independent living for all transition-age students with an IEP. Many of the activities contained in the transition plans are equivalent to services defined as Pre-ETS under WIOA, but there is presently no means to account for the provision of these services as PTS. DRS proposes to build upon the existing system to enable schools across Illinois to validate the provision of Pre-ETS to students whether or not they participate in VR services through DRS.

Progress has been made in establishing partnerships with ISBE and the results have led to considerable growth in numbers served internally. In PY 2022, Title-IV VR served over 13,000 students in the STEP and Transition programs, while over 1,500 were served in the Fast Track program. Substantially higher than the amounts listed when the goal was established. Overall services to those ages 20 and under have risen annually from 23,269 in PY 2020; to 25,462 in PY 2021; and to 26,312 in PY 2022.

Goal: 4 Increase earnings at case closure and the second quarter follow-up for individuals closed as competitive employment outcomes.

It is well known that people with disabilities are less likely to be employed, compared to people that do not have disabilities. People with disabilities are also more likely to be employed part-time. The typical VR customer closed as successful by DRS works approximately 26 hours per week, with many working even fewer hours. Regardless of the hourly wage, part-time work means lower overall earnings. VR Counselors should work with their customers to identify opportunities for full-time employment whenever possible.

Title IV saw considerable success in this goal, as a result of an agency-wide effort to train, refocus, and strive for better careers for customers. The result is best viewed through the median monthly earnings 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter after exit. From PY 2018 through PY 2020, DRS saw only modest growth; in PY 2018, \$3,100; in PY 2019, \$3,107; and in PY 2020, \$3,337. In PY 2021, growth grew to \$3,997, and experienced an increase in PY 2022, by coming in at \$4,207.

Being able to funnel messaging from leadership to field practitioners, has made a difference in ensuring adherence to DRS' mission statement and goals are met. DRS ties its drive for

improvement directly to the reason Title IV is here, to serve people with disabilities in achieving lasting careers and a higher quality of life. Furthermore, DRS was able to extract historical data on all closures to address the goal holistically, but also while being able to directly target room for improvement.

Goal: 5      Establish a process for the transfer of individuals completing supported employment through DRS to receive support under the DDD waiver program

DRS and DDD completed a new agreement regarding services to mutual customers. A key component is ensuring that individuals who have completed 24 months in VR-funded supported employment can be transferred to receive ongoing support from the DDD waiver program. This is a typical arrangement in many states but has not taken place consistently in Illinois.

Goal: 6      Increase co-enrollment of VR customers in other WIOA programs

A basic tenet of the workforce system under WIOA is that an individual experiencing a barrier to employment should be able to receive services regardless of which WIOA partner is the main provider. Receiving services from more than one WIOA partner is considered co-enrollment and should be encouraged whenever possible.

Statistically, it appears as though DRS is making progress. However, DRS received notice from the RSA that our co-enrollment submissions have been in error for annual tracking. Thus, if our data has been corrected, PY 2022 is showing a marked improvement. Tracking further should occur as well as continuing to encourage increased co-enrollment when necessary and provide annual statistics towards this goal during the two-year modification.

Goal: 7      Establish a career pathways model for students with disabilities served by DRS

Various education and workforce programs utilize the concept of career pathways to guide services to individuals seeking employment. The general construct is that it is worthwhile to engage students with career concepts and the understanding that various jobs are available in a given industry with differing credential requirements. Rather than identify a job for an individual, the career pathways approach helps that individual understand how that job can lead to a career based on additional training and education. While DRS has been a leader in serving students with disabilities, we are lagging in adopting a career pathways approach for the students we serve. DRS should consider establishing pilot projects in selected locations, and partnering with school districts and community colleges in those areas.

Goal: 8      Become a disability-neutral organization, serving every person regardless of his or her disability

DRS will revisit policies and procedures throughout the agency to ensure that the VR program is capable of serving any individual regardless of disability. The policy review and revisions will be completed by June 20, 2021.

DRS is well on its way to opening the restrictions applied by a policy whereby the Division Director can enact such change. The Order of Selection and Financial Participation-related policies have been the most active in being remedied. Additional work continues and will be reported on further during the two-year modification.

Goal: 9      Expand the IPS program to reach additional populations likely to benefit from the IPS approach, including youth with disabilities, and individuals with intellectual disabilities and autism



IPS is an evidence-based practice of providing vocational services to persons with disabilities. IPS was initially focused on individuals with serious mental illness, but additional research has shown that IPS principles and methods are of benefit to a wider range of people with disabilities. DRS will continue to expand IPS by reaching out to specific populations of persons with disabilities and identifying qualified providers to initiate services.

VR has contracted with providers and began the work of outreach to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, along with those with autism. The model is actively being applied to these populations and presuming success continues, DRS VR will continue to expand the IPS model as appropriate.

**Goal: 10** Establish an aggressive system of information, education, and outreach to targeted populations to promote the growth of the customer base in the DRS VR program

DRS will use an access navigator approach to identifying potential customers who can benefit from VR services in terms of achieving a competitive integrated employment outcome. DRS intends to contract with a variety of community partner agencies across the state that have connections to individuals in targeted communities who may not be aware of the benefits of the VR program. Referrals to the DRS VR program have declined by 17 percent in the last five years. To achieve growth in employment outcomes, that decline must be reversed. In addition to facilitating referrals to the VR program, the access navigator model will ensure that individuals with disabilities are connected to other community supports that might otherwise inhibit their participation in VR services.

**Goal: 11** Work with other WIOA partners to build the capacity to exchange data in a manner that protects confidentiality but enables efficient cooperation among partners and improves the effectiveness of the workforce system

The implementation of the workforce system in Illinois has been hampered by a lack of data exchange methodology or framework. While individual partner agencies have useful systems for collecting and managing information on the individuals they serve, the system as a whole is inefficient and duplicative. DRS is committed to ongoing efforts through the State Workforce Board to move toward a solution to the problem. This solution should build on the existing capacities of each agency.

This process is still in its infancy in Illinois and all partners have much to overcome for this to be a reality. Progress has been made in codifying the need and implementing a plan to move forward. All parties are in general agreement with the need and benefit. Much of this work will take place throughout this Unified Plan and can be updated during the two-year modification.

#### **D. EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS**

For the most recently completed program year, provide an evaluation and report of progress for the goals or priorities, including progress on the strategies under each goal or priority, applicable to that program year. Sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe—

##### **1. PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED FOR THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS;**

List the goals/priorities and discuss the progress or completion of each goal/priority and related strategies

**Goal: 1** Achieve and exceed 6,000 competitive employment outcomes annually

The DRS believes it is reasonable to establish a consistent metric of 6,000 competitive employment outcomes per year. In the last five years, DRS has averaged 5,251 outcomes with a high of 5,538 and a low of 4,990. To attain the 6,000-outcome level, the following draft targets are established: 5,750 competitive employment outcomes in PY 2020 (FY 2021); 6,000 in PY 20201 (FY 2022); 6,250 in PY 2022 (FY 2023); and 6,500 in PY 2023 (FY 2024). DRS finished the most recent fiscal year with 5,100 outcomes and it can target 5,500 in the current fiscal year.

Result: Not Achieved

Goal: 2 Transition minimally 100 individuals per year from 14(c) employment into competitive integrated employment

DRS' goal is to make consistent progress on creating competitive integrated employment opportunities for individuals working in subminimum wage settings. This will be accomplished using a variety of strategies, including the following: use of supported employment models; use of customized employment models; and development of new business models for agencies currently acting as 14(c) employers. The numerical targets are modest, but the main focus is on building a successful system for creating employment opportunities. The draft targets are:

Transitioning 100 individuals from 14(c) to competitive integrated employment in PY 2020 (FY 2021); 150 in PY 20201 (FY 2022); 200 in PY 2022 (FY 2023); and 250 in PY 2023 (FY 2024)

Result: TBD – Update during the two-year modification

Goal: 3 By the conclusion of PY 2023 (state FY 2024), DRS, working in partnership with the ISBE and local education authorities, will ensure that 100,000 students with disabilities engage in Pre-ETS during their time in school

WIOA requires all students with disabilities to receive Pre-ETS. This requirement does not fall entirely on the VR agency. It is a partnership with state and local education authorities as well as the VR agency.

DRS envisions at least three levels of engagement with Pre-ETS. The first is participation in the STEP program, which involves individuals determined eligible for VR services and who have an active IPE that includes Pre-ETS. This program served 11,126 students in the most recent program year.

The second mode of engagement is the provision of services to potentially eligible students with disabilities through the Fast Track Transition program. This program is operated by vendor agencies under contract to DRS. In FY 2019 the Fast Track program served 659 students.

The third mode of engagement will involve an improved level of coordination with local school systems. DRS will work with local schools and ISBE to enhance the understanding of Pre-ETS on the part of teachers and school administrators. DRS believes that most students with disabilities receive some form of Pre-ETS through participation in the transition plan developed beginning at age 14. The Illinois transition plan requires schools to address goals in the areas of employment; post-secondary education; and independent living for all transition-age students with an IEP. Many of the activities contained in the transition plans are equivalent to services defined as Pre-ETS under WIOA, but there is presently no means to account for the provision of these services as Pre-ETS. DRS proposes to build upon the existing system to enable schools across Illinois to validate the provision of Pre-ETS to students whether or not they participate in VR services through DRS.

Result: TBD – Update during the two-year modification

Progress has been made in establishing partnerships with ISBE and the results have led to considerable growth in numbers served internally. In PY 2022, Title-IV VR served over 13,000 students in the STEP and Transition programs, while over 1,500 were served in the Fast Track program. Substantially higher than the amounts listed when the goal was established. Overall services to those ages 20 and under have reason annually from 23,269 in PY 2020; to 25,462 in PY 2021; and to 26,312 in PY 2022.

Goal: 4      Increase earnings at case closure and the second quarter follow-up for individuals closed as competitive employment outcomes

It is well known that people with disabilities are less likely to be employed, compared to people that do not have disabilities. People with disabilities are also more likely to be employed part-time. The typical VR customer closed as successful by DRS works approximately 26 hours per week, with many working even fewer hours. Regardless of the hourly wage, part-time work means lower overall earnings. VR Counselors should work with their customers to identify opportunities for full-time employment whenever possible.

Result:      Achieved

Title IV saw considerable success in this goal, as a result of an agency-wide effort to train, refocus, and strive for better careers for customers. The result is best viewed through the median monthly earnings 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter after exit. From PY 2018 through PY 2020, DRS saw only modest growth; in PY 2018, \$3,100; in PY 2019, \$3,107; and in PY 2020, \$3,337. In PY 2021, growth grew to \$3,997, and experienced an increase in PY 2022, by coming in at \$4,207.

Goal: 5      Establish a process for the transfer of individuals completing supported employment through DRS to receive support under the DDD waiver program

DRS and DDD renewed an agreement regarding services to mutual customers. A key component is ensuring that individuals who have completed 24 months in VR-funded supported employment can be transferred to receive ongoing support from the DDD waiver program. This is a typical arrangement in many states but has not taken place consistently in Illinois.

Result:      TBD – Update during the two-year modification.

Goal: 6      Increase co-enrollment of VR customers in other WIOA programs

A basic tenet of the workforce system under WIOA is that an individual experiencing a barrier to employment should be able to receive services regardless of which WIOA partner is the main provider. Receiving services from more than one WIOA partner is considered co-enrollment and should be encouraged whenever possible.

Result:      Achieved

Statistically, it appears as though DRS is making progress. However, DRS received notice from the RSA that our co-enrollment submissions have been in error for annual tracking. Thus, if our data has been corrected, PY 2022 is showing a marked improvement. Tracking further should occur as well as continuing to encourage increased co-enrollment when necessary and provide annual statistics towards this goal during the two-year modification.

Goal: 7      Establish a career pathways model for students with disabilities served by DRS

Various education and workforce programs utilize the concept of career pathways to guide services to individuals seeking employment. The general construct is that it is worthwhile to engage students with career concepts and the understanding that various jobs are available in a

given industry with differing credential requirements. Rather than identify a job for an individual, the career pathways approach helps that individual understand how that job can lead to a career based on additional training and education. While DRS has been a leader in serving students with disabilities, we are lagging in adopting a career pathways approach for the students we serve. DRS should consider establishing pilot projects in selected locations and partnering with school districts and community colleges in those areas.

Result: TBD – Update during the two-year modification

Goal: 8 Become a disability-neutral organization, serving every person regardless of his or her disability

DRS will revisit policies and procedures throughout the agency to ensure that the VR program is capable of serving any individual regardless of disability. The policy review and revisions will be completed by June 20, 2021.

Result: TBD – Update during the two-year modification

DRS is well on its way to opening the restrictions applied by a policy whereby the Division Director can enact such change. The Order of Selection and Financial Participation-related policies have been the most active in being remedied. Additional work continues and will be reported on further during the two-year modification.

Goal: 9 Expand the IPS program to reach additional populations likely to benefit from the IPS approach, including youth with disabilities, and individuals with intellectual disabilities and autism

IPS is an evidence-based practice of providing vocational services to persons with disabilities. IPS was initially focused on individuals with serious mental illness, but additional research has shown that IPS principles and methods are of benefit to a wider range of people with disabilities. DRS will continue to expand IPS by reaching out to specific populations of persons with disabilities and identifying qualified providers to initiate services.

Result: Achieved and Ongoing

VR has contracted with providers and began the work of outreach to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, along with those with autism. The model is actively being applied to these populations and presuming success continues, DRS VR will continue to expand the IPS model as appropriate.

Goal: 10 Establish an aggressive system of information, education, and outreach to targeted populations to promote the growth of the customer base in the DRS VR program

DRS will use an access navigator approach to identifying potential customers who can benefit from VR services in terms of achieving a competitive integrated employment outcome. DRS intends to contract with a variety of community partner agencies across the state that have connections to individuals in targeted communities who may not be aware of the benefits of the VR program. Referrals to the DRS VR program have declined by 17 percent in the last five years. To achieve growth in employment outcomes, that decline must be reversed. In addition to facilitating referrals to the VR program, the access navigator model will ensure that individuals with disabilities are connected to other community supports that might otherwise inhibit their participation in VR services.

Result: Achieved and Ongoing

Goal: 11 Work with other WIOA partners to build the capacity to exchange data in a manner that protects confidentiality but enables efficient cooperation among partners and improves the effectiveness of the workforce system

The implementation of the workforce system in Illinois has been hampered by a lack of data exchange methodology or framework. While individual partner agencies have useful systems for collecting and managing information on the individuals they serve, the system as a whole is inefficient and duplicative. DRS is committed to ongoing efforts through the State Workforce Board to move toward a solution to the problem. This solution should build on the existing capacities of each agency.

Result: Ongoing

This process is still in its infancy in Illinois and all partners have much to overcome for this to be a reality. Progress has been made in codifying the need and implementing a plan to move forward. All parties are in general agreement with the need and benefit. Much of this work will take place throughout this Unified Plan and can be updated during the two-year modification.

2. PERFORMANCE ON THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR, REFLECTING ACTUAL AND NEGOTIATED LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE. EXPLAIN ANY DISCREPANCIES IN THE ACTUAL AND NEGOTIATED LEVELS; AND

Performance on the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA for the most recently completed program year, reflecting actual and negotiated levels of performance. Explain any discrepancies in the actual and negotiated levels; and

THE VR PROGRAM'S PERFORMANCE ON THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA

Title-IV VR met or exceeded all negotiated levels of performance for PY22.

Performance Indicators	PY 2022 Actual Level	PY 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	60.2%	56.0%	56.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	48.7%	49%	49%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$4,207	\$3,627	\$3,627
Credential Attainment Rate	31.9%	29.5%	29.5%
Measurable Skill Gains	67.8%	72.5%	61%

The DRS Goals and priorities contained in this Unified Plan are based on an analysis of DRS performance on program standards, as well as other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program. This includes reports from the SRC and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted by RSA under Section 107 of the Act. The goals and priorities are based on the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA.

## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS PERFORMANCE GOALS FOR TITLE-IV

Illinois' proposed performance targets along with supporting documentation (including source references) associated with the PY 2024-2027 WIOA proposed performance targets has been prepared in response to the instructions provided by the United States Departments of Labor and Education. Illinois will enter into negotiations with the Departments in State Fiscal Year 2024 to come to agreement on performance outcomes for PY 2024 and 2025.

Illinois' proposed performance targets along with supporting documentation (including source references) associated with the PY 2024-2027 WIOA proposed performance targets has been prepared in response to the instructions provided by the United States Departments of Labor and Education. For Title-IV, this is done through the Department of Education Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). Illinois will enter into negotiations with the Departments in State FY 2024 to come to agreement on performance outcomes for PY 2024 and 2025.

Based on an analysis of historical and current participant outcomes, each core partner will negotiate WIOA performance measures for each indicator, as applicable for PY 2024 and 2025. The primary indicators of performance under WIOA for each core partner (note that primary indicators four and five do not apply to Wagner-Peyser Employment Services) are:

- *Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after exit.* The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program.
- *Employment Rate 4th Quarter after exit.* The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program.
- *Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after exit.* The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the 2nd quarter after exit from the program -- participants who obtain a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent must also be employed or enrolled in an education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within one year of the exit from the program.
- *Credential Attainment Rate.* The percentage of program participants enrolled in education or training program (excluding those in OJT and customized training) who attain a recognized post-secondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in, or within, 1 year after exit from the program. A participant who has attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent only must also be enrolled in education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within one year after exit.
- *Measurable Skills Gains.* The percentage of participants who during a program year are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized post-secondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains, defined as documented academic, technical, occupational, or other forms of progress towards such a credential or employment.

The core partners present performance data to the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) regularly. This collaboration ensures all core partners are on track to meet the requirements set forth in this Unified Plan and ensures customers in the Workforce System are provided with the education, training, and resources necessary to increase the talent pipeline for Illinois' diverse

business and industry. See the Assessment and Evaluation Section of the Strategic Elements of the state plan for further details about the evaluation of the performance goals.

### 3. THE USE OF FUNDS RESERVED FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES (SECTIONS 101(A)(18) AND 101(A)(23) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT) (E.G., SRC, SILC).

The use of funds reserved for innovation and expansion activities (sections 101(a)(18) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act) (e.g., SRC, SILC).

The DRS identifies and addresses the needs of students and youth with disabilities through multiple means. DRS believes it is capable of meeting the essential needs of students with disabilities through the ongoing expansion of its existing program options.

The DRS is on the verge of an Interagency agreement with the ISBE. In the most recent State fiscal year, DRS served nearly 12,000 students with disabilities. ISBE and DRS will collaboratively provide training and information sessions. The agreement is based upon the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act, 5 ILCS 220/1, which States that the two agencies must collaborate. The purpose is to promote the delivery of Vocational Rehabilitation services, including PTS to students with disabilities. The partnership will focus on service provision, roles and responsibilities of each entity, and collaboration planning between the two agencies.

The DRS was awarded the Pathways to Partnership grant to fund a five-year project to pilot, refine, and implement programs to improve transition outcomes, competitive integrated employment (CIE), and independent living outcomes for students with disabilities ages 10- 24 across the State. The program will begin transition support as early as age 10 and follow students through school, providing them with an age-appropriate curriculum implemented by the Centers for Independent Living. The model will improve postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities, particularly those students who are people of color.

The proposed innovative pre-ETS model program will employ a comprehensive system of integrated resources, pieces of training, technical assistance, and supports utilizing coordinated expertise from all four partners that will focus on the following three major domain areas: 1) Pre-ETS to CIE; 2) independent living; and 3) professional. The project will also work with high-demand employers and other community and State agencies to maximize the implementation of the Statewide model and build Statewide capacity and partnerships to support CIE and independent living for Illinois students with disabilities.

The Illinois Center for Transition and Work (ICTW) at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign is a Statewide training and technical assistance center specifically focused on transition from school to work for students with disabilities who have extensive support needs (i.e., intellectual disability, autism, multiple disabilities). The ICTW is funded through a grant from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). The Transition School to Work Study Group examined how DRS and Special Education teachers across the State can work more collaboratively regarding the transition from school to work.

The group developed a resource that clearly outlines each party's roles and responsibilities; the ICTW Transition Guide. The Guide provides information and links to resources surrounding transition issues, including an overview of the transition process and appropriate timelines; a description of the IEP and its development; laws that impact transition; the Prioritization of Urgency of Need for Service (PUNS) list and access to Medicaid waiver services for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities; and an exhaustive list of related resources at the local, state, and national level. The Guide is primarily an online resource available to anyone (i.e., parents, students, school, DRS office staff, etc.).

The DRS continues to meet four times a year with the STEP Advisory Council, a group representing school districts contracted by DRS to provide PTS through the STEP program. This group helps identify issues and concerns about transition services as they are experienced at the local level. DRS believes that this mechanism is very important for managing the program and gaining an understanding of ongoing needs.

**E. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS, AND  
ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED  
EMPLOYMENT SERVICES.**

**1. ACCEPTANCE OF TITLE VI FUNDS:**

(A) VR agency requests to receive title VI funds.

**2. IF THE VR AGENCY HAS ELECTED TO RECEIVE TITLE VI FUNDS, SECTION 606(B)(3) OF THE  
REHABILITATION ACT REQUIRES VR AGENCIES TO INCLUDE SPECIFIC GOALS AND  
PRIORITIES WITH RESPECT TO THE DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS RECEIVED UNDER  
SECTION 603 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED  
EMPLOYMENT SERVICES. DESCRIBE THE USE OF TITLE VI FUNDS AND HOW THEY WILL BE  
USED IN MEETING THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES OF THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT  
PROGRAM.**

**GOALS AND PLANS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS**

**SPECIFY THE STATE'S GOALS AND PRIORITIES FOR FUNDS RECEIVED UNDER SECTION  
603 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT  
SERVICES**

The DRS provides the following projections for the use of those funds. For PY 2024, the Supported Employment Program (SEP) has set forth the following goals using Title VI, and Part B funds. In establishing the goals listed in the plan, DRS utilized the following priorities.

**PRIORITIES**

*Extend Services.* The first priority is to extend the reach of the DRS VR program, serve more individuals, and establish a presence in hard-to-serve communities across the State. This includes reaching individuals regardless of their disability, individuals in minority communities, individuals who speak languages other than English, and individuals in low-income or isolated communities such as the LGBTQ community.

*Ensure Equity.* The second priority area is to ensure that VR services are available to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including individuals in need of traditional supported employment services. This priority also addresses individuals currently working in a subminimum wage setting and those in need of long-term extended support to maintain employment. There are currently an estimated 4,000 individuals earning a subminimum wage in Illinois, the majority of whom would likely benefit from supported employment services. DRS, in conjunction with the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign and Virginia Commonwealth University, has received a five-year grant to develop and implement the SWTCIE Innovative Model Demonstration Project. The purpose of the grant is to support innovative activities aimed at increasing competitive integrated employment for youth and other individuals with disabilities seeking or engaged in subminimum wage employment. It is anticipated that this project will generate a significant number of referrals to DRS for VR services, including supported employment services, as customers work to attain competitive integrated employment.



*Expand PTS Amongst Students.* The third priority is to expand PTS to students with disabilities to encompass all students. In partnership with ISBE and local education authorities, to provide PTS to 100,000 students with disabilities across the State. DRS currently serves over 20,000 youth with disabilities across the State. Attaining this goal would reflect a five-fold increase in service provision to eligible youth. DRS and ISBE are nearing completion of an interagency agreement that will improve collaboration between the two agencies and the 800+ local education authorities throughout the State in the provision of said services. Over 40% of customers utilizing supported employment services are youth with disabilities.

*Foster Self-Sufficiency Amongst Those Served.* The fourth priority is increasing the self-sufficiency of people with disabilities. Employment is an important objective, but full-time employment and higher earnings are also critical in achieving self-sufficiency.

## **GOALS**

*Policy-Driven SEP.* Serve customers recently placed into supported employment in a manner consistent with federal regulations, with an emphasis on moving as many individuals as possible into natural supports after ongoing support services.

*Continuously Expand Services with Most Significant Disabilities.* Continue to expand the scope of those who receive services to include persons who are deafblind, persons with traumatic brain injuries, persons who are mentally ill, persons with significant hearing impairments, and other persons with the most significant disabilities. *Develop New Programmatic Funding Strategies.* Develop new mechanisms for funding paid extended services, including cooperative agreements with other State agencies and local units of government.

*Assess Efficient Means to Supporting Positive Employment Outcomes.* Evaluate the most effective means of achieving employment outcomes for individuals traditionally served in supported employment services.

*Direct Funds to Maintain Supportive Services for Youth with Disabilities.* Ensure that no less than 50 percent of the Title VI Part B grant funds are used for long-term support services to youth with disabilities.

3. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES MAY BE PROVIDED WITH TITLE 1 OR TITLE VI FUNDS FOLLOWING PLACEMENT OF INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES IN EMPLOYMENT. IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(22) AND SECTION 606(B)(3) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, DESCRIBE THE QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES; AND THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES.

The annual estimates with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services:

### **THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS IN THE STATE WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES**

To estimate the number of possibly eligible individuals in the State, DRS uses disability data from the U.S. Census Bureau as compiled in the Disability Statistics Compendium. The Census population base data is from the 2022 US Census American Community Survey. Disability prevalence data is taken from the 2023 Disability Statistics Compendium. Using these sources, DRS provides the following estimates for FFY 2025.

- As of 2023, it is estimated that there are 738,699 individuals with disabilities in the state aged 18 to 64 who are possibly eligible for the VR program. Of that number, DRS estimates there are 738,699 who would potentially be eligible for services under the DRS order of selection policy.
- If Illinois were under an Order of Selection, 64% of the 738,699 would be in the Most Significant Disability category.
- 205,752 who would be in the Very Significant Disability category, and 49,940 that would be in the significant disability category.
- Lastly, for FFY 2025, DRS estimates that 83,981 individuals with the most significant disabilities are possibly eligible for VR services under Title VI, Part B.

#### **NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL RECEIVE SERVICES UNDER:**

##### **THE VR PROGRAM**

In the VR program, DRS estimates 39,799 individuals will be served in FFY 2024, and 41,579 individuals will be served in FFY 2025.

##### **THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM**

In the supported employment program utilizing Title IV Part B funds, DRS estimates that 703 individuals, all in the most significant disability category will be served in FFY 2025. A further 754 will be served using other funds.

#### **EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION.**

Illinois Vocational Rehabilitation is not under an order of selection.

#### **THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR VR SERVICES, BUT ARE NOT RECEIVING SUCH SERVICES DUE TO AN ORDER OF SELECTION**

Illinois Title-IV does not anticipate anyone will be categorized as such in PY 2024 or PY 2025.

4. SECTIONS 101(A)(22) AND 606(B)(4) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT REQUIRE THE VR AGENCY TO DESCRIBE EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY AND ARRANGE, INCLUDING ENTERING INTO COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS, WITH OTHER STATE AGENCIES AND OTHER APPROPRIATE ENTITIES IN ORDER TO PROVIDE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES. THE DESCRIPTION MUST INCLUDE EXTENDED SERVICES, AS APPLICABLE, TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE PROVISION OF EXTENDED SERVICES TO YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH 34 C.F.R. § 363.4(A) AND 34 C.F.R. § 361.5(C)(19)(V).

#### **COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH AGENCIES NOT CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES UNDER THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM**

Describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce development system concerning:

#### **FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS**

#### **INTERAGENCY COOPERATION WITH THE ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

The DRS maintains cooperative agreements and working relationships with a wide variety of state, local, and education entities that provide services to individuals with disabilities. DRS presently has interagency agreements in effect with several other state agencies. DRS has a long-standing agreement with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) regarding the provision of PTS to students with disabilities aged 14 and older. This agreement was renewed in September 2019. The renewed agreement places greater emphasis on the roles of each party in preparing students for the transition to employment, education, and training.

Presently, DRS provides VR services to around 12,890 students with disabilities each year through contracts with 156 school systems. DRS provides VR services to another 1,000 high school students with disabilities outside of the contractual system. In 2018, DRS created the Fast Track Transition program operated through contracts with 20 community providers to provide PTS to potentially eligible students with disabilities. As of the end of end of FY 2023/PY 2022, DRS had served 1,555 students through this contract.

### **INTERAGENCY COOPERATION WITH STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

The DRS also has agreements with state universities and community colleges in Illinois regarding funding for services to students who are VR customers. DRS has contracts and working agreements with around 114 not-for-profit community rehabilitation programs (CRPs), which serve about 3,500 VR customers each year, providing job placement and supported employment services. DRS maintains working relationships with the SRC, as well as the Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living, and has contracts with centers for independent living to provide a variety of rehabilitation services.

### **STATE PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998**

The DRS has a longstanding partnership with the Illinois Assistive Technology Project (IATP), the State's AT grant recipient. IATP provides a variety of services to Illinois citizens with disabilities, including many who are participants in the DRS VR program. Cooperative activities include joint staff training as well as the use of IATP staff for technology consultation on specific VR cases. DRS also works with IATP staff on general issues involving the accessibility of computer systems throughout the State of Illinois (SOI) government. IATP also provides consultation on specific items of assistive technology (AT) and their applicability for VR program purposes.

The DRS has also worked with IATP on innovative approaches to purchasing AT equipment for the benefit of VR program customers. DRS continues to develop its Fast Track Technology Evaluation (FTTE) program. The program is the successor to the Assistive Technology Open-Ended Loan (OEL) program that was funded through ARRA. Similar to the OEL program, FTTE provides assistive technology to customers in a fast and efficient way, which increases the possibilities of a successful outcome.

Any eligible VR customer can participate in the FTTE program. The counselor makes a referral to the Assistive and Information Technology Support (AITS), formerly known as the Rehabilitation Technology unit and a technology specialist schedules an evaluation as soon as possible. Under the program, VR Counselors do not have to obtain bids and issue authorizations for assistive technology purchases. Those activities are managed by the AITS unit.

Customers can keep technology provided through FTTE as long as they are working toward their VR goal or have obtained employment. Examples of assistive technology available through FTTE include, but not limited to are the following: JAWS, ZoomText, Dragon Naturally Speaking,

Kurzweil, OpenBook, Read and Write Gold, ergonomic chair, ergonomic desk, talking graphing/scientific calculator, portable video magnifier, large monitor, laptop, headphones, digital recorder, large key keyboard, and ergonomic mice.

#### PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT BY THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

The DRS does not have formal interagency agreements with Rural Development Programs operated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In PY 2020, DRS intended to reach out to representatives of the Department of Agriculture to initiate a discussion of developing such an agreement. In February 2020, four DRS employment services staff, along with other workforce partners, attended the Rural Affairs Conference to learn more about meeting the unique needs of businesses in rural areas and downstate Illinois. On February 23, 2022, one member of our unit attended the Rural Community and Economic Development Conference.

#### NON-EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH

The DRS does not have specific agreements with non-education agencies serving out-of-school youth with disabilities. Out-of-school youth are served through contracts that DRS has developed with CRP agencies, although the contracts are not targeted at that specific age group. Data for FY 2023/PY 2022 shows that 77.8% percent of individuals served were under age 25, thus meeting the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) definition of youth with disabilities.

#### STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS

The DRS does not presently have formal interagency agreements with State Use programs operated within Illinois. The State Use program in Illinois is coordinated by the Department of Central Management Services (CMS), which awards contracts to State Use providers and coordinates purchases on behalf of State agencies. Executive Order (EO) 2021-26 prevents State agencies from entering contracts with vendors in the State Use program who pay people with disabilities a subminimum wage.

All current and future contracts entered into by the State of Illinois (SOI) with a not-for-profit agency that is qualified to participate in the State Use program following 30 ILCS 500/45-35 shall provide for payment of no less than the applicable local, if higher, or Illinois minimum wage for all employees performing work on the contract, notwithstanding any provision that would permit payment of a lower wage rate. This requirement shall apply to and include employees of any subcontractors performing work on the contract. DRS is working with the Employment and Economic Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities Task Force in their efforts to reduce reliance on subminimum wages for State Use positions. In 2021, the Governor enacted an Executive order for State Use contracts to pay minimum wage.

#### F. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

Sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require all VR agencies to annually conduct a full assessment of their resources and ability to serve all eligible individuals before the start of the Federal fiscal year. In accordance with 34 C.F.R. § 361.29(b), annual estimates must include the following projections:

##### 1. ESTIMATES FOR NEXT FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR—

##### A. VR PROGRAM; AND

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Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under VR Program	Costs of Services using Title I Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
Most Significant Disability	479,452	26,987	\$90,151,860	
Very Significant Disability	205,752	11,581	\$53,059,020	
Significant Disability	49,940	2,811	\$11,143,683	
No Significant Disability	TBD	TBD	N/A	

#### B. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM.

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Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under Supported Employment Program	Costs of Services using Title I and Title VI Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
N/A	738,699	39,799	\$154,357,353	

#### G. ORDER OF SELECTION

1. PURSUANT TO SECTION 101(A)(5) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, THIS DESCRIPTION MUST BE AMENDED WHEN THE VR AGENCY DETERMINES, BASED ON THE ANNUAL ESTIMATES DESCRIBED IN DESCRIPTION (F), THAT VR SERVICES CANNOT BE PROVIDED TO ALL ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE STATE WHO APPLY FOR AND ARE DETERMINED ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES.

\* VR agencies may maintain an order of selection policy and priority of eligible individuals without implementing or continuing to implement an order of selection.

The VR agency is not implementing an order of selection and all eligible individuals will be served.

## 2. FOR VR AGENCIES THAT HAVE DEFINED PRIORITY CATEGORIES DESCRIBE—

### A. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER

DRS does not maintain an order of selection.

B. THE ORDER (PRIORITY CATEGORIES) TO BE FOLLOWED IN SELECTING ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS TO BE PROVIDED VR SERVICES ENSURING THAT INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES ARE SELECTED FOR SERVICES BEFORE ALL OTHER INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES; AND

Illinois VR does not have an order of selection.

If an order is needed again, DRS estimates 39,799 individuals will be served in FFY 2024, and 41,579 individuals will be served in FFY 2025.

### THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

In the supported employment program utilizing Title IV Part B funds, DRS estimates that 703 individuals, all in the *most significant disability* category will be served in FFY 2025. A further 754 will be served using other funds.

### EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION.

In the VR program, DRS estimates that 26,987 individuals in the *Most Significant Disability* category will be served in FFY 2025, along with 11,581 individuals in the *Very Significant Disability* category and 2,811 individuals in the *Significant Disability* category. The Individual with a *Disability* category will be estimated as we gather data on usage and frequency over the next two years.

### THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR VR SERVICES, BUT ARE NOT RECEIVING SUCH SERVICES DUE TO AN ORDER OF SELECTION

Illinois Title-IV does not anticipate anyone will be categorized as such in PY 2024 or PY 2025.

The Disability Statistics Compendium 2023 edition using 2021 data shows a total of 738,699 working-age persons with disabilities or 9.7 percent of the age 18-64 population in Illinois. In addition, an interpolated figure of 31,603 individuals aged 16 and 17 was added to create an overall estimate of 770,302 or roughly 770,300 individuals aged 16 to 64 that could potentially benefit from vocational rehabilitation services.

The 2022 US Census American Community Survey data estimates that 43.9% of individuals 18-64 live with two or more types of disabilities. This should be considered in conjunction with the following breakdowns by disability type as their cumulative total is more than the total reported above. According to the same compendium as above, 136,998 individuals 18-64 reported a vision disability, 130,549 with a hearing disability, 320,585 with a cognitive disability, 316,618 with an ambulatory disability, 122,424 with a self-care disability, and 268,220 with an independent living disability.

C. THE VR AGENCY'S GOALS FOR SERVING INDIVIDUALS IN EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, INCLUDING HOW THE AGENCY WILL ASSIST ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS ASSIGNED TO CLOSED PRIORITY CATEGORIES WITH INFORMATION AND REFERRAL, THE METHOD IN WHICH THE VR AGENCY WILL MANAGE WAITING LISTS, AND THE PROJECTED TIMELINES FOR OPENING

PRIORITY CATEGORIES. NOTE: PRIORITY CATEGORIES ARE CONSIDERED OPEN WHEN ALL INDIVIDUALS IN THE PRIORITY CATEGORY MAY BE SERVED.

The priority of categories to receive VR services under the DRS order of selection policy is consistent with our current analysis: 1. Individuals determined to have the most significant disabilities;

2. Individuals determined to have very significant disabilities;

3. Individuals determined to have a significant disability; and

4. Individuals determined to have a disability.

For PY 2024, all categories will be open to services, unless a determination is made by the DRS Director that circumstances require a change in the categories open to service. The priority categories established under this rule are based solely on the definition of "individual with a significant disability" defined in the Rehabilitation Act (section 7 (21) (A)) and regulations (34CFR361.36(d)(2) and 34CFR361.5(b)(31)).

### **THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER**

The DRS continues to operate under an order of selection since 1979. Illinois last changed its order of selection policy in April 2013. The overall purpose of the policy is to reflect the priorities of the agency and provide for an equitable distribution of resources to individuals with the most significant disabilities. For FF Y2024, DRS projects that all available funds, program income, and carryover, will be expended on individuals in all categories of the order of selection policy.

### **HOW INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES ARE SELECTED FOR SERVICES BEFORE ALL OTHER INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES**

The DRS order of selection policy establishes priority for individuals with a most significant disability. DRS will be able to serve all eligible individuals for the next FFY.

Consistent with longstanding policy, if financial circumstances change, other categories of the order of selection policy will be closed to services until only the most significant category remains open, at which time all new cases will be individuals in that category. It is not anticipated that such financial circumstances will arise as no similar situation has taken place in more than a decade. However, the policy in place is sufficient to ensure that individuals in the most significant disability category will have priority going forward in such an event.

### **3. HAS THE VR AGENCY ELECTED TO SERVE ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS OUTSIDE OF THE ORDER OF SELECTION WHO REQUIRE SPECIFIC SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT?**

DRS for FFY 2024/PY 2024 does not plan to implement an exemption to the order of selection process based on specific service needs in order to retain employment.

### **H. WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS.**

The State plan shall be in effect in all political subdivisions of the State, however, the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (Commissioner) may waive compliance with this requirement in accordance with Section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and the implementing regulations in 34 C.F.R. § 361.26. If the VR agency is requesting a waiver of statewideness or has a previously approved waiver of statewideness, describe the types of services and the local entities providing such services under the waiver of

statewideness and how the agency has complied with the requirements in 34 C.F.R. § 361.26. If the VR agency is not requesting or does not have an approved waiver of statewideness, please indicate “not applicable.”

**Waiver of Statewideness.** The State plan shall be in effect in all political subdivisions of the State, however, the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (Commissioner) may waive compliance with this requirement in accordance with section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and the implementing regulations in 34 CFR 361.26. If the VR agency is requesting a waiver of statewideness or has a previously approved waiver of statewideness, describe the types of services and the local entities providing such services under the waiver of statewideness and how the agency has complied with the requirements in 34 CFR 361.26. If the VR agency is not requesting or does not have an approved waiver of statewideness, please indicate “not applicable.”

#### REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS

When requesting a waiver of the state wideness requirement, the designated state unit must identify the types of services to be provided by the program on a non-statewide basis. The waiver request must also include written assurances that:

#### LOCAL PUBLIC AGENCY WILL PROVIDE THE NON-FEDERAL SHARE OF COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WAIVER REQUEST

The DRS maintains a considerable number of third-party cooperative agreements with other units of government, primarily school districts. These agreements are designed to increase the availability of vocational rehabilitation services to specific populations of people with disabilities. The DRS has a contract with each entity that is consistent with Federal regulations (34CFR361.26) and includes the following provisions: (a) the vocational rehabilitation services to be provided are identified; (b) the local agency assures that non-federal funds are made available to DRS; (c) the local agency assures that DRS approval is required before services are provided; and (d) the local agency assures that all other state plan requirements, including the Order of Selection policy, are applied to persons receiving services through the agreement.

The DRS third party arrangements do not involve transfer of funds from the provider to DRS. Each provider develops an annual program budget which specifies the portion contributed by the provider as well as the portion funded by DRS. The provider submits quarterly financial reports to DRS to document the spending of non-federal funds in support of the program budget. DRS spending is tracked through the state fiscal accounting system. The DRS contract monitors are able to verify both federal and non-federal spending throughout the course of the fiscal year. The following is a list of the third-party cooperative agreements now in place.

#### I. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT.

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act, the VR agency must develop and maintain annually a description (consistent with the purposes of the Rehabilitation Act) of the VR agency’s comprehensive system of personnel development, which shall include a description of the procedures and activities the State VR agency will undertake to ensure it has an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessionals that provides the following:

##### 1. ANALYSIS OF CURRENT PERSONNEL AND PROJECTED PERSONNEL NEEDS INCLUDING—

##### A. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL CURRENTLY NEEDED BY THE VR AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY; AND



**B. THE NUMBER AND TYPE OF PERSONNEL THAT ARE EMPLOYED BY THE VR AGENCY IN THE PROVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES, INCLUDING RATIOS OF QUALIFIED VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELORS TO CLIENTS;**

**C. PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY, WHO WILL BE NEEDED BY THE VR AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES IN 5 YEARS BASED ON PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED, INCLUDING INDIVIDUALS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL EXPECTED TO RETIRE OR LEAVE THE FIELD, AND OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS.**

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Personnel Category	No. of Personnel Employed	No. of Personnel Currently Needed	Projected No. of Personnel Needed in 5 Years
VR Counselors	176	29	205
Rehabilitation and Mobility Instructors	17	4	21
Assistant Bureau Chiefs	6	1	7
Case Rehabilitation Coordinator	115	19	134
Administrative Assistants	22	8	30
Field Office Supervisors	37	8	45
Bureau Chief- Blind Services	1	0	1
Business Enterprise Program	15	5	20
Central Office/Directors/Managerial and Administrative Support	81	16	75

**D. RATIO OF QUALIFIED VR COUNSELORS TO CLIENTS:**

Data for PY 2022 show a total of 29,506 active cases in the DRS VR program. The ration is 1:168. This gives an average of 168 individuals per filled Rehabilitation Counselor position. The average of cases per counselor is 144. Specialty counselor positions have a slightly higher vacancy rate, but one that still allows DRS to provide services to select populations. DRS has staff positions for counselors certified to communicate in sign language, as well as Spanish-speaking counselor positions.

**E. PROJECTED NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED IN 5 YEARS:**

TBD. Projected number is not available at this time.

**2. DATA AND INFORMATION ON PERSONNEL PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT, RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION, AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:**

A. A LIST OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE THAT ARE PREPARING VR PROFESSIONALS, BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED AT EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS, BROKEN DOWN BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; AND THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED DURING THE PRIOR YEAR FROM EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS WITH CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, OR WITH THE CREDENTIALS FOR CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, BROKEN DOWN BY THE PERSONNEL CATEGORY FOR WHICH THEY HAVE RECEIVED, OR HAVE THE CREDENTIALS TO RECEIVE, CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE.

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Institute of Higher Education	Type of Program	No. of Students Enrolled	No. of Prior Year Graduates
Adler University, Chicago	Master of Arts in Counseling	16	10
Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago	Master's degree in Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling	14	10
Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago	Master of Science degree in Rehabilitation Counseling	11	2
Northern Illinois University, DeKalb	Master of Science degree in Rehabilitation Counseling	18	11
Southern Illinois University, Carbondale	Master of Science degree in Rehabilitation Counseling	14	7

B. THE VR AGENCY'S PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL, WHICH ADDRESSES THE CURRENT AND PROJECTED NEEDS FOR QUALIFIED PERSONNEL; AND THE COORDINATION AND FACILITATION OF EFFORTS BETWEEN THE VR AGENCY AND INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS TO RECRUIT, PREPARE, AND RETAIN PERSONNEL WHO ARE QUALIFIED, INCLUDING PERSONNEL FROM MINORITY BACKGROUNDS AND PERSONNEL WHO ARE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

The DRS' establishment of the Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee position allows the division to hire individuals for the trainee title before they complete all requirements for a master's degree. This creates a paid internship for counselor trainees.

The DRS has established with the IDHS personnel unit a plan to publicize available positions in DRS. One strategy includes attending numerous job fairs. DRS is focused on recruiting minority students and students with disabilities. The State of Illinois (SOI) has recruiting policies that assist minority individuals in obtaining employment in key positions and encourage training

and education for current employees. State policy also encourages the hiring of individuals with disabilities, which is utilized by DRS to the greatest extent possible. DRS worked with the State personnel agency to create a position dedicated to monitoring and assisting with the hiring of persons with disabilities in-State jobs. In addition to recruitment, DRS works actively to promote the retention of individuals with disabilities and individuals from minority backgrounds.

These efforts include those sponsored by IDHS, of which DRS is a part, as well as through other State government organizations and membership associations. The purpose of these activities is to facilitate the training and professional development of staff from these populations, to promote understanding of the need for a diverse workforce, and to encourage the participation of staff in a variety of cooperative efforts aimed at making contributions to the organization.

The strategies employed include:

- *The Upward Mobility program.* Which is designed to further the careers of State employees such as those from minority backgrounds as well as individuals with disabilities. This program provides support for a variety of training and educational opportunities for staff during their employment with the State.
- *The Interagency Committee on Employees with Disabilities (ICED).* ICED engages State employees with disabilities in activities related to promoting the hiring and career advancement of people with disabilities. DRS administration is closely involved in the operations of the ICED.
- *The Illinois Association of Minorities in Government (IAMG).* A membership organization promoting State employment for individuals from minority backgrounds, which is attended by DRS staff.
- *The Illinois Association of Hispanic State Employees (IAHSE).* IAHSE holds an annual conference, which focuses on State employees from Hispanic/Latino backgrounds. DRS supports staff attendance at this conference each year. DRS believes that its sponsorship of attendance at these conferences and encouragement of membership in these organizations is a positive step in promoting a diverse workforce and a means of ensuring a high rate of job retention among its employees with disabilities and employees from minority backgrounds.
- *Internships.* DRS has informal agreements with Rehabilitation Counselor training programs in the State to provide internship and practicum placement options for graduate students. Internships are encouraged whenever possible, both to support the universities and students as well as to provide a job preview to students interested in working for DRS, when they complete their training.

The DRS uses several strategies to recruit, hire, and retain rehabilitation personnel. Key elements are promotion and publicizing the VR program; locating job candidates; monitoring the State hiring process; and identifying methods to encourage retention of staff. DRS works with the IDHS personnel unit to conduct outreach activities to individuals who may be interested in State employment. IDHS maintains a regular schedule of job fairs, community events, and recruitment initiatives that include a focus on hiring minority individuals.

The DRS offers internship and practicum opportunities in its field offices to graduate students from the rehabilitation education programs. These are arranged with the university faculty and DRS administrators as needed. DRS also makes presentations to undergraduate students to

expose them to the field of VR and provide them with information on graduate rehabilitation education programs. DRS has an ongoing team composed of staff and administrators that focuses on issues related to the hiring and retention of qualified staff. This group attempts to identify strategies that motivate staff to continue their employment, including rewards and recognition for high-level performance.

C. DESCRIPTION OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND ACTIVITIES THAT ENSURE ALL PERSONNEL EMPLOYED BY THE VR AGENCY RECEIVE APPROPRIATE AND ADEQUATE TRAINING AND CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS:

I. PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO ASSESSMENT, VOCATIONAL COUNSELING, JOB PLACEMENT, AND REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING TRAINING IMPLEMENTED IN COORDINATION WITH ENTITIES CARRYING OUT STATE PROGRAMS UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998; AND

II. PROCEDURES FOR THE ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION OF SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE FROM RESEARCH AND OTHER SOURCES TO VR AGENCY PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS AND FOR PROVIDING TRAINING REGARDING THE AMENDMENTS TO THE REHABILITATION ACT MADE BY THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT.

**PROCEDURES FOR THE ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION OF SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE FROM RESEARCH AND OTHER SOURCES TO DESIGNATED STATE UNIT PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS**

*Dissemination of library research materials to staff.* DRS continues to develop additional research resources and has initiated relationships with State universities. The staff development section operates a small library with books and video materials available on numerous topics related to disability and rehabilitation counseling. These materials are distributed to field staff upon request. The library adds new materials relevant to assisting DRS staff in understand the scope of their job as they work with diverse customers. The titles of materials obtained by the library include the following: the Disability Handbook; Ex-Offenders Reentry guide; Customer Service Counts; and Conflicts in the Workplace: Sources and Solutions.

*Employee access to intranet.* DRS makes use of its intranet system to provide linkages to research sources and other new information relating to the field of rehabilitation. DRS supports staff participation in disability-related conferences within the State so that staff can learn about new developments in the rehabilitation field including presentations on research from university professionals as well as rehabilitation practitioners. In addition, key categories of staff such as rehabilitation counselors for the deaf and mental health specialist counselors, participate in regional and Statewide groups that share current research relevant to their fields of study. The DRS initiative on Individual Placement and Support (IPS) services for persons with mental illness involves sharing research findings in a structured way with staff.

As noted above, a major emphasis in DRS has been the effort to obtain up-to-date interactive technology to facilitate training events and limit the time and expense associated with traveling to training events. DRS has made use of a Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) quality grant to purchase video equipment; laptop computers; and microphones to establish the capability for a two-way interactive video in all offices across the State. DRS has also worked with contractors to develop online training modules in key areas of VR casework. Counselors are able to take training on key topics and improve their knowledge of important concepts directly from their office computers.

*Webinars and video trainings.* DRS has also implemented standard webinar training events with visual presentation of materials along with spoken narration. Real-time captioning is available as needed as an accommodation for webinar users. The staff is trained can interact with the presenter by responding to questions ("polling") and by texting questions. All webinar training events are followed up with an online participant survey that provides feedback on the training. Staff response to webinar technology for training has been very positive. DRS also started using YouTube videos to provide instructions on VR rules and policies.

3. DESCRIPTION OF VR AGENCY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF PERSONNEL STANDARDS CONSISTENT WITH SECTION 101(A)(7)(B) TO ENSURE THAT VR AGENCY PROFESSIONAL AND PARAPROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL ARE ADEQUATELY TRAINED AND PREPARED, INCLUDING—

A. STANDARDS THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH ANY NATIONAL OR STATE-APPROVED OR -RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATION, LICENSING, REGISTRATION, OR OTHER COMPARABLE REQUIREMENTS THAT APPLY TO THE PROFESSION OR DISCIPLINE IN WHICH SUCH PERSONNEL ARE PROVIDING VR SERVICES; AND

B. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(7)(B)(II) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, TO ENSURE THAT THE PERSONNEL HAVE A 21ST CENTURY UNDERSTANDING OF THE EVOLVING LABOR FORCE AND THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

**A SYSTEM OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT FOR PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS WITHIN THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO ASSESSMENT, VOCATIONAL COUNSELING, JOB PLACEMENT, AND REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING TRAINING IMPLEMENTED IN COORDINATION WITH ENTITIES CARRYING OUT STATE PROGRAMS UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998**

The DRS has established a system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals, focusing on assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology. The Staff Development Section (SDS) oversees training needs, development, implementation, coordination, monitoring, and evaluation. Training courses provided include job placement, case progression, and degree and non-degree case scenarios. DRS also conducts surveys to identify training needs and preferences, with a focus on addressing burnout, stress management, and other VR-related topics.

All DRS staff are required to complete a three-day new employee orientation training course, emphasizing counseling and guidance skills, assessment, and job placement. Training in rehabilitation technology is available, with specialists providing onsite consultation. DRS collaborates with external partners, including the Illinois Assistive Technology Program (IATP) and the University of Illinois at Chicago, to promote understanding and access to rehabilitation technology resources.

4. METHOD(S) THE VR AGENCY USES TO ENSURE THAT PERSONNEL ARE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE IN APPROPRIATE MODES OF COMMUNICATION WITH OR IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGE OF APPLICANTS OR ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE LIMITED ENGLISH SPEAKING ABILITY.

Describe how the designated State unit has personnel or obtains the services of other individuals who can communicate in appropriate modes of communication with or in the first language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability.

*Communication with Diverse Populations.* DRS has added the capability to communicate via virtual remote platforms and maintains rehabilitation counseling staff with expertise in communicating with diverse populations. DRS has 25 Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCDs) positions available for customers throughout the State. These individuals are fluent in sign language and conversant with deaf culture and provide the full range of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals who are deaf.

The Bureau of Customer & Community Blind Services employs Rehabilitation Counselors and 17 Rehabilitation Instructors who are professionally qualified to provide rehabilitation services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired. DRS strongly encourages the use of Braille as part of training for individuals who are blind.

In addition, Rehabilitation Counselors and Rehabilitation Case Coordinators are employed who are qualified to communicate with individuals whose primary language is Spanish. Employees are tested to qualify for bilingual positions. DRS also works with individuals whose primary language is one other than English, Spanish, or American sign language. While the number of such individuals is relatively small, it is equally essential to be able to communicate effectively with them about their rehabilitation needs. IDHS maintains a computerized resource directory, which includes information on translation services for a variety of languages, including Polish, Vietnamese, and Arabic among others. DRS counselors can link with these resources to provide translation services.

**5. AS APPROPRIATE, DESCRIBE THE PROCEDURES AND ACTIVITIES TO COORDINATE THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT WITH PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT.**

The DRS maintains an administrative liaison position with the State Board to facilitate communication about transition issues, including available training options. Also, DRS has staff who serve on the Education of Students with Disabilities Advisory Committee. DRS staff provide services annually to thousands of young people with disabilities, most of whom receive services under the IDEA.

Approximately, 9958 young people participated in STEP in 2020, which provides work experience during the high school years. DRS staff who work with high school students participate in training offered by the ISBE and its transition annual conference. Approximately, 339 young people participated in the non-STEP transition in 2020. Meaning, they had an open case with DRS but were not currently participating in the program.

DRS staff are closely involved in the Statewide network of TPCs, which consist of rehabilitation and education professionals, as well as employers and school administrators. The purpose of the TPCs is to facilitate the transition from school to work and to identify local issues that affect transition. DRS staff are involved with the schools in their communities and frequently attend training events sponsored by schools.

**J. COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS.**

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(11)(D) of the Rehabilitation Act—

**1. DESCRIBE PLANS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATION BETWEEN THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATION OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PUBLIC EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, THAT ARE DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF THE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM THE RECEIPT OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES IN SCHOOL TO THE RECEIPT OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES.**

The DRS identifies and addresses the needs of students and youth with disabilities through multiple means. DRS believes it is capable of meeting the essential needs of students with disabilities through the ongoing expansion of its existing program options.

The DRS has nearly executed an Interagency Agreement with the ISBE. In the most recent State fiscal year, DRS served nearly 12,000 students with disabilities. ISBE and DRS will collaboratively provide training and information sessions. The draft agreement is based upon the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act, 5 ILCS 220/1, which States that the two agencies must collaborate. The purpose is to promote the delivery of Vocational Rehabilitation services, including PTS to students with disabilities. The partnership will focus on service provision, roles and responsibilities of each entity, and collaboration planning between the two agencies.

The DRS was awarded the Pathways to Partnership grant to fund a five-year project to pilot, refine, and implement programs to improve transition outcomes, competitive integrated employment (CIE), and independent living outcomes for students with disabilities ages 10- 24 across the State. The program will begin transition support as early as age 10 and follow students through school, providing them with an age-appropriate curriculum implemented by the Centers for Independent Living in Illinois. The model will improve postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities, particularly those students who are people of color.

The proposed innovative pre-ETS model program will employ a comprehensive system of integrated resources, training, technical assistance, and supports utilizing coordinated expertise from all four partners that will focus on the following three major domain areas: 1) Pre-ETS to CIE; 2) independent living; and 3) professional. The project will also work with high-demand employers and other community and State agencies to maximize the implementation of the Statewide model and build Statewide capacity and partnerships to support CIE and independent living for Illinois students with disabilities.

The Illinois Center for Transition and Work (ICTW) at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign is a Statewide training and technical assistance center specifically focused on transition from school to work for students with disabilities who have extensive support needs (i.e., intellectual disability, autism, multiple disabilities). The ICTW is funded through a grant from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). The Transition School to Work Study Group examined how DRS and Special Education teachers across the State can work more collaboratively regarding the transition from school to work.

The group developed a resource that clearly outlines each party's roles and responsibilities; the ICTW Transition Guide. The Guide provides information and links to resources surrounding transition issues, including an overview of the transition process and appropriate timelines; a description of the IEP and its development; laws that impact transition; the Prioritization of Urgency of Need for Service (PUNS) list and access to Medicaid waiver services for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities; and an exhaustive list of related resources at the local, state, and national level. The Guide is primarily an online resource available to anyone (i.e., parents, students, school, DRS office staff, etc.).

The DRS continues to meet four times a year with the STEP Advisory Council, a group representing school districts contracted by DRS to provide PTS through the STEP program. This group helps identify issues and concerns about transition services as they are experienced at the local level. DRS believes that this mechanism is very important for managing the program and gaining an understanding of ongoing needs.

**2. DESCRIBE THE CURRENT STATUS AND SCOPE OF THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE VR AGENCY AND THE STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY. CONSISTENT WITH THE**

REQUIREMENTS OF THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT PURSUANT TO 34 C.F.R. § 361.22(B), PROVIDE, AT A MINIMUM, THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ABOUT THE AGREEMENT:

- A. CONSULTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, WHICH MAY BE PROVIDED USING ALTERNATIVE MEANS FOR MEETING PARTICIPATION (SUCH AS VIDEO CONFERENCES AND CONFERENCE CALLS), TO ASSIST EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES IN PLANNING FOR THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO POST-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES AND OTHER VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES;
- B. TRANSITION PLANNING BY PERSONNEL OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCY PERSONNEL FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES THAT FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS (IEPS) UNDER SECTION 614(D) OF THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT;
- C. THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, OF EACH AGENCY, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR DETERMINING STATE LEAD AGENCIES AND QUALIFIED PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSITION SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES;
- D. PROCEDURES FOR OUTREACH TO AND IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO NEED TRANSITION SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES. OUTREACH TO THESE STUDENTS SHOULD OCCUR AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE DURING THE TRANSITION PLANNING PROCESS AND MUST INCLUDE, AT A MINIMUM, A DESCRIPTION OF THE PURPOSE OF THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM, ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS, APPLICATION PROCEDURES, AND SCOPE OF SERVICES THAT MAY BE PROVIDED TO ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS;
- E. COORDINATION NECESSARY TO SATISFY DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS SET FORTH IN 34 C.F.R. PART 397 REGARDING STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE SEEKING SUBMINIMUM WAGE EMPLOYMENT; AND
- F. ASSURANCE THAT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH 34 C.F.R. § 397.31, NEITHER THE SEA NOR THE LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY WILL ENTER INTO A CONTRACT OR OTHER ARRANGEMENT WITH AN ENTITY, AS DEFINED IN 34 C.F.R. § 397.5(D), FOR THE PURPOSE OF OPERATING A PROGRAM UNDER WHICH YOUTH WITH A DISABILITY IS ENGAGED IN WORK COMPENSATED AT A SUBMINIMUM WAGE.

COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

**SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT AND INTEGRATION EFFORTS**

The DRS works with customers, employers, and staff to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities to facilitate the provision of services.

*The Workforce Development Unit.* In 2019, DRS established a workforce development unit to focus on the provision of services to businesses in Illinois. This unit employs staff dedicated to business services, including the newly created title of business services consultant as well as staff in the titles benefit specialist and program specialist. Staff have participated in training activities utilizing national and local experts, as well as through structured online training. Members of the team will work in partnership with business services teams organized in each of the 22 Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIA). The workforce development unit provides



information to employers on key issues relating to hiring people with disabilities, reasonable accommodations, hiring incentives, and the benefits of VR services. Workforce development staff also communicate with Rehabilitation Counselors about employment opportunities they identify through contacts with employers and business groups.

*The Local Workforce Board.* The DRS has an Office Supervisor or a Manager as a member of each local workforce board, participating in regular meetings and developing an annual memorandum of understanding (MOU) and cost-sharing budget. This ongoing role also provides a key opportunity for interactive communication with employers as well as other workforce business representatives. Local board participation helps build relationships within the area and enables the sharing of information on employment opportunities as well as career exploration and work-based learning opportunities at the local level. DRS representatives also participate in the regional planning process related to WIOA implementation. This process is based on 10 economic development regions (EDRs) around the State. Within each region, extensive data analysis has been conducted to identify employment sectors that are most likely to account for job growth and expansion in the next five years.

*Business Engagement Database.* The DRS continues to maintain a business engagement database that was developed in 2017 as part of the Job Driven Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center project. While this has involved a small number of staff to date, the system has documented continued growth in employer contacts, ranging from providing basic information to facilitating job interviews for candidates. Since the initiation of the system, DRS has documented successful employment outcomes at targeted businesses. The database is now being used by the workforce development unit staff and it is expected that both hires and successful closures will continue to increase.

*WIOA Summit Conferences.* The DRS staff have been active in planning and implementing a series of Statewide WIOA Summit conferences, as part of a coordination team representing core WIOA partner agencies. The purpose of the summit is to bring together workforce partners and employers; present information on workforce policies; highlight innovative practices; and demonstrate cooperative efforts around the State. The first Statewide conference in the nation (according to WINTAC) focused on service integration. Sessions include presentations on collaboration with business partners, economic development, and sector partnerships, as well as maximizing local collaboration.

*The National Employment Team (NET).* DRS continues to be an active participant in the National Employment Team (The NET), established by the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). The purpose of the NET is to provide a coordinated approach by State VR agencies when dealing with employers that have a national or multi-state presence. Each State VR agency has a designated point of contact for communicating with NET employers. This helps ensure consistent communication about VR services involving the employer, as well as improving communication among State VR agencies where several States are working with the same employer. From the DRS' point of view, the NET has been a very positive experience when working with large employers, which typically offer full-time employment at higher-than-average wages.

#### K. COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(11)(E) of the Rehabilitation Act, describe how the VR agency will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of VR

services; and transition services for youth and students with disabilities, including pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities.

The workforce development unit is still considered relatively, newly developed within DRS but the members of the Team all had previous State Employment with other agencies. It should also be noted at this time that the workforce development unit realigned under the umbrella of the Bureau of Engagement and Support Services (BESS). BESS is one of six bureaus within DRS. The newly formed bureau incorporated targeted populations (e.g., deaf and blind services; Latine services). The DRS staff members can take their previous experiences and build on them through training opportunities offered through DRS and participation in learning modules that cover all aspects of working with persons with disabilities and creating partnerships with businesses to hire persons with disabilities for their open positions.

Before COVID-19, many businesses within the State of Illinois were struggling to find qualified candidates to fill their open job positions and the Business Services Consultants and Employee Resource Specialists are bridging that gap between the customer and the business to obtain successful competitive integrated employment opportunities. Each member of the team has been assigned as a contact between community colleges and four-year public universities based on the geographical boundaries they serve. Each team is also responsible for reaching out to community organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Clubs, Centers for Independent Living, Veteran's Group, and similar groups to share information about our agency and how we can assist businesses within the community with their hiring needs. Team members also work with the Department of Economic Development representatives throughout the State of Illinois. Team members recently participated in a training conducted by the Illinois Department of Economic Security to learn more about accessing businesses and how to refer DRS candidates to openings within these businesses.

As the team develops, new connections and explorations are being developed. For example, the unit took part in a Statewide initiative with the Department of Corrections (DOC) to start working with returning citizens sooner. Unit members participated in the Summits offered throughout the State to share the services of our agency. Returning citizens with disabilities will also have an opportunity to open up cases with DRS offices to help them readjust to civilian life and employment. Another opportunity is for unit members to take the lead on reverse job fairs, a method that has gained increasing attention in recent years. Representatives of our agency attended the Rural Affairs Conference to learn more about meeting the unique needs of businesses in rural areas and downstate Illinois. Resources to assist these businesses were also shared and passed along to business customers served by our unit.

#### L. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(11)(C) and (K), describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce development system to develop opportunities for community-based employment in integrated settings, to the greatest extent practicable for the following:

##### 1. STATE PROGRAMS (DESIGNATE LEAD AGENCY(IES) AND IMPLEMENTING ENTITY(IES)) CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

The DRS has a longstanding partnership with the Illinois Assistive Technology Project (IATP), the State's AT grant recipient. IATP provides a variety of services to Illinois citizens with disabilities, including many who are participants in the DRS VR program. Cooperative activities include joint staff training as well as the use of IATP staff for technology consultation on specific

VR cases. DRS also works with IATP staff on general issues involving the accessibility of computer systems throughout the State of Illinois (SOI) government. IATP also provides consultation on specific items of assistive technology (AT) and their applicability for VR program purposes.

The DRS has also worked with IATP on innovative approaches to purchasing AT equipment for the benefit of VR program customers. DRS continues to develop its Fast Track Technology Evaluation (FTTE) program. The program is the successor to the Assistive Technology Open-Ended Loan (OEL) program that was funded through ARRA. Similar to the OEL program, FTTE provides assistive technology to customers in a fast and efficient way, which increases the possibilities of a successful outcome.

Any eligible VR customer can participate in the FTTE program. The counselor makes a referral to the Assistive and Information Technology Support (AITS), formerly known as the Rehabilitation Technology unit and a technology specialist schedules an evaluation as soon as possible. Under the program, VR Counselors do not have to obtain bids and issue authorizations for assistive technology purchases. Those activities are managed by the AITS unit.

Customers can keep technology provided through FTTE as long as they are working toward their VR goal or have obtained employment. Examples of assistive technology available through FTTE include, but not limited to are the following: JAWS, ZoomText, Dragon Naturally Speaking, Kurzweil, OpenBook, Read and Write Gold, ergonomic chair, ergonomic desk, talking graphing/scientific calculator, portable video magnifier, large monitor, laptop, headphones, digital recorder, large key keyboard, and ergonomic mice.

## 2. PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT BY THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;

**The DRS does not have formal interagency agreements with Rural Development Programs operated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In PY 2020, DRS intended to initiate a discussion with representatives of the Department of Agriculture. In February 2020, four DRS employment services staff, along with other workforce partners, attended the Rural Affairs Conference to learn more about meeting the unique needs of businesses in rural areas and downstate Illinois. On February 23, 2022, one member of our unit attended the Rural Community and Economic Development Conference.**

## 3. NON-EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH;

The DRS does not have specific agreements with non-education agencies serving out-of-school youth with disabilities. Out-of-school youth are served through contracts that DRS has developed with CRP agencies, although the contracts are not targeted at that specific age group. Data for FY 2023/PY 2022 shows that 77.8% percent of individuals served were under age 25, thus meeting the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) definition of youth with disabilities. The Pathways DIF seeks to have Centers for Independent Living to connect with the out-of-school youth.

## 4. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS;

The DRS does not presently have formal interagency agreements with State Use programs operated within Illinois. The State Use program in Illinois is coordinated by the Department of Central Management Services (CMS), which awards contracts to State Use providers and coordinates purchases on behalf of State agencies. Executive Order (EO) 2021-26 prevents State agencies from entering contracts with vendors in the State Use program who pay people with disabilities a subminimum wage.

All current and future contracts entered into by the SOI with a not-for-profit agency that is qualified to participate in the State Use program in accordance with 30 ILCS 500/45-35 shall provide for payment of no less than the applicable local, if higher, or Illinois minimum wage for all employees performing work on the contract, notwithstanding any provision that would permit payment of a lower wage rate. This requirement shall apply to and include employees of any subcontractors performing work on the contract. DRS is working with the Employment and Economic Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities Task Force in their efforts to reduce reliance on subminimum wages for State Use positions. In 2021, the Governor enacted an Executive order for State Use contracts to pay minimum wage.

5. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR ADMINISTERING THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN UNDER TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT (42 U.S.C. 1396 ET SEQ.);

In 2018, the IDHS-DRS, completed a written agreement with the Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS), the State Medicaid agency. The agreement ensures that IDHS and HFS will work cooperatively to promote the employment of people with disabilities and operate various Medicaid waiver programs efficiently. HFS and DRS representatives serve on the Employment and Economic Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities Task Force (EEOPD).

The EEOPD was established in 2009 via Legislation (PA 96-368). It includes 10 Designated State Agencies: Governor's Office, Education (ISBE, CCO, IBHE), DCEO, Health and Human Services, Divisions of: Vocational Rehabilitation, Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health, DD Council, IDHS, Veterans Affairs. EEOPD has several priorities including: Reform of existing employment systems via implementation of Employment First, addressing subminimum wage, housing, and transportation.

EEOPD is the key entity for studying and making policy recommendations that will promote Employment First, a national systems-change framework centered on the employment of persons with disabilities.

6. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES;

The DDD and DRS continue a collaborative relationship in serving Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) to ensure the accessibility to, and provision of, high quality employment services and supports through an intra-agency agreement, or MOU. Individuals with I/DD experience unemployment or under employment at a rate much higher than that of the non-disabled population. Through the mutual, yet distinctive, efforts of DDD, DRS and all involved stakeholders, support of Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) as the first and preferred outcome of publicly funded services will be increased. This collaboration, established in 2019, includes recognition of each Divisions unique programs, policies, rules, laws, and other guidance.

As outline in the agreement, DDD and DRS commit to meeting no less than semi-annually to discuss the MOU including operations, progress, and status of the collaboration. These meetings will include discussions of need and actionable items related to the Divisions' shared constituent base. DDD and DRS commit to the facilitation of semi-annual joint training efforts, designed to ensure mutual, comprehensive, education and understanding of policies, laws, and regulations relevant to the Divisions' collaborative focus and the implementation of a common Administrative Directive.

*Customized Employment.* Customized Employment for Individuals with Disabilities Act was enacted effective January 1, 2020. The Act required that IDHS, through its DRS and in

collaboration with the DDD, established a 5-year Customized Employment (CE) Pilot Program that serves a minimum of 25 individuals by the second year of the Pilot Program.

The CE Pilot Program has been in effect since 1/1/2020. The process has led to the implementation of a CE contract that took effect 7/1/2020 to serve at least 25 new CE individuals over the course of the five-year pilot period. The results through 1/1/2023 show a total of 89 individuals served with 52 of those individuals obtaining competitive integrated employment. Budgeted cost per customer engaged in competitive employment services is \$13,450 for completion of all nine phases.

The DRS is committed to completing the five-year pilot program, with the intent of evaluating efficacy at the end of the pilot to determine Statewide, long-term implementation. The provision of customized employment takes many months, if not over a year. Discovery with the customer, job development, and then 45 weeks of support on the job, are integral to customer success and the success of the program, yet do not lead to rapid outcomes. The DRS will continue to track data on impact and outcomes so that trends, successes, and course corrections can be evaluated and implemented to strengthen Customized Employment and supported employment services within DRS.

#### **7. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES; AND**

The State agency for Mental Health Services is the Division of Mental Health (DMH). It is also a Division of IDHS similar to DRS and DDD. In late 2018, DMH and DRS updated a written agreement to coordinate services relating to the vocational needs of individuals with a serious mental illness. The two agencies have enjoyed an effective partnership for several years. This partnership is centered on provision of VR through the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) service model. DRS and DMH have worked with the IPS Employment Center (formerly the Psychiatric Research Center) to implement a fidelity-based service model that has proven to be very effective in assisting individuals with serious mental illness in becoming employed.

The DRS and DMH have a cooperative funding model in which DMH utilizes Medicaid funding to the greatest extent possible and DRS provides VR funds to support the vocational aspects of the IPS model. DRS has worked with DMH to expand IPS services to the youth population and intends to continue expansion to this group through additional pilot projects as funding becomes available. In addition, both agencies intend to participate in evaluation projects that document the effectiveness of IPS as an evidence-based practice. Research suggests that implementation of IPS principles in VR service provision can be of benefit to a wider range of individuals.

#### **8. OTHER FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS OUTSIDE THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM.**

### **INTERAGENCY COOPERATION WITH THE ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

The DRS maintains cooperative agreements and working relationships with a wide variety of state, local, and education entities that provide services to individuals with disabilities. DRS presently has interagency agreements in effect with several other state agencies. DRS has a long-standing agreement with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) regarding the provision of PTS to students with disabilities age 14 and older. This agreement was renewed in September 2019. The renewed agreement places greater emphasis on the roles of each party in preparing students for the transition to employment, education, and training.

Presently, DRS provides VR services to around 12,890 students with disabilities each year through contracts with 156 school systems. DRS provides VR services to another 1,000 high

school students with disabilities outside of the contractual system. In 2018, DRS created the Fast Track Transition program operated through contracts with 20 community providers to provide PTS to potentially eligible students with disabilities. As of the end of end of FY 2023/PY 2022, DRS had served 1,555 students through this contract.

## **INTERAGENCY COOPERATION WITH STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

The DRS also has agreements with state universities and community colleges in Illinois regarding funding for services to students who are VR customers. DRS has contracts and working agreements with around 114 not-for-profit community rehabilitation programs (CRPs), which serve about 3,500 VR customers each year, providing job placement and supported employment services. DRS maintains working relationships with the SRC, as well as the Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living, and has contracts with centers for independent living to provide a variety of rehabilitation services.

## **9. OTHER PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.**

### **COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS**

Describe the manner in which the designated State agency establishes cooperative agreements with private non-profit VR service providers.

The DRS has contractual agreements with non-profit rehabilitation providers to provide services to VR customers. DRS works with the Facilities Advisory Council consisting of provider representatives to discuss issues and identify service needs in an ongoing manner. DRS conducts ongoing reviews of the effectiveness of service contracts with community agencies as part of a larger state-level effort to establish greater consistency in human service contracting. DRS contracts specify the responsibilities of the service providing agency, the performance basis of the contract, and the rates to be paid to the provider.

The DRS has contracts with around 118 not-for-profit community rehabilitation programs, which serve about 5,000 VR customers each year, providing job placement and supported employment services. DRS maintains working relationships with the Statewide Independent Living Council, as well as the Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living. DRS also has contracts with Centers for Independent Living to provide a variety of rehabilitation services, including pre-employment transition services under the Fast Track Transition program described elsewhere in this plan.

The DRS develops community service contracts based on an assessment of need at the local level. Counselors and office supervisors work with regional administrators to identify specific areas of need and potential provider agencies qualified to provide services. To the extent possible, DRS has utilized one-time funding to establish new service contracts with providers. Illinois emphasizes performance-based or outcome-based funding for human services programs and this logic is applied to all new providers.

## **ASSURANCES**

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner, that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances:

**The VR agency must select the “Edit” button to review and agree to the VR State plan Assurances.**

The State Plan must include
1. Public Comment on Policies and Procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.
2. Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement: The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a Unified State plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.
3. Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan: The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:
3.a. the establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.b. either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.c. consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.d. the financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3).
3.e. as applicable, the local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.f. as applicable, the shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.g. statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.h. the requirements for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.i. all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.j. the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.k. the compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by

The State Plan must include
sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.l. the reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities as set forth in section 101(a)(18)(A).
3.m. the submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services: The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:
4.a. comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(E) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.b. impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.c. provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services or, if implementing an order of selection, in accordance with criteria established by the State for the order of selection as set out in section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.d. determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.e. comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.f. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act
4.g. provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.h. comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by sections 101(a)(14) and 511 of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.i. meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs.
4.j. With respect to students with disabilities, the State,
4.j.i. has developed and will implement,
4.j.i.A. strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and
4.j.i.B. strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and



The State Plan must include
expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and
4.j.ii. has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15), 101(a)(25) and 113).
4.j.iii. shall reserve not less than 15 percent of the allocated funds for the provision of pre-employment transition services; such funds shall not be used to pay for the administrative costs of providing pre-employment transition services.
5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement to the State plan:
5.a. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act.
5.b. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.
6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program (Title VI):
6.a. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(H) and (I) of the Rehabilitation Act.
6.b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act.
7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:
7.a. The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act.
7.b. The designated State agency assures that the comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act an individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with

The State Plan must include
title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(7)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act.

Do you attest that these assurances will be met?

Yes

#### VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL) CERTIFICATIONS

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

1. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE,) IS AUTHORIZED TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 (REHABILITATION ACT), AS AMENDED BY TITLE IV OF WIOA[1], AND ITS STATE PLAN SUPPLEMENT UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT;

[1] Public Law 113-128.

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE

#### ***Rehabilitation Services, a Division of the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS-DRS)***

2. IN THE EVENT THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY IS NOT PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH VOCATIONAL AND OTHER REHABILITATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY MUST INCLUDE A DESIGNATED STATE UNIT FOR THE VR PROGRAM (SECTION 101(A)(2)(B)(II) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT). AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES, THE (DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WHEN THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY HAS A DESIGNATED STATE UNIT)[2] AGREES TO OPERATE AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[3], THE REHABILITATION ACT, 34 CFR 361.13(B) AND (C), AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[4], POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE TO STATES UNDER SECTION 111(A) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

[2] All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

[3] No funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[4] Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76, 77, 79, 81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3474; and the State VR Services program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 361.

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY

#### ***Illinois Department of Human Services - Division of Rehabilitation Services***

3. AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY, OR THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WHEN THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY HAS A DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AGREES TO OPERATE AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[5], THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[6], POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER TITLE VI ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

[5] No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supported employment supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[6] Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 4, as well as Supported Employment program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 363.

4. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT OR, IF NOT APPLICABLE, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO PERFORM THE FUNCTIONS OF THE STATE REGARDING THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH 34 CFR 361.13(B) AND (C);

5. THE STATE LEGALLY MAY CARRY OUT EACH PROVISION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

6. ALL PROVISIONS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT ARE CONSISTENT WITH STATE LAW.

7. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO RECEIVE, HOLD, AND DISBURSE FEDERAL FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT;

ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Rahnee Patrick, IDHS-DRS Division Director

8. THE (ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND THE SUPPLEMENT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Division Director, IDHS-DRS

9. THE AGENCY THAT SUBMITS THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT HAS ADOPTED OR OTHERWISE FORMALLY APPROVED THE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

#### FOOTNOTES

[1] Public Law 113-128.

[2] All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

[3] No funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[4] Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76, 77, 79, 81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3474; and the State VR Services program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 361.

[5] No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supported employment supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[6] Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 4, as well as Supported Employment program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 363.

#### CERTIFICATION SIGNATURE

**To review and complete the Certification section of the VR portion of the State plan, please select the "Edit" button.**

Note, please do not edit the table header or formatting. Only edit the table contents.

If you accidentally edit the table headers and structure, open this link to the blank table. You can copy and paste the table into the narrative field, and start over if needed.

Signatory information	Enter Signatory information in this column
<b>Name of Signatory</b>	Rahnee K. Patrick
<b>Title of Signatory</b>	Director
<b>Date Signed</b>	2/28/2024

#### VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Each State VR program must submit expected levels of performance in its Unified or Combined State Plan and in the two-year modification of that plan. Expected levels of performance for the first two years of a state plan must be submitted in the initial submission of the Unified or Combined State Plan and in the initial submission of the two-year modification of that Plan, for years three and four, as described in 34 CFR § 361.170(a). Expected levels of performance must be stated to the nearest tenth of a percent (XX.X %) or to the nearest whole dollar for median earnings. State VR programs are reminded that the expected levels of performance must be published for public comment prior to plan submission in accordance with state law, regulation, and policy.

After the Unified or Combined State Plan submission, each State VR program must reach agreement with RSA on the negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the Unified or Combined State Plan (or for the third and fourth years of the Unified or Combined State Plan during the required two-year modification process) in accordance with WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv).

RSA will use its statistical adjustment model to derive pre-program year estimated levels of performance for each indicator. Each State VR program and RSA will consider the negotiation

factors outlined in WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(v) during the negotiation process. Once negotiated levels of performance are agreed upon, each State VR program must incorporate the negotiated levels of performance into the Unified or Combined State Plan and the two-year modification of that plan prior to the plan's approval (section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv) of WIOA).

### **Effectiveness in Serving Employers**

In the final rule implementing WIOA, the Departments indicated that they would initially implement this indicator in the form of a pilot to test the feasibility and rigor of three proposed approaches. During Program Year (PY) 2022, the Departments initiated the rulemaking process to establish a standard definition of Effectiveness in Serving Employers. States will continue to report two of three proposed approaches until the Departments issue the final rule and implement the indicator.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	63.0%	TBD	63.0%	TBS
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	53.5%	TBD	53.5%	TBD
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$4,692	TBD	\$4,692	TBD
Credential Attainment Rate	34.9%	TBD	34.9%	TBD
Measurable Skill Gains	69.0%	TBD	69.0%	TBD
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.*

### **GEPA 427 FORM INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLICATION PACKAGE - VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION**

### **EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES**

OMB Control Number 1894-0005 Expiration 02/28/2026

**Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)** (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program

beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

### **GEPA Section 427 Form Instructions for State Applicants**

#### **State applicants must respond to the following four questions:**

1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.
2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?
3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?
4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

- Applicants identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.
- Applicants use the associated text box to respond to each question. However, applicants might have already included some or all this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) in their State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.
- Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity to apply.
- Applicants that have already undertaken steps to address barriers must still provide an explanation and/or description of the steps already taken in each text box, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.
- Applicants that believe no barriers exist must still provide an explanation and/or description to each question to validate that perception, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.

Please refer to GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

1. DESCRIBE HOW YOUR ENTITY'S EXISTING MISSION, POLICIES, OR COMMITMENTS ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO, AND EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION IN, THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY.

***Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.***

*GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package*

***State applicants must respond to four questions.***

***The first of four questions is:***

*Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.*

DRS has prioritized equity and ensuring that VR services are available to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including individuals in need of traditional supported employment services. This priority also addresses individuals currently working in a subminimum wage setting and those in need of long-term extended support to maintain employment. There are currently an estimated 4,000 individuals earning a subminimum wage in Illinois, the majority of whom would likely benefit from supported employment services. DRS, in conjunction with the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign and Virginia Commonwealth University, has received a five-year grant to develop and implement the SWTCIE Innovative Model Demonstration Project. The purpose of the grant is to support innovative activities aimed at increasing competitive integrated employment for youth and other individuals with disabilities seeking or engaged in subminimum wage employment. It is anticipated that this project will generate a significant number of referrals to DRS for VR services, including supported employment services, as customers work to attain competitive integrated employment.

**2. BASED ON YOUR PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY, WHAT BARRIERS MAY IMPEDE  
EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, OR OTHER  
BENEFICIARIES?**

***Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.***

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

***State applicants must respond to four questions.***

***The second of four questions is:***

*Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?*

Barriers to equitable access and participating include such things as technology, transportation, mode of communication, disability type, race, gender, language, and a history of justice system involvement.

These barriers to equitable participation were addressed in the goals and priorities jointly developed and agreed to by the DRS and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). In large part, the barriers were identified in the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. DRS will work toward mitigate the reported barrier in equity and access to ensure the needs of the disability community are addressed in plans and programs.

**3. BASED ON THE BARRIERS IDENTIFIED, WHAT STEPS WILL YOU TAKE TO ADDRESS SUCH  
BARRIERS TO EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION IN THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR  
ACTIVITY?**

***Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.***

*GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package*

***State applicants must respond to four questions.***

***The third of four questions is:***

*Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?*

DRS will work to address transportation deficits throughout the state by assessing needs and formulating strategies to mitigate transportation barriers for customers seeking employment, such as engaging employers on or near transit routes or paratransit routes, offering incentives to rural transportation providers, collaborating with other providers to offer transit training, and addressing staffing shortages within DRS certified orientation and mobility staff and Regional Coordinators of the Deaf.

DRS will develop and augment programs to support adult workers (>25) with disabilities in job retention and placement services.

DRS will develop a comprehensive model to increase and simplify customer access to services such as offering community or home-based appointments, expanded office hours, and ways to connect virtually.

DRS will develop collaborative partnerships between VR, State and local educational agencies, and centers for independent living to help individuals with disabilities seamlessly transition to life after high school, preparing them for independent living, competitive integrated employment, and community integration.

DRS will upgrade programs and policies to increase Self-employment opportunities for customers.

DRS will promote alternative business models for 14(c) certificate holders to reduce Subminimum Wage work and support Competitive Integrated Employment through the Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment (SWTCIE) grant project.

DRS will develop an accessible communication plan to expand and build partnerships with employment service providers including community rehabilitation providers, Centers for Independent Living, benefits planners, and other providers who support people with disabilities.

DRS will expand and extend engagement with employers, developing an accessible communication plan to educate employers on vital programs offered by DRS. Simplifying and communicating how employers can best access and engage DRS offices and services. Educating employers on how to increase quality work opportunities for disabled persons through innovative programs, such as “Earn while you learn” opportunities, apprenticeships, paid work-based learning opportunities, and on-the-job training experiences.

**4. WHAT IS YOUR TIMELINE, INCLUDING TARGETED MILESTONES, FOR ADDRESSING THESE IDENTIFIED BARRIERS?**



**Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)** (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

*GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package*

**State applicants must respond to four questions.**

**The final of four questions is:**

*What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?*

DRS intends to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions established to mitigate the barriers annually.

GEPA 427 FORM INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLICATION PACKAGE - SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT  
**EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES**

OMB Control Number 1894-0005 Expiration 02/28/2026

**Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)** (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

**GEPA Section 427 Form Instructions for State Applicants**

**State applicants must respond to the following four questions:**

1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.
2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?
3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?
4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

- Applicants identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.

- Applicants use the associated text box to respond to each question. However, applicants might have already included some or all this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) in their State Plans that includes the

information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.

- Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity to apply.
- Applicants that have already undertaken steps to address barriers must still provide an explanation and/or description of the steps already taken in each text box, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.
- Applicants that believe no barriers exist must still provide an explanation and/or description to each question to validate that perception, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.

Please refer to GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

**1. DESCRIBE HOW YOUR ENTITY'S EXISTING MISSION, POLICIES, OR COMMITMENTS ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO, AND EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION IN, THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY.**

***Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.***

*GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package*

***State applicants must respond to four questions.***

***The first of four questions is:***

*Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.*

DRS' mission is all about people working and living where they want. Each person is in the driver's seat and we engage our customers regularly to identify how we are meeting their needs. Being able to funnel messaging from leadership to field practitioner, has made a difference in ensuring DRS' mission statement is adhered to and goals are met. DRS ties its drive for improvement directly to the reason Title IV is here, to serve people with disabilities in achieving lasting careers and a higher quality of life. By connecting with agencies and programs that seek to support a living wage and competitive employment, our impact is multiplied.

**2. BASED ON YOUR PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY, WHAT BARRIERS MAY IMPEDE EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, OR OTHER BENEFICIARIES?**

***Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.***

*GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package*

***State applicants must respond to four questions.***

***The second of four questions is:***

*Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?*

Barriers to equitable access and participating include such things as technology, transportation, mode of communication, disability type, race, gender, language, and a history of justice system involvement.

These barriers to equitable participation were addressed in the goals and priorities jointly developed and agreed to by the DRS and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). In large part, the barriers were identified in the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. DRS will work toward mitigate the reported barrier in equity and access to ensure the needs of the disability community are addressed in plans and programs.

**3. BASED ON THE BARRIERS IDENTIFIED, WHAT STEPS WILL YOU TAKE TO ADDRESS SUCH BARRIERS TO EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION IN THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY?**

***Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.***

*GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package*

***State applicants must respond to four questions.***

***The third of four questions is:***

*Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?*

DRS will work to address transportation deficits throughout the state by assessing needs and formulating strategies to mitigate transportation barriers for customers seeking employment, such as engaging employers on or near transit routes or paratransit routes, offering incentives to rural transportation providers, collaborating with other providers to offer transit training, and addressing staffing shortages within DRS certified orientation and mobility staff and Regional Coordinators of the Deaf.

DRS will develop and augment programs to support adult workers (>25) with disabilities in job retention and placement services.

DRS will develop a comprehensive model to increase and simplify customer access to services such as offering community or home-based appointments, expanded office hours, and ways to connect virtually.

DRS will develop collaborative partnerships between VR, State and local educational agencies, and centers for independent living to help individuals with disabilities seamlessly transition to life after high school, preparing them for independent living, competitive integrated employment, and community integration.

DRS will upgrade programs and policy to increase Self-employment opportunities for customers.

DRS will promote alternative business models for 14(c) certificate holders to reduce Subminimum Wage work and support Competitive Integrated Employment through the Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment (SWTCIE) grant project.

DRS will develop an accessible communication plan to expand and build partnerships with employment service providers including community rehabilitation providers, Centers for Independent Living, benefits planners, and other providers who support people with disabilities.

DRS will expand and extend engagement with employers, developing an accessible communication plan to educate employers on vital programs offered by DRS. Simplifying and communicating how employers can best access and engage DRS offices and services. Educating employers on how to increase quality work opportunities for disabled persons through innovative programs, such as “Earn while you learn” opportunities, apprenticeships, paid work-based learning opportunities, and on the job training experiences.

#### 4. WHAT IS YOUR TIMELINE, INCLUDING TARGETED MILESTONES, FOR ADDRESSING THESE IDENTIFIED BARRIERS?

***Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.***

*GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package*

***State applicants must respond to four questions.***

***The final of four questions is:***

*What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?*

DRS intends to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions established to mitigate the barriers annually.

### VII. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS

States choosing to submit a Combined State Plan must provide information concerning the six core programs—the Adult program, Dislocated Worker program, Youth program, Wagner-Peyser Act program, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program, and the Vocational Rehabilitation program—and also submit relevant information for any of the eleven partner programs it elects to include in its Combined State Plan. When a State includes a Combined State Plan partner program in its Combined State Plan, it need not submit a separate plan or application for that particular program. <sup>24</sup> If included, Combined State Plan partner programs are subject to the “common planning elements” in Sections II-IV of this document, where specified, as well as the program-specific requirements for that program.

[24] States that elect to include employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.) under a Combined State Plan would submit all other required elements of a complete CSBG State Plan directly to the Federal agency that administers the program. Similarly, States that elect to include employment and training activities carried by the Department of Housing and Urban Development would

submit all other required elements of a complete State Plan for those programs directly to the Federal agency that administers the program.

## PERFORMANCE INDICATOR APPENDIX

### ALL WIOA CORE PROGRAMS

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

#### ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES - ADULT PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

##### **Performance Goals for the Core Programs**

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as “baseline” indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A “baseline” indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, “baseline” indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as “baseline” based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a

reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as “baseline” for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as “baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA.” The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as “baseline” for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as “baseline” for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as “baseline.” Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state’s plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
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Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	75.5%	TBD	75.5%	TBD
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	76.0%	TBD	76.0%	TBD
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$8,400	TBD	\$8,400	TBD
Credential Attainment Rate	73.5%	TBD	73.5%	TBD
Measurable Skill Gains	60.0%	TBD	60.0%	TBD
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

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*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.*

#### ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES - DISLOCATED PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

##### **Performance Goals for the Core Programs**

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as “baseline” indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A “baseline” indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, “baseline” indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as “baseline” based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available

to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as “baseline” for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as “baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA.” The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as “baseline” for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.



Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as “baseline” for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as “baseline.” Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state’s plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	79.5%	TBD	79.5%	TBD
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	79.5%	TBD	79.5%	TBD
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$11,300	TBD	\$11,300	TBD
Credential Attainment Rate	74.0%	TBD	74.0%	TBD
Measurable Skill Gains	61.0%	TBD	61.0%	TBD
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

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*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.*

#### ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES - YOUTH PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

##### **Performance Goals for the Core Programs**

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as “baseline”

indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A “baseline” indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, “baseline” indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as “baseline” based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as “baseline” for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as “baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA.” The actual performance data

reported by these programs for indicators designated as “baseline” for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as “baseline” for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as “baseline.” Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state’s plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	74.5%	TBD	74.5%	TBD
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	74.0%	TBD	74.0%	TBD
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$4,300	TBD	\$4,300	TBD
Credential Attainment Rate	70.5%	TBD	70.5%	TBD
Measurable Skill Gains	56.5%	TBD	56.5%	TBD
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.*

## **Performance Goals for the Core Programs**

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as “baseline” indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A “baseline” indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, “baseline” indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as “baseline” based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as “baseline” for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as “baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA.” The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as “baseline” for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as “baseline” for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as “baseline.” Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state’s plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	65.0%	TBD	65.0%	TBD
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	66.0%	TBD	66.0%	TBD
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$8,100	TBD	\$8,100	TBD
Credential Attainment Rate	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Measurable Skill Gains	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.*

#### ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM - ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

##### **Performance Goals for the Core Programs**

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as “baseline” indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A “baseline” indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, “baseline” indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as “baseline” based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);

- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as “baseline” for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as “baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA.” The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as “baseline” for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as “baseline” for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as “baseline.” Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state’s plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	27.0%	TBD	26.0%	TBD

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	27.6%	TBD	25.0%	TBD
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$4,926	TBD	4,927.00	TBD
Credential Attainment Rate	30.9%	TBD	28.9%	TBD
Measurable Skill Gains	37.1%	TBD	37.2%	TBD
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.*

#### VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM (COMBINED OR GENERAL) - VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Each State VR program must submit expected levels of performance in its Unified or Combined State Plan and in the two-year modification of that plan. Expected levels of performance for the first two years of a state plan must be submitted in the initial submission of the Unified or Combined State Plan and in the initial submission of the two-year modification of that Plan, for years three and four, as described in 34 CFR § 361.170(a). Expected levels of performance must be stated to the nearest tenth of a percent (XX.X %) or to the nearest whole dollar for median earnings. State VR programs are reminded that the expected levels of performance must be published for public comment prior to plan submission in accordance with state law, regulation, and policy.

After the Unified or Combined State Plan submission, each State VR program must reach agreement with RSA on the negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the Unified or Combined State Plan (or for the third and fourth years of the Unified or Combined State Plan during the required two-year modification process) in accordance with WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv).

RSA will use its statistical adjustment model to derive pre-program year estimated levels of performance for each indicator. Each State VR program and RSA will consider the negotiation factors outlined in WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(v) during the negotiation process. Once negotiated levels of performance are agreed upon, each State VR program must incorporate the negotiated levels of performance into the Unified or Combined State Plan and the two-year modification of that plan prior to the plan's approval (section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv) of WIOA).

#### **Effectiveness in Serving Employers**



In the final rule implementing WIOA, the Departments indicated that they would initially implement this indicator in the form of a pilot to test the feasibility and rigor of three proposed approaches. During Program Year (PY) 2022, the Departments initiated the rulemaking process to establish a standard definition of Effectiveness in Serving Employers. States will continue to report two of three proposed approaches until the Departments issue the final rule and implement the indicator.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	63.0%	TBD	63.0%	TBS
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	53.5%	TBD	53.5%	TBD
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$4,692	TBD	\$4,692	TBD
Credential Attainment Rate	34.9%	TBD	34.9%	TBD
Measurable Skill Gains	69.0%	TBD	69.0%	TBD
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.*

#### VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM (BLIND) - VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Each State VR program must submit expected levels of performance in its Unified or Combined State Plan and in the two-year modification of that plan. Expected levels of performance for the first two years of a state plan must be submitted in the initial submission of the Unified or Combined State Plan and in the initial submission of the two-year modification of that Plan, for years three and four, as described in 34 CFR § 361.170(a). Expected levels of performance must be stated to the nearest tenth of a percent (XX.X %) or to the nearest whole dollar for median earnings. State VR programs are reminded that the expected levels of performance must be published for public comment prior to plan submission in accordance with state law, regulation, and policy.

After the Unified or Combined State Plan submission, each State VR program must reach agreement with RSA on the negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the Unified or Combined State Plan (or for the third and fourth years of the

Unified or Combined State Plan during the required two-year modification process) in accordance with WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv).

RSA will use its statistical adjustment model to derive pre-program year estimated levels of performance for each indicator. Each State VR program and RSA will consider the negotiation factors outlined in WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(v) during the negotiation process. Once negotiated levels of performance are agreed upon, each State VR program must incorporate the negotiated levels of performance into the Unified or Combined State Plan and the two-year modification of that plan prior to the plan's approval (section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv) of WIOA).

### **Effectiveness in Serving Employers**

In the final rule implementing WIOA, the Departments indicated that they would initially implement this indicator in the form of a pilot to test the feasibility and rigor of three proposed approaches. During Program Year (PY) 2022, the Departments initiated the rulemaking process to establish a standard definition of Effectiveness in Serving Employers. States will continue to report two of three proposed approaches until the Departments issue the final rule and implement the indicator.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)				
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)				
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)				
Credential Attainment Rate				
Measurable Skill Gains				
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.*

### **ADDITIONAL INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE**

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

## OTHER APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

#### Stakeholder Engagement Report

The following report summarizes key findings from Stakeholder Listening and Engagement Sessions that will be used to refine a four-year strategic plan for the State's Workforce Development System under the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

The sessions covered a variety of discussion topics, but focused on gathering feedback on a new, forward-looking economic analysis; identifying current strengths/weaknesses in Illinois' Workforce Development System; and examining how to address current WIOA challenges and opportunities in Illinois.

All stakeholder feedback and comments collected during recent listening sessions has been reviewed and analyzed in preparation of this report. A selection of verbatim comments made by stakeholders has been included to help readers understand feedback from the voice of individual stakeholders. In some instances, stakeholder comments were edited to protect the identity of contributing stakeholders and to condense the amount of text featured in the report.

The Workforce Development System wishes to extend its appreciation to all the stakeholders who generously shared their perspectives, insights, and time to participate in the listening and engagement sessions.

#### Methodology

A total of nineteen (19) WIOA Stakeholder Listening and Engagement Sessions were held throughout the State of Illinois in Fall 2023. The sessions were held both in-person and online. In total, over 500 stakeholders participated in the listening and engagement sessions.

Sixteen (16) of the stakeholder sessions were held in-person and spread across ten Economic Development Regions. The in-person sessions were attended by stakeholders who represent Illinois Workforce Service Providers, Community Action Agencies, Community Colleges, Employers, and Federal, State and Local Government. Most of the sessions were conducted in English, however, three sessions in EDR 4 were conducted in Spanish by a bi-lingual facilitator.

Three additional sessions were held online, each with a different intended audience – service providers, employers and individuals. A handful of one-on-one follow-up interviews were also conducted with stakeholders who specifically provide workforce support for immigrants and workers enrolled in English Language Acquisition (ELA) courses.

All stakeholder listening sessions were held between September and November 2023. The in-person listening sessions were approximately 1½ to 2 hours in length and held in community college meeting rooms, public libraries, and community centers. Stakeholder attendance at in-person sessions varied, but generally averaged around 10-12 stakeholders per session. The online webinar sessions reached a much larger pool of employers and jobseekers with more than one hundred stakeholders on each call.

#### Respondent Profile

Approximately 588 WIOA stakeholders participated in Illinois WIOA Listening and Engagement Sessions. Feedback was obtained from stakeholders in ten (10) economic development regions, ensuring broad participation across the State of Illinois.

Participating stakeholders represented different entities within Illinois, including employers, workforce development service providers, community colleges, community action agencies, jobseekers, and federal/state/local government representatives. Given the diversity of businesses represented in the listening sessions, there are both similar and divergent perspectives, at times, that can help shape the state's workforce development planning process.

About half of stakeholders who participated in listening sessions fulfill a role within their organization where they provide hands-on workforce development support for jobseekers or work to educate future workers. Over one-quarter of stakeholders are senior executives within their organizations, and about one-third serve the public more generally, through federal, state or local governments. Additionally, some stakeholders were jobseekers, consultants, or retired individuals with a specific interest in workforce development.

Nearly all stakeholders attended listening sessions conducted in English, however, a few participated in Spanish sessions led by a bi-lingual moderator. Similarly, most stakeholders participated in sessions conducted online, however, just under one-quarter attended in-person. There is a notable gender skew among stakeholders; about two-thirds are female and one-third are male. Other demographic data on stakeholders, such as age or income metrics, were not gathered.

Tables and charts available in the appendix starting on page 35 provide more detailed information on stakeholders who participated in the listening and engagement sessions.

To increase consistency across the sessions the same presentation and facilitator guide was used for the listening and engagement sessions. Facilitators completed moderator training to ensure these materials would be used effectively, and facilitators were prepared to elicit desired responses and feedback from participating stakeholders.

## **Summary**

Stakeholders who participated appear to have genuine interest in the State's new WIOA four-year plan. Regardless of their role in the system, they appear to be committed to working with the State to strengthen the Workforce Development System and hope for more opportunities in the future to engage in discussion.

Stakeholders describe Illinois' Workforce Development System as having both strengths and weaknesses. Strengths are frequently identified as adaptability, staff commitment, programs, partnership between different service providers, and facilities. Weaknesses are identified as things which generally impede the efficiency and effectiveness the system, such as outdated information systems, inability of program staff to access and share data across partners, resistance to collaboration between programs, and a process which at times seems to impede rather than streamline their workforce development efforts. Key threats to the system are reportedly the burden that the current process places on individuals, employers and staff, such as program drop-outs and staff turnover; backlogged demand; and a rising population of immigrants with urgent, unmet needs. Despite these challenges, stakeholders remain optimistic about the future and hope the State's new strategic plan for WIOA will provide a detailed roadmap for the future.

When exposed to an overview of new draft plan, stakeholders are receptive to the three overall goals outlined in the draft plan. In fact, many stakeholders feel the over-arching goals are aligned to their current work and feel the goals will allow them to work toward achieving WIOA's mission. When exposed to strategies for each goal, however, stakeholders are receptive, but to varying degrees.

Goal 1 strategies are considered important though many stakeholders say that the word “customers” should be defined when used in “customer-focused” and in other areas of the plan. They often prefer more specific descriptors, such as jobseekers, employers, etc. Goal 1 strategies pertaining to equity and access, collaboration, and building awareness, they say, are dependent on first overcoming existing barriers which impede success. For example, to ensure equity and access, they say current WIOA eligibility requirements must be reviewed through the lens of disabled individuals, who may only have capacity to work part-time. To enable collaboration, they explain that information systems must first allow for information sharing. And, to build awareness, they report that a state-wide marketing plan and invest in building capacity for marketing and awareness-building activities at the ground level. The final Goal 1 related to “frontline workers” is generally considered confusing; some stakeholders reveal that they do not understand the meaning of “frontline workers” and suggest removing this item.

Goal 2 strategies, which focus on supporting employers, are met with the greatest degree of resistance. While they generally understand the Goal 3 strategies, some workforce service providers indicate that they have limited time to support employers. As such, while they attempt to support employers upon request, they are currently unable to provide the level of employer support depicted in Goal 2, since they are currently required to spend a high proportion of their time supporting jobseekers. The remainder of time is spent on process-related hurdles, such as paperwork and accessing data. Without a reduction in process-related burden or improved efficiency, Goal 2 strategies are, at times, considered aspirational or unrealistic.

Stakeholders appear to support Goal 3 strategies, which focus on the use of customer-centered and data-informed practices. However, some stakeholders indicate that they are confused with this terminology. For example, many stakeholders say they do not know what “a data-informed approach” is, and others are confused by text that suggests that they will “interact with jobseekers where they live and visit.” The latter phrase is considered generally impractical, given the State’s rural settings and distance between job centers. Lastly, stakeholders mention concern about use of the phrase, “historically marginalized,” indicating that WIOA is focused on serving all people eligible for services, not people defined as “historically marginalized.” Some suggest it may be more appropriate to describe them as “underserved individuals eligible for WIOA services.”

Stakeholders generally feel that the Economic Analysis contained in the draft plan is accurate and well-aligned to the State overall. Despite this, some indicate that it would be helpful if the plan provided both state and regional assessments of industry job growth given wide industry variations across Illinois. While stakeholders are receptive to the Economic Analysis, they reveal that some Illinois industries seem mischaracterized, which may be a function of basing the analysis predominantly on NAICS without customization or adaptation for the State of Illinois.

For example, some stakeholders question the current categorization of Education Services in Illinois as a maturing industry, given current teacher shortages, growing demand for educators to support a rising immigrant population, and state-wide initiatives such as “Pre-school for All.” Similarly, some feel that Health Care should be a growing industry in Illinois, given that Illinois healthcare is often ranked best in the nation, there is diversity of health care companies—providers, pharma, device manufacturers in Illinois--and the state’s demand for healthcare workers is currently unmet.

Stakeholders also report that the plan should recognize the State’s considerable investments in building new industries. For example, while Clean Energy is not a NAICS per se, some feel it should be listed as an emerging industry in the analysis given the State’s commitment to the

clean industry, as evidenced by Illinois' Clean Energy Jobs Act (CEJA). They indicate the State's effort to bring such industries as solar, wind, and electrical vehicle manufacturing to Illinois should indicate that the industry will be growing in the State during the next 8 years. Additionally, they suggest that job reporting for Agriculture should be split into cannabis and non-cannabis production, given that WIOA does not support job placement in the marijuana industry hence data could be misleading.

Stakeholders frequently mention that the Economic Analysis appears to be missing an important assessment of job value. Stakeholders explain that the analysis should provide a prediction on the proportion of jobs created for each industry that will result in full-time vs. part-time positions. Similarly, they also seek to understand what the estimated average wage will be for new jobs generated by each industry. More specifically, they seek to understand whether the industries are expected to provide "living wages" for workers in their area. At present, stakeholders indicate that cost of food and housing, particularly in EDR 4, is often a barrier for the jobseekers they support.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Public Comments**

#### **Overview of Public Comments Submitted**

Four comments were received during the public comment period of the draft 2024 – 2027 WIOA State Plan. The majority of the comments stated that the plan addressed major areas of consideration and instead of seeking changes to the plan, focused on specific actions to take during the implementation of the plan.

Suggestions for implementation generally can be addressed in four ways:

1. operational guidance
2. the setting of state policy
3. actions taken by the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board
4. appropriations or legislation created by the Illinois General Assembly and signed by the Governor.

It should be noted that some of the comments around implementation are already happening.

#### **Comments Concerning Considerations on the Implementation of the WIOA State Plan**

Support the establishment and implementation of a sector partnership focused on "blue jobs" – jobs and career pathways related to the management of water and water-dependent industries.

#### **Customer-Centered Approach to Service Delivery**

- Develop a shared intake platform and common referral process among partners. Implement a feedback loop to continuously improve the process based on user experiences and feedback from service providers should also be considered.
- Assessment of AJCs: In addition to assessing accessibility for individuals with disabilities, prioritize accessibility for all demographics. Collaborate with disability advocacy groups for insights and recommendations.
- Empower AJCs to shift from a one-size-fits-all mentality to an individualized, experiential, contextualized, and transformative experience for users that allows for hands-on learning and experimentation.

- Adopt a membership-like model at AJCs that promotes a sense of belonging and supports workers throughout their careers.
- Further, long-term state investment in barrier reduction strategies outlined by the Commission on Workforce Equity & Access.

### **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility**

- Involve diverse stakeholders, including employees, in creating a Good Jobs Standard to ensure a comprehensive and equitable definition.
- As emphasized in the Governor's Commission on Workforce Equity and Access report, there is a need to hire more bilingual staff workforce staff serving WIOA Titles I-IV.
- Ensure that the training on equity and inclusivity is ongoing and evolves to address emerging issues.
- Reducing barriers for the deaf
  - Ensure any marketing or awareness campaign includes video materials be provided in American Sign Language (ASL) to ensure that we have full language accessibility.
  - The Basic Skills Deficiency Assessment Requirements policy at WIOA Policy ([illinoisworknet.com](http://illinoisworknet.com)) outlines the use of the Basic Skills Screening Tool to identify if a youth or adult is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or society. This may become a barrier to deaf persons seeking services.
  - The nation has a severe sign language interpreter shortage, and it is incumbent on the core partners to ensure that all these services are accessible to persons who may or may not have limited ability to understand and use English.
  - The activity of aligning and coordinating WIOA Title I with Title II Adult Education services to ensure immigrants and other individuals who are English language learners have access to services, such as workforce readiness, bridge programs, and Integrated Education and training through the Illinois WorkNet American Job Centers is listed. These alignment and coordination efforts often focus on spoken language and not on American Sign Language. This needs to be available.

### **Other suggestions**

- Invest in user-friendly tools and strengthen partnerships with research institutions to improve the accuracy and timeliness of labor market data.
- Establish a centralized platform for best practice sharing and ensure the assessment process is comprehensive and individualized.
- Provide digital literacy training for system staff to promote best and offer users digital literacy training and technology access to keep pace with changing industry needs.
- Create a feedback loop for employers to provide input on workforce needs and align sector initiatives consistently.

- Promote apprenticeships effectively, standardize procedures, and simplify documentation to encourage more businesses to participate.
- Regularly update the inventory of services and ensure that it is easily accessible to service providers and individuals seeking assistance.
- Promote transparency and inclusivity in the MOU and budget negotiation process to build trust among partners.
- Continue to adapt the one-stop center certification process to align with evolving workforce development trends and technologies.
- Prioritize data-driven decision-making strategies in region and local workforce area planning process that encourage regional teams to utilize data to inform their strategies.
- Increase state funding for the workforce development system.
- Create a Chief Workforce Officer through legislation and fill that position as soon as possible. That position should oversee implementation of the plan.