

DRAFT

# Illinois' 2024-2027 WIOA State Plan

## 2026 Modification



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# I. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## a. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE

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

## b. PLAN INTRODUCTION

Illinois' Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified State Plan Modification reflects the State's continued effort to align workforce strategies with current economic conditions, evolving labor market demand, and the operational realities of delivering services across a complex, multi-partner system.

Since the submission of Illinois' 2024–2027 Unified State Plan, economic conditions have continued to shift. While many sectors have recovered from the immediate effects of the pandemic, longer-term structural changes, including slower employment growth, persistent labor shortages in key industries, rapid technological adoption, and demographic pressures, have reinforced the need for a workforce system that is adaptive, coordinated, and closely aligned with employer demand. These conditions form the basis for the updates reflected in this modification.

This modification does not represent a departure from Illinois' core workforce strategy, but rather a refinement informed by updated data, operational assessments, and implementation experience. In particular, Illinois has used recent analysis to better understand how workforce services are delivered across local areas, how customers and employers interact with the system, and where improvements in coordination, efficiency, and capacity can strengthen outcomes.

Illinois' workforce system is organized around a demand-driven approach that emphasizes alignment with priority industries, sector partnerships, and career pathways leading to in-demand occupations. The modification reinforces the State's focus on work-based learning models—including Registered Apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and incumbent worker training—as effective strategies for connecting jobseekers to employment while supporting employers' talent needs. These approaches are reflected throughout the plan, including in the continued use of WIOA flexibilities and approved waivers to expand training access, modernize service delivery, and support employer engagement.

The modification also reflects Illinois' ongoing efforts to strengthen system integration across WIOA core and required partners. Findings from recent service delivery assessments and partner engagement activities highlight both progress and ongoing challenges related to staffing capacity, infrastructure, virtual service delivery, and coordination across programs. In response, Illinois is prioritizing improvements in referral relationships, intake and assessment processes, shared service delivery practices, and data-informed decision-making to improve the customer experience for both jobseekers and employers.

Technological change continues to shape Illinois' labor market and workforce strategies. The growing use of automation, artificial intelligence, and advanced manufacturing technologies is altering skill requirements across industries and increasing the importance of reskilling and upskilling strategies. This modification reflects the State's emphasis on preparing workers for these shifts through targeted training, credential attainment, and alignment between education and workforce systems.

Accountability remains a central feature of Illinois' workforce strategy. The State continues to emphasize performance outcomes, responsible use of public resources, and continuous improvement through evaluation and data analysis. Where WIOA flexibilities and waivers are utilized, Illinois remains focused on demonstrating measurable outcomes for participants and employers and ensuring that investments are aligned with statewide and regional workforce priorities.

Through this Unified State Plan Modification, Illinois affirms its commitment to a workforce system that is responsive to economic conditions, aligned with employer demand, and capable of adapting to change. The strategies outlined in this modification are intended to strengthen coordination across partners, improve service delivery, and ensure that Illinois' workforce system continues to support economic growth, labor force participation, and long-term competitiveness.

### **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 is responsive, inclusive and accessible.
  - 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.
  - f. Strategy: The Workforce Development System explores the responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI) in service delivery.
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 inclusivity 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 responsive, inclusive 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, artificial intelligence 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, artificial intelligence and solar energy.
  - b. Strategy: The Workforce Development System explores workforce training opportunities related to artificial intelligence (AI) to support workers' ability to adapt to changing skill demands across industries.

**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.

Illinois sought stakeholder feedback for the 2026 modification of its WIOA State plan through two webinars and a survey regarding topics impacting individuals, employers and service providers. The results of those stakeholder engagements are included in the appendix of public comments from 2024.

## II. Strategic Elements

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

#### 1. ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

##### A. Economic Analysis

###### I. 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 2014 and 2019, the state's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increased by 5.7 percent compared to the US GDP growth of 13.4 percent. The GDP in the Great Lakes Region increased by 7.3 percent during same period. The story through 2024-- 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 just over 10 percent, which is less than the region's growth of 15.3 percent and the nation's 27.6 percent growth.

A look at the employment data suggests a similar struggle: in the five years ending 2024, Illinois' employment was nearly flat with growth of 0.2 percent, reflecting the return to pre-pandemic levels. Similarly, the Great Lakes region overall registered slight expansion of 0.8 percent, while the U.S. experienced larger growth with a 3.2 percent increase 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 (26.0 percent vs 27.4 percent, respectively). However, earnings in the nation have surpassed both Illinois and the region, growing by 32.9 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		
	2014	2019	2024	2014	2019	2024	2014	2019	2024
ILLINOIS	811,490	858,018	895,343	6,085,618	6,284,390	6,294,096	333,332,099	394,899,666	497,461,491
Great Lakes Region *	2,569,255	2,756,944	2,961,959	21,866,815	22,981,275	23,156,050	1,054,370,066	1,260,995,200	1,605,974,526
United States	18,261,714	20,715,671	23,305,023	146,305,333	157,538,083	161,345,500	7,467,705,000	9,313,643,000	12,381,330,176

	Percent Change in Gross Domestic Product			Percent Change in Employment			Percent Change in Earnings		
	2014-2019	2019-2024	2014-2024	2014-2019	2019-2024	2014-2024	2014-2019	2019-2024	2014-2024
	ILLINOIS	5.7%	4.4%	10.3%	3.3%	0.2%	3.4%	18.5%	26.0%
Great Lakes Region *	7.3%	7.4%	15.3%	5.1%	0.8%	5.9%	19.6%	27.4%	52.3%
United States	13.4%	12.5%	27.6%	7.7%	2.4%	10.3%	24.7%	32.9%	65.8%

\* Defined by the US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis to include: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin  
Sources:

Gross Domestic Product: BEA/Haver Analytics; GDP in 2017\$ (Millions)

Employment: BLS/Haver Analytics; Household Employment,

Not Seasonally Adjusted

Earnings: BEA; Data from Annual Personal Income, Components of Earnings by Place of Work, Wages and Salaries (Thousands)

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 2032 for major industry sectors across Illinois. It is expected that the largest number of job openings will be created within the Health Care and Social Assistance, Professional and Business Services, and Leisure and Hospitality sectors. The largest percentage increases in employment are expected in these sectors, as well as in transportation, warehousing, and utilities and agricultural production.

**Table 2: Illinois Employment by Major Industry Sector**

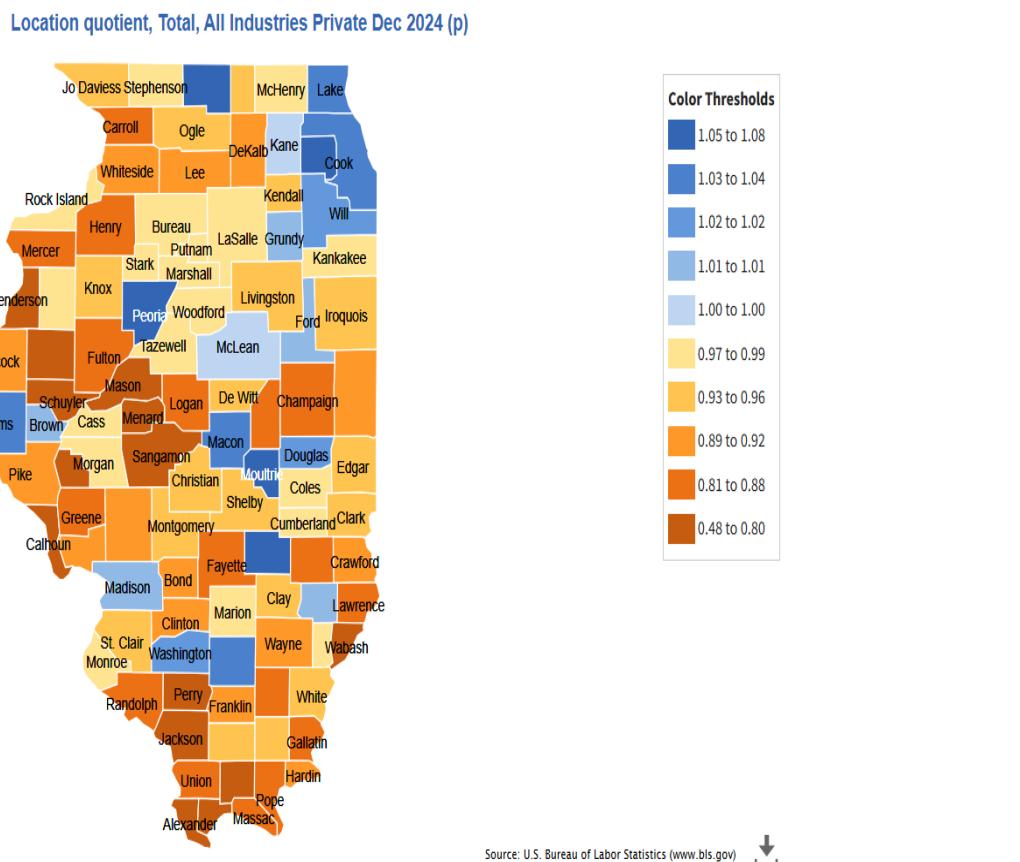
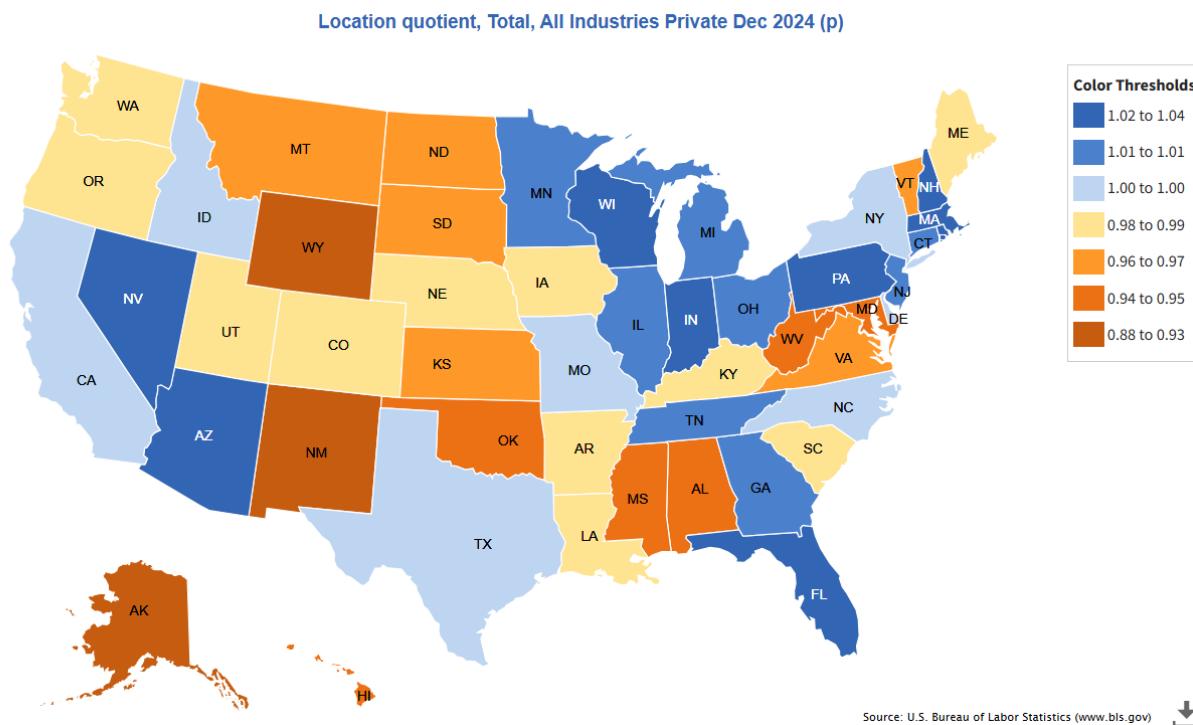
North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Title	Base Year Employment 2022	Share of Statewide Base Year Employment 2022	Projected Year Employment 2032	Net Change 2022- 2032	Ten- Year Percent Change 2022- 2032	Location Quotient 2022
<b>TOTAL, ALL INDUSTRIES</b>	<b>6,369,370</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>6,538,492</b>	<b>169,122</b>	<b>2.66%</b>	<b>1.00</b>
Agricultural Production	77,622	1.22%	80,344	2,722	3.51%	1.29
Mining	6,941	0.11%	7,039	98	1.41%	0.30
Utilities	23,851	0.37%	24,832	981	4.11%	1.03
Construction	230,492	3.62%	237,368	6,876	2.98%	0.71
Manufacturing	571,662	8.98%	582,358	10,696	1.87%	1.07
Wholesale Trade	295,029	4.63%	298,634	3,605	1.22%	1.19
Retail Trade	571,849	8.98%	566,444	-5,405	-0.95%	0.89
Transportation and Warehousing	350,701	5.51%	368,139	17,438	4.97%	1.14
Information	92,394	1.45%	93,501	1,107	1.20%	0.59
Financial Activities	403,641	6.34%	412,256	8,615	2.13%	1.06
Professional and Business Services	972,391	15.27%	1,005,027	32,636	3.36%	1.03
Education Services, Private and Public	557,612	8.75%	567,623	10,011	1.80%	0.95
Health Care and Social Assistance	817,990	12.84%	873,642	55,652	6.80%	0.91
Leisure and Hospitality	559,685	8.79%	589,437	29,752	5.32%	0.85
Personal and Other Services	262,682	4.12%	267,718	5,036	1.92%	0.99
Government	324,758	5.10%	326,053	1,295	0.40%	0.76
Self Employed, Unpaid Family Workers and Others n.e.c.	250,070	3.93%	238,077	-11,993	-4.80%	0.61

*Illinois Department of Employment Security  
Long-Term Statewide 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.

**Table 3: Ranking Sector by Location Quotient**

Sector	LQ	Percent Change in Employment Dec '22- Dec '24	Sector	LQ	Percent Change in Employment Dec '22- Dec '24
Total Private	1.02	0.7%	Total Private	1.01	0.7%
<b>Sorted by LQ Rank</b>					
Manufacturing	1.17	-0.3%	Education and Health Services	0.99	7.1%
Other Services	1.13	1.2%	Leisure and Hospitality	0.92	4.7%
Financial Activities	1.11	-0.6%	Construction	0.73	2.0%
Trade-Transportation-Utilities	1.09	0.3%	Other Services	1.13	1.2%
Professional and Business Services	1.04	-5.6%	Natural Resources and Mining	0.38	0.6%
Education and Health Services	0.99	7.1%	Trade-Transportation-Utilities	1.09	0.3%
Leisure and Hospitality	0.92	4.7%	Manufacturing	1.17	-0.3%
Information	0.81	-6.8%	Financial Activities	1.11	-0.6%
Construction	0.73	2.0%	Professional and Business Services	1.04	-5.6%
Natural Resources and Mining	0.38	0.6%	Information	0.81	-6.8%

*US Data from BLS QCEW <https://www.bls.gov/cew/data.htm>*

*Illinois Data from IDES QCEW <https://ides.illinois.gov/resources/labor-market-information/qcew.html>*

Covered private sector employment in Manufacturing, Other Services, Financial Activities, Trade, Transportation & Utilities, and Professional and Business Services had an LQ above 1.0, indicating a comparative advantage for Illinois. Education and Health Services has an LQ shy of 1.0, meaning employment concentration is almost the same as the nation. Leisure & Hospitality has an LQ of 0.92, which indicates it is near the national level. Information and Construction are the next level at 0.81 and 0.73, respectively. The Natural Resources and Mining sector is the smallest sector in Illinois with an LQ of 0.38. Note that the data listed in Table 3 is UI covered private sector employment change for the month of December over a 2-year period.

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 2032 for major occupational sectors throughout Illinois. The largest numbers of new jobs are expected to be created within occupational categories of Transportation and Material Moving, Management occupations, Healthcare Support, Healthcare Practitioners and Technical occupations, and Business and Financial Operations occupations. Large numbers of total job openings (including replacement jobs) are expected in some of those occupations as well as Food Preparation and Serving, Office and Administrative Support and Sales and Related occupations. Regardless of overall employment change, significant numbers of job openings are still expected annually due to replacement of existing workers who will transfer to another occupation or exit 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 2022-2032		Average Annual Job Openings			
				2022	2032	Number	Percent	Exits	Transfer
Total All Occupations	6,369,370	100%	6,538,492	169,122	2.66%	305,824	385,984	16,912	708,720
Management Occupations	627,922	9.86%	659,903	31,981	5.09%	19,908	29,792	3,198	52,898
Business & Financial Operations Occupations	414,333	6.51%	431,952	17,619	4.25%	12,965	20,196	1,762	34,923
Computer & Mathematical Occupations	191,036	3.00%	210,778	19,742	10.33%	4,330	7,317	1,974	13,621
Architecture & Engineering Occupations	82,685	1.30%	87,412	4,727	5.72%	2,347	3,124	473	5,944
Life, Physical & Social Science Occupations	42,812	0.67%	45,612	2,800	6.54%	888	2,502	280	3,670
Community & Social Services Occupations	109,774	1.72%	116,746	6,972	6.35%	4,286	5,288	697	10,271
Legal Occupations	54,699	0.86%	57,913	3,214	5.88%	1,580	1,663	321	3,564
Educational Instruction & Library Occupations	371,048	5.83%	384,007	12,959	3.49%	17,032	16,306	1,296	34,634
Arts/Design/Entertainment, Sports/Media Occs	103,757	1.63%	106,050	2,293	2.21%	4,548	5,862	229	10,639
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical Occs	388,038	6.09%	409,965	21,927	5.65%	12,358	9,424	2,193	23,975
Healthcare Support Occupations	231,628	3.64%	255,552	23,924	10.33%	16,657	18,114	2,392	37,163
Protective Service Occupations	146,932	2.31%	148,938	2,006	1.37%	7,675	8,895	201	16,771
Food Preparation & Serving Occupations	461,870	7.25%	476,375	14,505	3.14%	39,514	48,179	1,450	89,143
Building & Grounds Cleaning & Maint Occs	195,481	3.07%	201,537	6,056	3.10%	12,644	14,049	606	27,299

Personal Care & Service Occupations	134,144	2.11%	144,309	10,165	7.58%	9,429	14,432	1,016	24,877
Sales & Related Occupations	540,079	8.48%	530,947	-9,132	-1.69%	30,522	37,800	-913	67,409
Office & Administrative Support Occupations	767,858	12.06%	717,911	-49,947	-6.50%	40,167	44,663	-4,995	79,835
Farming, Fishing & Forestry Occupations	15,760	0.25%	15,886	126	0.80%	889	1,438	13	2,340
Construction & Extraction Occupations	202,536	3.18%	208,936	6,400	3.16%	7,015	10,279	640	17,934
Installation, Maintenance & Repair Occs	216,481	3.40%	225,382	8,901	4.11%	8,513	10,749	890	20,152
Production Occupations	423,063	6.64%	422,388	-675	-0.16%	18,558	26,675	-68	45,165
Transportation & Material Moving Occupations	647,434	10.16%	679,993	32,559	5.03%	34,002	49,237	3,256	86,495

*Illinois Department of Employment Security  
Long-Term Statewide Employment Projections*

## ii. Emerging Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations.

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
Education Services (Private + Public)	Manufacturing	Transportation & Warehousing
Financial Activities	Mining	Utilities
Health Care & Social Assistance (Private + Public)	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
- 10 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	Above 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 2032	Net Change 2022-2032	Location Quotient 2022
<b>TOTAL, ALL INDUSTRIES</b>	<b>6,369,370</b>	<b>6,538,492</b>	<b>169,122</b>	<b>1.00</b>
Professional and Business Services	972,391	1,005,027	32,636	1.03
Transportation and Warehousing	350,701	368,139	17,438	1.14
Manufacturing	571,662	582,358	10,696	1.07
Financial Activities	403,641	412,256	8,615	1.06
Wholesale Trade	295,029	298,634	3,605	1.19
Agricultural Production	77,622	80,344	2,722	1.29
Utilities	23,851	24,832	981	1.03

**Table 6: Emerging Major Industry Sectors Statewide**

North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Title	Base Year Employment 2022	Projected Year Employment 2032	Net Change 2022-2032	Location Quotient 2022
<b>TOTAL, ALL INDUSTRIES</b>	<b>6,369,370</b>	<b>6,538,492</b>	<b>169,122</b>	<b>1.00</b>
Health Care and Social Assistance	817,990	873,642	55,652	0.91
Leisure and Hospitality	559,685	589,437	29,752	0.85
Education Services, Private and Public	557,612	567,623	10,011	0.95
Construction	230,492	237,368	6,876	0.71
Personal and Other Services	262,682	267,718	5,036	0.99
Government	324,758	326,053	1,295	0.76
Information	92,394	93,501	1,107	0.59
Mining	6,941	7,039	98	0.30

**Table 7: Maturing Major Industry Sectors Statewide**

**\*No statewide maturing industry sectors for the employment projection period (2022-2032)**

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 (2-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**

Region	Leading Sectors	Emerging Sectors	Maturing Sectors	Comments
Central	Agricultural Production, Utilities, Manufacturing, Health Care & Social Assistance, Other Services	Wholesale Trade, Transportation & Warehousing, Information, Leisure & Hospitality	Retail Trade, Government	Government and Retail Trade, two of the four largest industries in the Central Region, are expected to slightly contract during the projected period. The largest industry, Health Care and Social Assistance, is identified as a leading industry however other leading industries such as Agricultural Production, Utilities, Manufacturing, and Other Services have higher industry employment concentrations above the nation.
East Central	Agricultural Production	Mining, Utilities, Construction, Wholesale Trade, Retail Trade, Information, Financial Activities, Professional & Business Services, Health Care & Social Assistance, Leisure & Hospitality, Other Services, Government	Manufacturing, Education Services	Agricultural Production and Education Services are the sectors of greatest employment concentration in the East Central Region but only Agricultural Production is expected to have job growth over the projected period. The most job growth is estimated in the emerging industries Health Care and Social Assistance and Leisure and Hospitality.
North Central	Agricultural Production, Utilities, Manufacturing	Mining, Construction, Wholesale Trade, Transportation & Warehousing, Health Care & Social Assistance, Leisure & Hospitality, Other Services, Government	Financial Activities, Education Services	The sectors in the North Central Region with the highest employment concentration above the national average are Agricultural Production, Utilities, Financial Activities, and Manufacturing. Slight contraction is projected in Financial Activities as well as Education Services. Health Care and Social Assistance, Manufacturing, and Leisure and Hospitality are expected to expand the most by 2032.
Northeast	Wholesale Trade, Transportation & Warehousing, Financial Activities, Professional & Business Services	Agricultural Production, Mining, Utilities, Construction, Manufacturing, Information, Education Services, Health Care & Social Assistance, Leisure & Hospitality, Other Services, Government		Wholesale Trade, Professional and Business Services, Transportation and Warehousing, and Financial Activities have employment concentrations above the nation and are expected to have growth over the projected period. Industries with the most forecasted job growth are in Health Care and Social Assistance, previously mentioned Professional and Business Services, and Leisure and Hospitality sectors. The only industry sector projected to contract is Retail Trade.

Northern Stateline	Agricultural Production, Utilities, Manufacturing, Transportation & Warehousing, Health Care & Social Assistance, Other Services	Mining, Construction, Wholesale Trade, Financial Activities, Professional & Business Services, Education Services, Leisure & Hospitality, Government		Only the Retail Trade and Information sectors are projected to contract by 2032. Expected slight growth in Agricultural Production, Utilities, and Manufacturing, which are the three sectors with the highest employment concentration. Health Care and Social Assistance and Leisure and Hospitality are expected to add the most jobs during the projected period.
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Region	Leading Sectors	Emerging Sectors	Maturing Sectors	Comments
Northwest	Agricultural Production, Mining, Utilities, Manufacturing, Wholesale Trade, Transportation & Warehousing, Other Services, Government	Construction, Financial Activities, Professional & Business Services, Health Care & Social Assistance, Leisure & Hospitality		Half of the industry sectors in the Northwest Region have an employment concentration above the national average and are projected to add jobs by 2032. The three sectors estimated to expand the most are Leisure and Hospitality, Professional and Business Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance. Slight losses expected in Retail Trade, Education Services, and Information.
Southeast	Agricultural Production, Utilities, Manufacturing	Construction, Transportation & Warehousing, Professional & Business Services, Leisure & Hospitality	Mining, Health Care & Social Assistance, Government	Overall, small employment losses are expected in the Southeast Region by 2032. Industries projected to shed the most jobs are Retail Trade, Health Care and Social Assistance, and Education Services. Transportation and Warehousing, Construction, and Leisure and Hospitality are sectors forecasted to add the most jobs by 2032. Manufacturing, the largest sector in the region, is expected to have small gains.
Southern	Agricultural Production, Mining, Utilities, Health Care & Social Assistance	Construction, Manufacturing, Transportation & Warehousing, Professional & Business Services, Leisure & Hospitality	Education Services, Government	Southern Region employment is projected to be nearly unchanged in 2032. Agricultural Production, Mining, and Utilities have the greatest employment concentration and expected to have slight job growth. Maturing industries, Education Services and Government, and Retail Trade are projected to contract the most by 2032. Leading industry Health Care and Social Assistance and emerging industries Leisure and Hospitality and Construction are forecasted to add the most jobs during the period.

Southwest	Agricultural Production, Utilities, Transportation & Warehousing, Leisure & Hospitality, Other Services	Mining, Construction, Manufacturing, Wholesale Trade, Financial Activities, Professional & Business Services, Health Care & Social Assistance	Retail Trade, Education Services, Government	Information is the only industry sector not classified as leading, emerging, or maturing in the Southwest Region. Agricultural Production, Utilities, and Transportation and Warehousing have the highest employment concentration in the region and are expected to add jobs by 2032. The most projected losses are in the maturing sectors Retail Trade, Education Services, and Government.
West Central	Manufacturing, Health Care & Social Assistance	Construction, Transportation & Warehousing, Financial Activities, Professional & Business Services	Agricultural Production, Mining, Wholesale Trade, Retail Trade, Government	Five of the seven industries with employment concentrations greater than the nation are projected to contract by 2032, including the industries with greatest concentration, Agricultural Production, Wholesale Trade, and Government. The West Central region is expected to have modest employment losses in the majority of industry sectors.

*Illinois Department of Employment Security*

*Long-Term Employment Projections*

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 Rankings with Regional Weightings**

2022 Base Year

Sector/Industry	State Status	No. Of Leading Regions (3x Weight)	No. Of Emerging Regions (2x Weight)	No. Of Maturing Regions (1x Weight)	TOTAL POINTS
Agricultural Production	Leading	8 X 3 = 24	1 X 2 = 2	1 X 1 = 1	27
Utilities	Leading	7 X 3 = 21	2 X 2 = 4	0	25
Manufacturing	Leading	6 X 3 = 18	3 X 2 = 6	1 X 1 = 1	25
Health Care & Social Assistance, Private & Public	Emerging	4 X 3 = 12	5 X 2 = 10	1 X 1 = 1	23
Transportation & Warehousing	Leading	4 X 3 = 12	5 X 2 = 10	0	22
Leisure & Hospitality	Emerging	1 X 3 = 3	8 X 2 = 16	0	19

Mining	Emerging	2 X 3 = 6	5 X 2 = 10	2 X 1 = 2	18
Construction	Emerging	0	9 X 2 = 18	0	18
Other Services	Emerging	4 X 3 = 12	3 X 2 = 6	0	18
Wholesale Trade	Leading	2 X 3 = 6	5 X 2 = 10	1 X 1 = 1	17
Professional & Business Services	Leading	1 X 3 = 3	7 X 2 = 14	0	17
Government	Emerging	1 X 3 = 3	4 X 2 = 8	5 X 1 = 5	16
Financial Activities	Leading	1 X 3 = 3	5 X 2 = 10	1 X 1 = 1	14
Education Services, Private & Public	Emerging	0	2 X 2 = 4	4 X 1 = 4	8
Information	Emerging	0	3 X 2 = 6	0	6
Retail Trade		0	1 X 2 = 2	3 X 1 = 3	5

*Illinois Department of Employment Security*

*Long-Term Employment Projections*

Regardless of whether an industry is in an existing or emerging sector, the employment opportunities for people with disabilities are more changing than what people without disabilities face. In Illinois, there are 749,415 people with disabilities who are of working age. Of those persons with disabilities of working age, 47.9% are unemployed. This includes 51.7% of people with cognitive disabilities, 35.3% of people with hearing disabilities, 63.6% with ambulatory disabilities, and 42.7% of people with visual disabilities.

In 2023, those without a disability are three times more likely to be employed. The average annual employment rate for people with disabilities was 22.5% compared to a rate of 65% for those who are not disabled. In 2023, barriers to employment range from: a physical work environment that can be difficult to navigate; a lack of assistive tools that provide needed accommodations to complete work tasks; and negative attitudes in the workplace that are unsupportive. In short, there is lack of programs, services, and systems to support people with disabilities in obtaining and maintaining employment. Employers fear a disruption and the added expenses that believe will be required accommodating employees with disabilities in the workplace.

### iii. 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, MBA certification appears frequently regardless of sector, because all industries have managers.

The below table summarizes the most prevalent occupations, general skills, specialized skills, and certifications in each employment sector. Communication was one of the most-demanded common or general skills in every industry. Nearly all industries also show demand for management skills. In-demand specialized skills vary by industry, but the majority of sectors had project management among their top three. Certifications in demand varied by sector, but MBA and CDL Class A were among the most common. All industries require managers, and goods-producing industries typically ship goods by truck. Job postings for Registered Nurse certification were prevalent in several sectors other than health care, which can include school nurses and staff at county-owned nursing facilities.

The most-prevalent certifications in job postings might not correspond to the occupations or skills with the most job postings. For example, the most common occupation in job postings for the Professional & Business Services was software developer, and the most common certification was MBA, but an MBA is not required for software development. Job posting data by certification are often more fragmented than job postings by occupation, as there could be multiple educational and employment backgrounds leading to the same types of jobs. Further, some job postings appear frequently because jobs have high turnover or are hard to fill, rather than due to growth.

Sector	Example Occupations	Common Skills	Specialized Skills	Certifications
 Manufacturing	Production Workers, Sales Representatives, Maintenance Workers	Communication, Management, Operations	Project Management, Continuous Improvement Processes, Marketing	MBA, CDL, Forklift Certification
 Transportation & Warehousing	Truck Drivers, Laborers & Movers, Driver/Sales Workers	Communication, Operations, Customer Service	Truck Driving, Warehousing, Lifting Ability	CDL Class A, Forklift Certification, Hazmat Endorsement
 Government	Patrol Officers, Home Health & Personal Care Aides, Secretaries & Administrative Assistants	Communication, Operations, Management	Sign Language Interpretation, Auditing, Social Work	CPR & defibrillator, First Aid, Registered Nurse
 Health Care & Social Assistance	Registered Nurse, Home Health Aides, Health Technicians	Communication, Customer Service, Leadership	Nursing, Medical Records, Home Health Care	Registered Nurse, Basic Life Support, CPR
 Education (public & private)	Postsecondary teachers, Secondary school teachers, Teaching assistants	Communication, Teaching, Research	Statistics, Lesson Planning, Student Services	Teaching certificate, Board Certified, Registered Nurse
 Construction	Construction Managers, Project Management Specialists, Sales Representatives	Communication, Customer Service, Management	Construction, Project Management, Subcontracting	30-Hour OSHA, CDL Class A, CPR
 Wholesale Trade	Laborers and Movers, Sales Representatives, Truck Drivers	Communication, Sales, Customer Service	Warehousing, Marketing, Lifting Ability	CDL Class A, MBA, Forklift Certification
 Utilities	Electrical Engineers, Project Management Specialists, Nuclear Power Reactor Operators	Operations, Communication, Management	Project Management, Emergency Response, Construction	Professional Engineer License, MBA, Reactor Operator License
 Retail Trade	Retail Salespersons, First-Line Supervisors of Retail Workers, Stockers & Order Fillers	Customer Service, Sales, Communication	Merchandising, Selling Techniques, Cash Register	Certified Pharmacy Technician, Registered Pharmacist, Automotive Service Excellence Certification
 Leisure & Hospitality	Food Service Managers, Food Preparation Workers, Fast Food & Counter Workers	Customer Service, Communication, Management	Restaurant Operation, Food Safety & Sanitation, Lifting Ability	ServSafe Certification (food & beverage handling), CPR & defibrillator, Food Handler's Card
 Financial Activities	Financial Services Sales Agents, Financial Managers, Software Developers	Communication, Management, Customer Service	Financial Services, Marketing, Finance	MBA, FINRA Series 7 (securities representative), Nationwide Mortgage Licensing System
 Information (e.g., telecommunications, data processing)	Sales Representatives, Software Developers, Retail Salespersons	Communication, Sales, Customer Service	Marketing, Selling Techniques, Project Management	MBA, CPA, Internet and Computing Core Certification
 Professional & Business Services	Software Developers, "All Other" Computer Occupations (e.g., cloud engineers, systems engineers), Financial Managers	Communication, Management, Leadership	Project Management, Marketing, Finance	MBA, Professional Engineer, Project Management Professional
 Other Services (e.g., repair & maintenance)	Hairdressers, Automotive Service Technicians, Retail Salespersons	Communication, Customer Service, Management	Lifting Ability, Marketing, Cosmetology	Barber License, CPR, Cosmetology License
 Natural Resources	Agricultural Equipment Operators, Farmworkers and Laborers, Construction Managers	Communication, Operations, Management	Lifting Ability, Project Management, Construction	CDL Class A, American Registry of Radiologic Technologists Certified, CPR

Source: Lightcast, December 2024 – December 2025.

## *B. Workforce Analysis*

### i. 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 August 2025, the Illinois unemployment rate (seasonally adjusted) was 4.4% and the national unemployment rate was 4.3%.

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. These trends have remained relatively consistent for July 2007 through July 2025.

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. As of July 2025, the unemployment rate for white persons was 4.0%, the Hispanic unemployment rate was 5.8%, and the African American unemployment rate was 7.7%.

Although Illinois has a slightly 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 2025 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. As of August 2025, the Illinois labor force participation rate was 64.2% (seasonally adjusted), compared to 62.3% nationally.

Unemployment varies considerably within Illinois, by region and by county. As of August 2025 (not seasonally adjusted), the region with the highest unemployment rate is the Northern Stateline, with a rate of 5.2% compared to 4.7% statewide. The southwestern region had the lowest unemployment rate at 4.4%. Unemployment rates can also differ within regions. For example, the Southern region has a 5.0% unemployment rate, but the rate is 7.7% in Alexander County and 6.9% in Pulaski County.

## Individuals with Disabilities

To provide information on the national labor force characteristics for those with and without disabilities, data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics from the U.S. Department of Labor is being referenced. In 2024, people with disabilities had an employment-population ratio of 22.7%. This rate represented an increase of 0.2% points over the previous year. For people without disabilities, the employment-population ratio was 65.5%. The rate decreased by 0.3% from the previous year. There are several noteworthy statistics on the population with disabilities. They include the following:

- In terms of age, half of people with disabilities are age 65 years and older.
- The employment-population ratio was significantly lower for people with disabilities across all age groups, when compared to their non-disabled peers.
- The rates of unemployment were significantly higher for people with disabilities as compared to people without disabilities for those across all educational backgrounds. Nationally, workers with disabilities typically need a bachelor's degree to reach an unemployment rate resembling that of the labor force overall.
- Those working in part time status are almost twice as likely to be a person with a disability.
- People who were self-employed were more likely to be people with a disability than a person without a disability- 9.2% of workers with disabilities are self-employed, compared to 6% of workers without disabilities.

### ii. Labor Market Trends

Artificial Intelligence and the Workforce Artificial Intelligence, or AI, is poised to threaten the jobs of highly educated workers in much the same way manufacturing automation threatened and reduced the number of blue-collar jobs. AI is now on the brink of automating tasks that many thought could not be automated, and is doing so at a quick pace. Potential jobs at risk of being taken on by AI include copywriters, paralegals, digital content producers, and executive assistants. Globally, generative AI threatens about 300 million jobs with automation[1]. Additionally, Goldman Sachs predicts that about two-thirds of current jobs in the United States and Europe have some degree of exposure to AI automation.

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 needing 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 for 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 Labor**

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.

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.

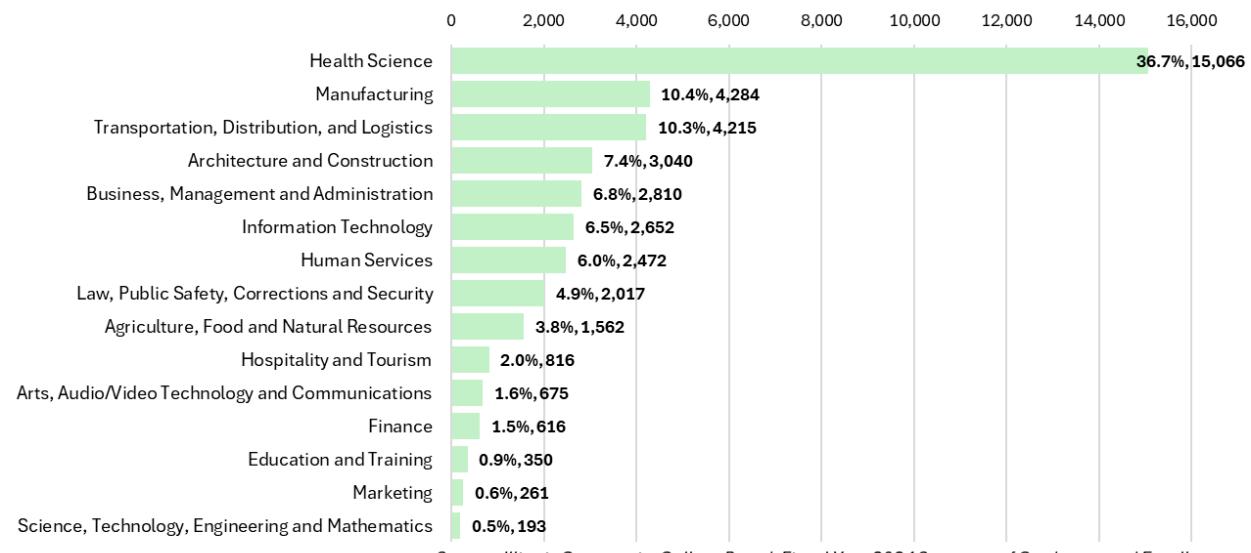
The Illinois Future of Work Task Force examined the opportunities and challenges facing the state's labor market through a lens of creating equitable access to quality jobs, education and training opportunities in a way that supports employers and workers alike. The task force found that shifts away 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.

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

The most recent completer data for the statewide community college system indicates over 19,600, or 40%, of graduates completed an Associate level award designed to transfer into baccalaureate programs of study. Additionally, over 9,400 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 more than 41,000 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) Architecture and Construction; and 5) Business, Management and Administration. A complete breakout is provided in the table below.

## FY 2024 Associate's Degree Completions by Career Cluster



Source: Illinois Community College Board, Fiscal Year 2024 Summary of Graduates and Enrollments.

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% to 22.3% and the share of residents with a graduate or professional degree increased from 11.4% to 14.9%.

According to the 2019-2023 American Community Survey, the largest share of bachelor's degree holders in Illinois majored in science and engineering fields (33.9% 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, such as pre-medical or engineering technology. In the science and engineering related fields, some job seekers instead pursue associate's degrees or postgraduate degrees.

In 2024, there were 64,195 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. Visual arts, computer sciences, and engineering each represented about 6% of bachelor's degree completions.

## Bachelor's Degree Completions in FY24

Curriculum Group (CIP2)	Completions	Share
Total, all Bachelor's Degrees	64,195	
Health Professions and Related Programs	13,264	20.7%
Business, Management, Marketing, and Related Support Services	9,515	14.8%
Visual and Performing Arts	3,925	6.1%
Computer and Information Sciences and Support Services	3,904	6.1%
Engineering	3,833	6.0%
Psychology	3,745	5.8%
Education	3,575	5.6%
Social Sciences	3,538	5.5%
Biological and Biomedical Sciences	3,517	5.5%
All Other, <5% Each	15,379	24.0%

Source: *Illinois Board of Higher Education, 2024.*

There were 46,031 Masters' Degree completions in 2024. 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 computer science.

#### Masters' Degree Completions in 2024

Curriculum Group (CIP2)	Completions	Share
Total, All Masters Degree Completions	46,031	
Business, Management, Marketing, and Related Support Services	10,805	23.5%
Health Professions and Related Programs	8,937	19.4%
Computer and Information Sciences and Support Services	5,213	11.3%
Education	4,437	9.6%
Public Administration and Social Service Professions	2,199	4.8%
Engineering	1,933	4.2%
Psychology	1,631	3.5%
Social Sciences	1,360	3.0%
Multi/Interdisciplinary Studies	1,268	2.8%
Visual and Performing Arts	962	2.1%
All Other, <2% Each	7,286	15.8%

Source: *Illinois Board of Higher Education, 2024.*

There were 9,693 doctoral completions in 2024. By far the largest category for doctoral completions was health professions, which represented 42.8% of completions. Within the health professions, the two most common specializations were medicine and nursing

practice, both with about 1,000 completions. The second largest category was legal professions at 17.7%, including law degrees. Education was the third largest category, representing 5.3% of doctoral completions.

#### Doctoral Degree Completions in 2024

Curriculum Group (CIP2)	Completions	Share
Total, All Doctoral Completions	9,693	
Health Professions and Related Programs	4,149	42.8%
Legal Professions and Studies	1,920	19.8%
Education	563	5.8%
Engineering	516	5.3%
Psychology	465	4.8%
Physical Sciences	334	3.4%
Biological and Biomedical Sciences	319	3.3%
Social Sciences	241	2.5%
All Other, <2% Each	1,186	12.2%

Source: *Illinois Board of Higher Education, 2024.*

[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://universityservices.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>

#### iv. 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 nearly 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, retail trade, and government.

- 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 home health care.
- Each employment sector has unique employment needs, but several specialized skills are currently in demand across multiple sectors.
  - CDL truck driving is needed in manufacturing, transportation & warehousing, construction, wholesale trade, and natural resources.
  - Project management is necessary for utilities, other services, information (e.g., data processing, telecommunications), and manufacturing.
  - Marketing is a specialized skill required in manufacturing, wholesale trade, financial activities, information, professional services, other services, and natural resources.

#### Skill Gaps, Labor Market Alignment, and Areas of Development Opportunity

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 more than a bachelor's degree, and there were slight shortages for occupations requiring an associate's degree or 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:
  - Associate degree programs for computer user support specialists, computer network support specialists, and clinical laboratory technologists. However, the clinical lab program attracts a considerable number of international students who might not find employment in Illinois.

- Bachelor's degree programs for market research specialists and business operations specialists
- Graduate programs for management occupations in finance, sales, marketing, and medical services. These occupations have different work responsibilities and skill requirements but overlapping education requirements.
  - Each of the top seven graduate-level occupations by job openings had a surplus of completers. The lowest surplus was for software development, which had 1.1 completer per job opening.
- Occupations with large shortages of completers relative to job openings include:
  - Certificate programs for truck drivers, teaching assistants, childcare workers, and exercise trainers.
  - Associate's degree programs for registered nurses, preschool teachers, paralegals, and physical therapist assistants.
  - Bachelor's degree programs for general managers and elementary school teachers.

The gap analysis is based on occupational employment forecasts from the Illinois Department of Employment Security, counts of completers by curriculum from the Illinois Board of Higher Education, and a crosswalk of occupations to curricula from Lightcast. Lightcast developed their crosswalk from data from the National Center for Education Statistics and their consulting experience with education providers and economic/workforce development agencies. The Learn More, Earn More publication from IDES shows the seven occupations at each education level with the most projected job openings due to growth, turnover, and replacement.<sup>[1]</sup>

Education requirement data are based on analysis by the Bureau of Labor Statistics showing the education level most commonly held by employees at entry level for the occupation. The analysis is based on national employee surveys from O\*NET and individual-level American Community Survey data on occupations and educational attainment.

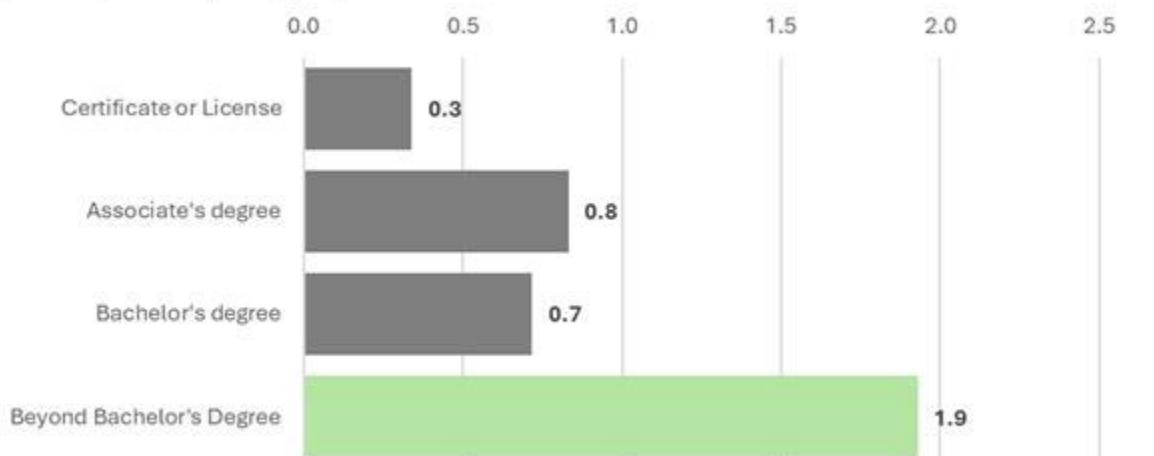
To determine potential labor market supply gaps, we examine ratios of projected annual job openings to the number of suitable completers from the past year. Suitable completers are specific to the education level for each occupation- e.g., certificates are not counted in the supply for occupations requiring a bachelor's degree. A gap ratio of 1 indicates one completer per job opening, and it can be considered an equilibrium or break-even point. Gap ratios below 1 indicate fewer completers than job openings. They might be favorable for job seekers if they face less competition when applying for jobs, but they

might also suggest businesses will have difficulty hiring qualified candidates. Gap ratios above 1 indicate surpluses of completers relative to job openings. These are favorable for businesses, given that they might have more qualified job applicants and could hire more selectively.

Care must be taken when interpreting gap ratios, as the supply of potential workers for a given occupation might not be limited to recent completers in the state. Workers can substitute education requirements for related work experience. Jobs could be filled by out-of-state graduates who might work remotely, relocate, or commute to companies along state borders. Similarly, the gap ratios do not include underemployed persons who completed a suitable program in a prior year. Finally, some programs might have completer surpluses because they attract out-of-state or international students who might not remain in Illinois after graduating. Regardless, the gap ratios provide an initial summary of the talent pipeline for jobs with the most openings.

Overall, Illinois has a shortage of completers for the top 7 occupations at all education levels below a graduate level, and there is a surplus of completers for the top 7 occupations requiring more than a bachelor's degree.

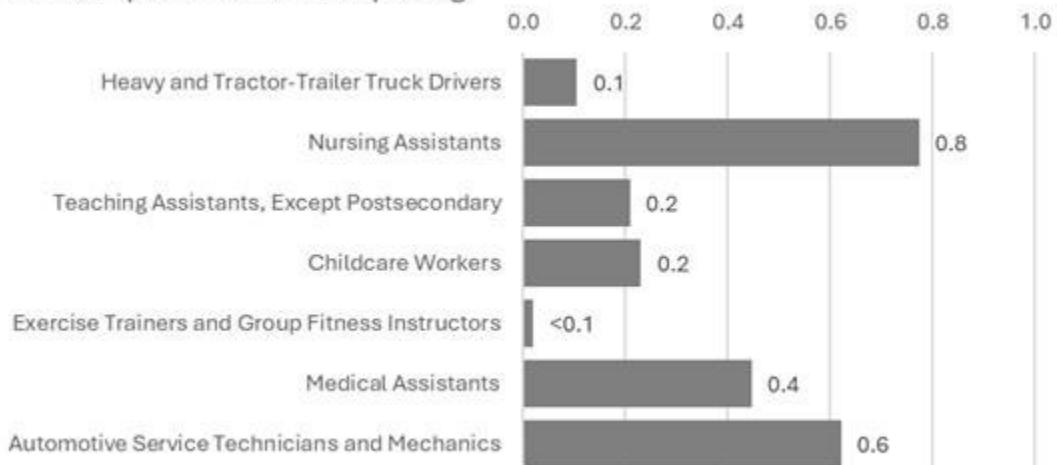
Completions per Job Opening, Top 7 Jobs at Each Education Level



Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security, 2022-2032 employment projections & Illinois State Board of Education, 2024. Crosswalk of education to occupations adapted from Lightcast.

There was a shortage of completers for the top 7 occupations requiring a certificate or license. Truck driving has about 10 job openings per completer (gap ratio of 0.1), and nursing assistants and teaching assistants have about 5 job openings per completer. Registered nursing has a slight shortage of completers.

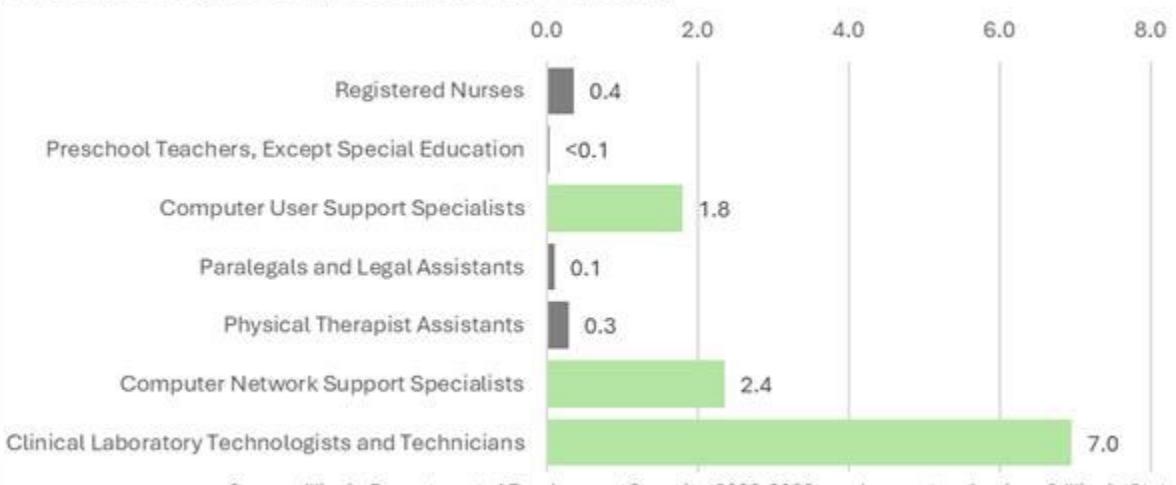
## Certificate Completions Per Job Opening



Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security, 2022-2032 employment projections & Illinois State Board of Education, 2024. Crosswalk of education to occupations adapted from Lightcast.

At the associate's degree level, some occupations have surpluses while others have shortages. There were 7 associate's degree completions for clinical lab technicians per job opening. There were 2.4 completers per job opening for computer network support specialists and 1.8 completers per opening for computer user support specialists. These occupations have some overlapping curricula. There was a shortage of completers for registered nursing, preschool teachers, paralegals, and physical therapist assistants.

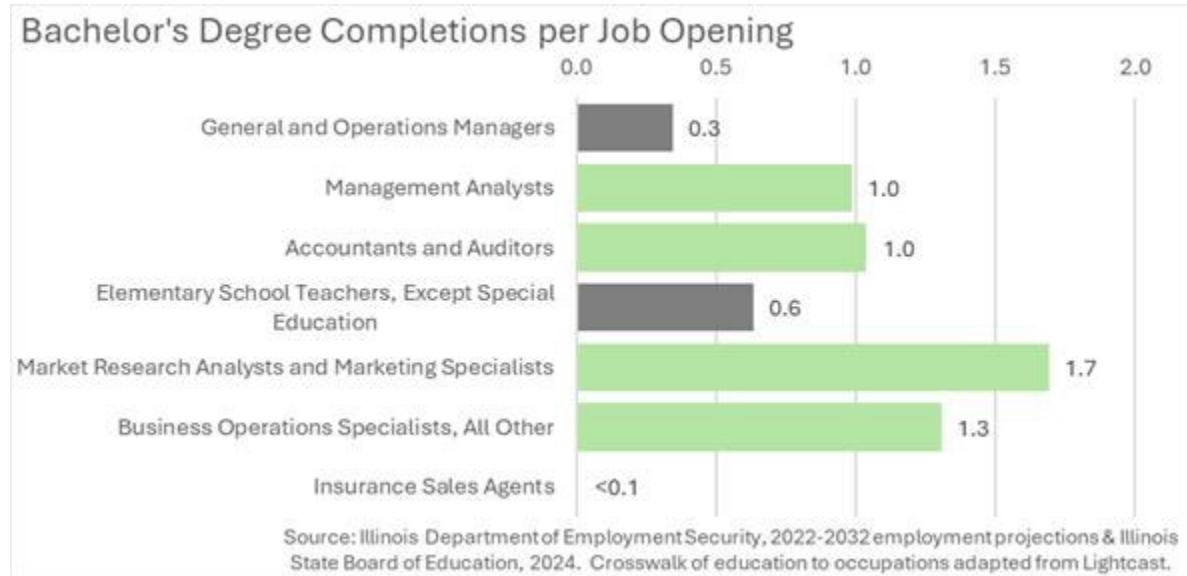
## Associate's Degree Completions per Job Opening



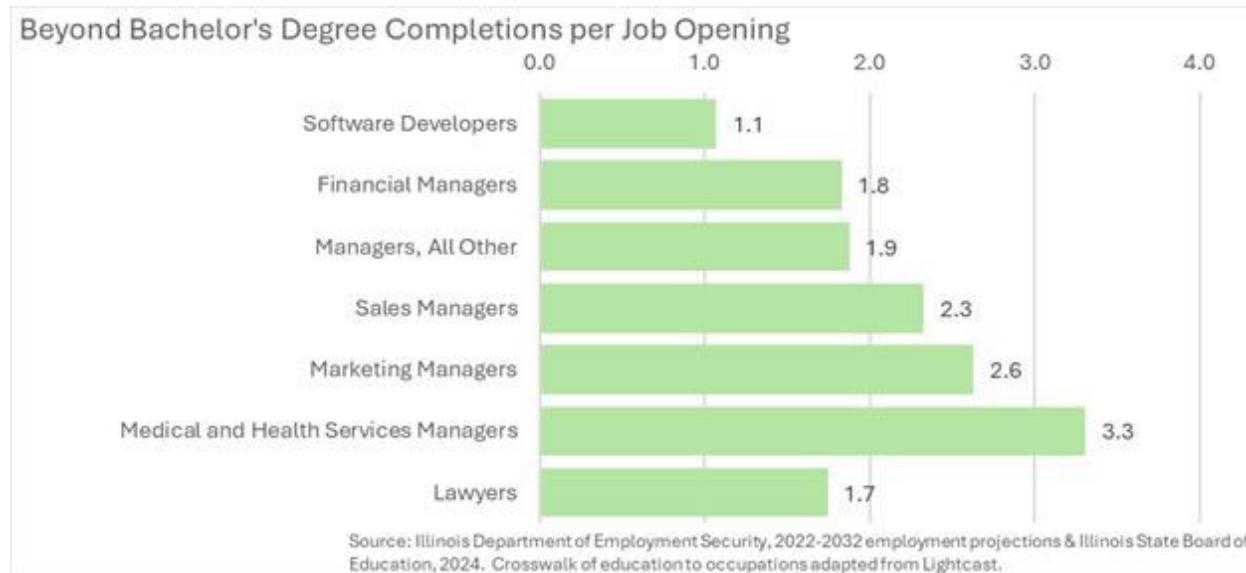
Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security, 2022-2032 employment projections & Illinois State Board of Education, 2024. Crosswalk of education to occupations adapted from Lightcast.

Four of the top seven bachelor's degree occupations have a balance or surplus of completers relative to job openings. The number of completers for management analysts and accountants were in line with the number of job openings. There was a surplus of

completers for market research and business operations. There were shortages of completers for general managers, elementary teachers, and insurance sales agents.



There were surpluses of completers for each of the top 7 occupations requiring education beyond a bachelor's degree. The number of graduate completions for software development slightly exceeded the number of job openings. Several of the graduate-level occupations with large numbers of job openings relate to management and have some overlapping curricula. The largest surplus at the graduate level was for medical and health services managers with 3.3 completers per job opening. Some graduate completers might find employment outside Illinois.



<sup>11</sup> Learn More, Earn More also includes job openings at various levels of on-the-job training. These are excluded from the gap analysis, as they do not require training prior to employment.

As of 2024, 7.5% of the labor force with disabilities was unemployed, and the rate was the same for men and women. In 2023, the unemployment rate for persons with disabilities was 7.2% with no difference by sex. The unemployment rate of African Americans with disabilities was 10.7% in 2024, which was 0.5% higher than in 2023. The unemployment rate for Asians with disabilities decreased from 7.0% to 6.3%. Unemployment rates for white and Hispanic persons with disabilities remained stable over the past year. The rate for white persons with disabilities increased from 6.7% to 6.9%. For Hispanic persons, the rate increased from 9.2% to 9.4%.

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

### *A. 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 Illinoisans 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), Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, is the primary legislation supporting adult education and literacy

services. AEFLA is designed to support adults acquire the foundational skills in math and reading necessary for obtaining a secondary school diploma, sustainable employment, postsecondary education, workforce training, and full participation in civic life. Title II is integrated into the broader workforce system by focusing on career pathways combining education, training, and wrap around support. Additionally, Title II emphasizes the integration of labor market data and coordination with local employers to improve the talent pipeline. 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 English Language and acquire the basic and more advanced language and workplace 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 of 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. These programs are designed to accelerate adult learner's progress toward postsecondary credential attainment and employment by concurrently and contextually delivering adult education, workforce preparation, and occupational skills training in partnership with Postsecondary Career and Technical Education

Aligned with the framework of *Building a Workforce for the Golden Age*, Title II's approach to IET programming targets high-growth, in-demand sectors and responds to demographic

and labor market needs through career pathway instruction with clearly defined entry points into occupational training programs for adults with foundational skill gaps and/or limited work experience.

### **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**

#### **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;; 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. The program was modeled off the Workforce Empowerment 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 able to enroll in healthcare programs.

### **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.

### **Workforce Empowerment Initiative (WEI)**

The purpose of WEI 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 70% of the students served be underrepresented students from disproportionately impacted areas. 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.

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.

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

##### **Strengths**

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.

In analyzing the State's effectiveness of the workforce development's activities considering people with disabilities, it starts with the identification of how many people with disabilities are being referred to and served by the Illinois Employment and Training Centers (workNet centers). At present time, the Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services has not yet implemented a system to track the data surrounding the number of people with disabilities being referred and served through workNet. This tracking represents an important step in capturing the State's effectiveness with this group of employment seekers.

### ***C. 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**

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..

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 inclusivity 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.

### **1. Illinois' Vision**

Illinois' workforce system will meet employers, jobseekers, and community members where they are, centering the customer experience in an interoperable, inclusive, 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
- Illinois Economic and Employment Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities Task Force Dignity in Pay Act Multi-Year Plan

## 2. Goals

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 responsive, inclusive and accessible.
4. Illinois' Workforce Development System will support the state's efforts to cultivate next-generation technologies, such as clean energy, bio-tech, artificial intelligence and quantum computing.

## 3. Performance Goals

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 2026 to come to agreement on performance outcomes for Program Years 2026 and 2027. For the Title I B 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 2026 and 2027. 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 – Defined as Retention with the Same Employer in the second and fourth quarters following a participant’s exit from a WIOA core program.

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.

On February 23, 2024, the Departments of Education and Labor (the Departments) published the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Effectiveness in Serving Employers (ESE) Performance Indicator final rule under Federal Register Number 89 FR 13814 with an effective date of March 25, 2024. The Departments issued formal guidance requiring state grantees to report the indicator as a shared indicator across the six core programs as required under WIOA section 116(b)(2). As part of the ESE pilot project requirements, Illinois has been reporting on this measure and will continue to report jointly through the Illinois Department of Employment Security. The Departments have not provided guidance on when this sixth performance indicator will be included in state performance negotiations.

Further, in accordance with WIOA Final Rules, and subsequent guidance, states will be assessed on two Overall State scores, the Overall State Program Score and Overall State Indicator Score . 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 WIOA core program.

The Departments have determined it is appropriate and reasonable to assess performance for the WIOA title I, III, and IV core programs for PY 2024 for the following performance indicators and scores as applicable:

- Employment Rate 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit;
- Median Earnings 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit;
- Employment Rate 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit;
- Credential Attainment Rate;
- Measurable Skill Gains;
- The Overall State Program Scores; and
- The Overall State Indicator Scores for Employment Rate 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit and Measurable Skill Gains.

The Departments have determined that it is appropriate and reasonable to assess performance for the WIOA title II program for PY 2024 for the following performance indicators as applicable:

- Employment Rate 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit; and
- Measurable Skill Gains.

The Departments have determined that the available baseline data are not sufficient to produce reliable estimates using the required statistical adjustment model for the

remaining performance indicators. Therefore, the Departments have determined it is necessary to use their transition

authority, pursuant to section 503(a) of WIOA, to delay assessment of:

- Effectiveness in Serving Employers for all WIOA core programs<sup>4</sup>;
- Median Earnings 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit, Employment Rate 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit, and Credential
- Attainment Rate for the WIOA title II core program;
- The Overall State Program Scores for the WIOA title II program.

This means the Departments will not assess performance for the purpose of imposing sanctions for the above performance indicators for PY 2024 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 2025.

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 the table below.

#### Performance Goals for Program Year 2026 and 2027

##### Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities - Adult Program Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	75.0%	N/A	75.0%	N/A

Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	75.5%	N/A	75.5%	N/A
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$8,500	N/A	\$8,500	N/A
Credential Attainment Rate	72.0%	N/A	72.0%	N/A
Measurable Skill Gains	65.0%	N/A	65.0%	N/A .0%
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, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities - Dislocated Program Performance Indicators*

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	78.5%	N/A	78.5%	N/A
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	79.5%	N/A	79.5%	N/A

Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$10,500	N/A	\$10,500	N/A
Credential Attainment Rate	72.5%	N/A	72.5%	N/A
Measurable Skill Gains	64.0%	N/A	64.0%	N/A
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, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities - Youth Program Performance Indicators*

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	75.0%	N/A	75.0%	N/A
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	75.0%	N/A	75.0%	N/A
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$4,500	N/A	\$4,500	N/A

Credential Attainment Rate	70.0%	N/A	70.0%	N/A
Measurable Skill Gains	63.0%	N/A	63.0%	N/A
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.*

#### *Wagner-Peyser Act - Wagner Peyser Program Performance Indicators*

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	65.0%	N/A	65.0%	N/A
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	66.0%	N/A	66.0%	N/A
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$8,100	N/A	\$8,100	N/A
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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<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 Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	27.0%	31.4	26.0%	31.5
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	27.6%	33.4	25.0%	34.5
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$4,926	6,050	4,927.00	6,150
Credential Attainment Rate	30.9%	31.8	28.9%	32.0
Measurable Skill Gains	37.1%	41.0	37.2%	41.5
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***

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	63.0%	63.0%	63.0%	63.4%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	53.5%	53.5%	53.5%	54.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$4,692	\$4,249	\$4,692	\$4,417
Credential Attainment Rate	34.9%	34.9%	34.9%	35.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	69.0%	69.0%	69.0%	69.5%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

#### 4. Assessment

Illinois will assess the effectiveness of its workforce development system by evaluating how system-level outcomes, partner alignment, and service delivery strategies advance

the strategic vision and goals of the WIOA State Plan. This assessment will be conducted on an ongoing basis through a coordinated process led by the State in collaboration with the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) and core and required partner agencies. The focus will be on measuring system-wide performance rather than evaluating individual programs in isolation.

System effectiveness will be measured through analysis of WIOA primary indicators of performance, supplemented by additional measures that reflect the State's strategic priorities, including service integration, responsiveness of the workforce system, and alignment with in-demand industries and occupations. The IWIB's Continuous Improvement and Accountability Committee (CIA) will review performance trends across core programs to determine whether collective efforts are producing improved employment, earnings, and credential outcomes and supporting the State's goals related to economic opportunity, employer engagement, and workforce system alignment. Disaggregated data will be used to assess progress in serving priority populations and reducing disparities.

Illinois will also assess effectiveness through evaluation findings, program monitoring results, and structured feedback from local workforce boards, employers, participants, and partner agencies. This qualitative and evaluative information will be used to examine how well policies, service strategies, and interagency coordination support the State's strategic vision, including the effectiveness of career pathways, sector-based approaches, regional planning, and integrated service delivery across programs. The CIA will review any pertinent findings and provide strategic oversight and recommendations to ensure that system-level conclusions inform statewide workforce policy and planning.

The results of these assessments will be used to support continuous and quality improvement across the workforce development system. Illinois will use performance and evaluation findings to guide policy revisions, strengthen guidance to local areas, refine performance expectations, and prioritize technical assistance and capacity-building efforts. System-level findings will also inform resource alignment decisions and future updates to the State Plan. Through this structured approach, Illinois will ensure that assessment results are actively used to improve system effectiveness, reinforce alignment with the State's strategic vision, and enhance outcomes for jobseekers, workers, and employers statewide.

## **c. STATE STRATEGY**

### **Goal 1 Strategies**

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

Illinois will continue to integrate a customer-centered approach to state's workforce development system. This will include but is not limited to:

- Regularly convening core and required partners to facilitate conversation and ensure service delivery practices address customer-centered concerns;
- Reviewing the current enrollment and referral processes for efficiencies, both from a customer point of view and from a staffing perspective;
- Performing a complete assessment of the physical and virtual footprint of the American Job Centers in the state; and
- Regularly convening meetings of state entities responsible for core and required programs and local service providers to address needs related to customer-centered service delivery.

*Strategy: The Workforce Development System is responsive, inclusive and accessible.*

Illinois will build on the work that leads to a responsive, inclusive and accessible system. This will include but is not limited to:

- Creating a pilot program for identifying and creating long-term partnerships with employers offering good jobs, and to create strategic, flexible career pathways to good jobs that take into account local labor market needs;
- Disaggregating data from core and required partners to understand areas where access within the workforce system need addressed;
- Support immigrants and migrants through appropriate and allowable services; and
- Ensuring that individuals with a disability have access to assistive technology throughout the workforce development, access to employer networks/Ticket-To-Work programs, and a coordinated network of organizations to meet their needs.

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

Core and required partners in Illinois have a long history of collaborating with other workforce and education systems in Illinois. A formalized communication system built on monthly meetings with core partners, required partners and other workforce and

education system representatives will be utilized to address needs as they arise and identify areas where further coordination and collaboration are needed.

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

Based on feedback from individuals, jobseekers, employers and local workforce area staff, Illinois will seek ways to increase the awareness of how the workforce development system can serve customers. This includes but is not limited to:

- Reviewing how the workforce development system is branded in Illinois;
- Reviewing avenues that are currently used to make individuals and employers aware of the workforce development system; and
- Suggesting pathways for broadening general awareness of the workforce development system;

*Strategy: The state enhances local service delivery through supporting development to frontline workers.*

Illinois has a robust system of providing professional development and technical assistance, such as weekly webinars, an asynchronous learning management system; virtual round tables and more. It will utilize these avenues to provide training to local frontline workers that address a variety of needs. This includes but is not limited to:

- Professional development on trauma informed service delivery, how to be an advocate for individuals, how to build employer partnerships, and how to utilize apprenticeships to support individuals and employers;
- Technical assistance relating to cross-training of staff on the services offered through WIOA and best practices for developing local policies and procedures.

## Goal 2 Strategies

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

Illinois has several pathways for supporting employers as they navigate the labor market. It will utilize these pathways to enhance employers' talent strategies. This includes but is not limited to:

- Facilitating industry champions in emerging and growing sectors that can be ambassadors for the workforce development system in local areas;

- Providing training to executive-level employees about Talent Pipeline Management sector strategies;
- Expanding the use of apprenticeships to better align core and required partners, funding sources and services to best serve individuals and employers; and
- Expand employers' awareness and use of existing pools of employees that have traditionally been overlooked such as justice-impacted individuals and individuals with disabilities.

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

Illinois will coordinate business services and the work of the state's workforce development board to provide a seamless, holistic experience for employers utilizing the workforce development system. These efforts will be coordinated by the various core partners' business service teams and the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board's Business Engagement Committee.

*Strategy: The Workforce Development System builds out tools and practices that can help employers adopt a culture that is responsive, inclusive and accessible to all employees and jobseekers.*

Local workforce development areas and employers have voiced a desire to improve their talent pipeline and provide opportunities for populations with barriers to employment, such as immigrants, justice-impacted individuals and individuals with disabilities. Illinois will explore what employers with a record of success in building talent pipelines that reach populations with barriers to employment are doing, as well as what other states' workforce development systems are doing and adopt best practices here.

### Goal 3 Strategies

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

Illinois will empower individuals as they navigate the labor market to find career pathways that provide good jobs. This could include utilizing career navigators in local workforce areas to help individuals find and retain high-quality jobs.

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

Illinois will explore service delivery beyond the traditional one-stop center model of to provide services to individuals in places they live and visit. Several local workforce areas in

the state are already experimenting with techniques to reach jobseekers and individuals outside of the one-stop centers. The state will review those practices and determine best practices that could be applied throughout Illinois. The state will also begin to explore what a virtual footprint looks like for service delivery, building on lessons learned during the pandemic.

*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.*

Core and required partners will review data of recent and current individuals who access services first to confirm that it is accurate, reliable and usable. Once good data is identified, the core and required partners will establish a process to extrapolate, where possible, what the data shows about existing barriers to services and how to reduce those barriers.

#### **Goal 4 Strategy**

*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, artificial intelligence and solar energy.*

Illinois will remain at the forefront of new and emerging industries to ensure it can attract new employers and provide individuals with career pathways in those fields. The state will work with education and workforce agencies to collaborate on education and training to meet the workforce needs of those emerging sectors.

## III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

### a. STATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

#### 1. State Board Functions

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 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's Workforce Development System.

The IWIB works closely with the Office of the Governor and their leadership team to develop the state's workforce development plan, align workforce development programs to function as a simplified workforce development system, support the continuous improvement of the workforce system, and perform other functions outlined in the WIOA

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.

IWIB's Vision is for a Thriving Economy and Equitable Prosperity for All Illinoisans. That is supported by a mission "help Illinois communities achieve and sustain economic prosperity by championing strategies and aligning organizations and partners statewide to deliver quality education, training, and workforce development services to employers, workers, job seekers, and learners."

In partnership with the Office of the Governor's office, the IWIB advances this mission by:

- Setting and communicating a vision for the Illinois workforce system, particularly as it relates to the use of WIOA dollars and the impact to programs governed by WIOA Titles I, II, III, and IV.
- Hosting critical conversations to foster innovation and better align stakeholder efforts and resources; facilitating public-private partnerships; supporting sector strategies and career pathways, including education, training, and employment.
- Supporting continuous improvement in system performance, enabling data-based decision-making, evaluating success, and revising plans appropriately.
- Identifying barriers, providing solutions, and avoiding duplication of services.
- Sharing best practices and innovative solutions.

**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.

**Customer-Centered Design:**

Executing a customer-centered service delivery model aims to ensure equitable outcomes and enhance satisfaction for both businesses and job seekers. This approach focuses on addressing challenges to employment and creating career pathways for all clients -- leading 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 Communication and Stakeholder Engagement Committee.

The IWIB works to expand and strengthen meaningful public-private partnerships through the efforts of the Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship Committee, enhancing both the quantity and quality of these collaborations.

Through the Continuous Improvement and Accountability Committee, IWIB promotes data-driven and demand-driven workforce and education initiatives, providing system-wide support for evaluation and performance improvement.

Additionally, IWIB leverages the WIOA system infrastructure to align and integrate economic development, workforce development, and education initiatives—advancing sector partnerships and career pathways across Illinois.

Each committee operates under specific charges and priorities outlined in the IWIB 2025–2030 Strategic Plan, with coordination provided by the Executive Committee.

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

## 2. Implementation of State Strategy

### *A. 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 and to programs outside of WIOA will be examined, especially programs that support individuals with disabilities and barriers to employment.
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.
5. **ACTIVITY:** The Workforce Development System will undertake planning and coordination efforts with the appropriate agencies to understand and respond to changes in SNAP work requirements and to explore opportunities for alignment with workforce system strategies.

The Workforce Development System is responsive, inclusive and accessible.

1. **ACTIVITY:** Data will be disaggregated to uncover areas where access needs improvement. That state will review data to make sure it is good data. Illinois will then examine areas where new or different service delivery practices can be implemented to ensure individuals with disabilities and barriers to employment are able to find good career pathways.
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 and migrants: Core partners will explore how to provide the appropriate and allowable support the ongoing influx of immigrants and migrants entering Illinois, including working with the Illinois Office of New Arrivals to coordinate services.
5. **ACTIVITY:** Ensuring that individuals with a disability have access to assistive technology throughout the workforce development, access to employer networks/Ticket-To-Work programs, and a coordinated network of organizations to meet their needs.
6. **ACTIVITY:** The Workforce Development System will assist in the creation of cross-agency tools to support employment exploration and planning for individuals with disabilities pursuing competitive integrated employment.

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.
3. **ACTIVITY:** The Workforce Development System will explore and advance strategies to align the workforce development system with Workforce Pell opportunities to expand access to education and training that supports in-demand occupations. This effort will focus on planning, coordination, and ongoing collaboration between workforce and education partners to identify opportunities for alignment, reduce barriers for participants, and support informed use of available funding sources.

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 support customers' evolving needs.

The Workforce Development System explores the responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI) in service delivery.

1. **ACTIVITY:** The Workforce Development System will undertake planning and exploratory activities to assess potential opportunities for the use of AI in workforce service delivery, including engaging partners, reviewing emerging best practices, and considering how AI-enabled tools could support staff, improve customer experience, and complement existing service models.

## **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 Communication and Stakeholder Engagement Committee will establish a network of industry champions and a community of practice for each targeted industry in the state. The committee 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 committee 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 Illinois Workforce Innovation Board's Communication and Stakeholder Engagement Committee 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 education, workforce, and economic development 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. Illinois will continue to support youth apprenticeship development.
4. **ACTIVITY:** Strengthen State Infrastructure for Work-Based Learning: Illinois will strengthen state infrastructure, expand and support business engagement, address barriers to participation, and strengthen data systems for work-based learning in the state.
5. **ACTIVITY:** Expanding Awareness and use of Existing Pools of Employees: Illinois will support both advancing an 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 inclusivity 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 is inclusive, accessible and responsive.
2. **ACTIVITY:** Illinois will also explore using existing inclusive and accessibility tools to help local workforce areas support employers' inclusive 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, artificial intelligence 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.

The Workforce Development System explores workforce training opportunities related to artificial intelligence (AI) to support workers' ability to adapt to changing skill demands across industries.

1. **ACTIVITY:** The Workforce Development System will engage in planning and coordination activities to assess AI-related training needs and opportunities, including reviewing labor market information, engaging education and industry partners, and exploring how AI-related concepts and skills could be integrated into existing training and career pathway programs.

#### *B. 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. Illinois has a special focus on serving individuals with disability and individuals with

barriers to employment, both through WIOA and other programs. Many plans and stakeholders consulted for the development of this plan listed below address those populations. They include:

- Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's Five-Year Economic Development Plan
- Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) Five-Year Plan
- Illinois' State Career and Technical Education Plan
- 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
- Illinois Department of Human Services 2023 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment
- Illinois Economic and Employment Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities Task Force Dignity in Pay Act Multi-Year Plan
- Illinois Office of New Arrivals

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 state-funded 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*

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

Activities are coordinated between core and required partners, local service providers and others through several processes. Interagency teams meet on a regular basis to ensure coordination of service delivery 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.

Plans include how economic development regions will coordinate with local workforce areas to provide supportive services to individuals with disabilities, barriers to employment and barriers to accessing WIOA services. Supportive services addressed include transportation, childcare and access to other, local community services.

#### **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.

Local partners and the LWIB must further describe in the MOU and budget features or methods to ensure the comprehensive one-stop center and any designated affiliate sites or specialized centers provide access to all required career services in the most inclusive and appropriate settings for each individual participant, including assuring that individuals with barriers to employment, such as individuals with disabilities, can access available services.

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 AEFLA Title II, 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 like 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*

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 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 specialists 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 Specialists and Integrated Business Service Teams**

Illinois will continue to refine and evolve apprenticeship expansion efforts based on feedback and need. Apprenticeship specialist 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 specialists
- Developing new strategies for communicating the value of workforce diversity to employers and proactively creating strategies that lead to historically underrepresented individuals entering and succeeding in registered apprenticeship programs.

Apprenticeship specialists 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.

### **Vocation Rehabilitation Outreach**

IDHS-DRS' vocational rehabilitation (VR) program assists individuals with disabilities in preparing for, obtaining, and maintaining quality competitive employment, with the goal of supporting customers in securing quality employment that pays a competitive salary and offers an opportunity for job growth. To achieve its goals, DRS will continue to increase engagement with Local Workforce Investment Boards, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act partners, and the DRS presence and involvement in local one-stop centers. DRS has an Office Supervisor or a Manager as member on 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 sharing 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.

#### *E. Partner Engagement with Educational Institutions and other Education and Training Providers.*

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

The Illinois Community College System covers the entire state with 45 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 mechanisms 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.

WEX 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. 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*

### **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 and scale is substantial. In state fiscal year 2024, Illinois community colleges served 1,729 apprentices across both registered and unregistered programs. Eighty (80) percent of community college districts (36) in Illinois offer apprenticeship programming. This has grown significantly in the last five years. 53% offer pre-apprenticeship opportunities via adult education or K-12 partnerships. There are 241 unique apprenticeship programs offered by or provided in partnership with community colleges, with 194 registered with the U.S. Department of Labor. Although there is significant variety, the majority of programs are in manufacturing, healthcare, and information technology. This type of variation by sector is unmatched by other providers, whereas most programs typically fall in the construction trades. While the primary role of the community college is to provide related technical instruction, a required component of an apprenticeship program, 32% reported serving as an intermediary, acting as a convener, providing outreach and technical assistance to employers and other stakeholders to grow apprenticeships, and 25% reported serving as a program sponsor for U.S. Department of Labor registered apprenticeship programs, alleviating the administrative burden from employers.

### **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*

### **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

In 2024 Illinois plans to provide training in the US Chamber of Commerce Talent Pipeline Management sector strategies to additional Title I and Title III local business service team staff. The intent is to establish a better understanding of business and community

economic development needs which will lead to more effective utilization of WIOA services. Regional Talent Pipeline Management employer collaboratives will develop their own primary data to augment Bureau of Labor Statistics labor market information to establish workforce priorities. The State will continue to encourage connections to regional and local economic development agencies and business and industry organizations and associations to foster direct linkages to economic and business development.

## **b. STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS**

### **1. State Operating Systems that Support Coordinated Implementation of State Strategies**

#### *WIOA Title IB – Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO)*

WIOA Title IB is overseen by DCEO. The Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs case management system is known as the Illinois Workforce Development System (IWDS). The IWDS provides electronic storage of users, customers, applications, providers, services and grants for local workforce innovation areas (LWIAs). IWDS is designed to specifically address WIOA Title I policy, procedure and reporting requirements. It is integrated fully with the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program and Illinois Employment and Business System (IEBS) Rapid Response Dislocated Worker Tracking and event assignment information.

Key functional elements of IWDS are: 1) customer management and case notes; 2) application management that includes an imbedded logic to ensure WIOA policy compliance, particularly regarding assessment, eligibility and service assignment; 3) service providers, employers, training providers and training program information tied to participants and participant outcomes; 4) service tracking and outcomes; 5) performance management via selection from a reporting menu in which a viewer can print and save standard reports; 6) DOL PIRL and WIPS reporting system of record for WIOA Title I. IWDS contains shared data uploaded via secure batch file processes to display Illinois Employment Security UI profile data, UI wage data Trade Readjustment Allowances / Alternative Adjustment Assistance (TRA/ATTA) payments. IWDS also has access to State Workforce Information System (SWIS) data and the Illinois Department of Human Services allows access to SNAP/TANF data to facilitate eligibility assurance.

This legacy system has continued to be updated on a timely basis to accommodate all necessary WIOA assessment, eligibility, service and training changes, and performance and reporting outcomes deliverables to stay in compliance and meet deadlines. Chicago Career Workforce Partnership (CCWP), the largest LWIA in Illinois utilizes a Geographic

Solutions system “Career Connect”. IWDS has API with Career Connect to download real time participant data into IWDS database for client management and DOL reporting activities. While ongoing updates have maintained IWDS functionality, the 30-year-old system is approaching its technical end of life.

The process to replace IWDS with a modern, more robust system is now in the final stages of discovery and development as it leads towards deployment of a new system IWDS 2.0. The current plan calls for the new system to be in place by July 1, 2026. This new system is based on customer-centered design principles, will be more intuitive and user friendly, and enhances reporting capabilities for better customer flow and to maximize performance outcomes.

#### ***WIOA Title II – Illinois Community College Board (ICCB)***

The Adult Education and Literacy Act is administered through the ICCB. The Adult Education program uses a web-based system to collect data from 70 programs throughout the state. The State Management Information System collects pertinent adult education data for Federal and State reporting. The system is available through a direct portal. The programs input student information, including demographics, assessment and testing, employment information, courses, funding, instructional activities & service and federal and state requirements, including information pertinent for federal National Reporting System (NRS) and WIOA reporting.

Programs must submit reports quarterly and can do this using the MIS Detailed instructions for reporting are provided to all programs prior to these submissions. These instructions assist in identifying and correct errors. The system is designed to exclude any student records that are not error-free and compliant with the error check mechanism within the system. Data staff know that failure to correct errors results in the loss of reporting of a student’s activity and progress in the program. In addition, the system provides an error check mechanism that allows users to check for errors or system warnings on a regular basis. Programs are instructed to run this error check on a weekly basis, and the system has been designed to exclude students with errors from official reporting until the student records have been corrected. Program staff review student files through on-site visits and also use the state-level Desktop Monitoring Tool to review program data. The data system is designed to ensure required data elements are collected as a student’s record is entered. All fields that are required are highlighted in red and if one of these fields is not completed, the system does not accept the record. Instead, the user is presented with an error message outlining what is missing in order for the record to be accepted. The front-end error checks also ensure that data is entered in a specific order to avoid missing data from the system.

The data system has a comprehensive error check to ensure that local programs are entering valid and accurate assessment information. When entering assessment information, users are guided through a series of fields and selected assessment information from drop-down menus. If a value is entered for a score that is outside the range of that particular assessment, the user receives an immediate prompt alerting to this error. For example, the student's NRS level, scale scores and point/level gains are calculated by the system and are not dependent upon the user indicating if a level gain has occurred. For students who receive several post-tests during the fiscal year, the system calculates final gains based only on the final assessment results in comparison with the first assessment given.

Programs are required to submit Performance and Status reports on a quarterly basis. Detailed quarterly reporting instructions are sent to the field to outline how to develop and run the report from the MIS system and the submission process at each reporting period. Users also complete an end of the year verification process that allows them to review final data for the year.

ICCB maintains a data listserv group of users to allow communication directly with those using the system. The ICCB also posts important announcements on the system's homepage where users arrive when logging into the system. MIS users also have access to a technical helpdesk through our grant contractor and assistance is provided by ICCB staff to handle all policy-related questions.

The ICCB is also the administrator for the Illinois High School Equivalency (HSE) program. The ICCB maintains a database of records at both the state and local levels, including Cook County. This system houses all the pertinent records of individuals who take approved exams instate. These exams are used to certify high school equivalency attainment. Currently, the exams include the GED(c) and the HiSET. The ICCB works with each vendor to upload data through a nightly feed into the system to ensure that timely and valid records are maintained. Error checks are embedded to ensure records are cross-matched and the names and other identifiable information is accurate. The system also maintains constitution results, which is a requirement in order to issue a High School Equivalency Certificate/Diploma. The HSE not only validates that an individual meets the requirements established by the ICCB but also produces both official and non-official transcript information on each exam taken.

#### *WIOA Title III – Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES)*

IDES continues to work to enhance the Labor Market Information (LMI) system to support the six WIOA strategies. Traditional LMI produced by Employment Security is readily available on the Employment Security website, the Virtual Labor Market Information (VLMI)

system (a Geographic Solutions web tool which houses the Workforce Information Database per the requirements of the Workforce Information Grant), and limited LMI through the IL Career Information System (wages and projections). Traditional LMI includes occupational wage information, current economic conditions by industry and geography, as well as statewide short-term Industry and Occupational Employment Projections, as well as long-term Industry and Occupational Employment Projections, at three geographic levels: statewide, by Economic Development Region and by Local Workforce Investment Area. Also included are the Local Area Unemployment Statistics (labor force data) and Current Employment Statistics (local area jobs data by industry). Near real-time LMI includes information on The Conference Board's Help Wanted Online Job Ads postings by Economic Development Region and can be customized upon request. Other real-time LMI utilizes information from the state's Unemployment Insurance and Employment Service programs.

The Illinois Benefit Information System (IBIS) is a web-based custom-developed application that administers the unemployment insurance benefits program for the State of Illinois. The benefits system provides 24/7 web access where individuals can file claims, certify for benefits and obtain payment information. Additional methods available to file claims and certifications include the Claimants filing their claims and their weekly benefits through a variety of methods: online, through an Interactive Voice Response System (Teleserve), over the telephone with a call center agent, or in person at one of the 36 locations throughout the state. The system IBIS keeps track of claims filed, certifications, correspondence, benefits investigations, payments, appeals, benefit charging, wage information and historical transactions. An integrated interface also exists between IBIS and Illinois JobLink, providing the opportunity for UI customers to transition to employment services immediately after filing a claim for benefits. Correspondence is received from both claimants and employers utilizing an electronic case folder. Adjudicatory hearings are scheduled and conducted via telephone. Payments are issued to eligible recipients via direct deposit or paper check delivered by the United States Postal Service. In addition to administering regular Unemployment Insurance claims, IBIS also administers Trade Readjustment Allowance Act (TRA) for impacted worker; Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA); Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC); Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Servicemembers (UCX) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE).

The Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) is the primary agency that administers Employment Services pursuant to Title III of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Through the one-stop delivery system, labor exchange services are delivered by utilizing IllinoisJobLink.com (the State of Illinois' mandated labor exchange

system). IllinoisJobLink.com is a robust, dynamic and comprehensive web-based Workforce Development System that is available 24/7 for job seekers, employers, training providers and workforce professionals with real-time data and reports, for meeting and tracking federal performance goals across all programs for core partners. To date, all known WIOA requirements are available to be fully implemented in IllinoisJobLink.com for: Title I (Adult, Dislocated Worker & Youth), Title II (Adult & Basic Education), and Title IV (Vocational Rehabilitation). WIOA requirements for Title III (Wagner-Peyser Labor Exchange) are fully implemented.

Job seekers, employers, training providers and workforce professionals in Illinois use IllinoisJobLink.com for their labor exchange and case management needs.

IllinoisJobLink.com is WIOA compliant and is updated every twelve to sixteen weeks to include all state and DOL mandates and requirements. Moreover, the reporting functionality allows Illinois to manage and produce Wagner/Peyser services and DOL PIRL performance reports. Illinois is a member of America's Job Link Alliance (AJLA), which is a consortium of states that use AJLA products and services. Currently, there are nine states (Arkansas, Arizona, Delaware, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, Oklahoma and Vermont) using the AJLA products. The value of membership allows the consortium of states to participate in monthly 'Team' meetings to share best practices and propose system enhancements that create better end-user experiences.

IllinoisJobLink.com is a robust, dynamic and comprehensive web-based Workforce Development System for job seekers, employers, training providers and workforce professionals with real-time data and reports, for meeting and tracking federal performance goals across all programs for core partners. The Labor Exchange functionality in IllinoisJobLink.com enables the claimant to transition – seamlessly, and in real-time -- from filing an unemployment claim to start the journey back to gainful employment. The platform provides real-time, scalable, collaborative and integrated case management across programs, which allows the staff to focus on the job seeker and reduce the administrative overhead. Since IllinoisJobLink.com implementation in December 2011, we have trained all partners in all local workforce areas, and all partners have case-management access to the system.

#### *[WIOA Title IV – Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services \(DRS\)](#)*

DRS's 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. WebCM was developed to be in compliance with all WIOA requirements and mandated data reporting. Key elements include: customer management and case notes; case progression and record-keeping for intake, assessment, eligibility determination and service plan development; secure access for vendor agencies; report generation and service tracking; and online linkage to partner systems, including the wage verification system, Social Security system and the DHS integrated eligibility system.

The Integrated Eligibility System (IES) promotes service integration and improves how eligibility is determined for health and human services, education, employment training and placement activities, along with other viable services needed to improve economic stability. It offers specific features for customers to access and manage their own cases. Staff and WIOA partners are trained to assist customers in obtaining case information, as well as applying for benefits online without the hardship of physically coming into the local offices.

The Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Family & Community Services (FCS) is the state administrator of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. TANF is a time-limited cash assistance program designed to help low-income families with children attain economic independence. DHS operates more than 100 Family Community Resource Centers (FCRC) statewide serving TANF customers on the pathway to self-sufficiency. TANF customers are evaluated and assessed for suitability for inclusion in employment and training programs. TANF customers are also assessed to determine barriers and to identify if barrier reduction services are required for upward mobility. Barriers assessed and identified may be associated with substance use, mental health and domestic violence for example. The FCRC identifies the customer's needs and creates a Responsibility and Service Plan (RSP), which is a guide to services to assist the customer. The RSP contains employment and training needs, supportive service needs (e.g., transportation and uniforms), childcare and other tangible services and resources needed.

FCS contracts with community-based organizations to provide either work experience or job placement for TANF Employment and Training customers. The FCS provides oversight of programs statewide as the Division's goal is to cultivate more career pathway opportunities for our TANF customers. FCS has a strong presence in Comprehensive One-Stop Centers. DHS is committed to increasing workforce engagement with aligned and coordinated services to achieve employment opportunities for all adults served by DHS.

A taskforce has been created to strategically move through the process of ensuring service integration among partners in the one-stop centers. Pre-Pandemic staff were located in

the Comprehensive One-Stop Centers and were trained to assist customers utilizing the online TANF/SNAP/Medical application through the Application for Benefits Eligibility System (ABE), which is accessible through Illinois WorkNet. DHS team members are currently working remote and participate in virtual partnership meetings to continue to identify and share resources within the American Job Center and with customers.

TANF staff will continue their visibility and orientation participation at the one-stop centers to ensure TANF customers are identified for program assessment and engagement. A streamlined referral process will continue and be refined and formalized based on observation and demonstration of how the referrals will be used and monitored. DHS-TANF staff will continue to actively participate in the monthly partnership meetings and cross-training sessions held at the One-stop centers in order to promote the definition of partner collaboration and service integration per the Governor's Guidelines. A key factor for TANF is assessments measured and based on evaluations through surveys shared with the one-stop program partners regarding services and/or employment received from the centers. This creates a statistical model for accountability, measurement and areas of continuous improvement.

#### *Cross-program Data Integration Efforts*

In addition to these systems, Illinois has additional platforms that reach across agencies and state boundaries to demonstrate new and innovative options for data-sharing and technology integrations.

The Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS) and the Centralized Demographic Dataset Administrator (CDDA) mentioned in the original Unified State Plan are progressing well. The system has successfully matched demographic data among seven of Illinois' workforce and education agencies and now has millions of Master Client Index IDs to bridge data across education, training, wages and employment. Technology, shared data agreements, research procedures and data-matching techniques can all be leveraged from ILDS practices and utilized to find solutions towards Illinois WIOA technology unification. The ILDS assists the WIOA state agencies, partners and the IWIB with research and in improving availability of intelligent and reliable combined program trends and outcomes that enable the state to make data-driven decisions.

The Governor's Office has endorsed and is forging ahead with ILDS 2.0 work in Illinois and is moving forward with establishing and implementing a state- of- the-art IBM Cloud Pak for Data ("Cloud Pak") as a Core technical component of the ILDS, alongside the Centralized Demographic Data Administrator ("CDDA"). Each Agency participating in the ILDS will make its best effort to introduce to Cloud Pak any data sets it intends to use for

interagency analysis and to catalog those data sets such that they can be incorporated into the ILDS universal data request tool for analytics and portal development.

Another initiative underway utilizing the WDQI funding award is the Coleridge Initiative which utilizes NYU --Administrative Data Research Facility (ADRF) that has the ability to extend data sharing outside Illinois borders. The system 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. I-ADRF is a FedRAMP-compliant, secure computing environment for approved analyses using agency administrative datasets. It currently consists of records from several State agencies – including Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC), Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), and the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) – and it resides within a broader ADRF ecosystem, administered by New York University containing microdata from states around the Midwest. This ecosystem facilitates inter-state data linkage and thus the pursuit of research questions across broader geographies, as well as pertaining to particular sub-populations such as those receiving public assistance or returning citizens from the justice system. In 2020, IL joined an inter-state WIOA research collaboration team with multiple Midwest states such as Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan to develop the prototype for the first Regional WIOA Performance Data Research and Reporting Platform via the ADRF. The Midwest collaborative continues to meet and gain momentum on a regional innovative solution to longitudinal data transparency.

In addition to the Midwest Collaborative work IDES and DCEO are working together on best practice data sharing to tell the story and rebound from COVID-19 pandemic. The Unemployment to Reemployment Portal data environment, an established program between states and the Coleridge Initiative, has already 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. IL 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.

DCEO continues to utilize the governmental agreement with Southern Illinois University (SIU) Center for Workforce Development to evolve the agile and cloud technology of the Illinois workNet (IwN) platform. For decades IwN has been the “go to” resource to connect individuals, employers, education & workforce professionals and community partners to career training and development resources and tools. Job seekers, businesses, non-profit organizations or state or local governmental entities seeking guidance can all utilize the portal as a resource. In PY2019 DCEO enhanced the backend customer and pilot program infrastructure to fully develop a case management system capable of fully managing customers from intake, referral, assessment, eligibility, career planning, accountability tracking, performance attainment, and reporting to DOL via PIRL/WIPS. The new Illinois Workforce Integration System (IWIS) is 100 percent integrated with DCEO’s IWDS system for WIOA Title I via an API. IWIS was piloted for the Apprenticeship IL grants and proved to be a success and a platform that can be a solution for much of Illinois’ integration issues. IwN has also provided the staffing and platform to further improve upon the online WIOA ePolicy site and host webinars to involve and inform state stakeholders. This state asset has continued to be a collaborative portal in which the state workforce and educational institutions can engage and explore new ways to combine efforts and data to create a seamless experience for the customer.

The next generation of innovative and integrative intake, client management, resource tracking, services and performance outcomes measurement is currently under development and will be launched in 2022 with the Apprenticeship Expansion project. The IwN next generation integration system will include the ability to access a full-service menu of intuitive system screen design that tracks business and client engagement and outreach efforts throughout the state. Navigators, local governments, and state economic developers will all be able to use a standardized approach to conduct informed and standardized business outreach engagements. The system will track the activity and allow for the ability to detect underserved populations and areas to target special outreach efforts. improvement efforts on this site to increase sharing or business information Illinois Business System (IEBS), the new integrated business engagement and layoff intake and tracking platform was launched in November of 2020. It contains economic landscape dashboards and predictive analytic statistics that facilitate business analysts and layoff specialists throughout the state to track layoffs and make more informed and proactive decisions to avert layoffs. Illinois Employment Business System (IEBS) is a cloud-based

agile software platform. The ultimate goal of IEBS is to provide quality workforce information and layoff tracking data from multiple reliable sources that is easy to access, easy to understand, and easy to retain and extract in order to make data-driven decisions that facilitate state efforts for layoff aversion and promote economic and workforce advancement in Illinois. Built-in responsive design, IEBS empowers users to have the business intelligence they need via smartphone, tablet or laptop to quickly search the economic landscape of Illinois utilizing real-time D&B global business data, IL Dept. of Employment Security LMI data, and State and local workforce layoff tracking data. Providing government workforce and economic advocates with critical transparent business intelligence via on-the-fly dashboards, analytic tools, and industry cluster SWOT information will facilitate informed strategic decision making and result in the ability for State leadership to formulate evidence-based policymaking.

## 2. The State policies that will support the implementation of the State's strategies

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.

An important policy work group was launched under this policy development process – 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. The content of the policy was developed 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 developed 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
- 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.

From this work local one-stop systems use the self-assessment tool as part of their local planning processes to further service integration. 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 the 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 2025 - 2030 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 is discussing the policy process to identify any needed revisions. The CIA 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 deliver 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 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 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 and Accountability Committee (CIA). This IWIB standing committee consists of IWIB members and is supported by the IWIB Staff with technical and logistical support from partners from Illinois State University and Northern Illinois University partners. Specific responsibilities of this Committee include: Supporting continuous improvement of the Illinois workforce system; Providing local workforce areas with technical assistance, information, promising practices, and tools to advance inclusive and accessibility. Supporting economic development regions to analyze disaggregated data for core WIOA programs to identify inequities and inform solutions. And supporting local workforce areas and industry partnerships in a broad range of sectors to disrupt occupational segregation of people of color, women, and individuals with disabilities in lower-wage jobs and support training and career advancement opportunities.

The CIA achieves this by prioritizing the annual review of disaggregated WIOA and non-WIOA performance and program data, including occupations and outcomes. It supports the effective evaluation of workforce programs at both the state and local levels by disseminating the Illinois Evaluation Toolkit, providing partners with tools and resources to strengthen their evaluation practices. The committee incorporates an inclusive lens into the IWIB policy process and supports continuous improvement of IWIB work, ensuring a responsive and accessible workforce system. In collaboration with the WIOA Professional Development (PD) Committee and the WIOA Technical Assistance (TA) team to ensure that topics related to enhancing responsive, inclusive, and accessible practices in workforce development are covered in the training and technical assistance provided by the state. Additionally, the CIA works closely with local workforce partners, case managers, and One-Stop operators to understand and address the root causes of occupational segregation in WIOA-funded training.

The CIA's Performance and Data Work Group utilizes 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 CIA group also works to ensure that other interested parties can easily access this information and utilize it.

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

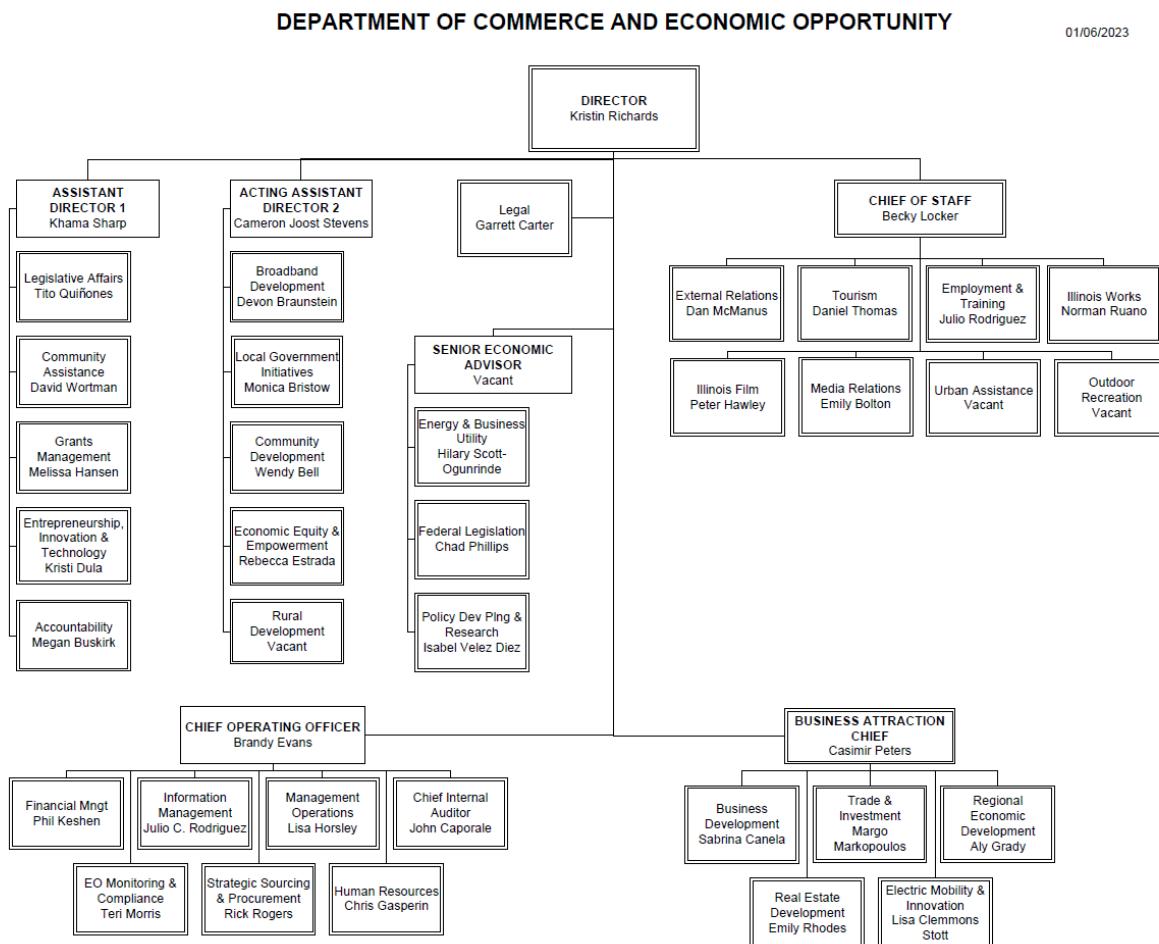
### 3. State Program and State Board Overview

#### *A. State Agency Organization*

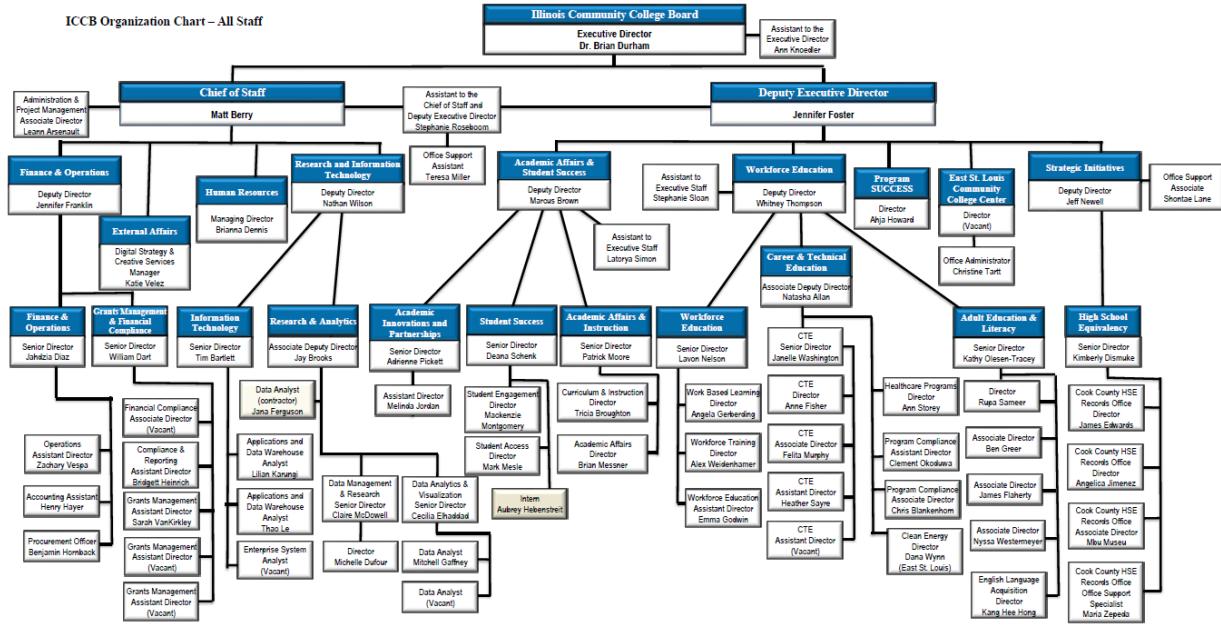
## State Agency Organization Charts

Images for each organization chart are also shown below:

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Chart

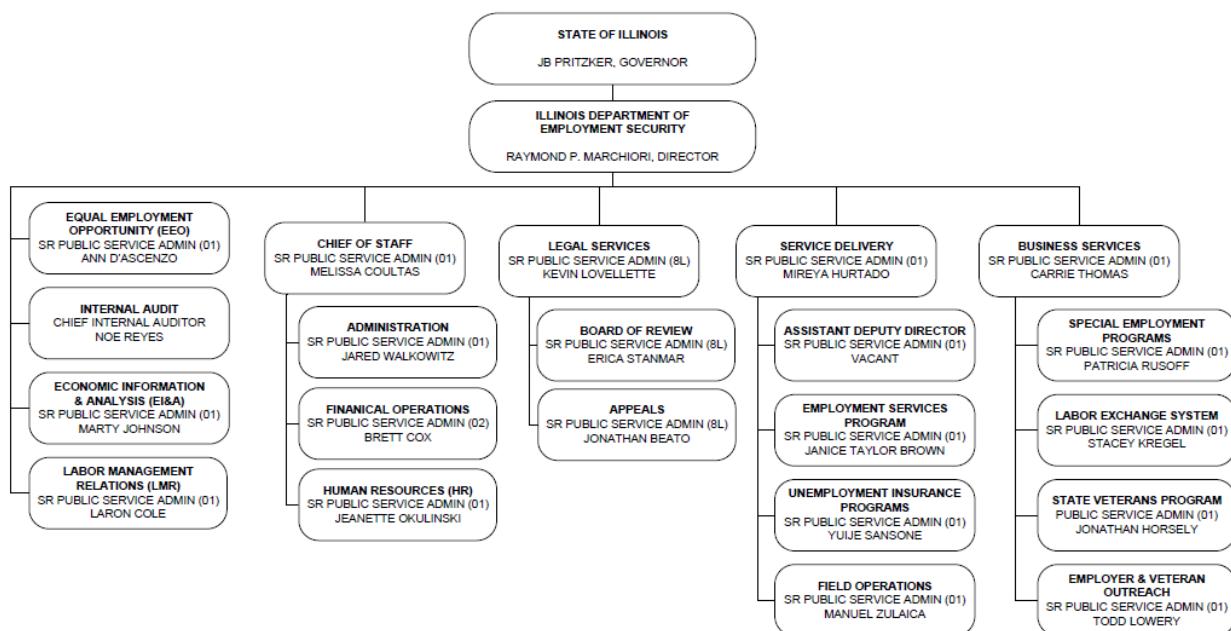


## Illinois Community College Board Chart

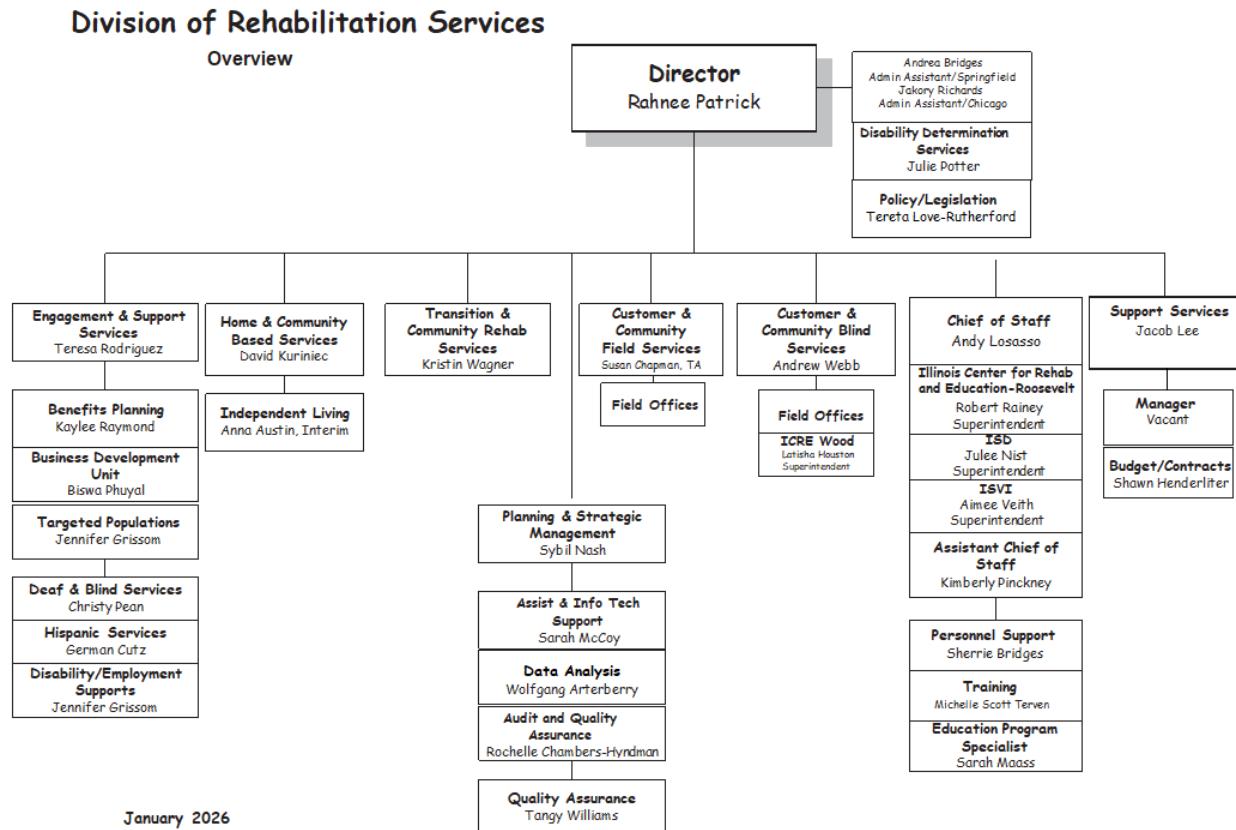


## Illinois Department of Employment Security Chart

### IL 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 leading 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 supports individuals and families in moving 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 trades.

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

Supporting innovative workforce programs that connect employers with a highly skilled workforce is central to Illinois' commitment to ensuring that businesses and communities thrive. 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, 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 II.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 and Regional Economic Development Offices, and the Office of Employment and Training collaborate to address the needs of business and industry in Illinois. This collaboration has accelerated over the last year under the leadership of the Governor and the DCEO Director. There have

been multiple informational briefings across offices, and a marked increase in the use of cross-cutting teams to bring additional perspectives and resources to bear on business retention, layoff aversion, and business expansion efforts. 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 implement locally designed programs that deliver a range of services and activities with 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 that increase self-sufficiency, including job preparation, education, and housing assistance. Small-business loans are also available through 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 with the workforce and education systems, strengthening 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 improve the management of the ADA monitoring process for American Job Centers. This agreement enables better coordination of office inspection schedules and improved cross-agency communication on inspection findings. In addition, both offices agreed to use the same inspection checklist to promote cross-agency integration of effort.

At facilities with both Title I and Title III staff, DCEO conducts ADA inspections to avoid duplication of services and to better align findings and related reports. DCEO provides IDES with the ADA inspection report after the inspection is complete. 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 the 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 companies' growth and success. 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 qualified candidates for the employer 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 who 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 incorporate practices aligned with the statewide-adopted definition of a career pathway framework. Proposals must serve opportunity youth who 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 developing sustainable career pathways for young people across 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). 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 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 labor market information to help locate talent and support 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 of service and referrals to job training and employment opportunities to eligible veterans and other eligible persons. The mission of the JVSG program is to assist eligible veterans and other eligible persons who self-attest, verbally, electronically, or in writing, to having one or more Qualifying Employment Barriers (QEBs), as defined by the U.S. Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS), 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 a veteran's 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 QEBs can be referred to the Veterans Career Coach - Disabled Veterans Outreach Program specialist (VCC-DVOP) for Individualized Career Services when requested. In addition to Individualized Career Services, the VCC-DVOP specialists may facilitate the case management process to guide and monitor the progress of these veterans and other eligible persons. They work with all AJC and community partners to assist veterans and other eligible persons to mitigate their QEBs so they can concentrate on obtaining and retaining meaningful employment. 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:

Illinois Veterans Transition Pathways (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 JVSG staff 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.

Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) is a DOL-VETS grant program with multiple grantees in Illinois. 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 JVSG 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 employment. VR&E counselors refer veterans who are within 90-days of completing their VR&E funded training / rehabilitation.

**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 Department's primary focus is to assist individuals with significant disabilities in obtaining and retaining 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 (IWIB).

#### ***B. State Board***

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 Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) is a Governor-appointed coalition of business, labor, education, community-based organizations, and state agency leaders dedicated to assisting residents to succeed in family-wage jobs while meeting employer needs for skilled 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, state 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 composed 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 representatives
- 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 the 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 Association(IWA) have a central role on the state board as Ex-Officio Members.

### IWIB Roster

Name	Board Representation	Title
Aranda-Suh, Elba	Member, Workforce	Executive Director, National Latino Education Institute
Caves, Christine Louise	Member, Business	VP of Business Retention, Expansion, and Workforce, Quad Cities Chamber of Commerce
Dickson, Victor	Member, Workforce	President/CEO, Safer Foundation

Name	Board Representation	Title
Durham, Dr. Brian	Ex-Officio, Non-Voting Member - other representative - higher education	Executive Director, Illinois Community College Board
Evans Jr., Rep. Marcus C.	Member Emeritus	Representative, Illinois House 33rd District
Flanagan, Jane	Voting Member, - other representative, - State agency officials	Director, Illinois Department of Labor
Foster, Jennifer	Voting Member, Title II Adult Education Representative	Executive Deputy Director, Illinois Community College Board
Garcia, Karina	Member, Business	President/CEO, Aurora Regional Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Hammond, Norine	Member Emeritus	Representative, Illinois House 94th District
Hampton, Chynna S.	Member, Labor	Equity Director, Climate Jobs Illinois/AFL-CIO
Harkness, Alaina Jean	Member, Business	CEO, Current
Huss, Kara Demirjian	Member, Business	Senior VP, TCCI Manufacturing, President, DCC Marketing
Lefaver, Stephen James	Member, Workforce	Director of Apprenticeship & Training, North Central Illinois Finishing Trades Institute (NCIFTI)
Lo, William	Member, Business	Executive Director, Carbondale Chamber of Commerce

Name	Board Representation	Title
Marchiori, Ray	Voting Member, Title III Wagner-Peyser Employment Services	Director, Department of Employment Security
McClinton, Marlon	Member, Business	President/CEO, Utilivate Technologies, LLC
Nain, Sandeep	Member, Business	President/CEO, Sntial Technologies, Inc.
Ostro, Ginger	Ex-Officio, Non-Voting Member - other representative - higher education	Executive Director, Illinois Board of Higher Education
Patrick, Rahnee	Voting Member, Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation Services	Director, Illinois Department of Human Services Office of Rehabilitation Services
Perry, Michael	Member, Labor	Director, Employment and Education, AFSCME Council 31
Arnold, Justin	Ex-Officio, Non-Voting Member - other representatives - CBOs	President of the Illinois Workforce Alliance
Pritzker, JB	Member	Governor
Purcell, Alexander	Member, Business	Director HR Partner, United Airlines
Quintero, Dulce	Ex-Officio, Non-Voting Member - other representative - State agency officials	Secretary, Illinois Department of Human Services
Richards, Kristin	Co-Chair, Voting Member, Title I - Workforce Development Activities	Director, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

Name	Board Representation	Title
Sanders, Tony	Ex-Officio, Non-Voting Member	Superintendent, Illinois State Board of Education
Serota, Daniel	Member, Business	Vice President of Government and Public Affairs, AON
Stuck, Elizabeth E.	Member, Workforce	VP, Government Affairs and MxD Learn, Manufacturing x Digital
Thompson, Whitney	Ex-Officio, Non-Voting Member- other representative - Post-Secondary Carl V. Perkins (CTE) Representative	Deputy Director, Workforce Education, Illinois Community College Board
Toppin, Christopher W.	Member, Business	VP Human Resources, S&C Electric Company
Vellinga, Jayne	Member, Workforce	Executive Director, Chicago Women in Trades
Warrington, Andrew	Member, Business	Co-Chair of IWB & CEO of UCC Environmental
Wojick, Lisa Burns	Member, Workforce	Challenge Unlimited
Wright (Giudici), Jessica	Member, Business	Director of People & Business Operations, Three Sixty MEP, LLC

## IWIB Strategic Plan

The IWIB initiated a strategic planning process in 2024 and adopted a five-year strategic plan in December of that year. This plan serves as a roadmap for guiding IWIB resources and priorities through 2030. It establishes direction for quarterly meeting agendas, defines the focus and deliverables of IWIB committees and workgroups, and informs IWIB

members on how to leverage their time and networks. Additionally, it provides a framework for the effective allocation of IWIB staff time and resources, ensuring alignment with the board's long-term goals. The plan is further aligned with state and federal priorities—reinforcing the Illinois WIOA State Plan and Perkins V objectives, and advancing WIOA-driven strategies that promote engagement, sector partnerships, and career pathways across the workforce and education systems.

The IWIB Strategic Plan is fully aligned with the Illinois 2024-2028 Workforce Development Strategic Plan; Open for Business: Illinois' 2024 Economic Growth Plan; the final report of the Future of Work Task Force; state agency strategic plans, and regional and local workforce development plans.

The IWIB's vision is for "A Thriving Economy and Equitable Prosperity for all Illinoisans", supported by the mission to "help Illinois communities achieve and sustain economic prosperity by championing strategies and aligning organizations and partners statewide to deliver quality education, training, and workforce development services to employers, workers, job seekers, and learners."

In partnership with the Office of the Governor's office, the IWIB advances by prioritizing:

- An inclusive workforce system that advances equitable prosperity for employers, workers, job seekers, and learners.
- Clear understanding of and improved use and impact of the workforce system by employers, workers, job seekers, and learners.
- Strategic and close alignment between education, economic development, and workforce development.

WIOA and non-WIOA-funded services provide customers access to quality jobs in leading and emerging industries and sectors.

The State of Illinois is in the process of establishing a Chief Workforce Officer (CWO). This position will align state workforce programs and other stakeholders and work closely with the Office of the Governor, the IWIB, and other stakeholders to improve service delivery and meet the workforce programming demands of job seekers and employers. The CWO will play a critical role in overseeing the implementation of this strategic plan and, in collaboration with the IWIB, planning its future activities and areas of focus.

As part of the strategic planning process, the IWIB realigned committee structure and charges to support the implementation of the plan. These realigned committees are described below and will replace the current committee structure.

## **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. Communication and Stakeholder Engagement (CASE) Committee
2. Continuous Improvement and Accountability (CIA) Committee
3. Executive Committee
4. Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship (WBLA) 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.

### **Communication and Stakeholder Engagement Committee**

Charge:

- Leverage IWIB communication channels and member networks to communicate the vision, priorities, impact, and progress of the IL workforce system to policymakers, partners, and customers.
- Promote coordination and cooperation across all IL workforce initiatives; help partners understand what effective alignment and collaboration look like and have the tools and support to do so.
- Facilitate industry champions in emerging and growing sectors and promote employer-driven regional sector partnerships.
- Encourage education, training, and employment service providers to integrate information about job quality and retention into career counseling and other services.

Committee Priorities/Initiatives:

- Strategic Communication
  - Identify and disseminate information, promising practices, and tools to help local workforce partners.
    - Analyze disaggregated data.
    - Apply an equity lens to developing policies, programs, and service delivery.
    - Provide job seekers with information about job quality and retention.
    - Support employers' equity and accessibility efforts

- Recognize local workforce partners making progress on equity, inclusion and fostering quality job opportunities.
- Document and disseminate promising practices and examples of effective alignment and collaboration at the state and regional level.
- Share resources quarterly targeted to IL workforce development ecosystem partners focused on information and resources to support alignment.
- Disseminate and promote resources that support strategic alignment at the regional and local level, including the Service integration assessment, the eligibility and service guide for workforce development programming, the career pathways resource guide, the integrated business team's framework, and other efforts.
- Sector Strategies
  - Establish a network of industry champions and a community of practice for targeted industries in the state.
  - Convene critical employers and industry sectors statewide to understand current and projected workforce needs and opportunities for workforce system support.
  - Develop a strategy to ensure that executive-level employees at employers throughout Illinois learn about Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) sector strategies, including how to operationalize public-private partnerships, sector partnerships, and various talent pipeline management concepts.

### **Continuous Improvement and Accountability Committee**

Charges:

- Support continuous improvement of the IL workforce system.
- Provide local workforce areas with technical assistance, information, promising practices, and tools to advance equity.
- Support economic development regions to analyze disaggregated data for core WIOA programs to identify inequities and inform solutions.
- Support local workforce areas and industry partnerships in a broad range of sectors to disrupt
- occupational segregation of people of color, women, and individuals with disabilities in lower wage jobs and support training and career advancement opportunities.
- .

Committee Priorities/Initiatives:



1. Review disaggregated WIOA and non-WIOA performance and program data annually, including occupations and outcomes.
2. Support effective evaluation of WIOA programs at the state and local level, including dissemination of the evaluation toolkit to local workforce partners.
3. Incorporate an inclusive lens into the IWIB policy process and support continuous improvement of IWIB work, ensuring a responsive and accessible workforce system.
4. Collaborate with the WIOA Professional Development (PD) Committee and the WIOA Technical Assistance (TA) team to ensure that topics related to enhancing responsive, inclusive, and accessible practices in workforce development are covered in the training and technical assistance provided by the state.
5. Work with local workforce partners, case managers, and one-stop operators to understand and address the root causes of occupational segregation in WIOA-funded training.

### **Executive Committee**

Charges:

- Lead by example by integrating an equity lens into the work of the IWIB.
- Articulate the IWIB's vision for the Illinois workforce system, particularly as it relates to the use of WIOA dollars, and the impact to programs governed by WIOA Titles I, II, the use of WIOA dollars and the impact on programs governed by WIOA Titles I, II, II, and IV.
- Manage implementation of the IWIB strategic plan.
- Ensure IWIB discharges its required duties under WIOA.
- Support the Chief Workforce Officer and their mission to align all partners to provide easy-to-access services and support for jobseekers, employers, and other key stakeholders.
- Support industry partnerships with businesses, worker organizations, and training providers to promote quality jobs, workforce diversity, and inclusion.

Committee Priorities/Initiatives:

- Articulate a vision for an equitable AJC customer experience.
- Articulate a vision for job quality in Illinois.
- Conduct power mapping of IWIB members to help identify and leverage members' networks.
- Advise state agencies on the strategic use of WIOA statewide funds.

- Design and disseminate a visual representation of the IL workforce development ecosystem.
- Work with state agencies to ensure that funding announcements reinforce cooperation and collaboration across partners.
- In consultation with the CWO, provide recommendations to the Office of the Governor and state legislators for amendments to the State Workforce Innovation Board Act.
- Review and participate in discussions on new policies related to workforce development in the State of Illinois.
- In consultation with the CWO, provide outreach to the legislative body and its members.
- Provide recommendations on updates to the IWIB by-laws.

### **Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship Committee**

Charge:

- Fully integrate apprenticeship and other work-based learning strategies 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 and other work-based learning programs and for workers to access these opportunities.

Committee Priorities/Initiatives:

1. Support statewide efforts to build upon the existing apprenticeship infrastructure to better align partners, funding, and services to integrate and institutionalize within the Illinois workforce ecosystem fully.
2. Support efforts to strengthen partnerships between apprenticeship, and the State and local workforce system.
3. Help Apprenticeship Illinois target data-driven, high-growth, high-demand industries with quality programs.
4. Utilize apprenticeships and other work-based learning strategies to align and support the jobs required for public and private investment at the federal, state, and regional levels.

## **IWIB Professional Development**

Professional development for IWIB members is critical to fostering engagement, building awareness, and ensuring meaningful impact on Illinois' workforce system. Over the past two years, IWIB has implemented a structured onboarding process designed to introduce and reinforce members' understanding of their roles and responsibilities, local workforce initiatives and strategies, and key workforce data and trends.

IWIB provides members with a comprehensive orientation, online training focused on programs under the board's authority, and opportunities for mentorship. IWIB Member Orientation includes key topics, including an overview of the system, board effectiveness, policy development and oversight, and the roles and responsibilities of each member and represented sector.

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) emphasizes the importance of providing ongoing, comprehensive professional development. Illinois is developing a comprehensive Illinois Workforce Academy (IWA) to support the IWIB's desire for robust professional development. 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, local workforce representatives, IWIB Members and supported by content experts at ISU. 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, customer-centered design, and policy implementation. As the committee worked to develop the IWA, they implemented a three-pronged approach to professional development ensuring support at all levels of the system. The Committee provides year-round support for the WIOA system through weekly Workforce Wednesday webinars, regional workshops, and an annual statewide Illinois Workforce Summit.

## 4. Assessment and Evaluation of Programs and One-Stop Program Partners

### *A. Assessment of Core and One-Stop Program Partner Programs.*

The Core Partners continue to monitor program enrollment, obligations, and expenditures to assess the ability of local workforce areas and the State 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 and Accountability Committee (CIA) in response to any issues of concern and to identify best practices evolving from adapting service delivery.

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

The core programs continue to work with the IWIB to establish updated procedures for negotiating performance benchmarks, as applicable. The state continues to develop strategies to align technology and data systems across core programs and to evaluate common performance outcomes (including the quality, effectiveness, and improvement of

programs in local areas). One tool to support that assessment is a dashboard that aggregates data across all core programs. The CIA 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 complies with WIOA and accurately reflects outcomes for each core program at the 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 Retention performance data by providing the UI wage match, recognizing 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, such as FEIN. The Employer Penetration Rate will be calculated by each core provider based on the number of establishments served in 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; issues 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 integrating 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 program enrollment data. Final revisions have been made to the policy, and the CIA is currently evaluating whether it is meeting its intended

outcomes. The State will use performance data, the expanded benchmark report, plan/MOU submissions, and the certification process to assess the quality, effectiveness, and improvement of programs in each local area.

The CIA has indicated it will review this information as part of an overall review and analysis of all assessments of the one-stop system to identify best practices that could benefit all local workforce boards and one-stop operators. Recommendations will be made to support continuous improvement across all local workforce areas and to ensure one-stop centers provide the most effective and efficient services to customers.

The state will utilize technology and data systems across one-stop program partners 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 areas' Memorandums of Understanding regarding infrastructure and service delivery costs. The state-level review of these documents gives each core partner agency the opportunity to assess the regions and workforce areas in Illinois. The TA Team works with IWIB Committees and workgroups to update the planning guidelines as needed, including information to assess the quality, effectiveness, and improvement of 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 service quality and consistency across 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, they will gain insights into assessing and establishing standards for 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. 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*

#### **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 conducted a service integration self-assessment, with all local partners participating in a facilitated joint assessment. 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 developing a plan to advance service integration goals. 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 for 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.

Beginning in July 2022, the Service Integration Workgroup, led by Becky Raymond, set state-level expectations for WIOA service integration and incorporated local applications 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 align with the revised Service Integration Policy. The policy, which includes system-level goals and local application points, serves

as the foundation for the updated Self-Assessment. The Self-Assessment instructs local areas to assess their progress against each application point and to request technical assistance as needed. These updates reflect the importance State WIOA Partners place on setting service integration goals for all customers and on creating a continually improving, equitable system to operationalize 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 among all WIOA Partners to better serve its customers, and informed the development of 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% where 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 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 positive 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 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*

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board’s (IWIB) Continuous Improvement and Accountability Committee (CIA) leads the process to determine appropriate actions and recommendations for the IWIB regarding the design of evaluation and research projects

across all four partners and required one-stop partners as opportunities arise. The CIA reviews performance measures to identify strategies that enable local boards to meet their performance targets. Similarly, they will examine key factors that may pose challenges to those boards and prevent them from meeting their goals. Using this information, they identify and recommend strategies that all boards should consider for continuous improvement. The CIA reviews policies and processes to assess their relationship to positive outcomes and whether the outcomes conform to the intended goals. They develop recommendations based on 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 CIA, an Evaluation Work Group meets 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

### *A. For Title I Programs*

#### *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)*

##### *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. 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, program performance from year to year, and other factors. In a competition, 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. 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 or 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, program performance 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.

### **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. 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 how they will achieve performance outcomes while implementing allowable activities.

Allowable activities under Corrections Education, Section 225, for corrections education and education for other institutionalized individuals include (1) adult education and literacy activities; (2) special education, as determined by the eligible agency; (3) secondary school credit; (4) integrated education and training; (5) career pathways; (6) concurrent enrollment; (7) peer tutoring; and (8) transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.

Allowable Activities under Integrated English Language and Civics Education, Section 243, include services that (1) enable adult English language learners to achieve competency in

the English language, (2) acquire the basic and more advanced skills needed to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens in the United States, (3) instruction in literacy and English language acquisition, (4) instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation, (5) and may include workforce training. Additionally, the IELCE programming must be provided in combination with integrated education and training (ICAPS).

Allowable Activities under Adult Education and Family Literacy, Section 231, include (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 (ICAPS). For programs serving English Language Learners, instructional activities include activities designed to help eligible individuals achieve competence in reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension of the English language with preparing leaners for (1) Attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; and (2) Transition to postsecondary education and training; or (3) Employment.

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*

**Vocational Rehabilitation**

This is not applicable to the State of Illinois.

## 6. Program Data

### *A. Data Alignment and Integration*

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 primary 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 technologies available in the new version enable maximum agility for on-demand program development and implementation. Starting in 2024, the Illinois workNet system will expand to fully serve WIOA Title I and Trade programs, replacing the legacy IWDS system. This update, referred to as IWDS 2.0, enhances reporting capabilities, not only meeting Federal and State requirements but also providing advanced reporting tools for DCEO and Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIAs). By building on the IwN foundation and leveraging innovative approaches

and intuitive design, the system delivers a secure, accessible user experience, supported by a flexible application and database architecture. The result will be a customer-centered workflow that streamlines processes and improves service delivery.

- 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 and Accountability Committee (CIA) 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

Illinois' approach to integrating data across the four core programs for the purpose of streamlined intake and service delivery is to maximize: Application Programming Interfaces (APIs); data sharing; and aligned service delivery policies and procedures across the core programs, each of which is managed in separate state agencies. The core programs plan and implement integration through multiple interagency working groups including: IWIB Referral Policy Work Group; IWIB Continuous Improvement and Accountability Committee; IWIB Performance Work Group; and the WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team.

Over the course of the next two years, the core partners plan to continue the approach outlined above. The core partners will modify and/or expand integration when recommended by the inter-agency work groups outlined above. IT system modernization, use of Artificial Intelligence Tools, and adopting innovative service delivery models developed during the pandemic are all emerging topics with implications for data integration and other strategies to facilitate streamlined intake and service delivery.

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 and Accountability Committee's (CIA), 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.

The CIA's 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 CIA 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.. 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 CIA 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.

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*

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 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.

### *C. Use of Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage Record Data*

#### **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*

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

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, VPL 07-09, and VPL 05-24. The Comprehensive American Job Centers (AJCs) are committed to helping veterans and other eligible persons find employment. Illinois veterans and other eligible persons have been served over the years through targeted programs administered through the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) and the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA) in cooperation with other education and workforce agencies.

IDES 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 WIOA State Plan. All veterans, regardless of their characterization of discharge, are provided employment services by IDES or other AJC staff. IDES accepts an individual's verbal, written, or electronic confirmation of their veteran eligibility status and experiences as sufficient evidence for priority of service in accordance with Veterans Program Letters (VPL) 05-24. All veterans and other eligible persons coming into the American Job Centers may receive an assessment from either an Employment Services or WIOA Title I staff member. If during this assessment, a veteran or other eligible person self-attests to one or more Qualifying Employment Barrier(s) (QEB) they may request to 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, ES or AJC staff member, a veteran and other eligible person may continue to receive services from all AJC partners. Once their QEBs have been mitigated and are job-ready, the DVOP specialist or appropriate AJC staff will work to place them in active IJL Job Orders. Any AJC staff member can refer a qualified veteran / covered person to the Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) for job

development while continuing to provide services. 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 AJC's operational area.

In accordance with VPL 01-26, DVOP specialists or AJC staff may provide employment assistance to all Chapter 31 Referred Veterans - U.S. Veterans Affairs Vocational Readiness & Employment (VA-VR&E) 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 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.
- Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) - RESEA selects recipients 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 IDES staff member to assess the claimant's continuing UI eligibility, employment status, and work search activities. IDES staff support claimants selected for RESEA with: development of an individual reemployment plan; customized career and labor market information; enrollment in additional ES services ; and referrals to other AJC services and resources the support the claimant's return to work.
- Illinois Veterans Transition Pathway (IVTP) - IVTP offers Illinois' eligible incarcerated veterans employment services during and post confinement at selected Illinois Department of Correction locations.

JVSG staff present 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 presentations 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.

In addition to federal requirements for reporting priority of service, information for priority of service is displayed in each office. 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

### **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

### **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. 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

Illinois uses well-established cross-program groups created by the state workforce board (IWIB) and State agency directors to provide and review plan content a 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.