ILLINOIS PYS 2026-2027 (MOD)

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OVERVIEW

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

OPTIONS FOR SUBMITTING A STATE PLAN

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

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

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

the program-specific requirements for that program where such planning requirements exist separately for the program. The Combined State Plan partner programs are—

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

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

HOW STATE PLAN REQUIREMENTS ARE ORGANIZED

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

- The **Strategic Planning Elements** section includes analyses of the State's economic conditions, workforce characteristics, and workforce development activities. These analyses drive the required vision and goals for the State's workforce development

system and alignment strategies for workforce development programs to support economic growth.

- The **Operational Planning Elements** section identifies the State's efforts to support the State's strategic vision and goals as identified in the Strategic Planning Elements section. This section ensures that the State has the necessary infrastructure, policies, and activities to meet its strategic goals, implement its alignment strategy, and support ongoing program development and coordination. Operational planning elements include:
    - State Strategy Implementation,
    - State Operating Systems and Policies,
    - Assurances,
    - Program-Specific Requirements for the Core Programs, and
    - Program-Specific Requirements for the Combined State Plan partner programs. (These requirements are available in a separate supplemental document, Supplement to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified and Combined State Plan Requirements. The Departments are not seeking comments on these particular requirements).

When responding to Unified or Combined State Plan requirements, States must identify specific strategies for coordinating programs and services for State-identified populations. Use of links to external websites and documents is permitted within the State Plan narrative submission if such links remain active and adhere to Section 508 accessibility requirements.

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

I. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE

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

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

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

This is a unified plan

COMBINED PLAN PARTNER PROGRAM(S)

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

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

No

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

No

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

No

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

No

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

No

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

No

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

No

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

No

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

No

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

No

B. PLAN INTRODUCTION OR EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

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 public board meetings, two webinars and a survey regarding topics impacting individuals, employers and service providers.

II. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a Strategic Planning Elements section that analyzes the State's current economic environment and identifies the State's overall vision for its workforce development system. The required elements in this section allow the State to develop data-driven goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce and to identify successful strategies for aligning workforce development programs to support economic growth. Unless otherwise noted, all Strategic Planning Elements apply to Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan as well as to core programs. Where requirements identify the term "populations", these must include individuals with barriers to employment as defined at WIOA Section 3. This includes displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; farmworkers; individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed individuals. Additional populations include veterans, unemployed workers, and youth, and others that the State may identify.

A. ECONOMIC, WORKFORCE, AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

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

1. ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

A. ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

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

I. EXISTING DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS

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

II. EMERGING DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS

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

III. EMPLOYERS' EMPLOYMENT NEEDS

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

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 present 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	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

Table 1: Illinois vs. Benchmark States vs. US:									
Region *									
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%**	**49.2%**
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.

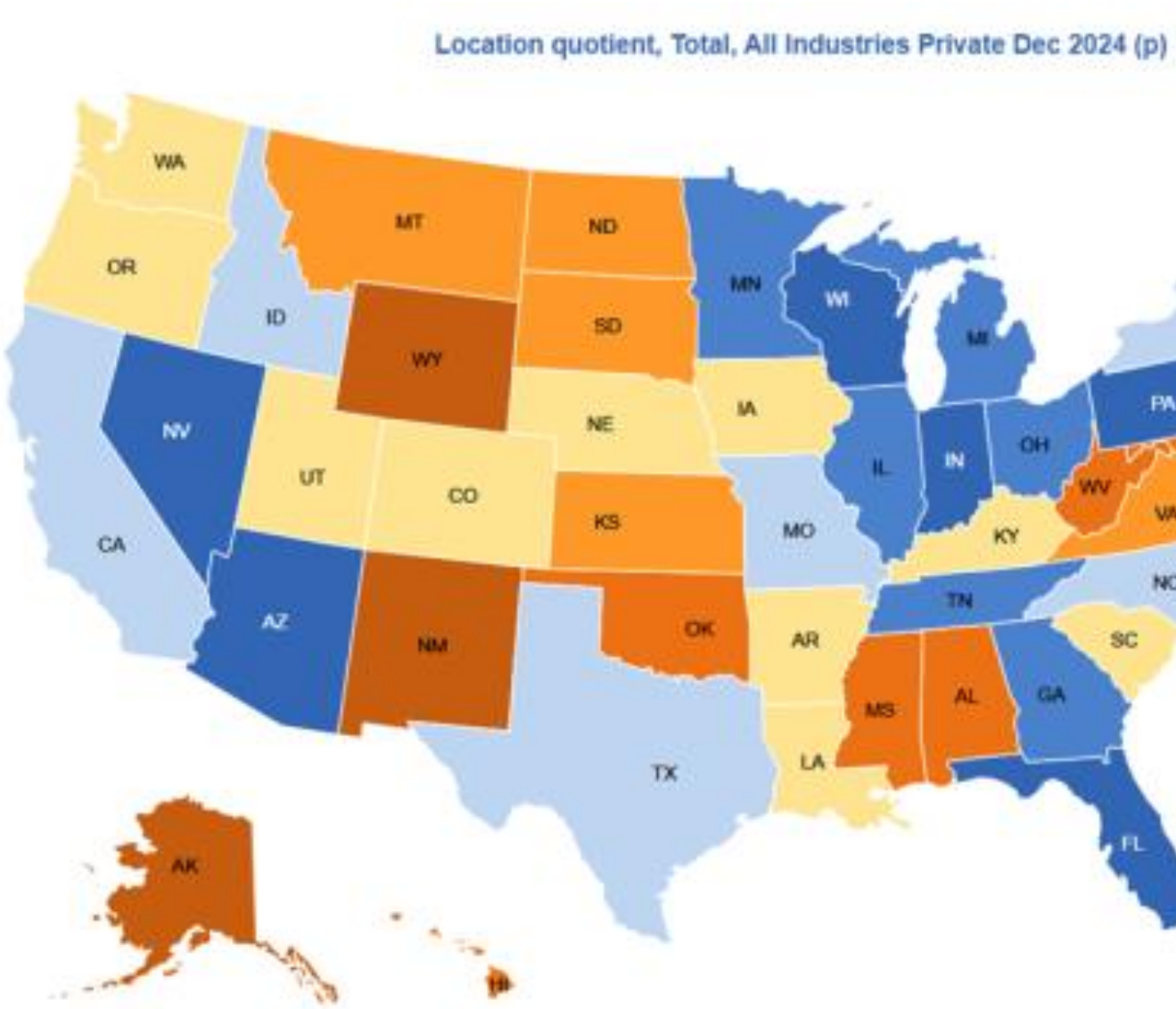
Table 2: Illinois Employment by Major Industry Sector

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**
TOTAL, ALL INDUSTRIES	**6,369,370**	**100%**	**6,538,492**	**169,122**	2.66%	**1.00**
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

Table 2: Illinois Employment by Major Industry Sector						
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.


Location quotient, Total, All Industries Private Dec 2024 (p)
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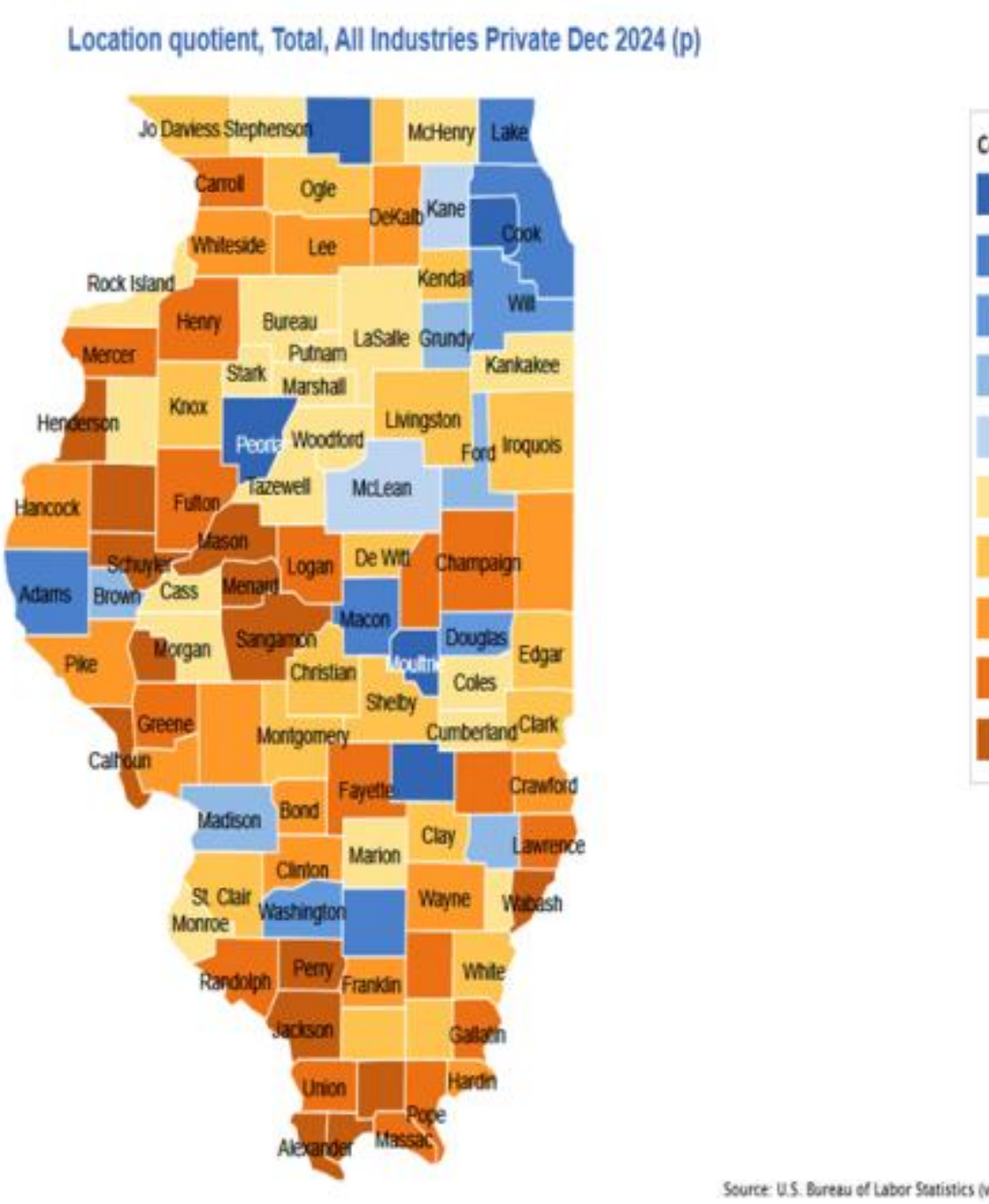


The following table provides a ranking of sectors by LQ and by the Percent Change in Employment.

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**

Table 3: Ranking Sector by Location Quotient						
Total Private	1.02	0.7%		Total Private	1.01	0.7%
Sorted by LQ Rank				**Sorted by Percent Change Rank**		
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	**2022**	**2032**	**Number**	**Percent**	**Exits**	**Transfer**	**Growth**	**Total**
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 Operatio	414,333	6.51%	431,952	17,619	4.25%	12,965	20,196	1,762	34,923

Table 4: Illinois Employment by Major Occupational Sector									
ns Occupations									
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/Entertainmen	103,757	1.63%	106,050	2,293	2.21%	4,548	5,862	229	10,639

Table 4: Illinois Employment by Major Occupational Sector									
t, Sports/ Media Occs									
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

Table 4: Illinois Employment by Major Occupational Sector									
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**
TOTAL, ALL INDUSTRIES	**6,369,370**	**6,538,492**	**169,122**	**1.00**
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**
TOTAL, ALL INDUSTRIES	**6,369,370**	**6,538,492**	**169,122**	**1.00**
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,	Manufacturing, Education Services	Agricultural Production and Education Services are the sectors of greatest employment concentration in the East Central Region but only

Table 8: LEADING, EMERGING, and MATURING				
		Health Care & Social Assistance, Leisure & Hospitality, Other Services, Government		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 &	Agricultural Production,		Wholesale Trade, Professional and

Table 8: LEADING, EMERGING, and MATURING				
	Warehousing, Financial Activities, Professional & Business Services	Mining, Utilities, Construction, Manufacturing, Information, Education Services, Health Care & Social Assistance, Leisure & Hospitality, Other Services, Government		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

Table 8: LEADING, EMERGING, and MATURING				
				concentration. Health Care and Social Assistance and Leisure and Hospitality are expected to add the most jobs during the projected period.
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

Table 8: LEADING, EMERGING, and MATURING				
				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

Table 8: LEADING, EMERGING, and MATURING				
				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

Table 8: LEADING, EMERGING, and MATURING				
				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

Table 9: Sector Rankings with Regional Weightings					
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	Ce
	Manufacturing	Production Workers, Sales Representatives, Maintenance Workers	Communication, Management, Operations	Project Management, Continuous Improvement Processes, Marketing	ME Ce
	Transportation & Warehousing	Truck Drivers, Laborers & Movers, Driver/Sales Workers	Communication, Operations, Customer Service	Truck Driving, Warehousing, Lifting Ability	CD Ce En
	Government	Patrol Officers, Home Health & Personal Care Aides, Secretaries & Administrative Assistants	Communication, Operations, Management	Sign Language Interpretation, Auditing, Social Work	CP Re
	Health Care & Social Assistance	Registered Nurse, Home Health Aides, Health Technicians	Communication, Customer Service, Leadership	Nursing, Medical Records, Home Health Care	Re Su
	Education (public & private)	Postsecondary teachers, Secondary school teachers, Teaching assistants	Communication, Teaching, Research	Statistics, Lesson Planning, Student Services	Te Ce
	Construction	Construction Managers, Project Management Specialists, Sales Representatives	Communication, Customer Service, Management	Construction, Project Management, Subcontracting	30 CP
	Wholesale Trade	Laborers and Movers, Sales Representatives, Truck Drivers	Communication, Sales, Customer Service	Warehousing, Marketing, Lifting Ability	CD Ce
	Utilities	Electrical Engineers, Project Management Specialists, Nuclear Power Reactor Operators	Operations, Communication, Management	Project Management, Emergency Response, Construction	Pr Lic Op
	Retail Trade	Retail Salespersons, First-Line Supervisors of Retail Workers, Stockers & Order Filers	Customer Service, Sales, Communication	Merchandising, Selling Techniques, Cash Register	Ce Te Ph Se Ce
	Leisure & Hospitality	Food Service Managers, Food Preparation Workers, Fast Food & Counter Workers	Customer Service, Communication, Management	Restaurant Operation, Food Safety & Sanitation, Lifting Ability	Se & & Ha
	Financial Activities	Financial Services Sales Agents, Financial Managers, Software Developers	Communication, Management, Customer Service	Financial Services, Marketing, Finance	ME (se Na Lic
	Information (e.g., telecomunications, data processing)	Sales Representatives, Software Developers, Retail Salespersons	Communication, Sales, Customer Service	Marketing, Selling Techniques, Project Management	ME Co
	Professional & Business Services	Software Developers, "All Other" Computer Occupations (e.g., cloud engineers, systems engineers), Financial Managers	Communication, Management, Leadership	Project Management, Marketing, Finance	ME Pr Pr
	Other Services (e.g., repair & maintenance)	Hairdressers, Automotive Service Technicians, Retail Salespersons	Communication, Customer Service, Management	Lifting Ability, Marketing, Cosmetology	Ba Co
	Natural Resources	Agricultural Equipment Operators, Farmworkers and Laborers, Construction Managers	Communication, Operations, Management	Lifting Ability, Project Management, Construction	CD Re Te

Source: Lightcast, December 2024 – December 2025.

B. WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the current workforce in the State and within various state regions, including for populations with barriers to employment described in the first paragraph of Section II. Analysis must include—

I. EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

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

II. LABOR MARKET TRENDS

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

III. EDUCATION AND SKILL LEVELS OF THE WORKFORCE

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

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

Describe areas of opportunity for meeting hiring, education, and skills needs identified in the economy compared to the assets available in the labor force in the state.

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.

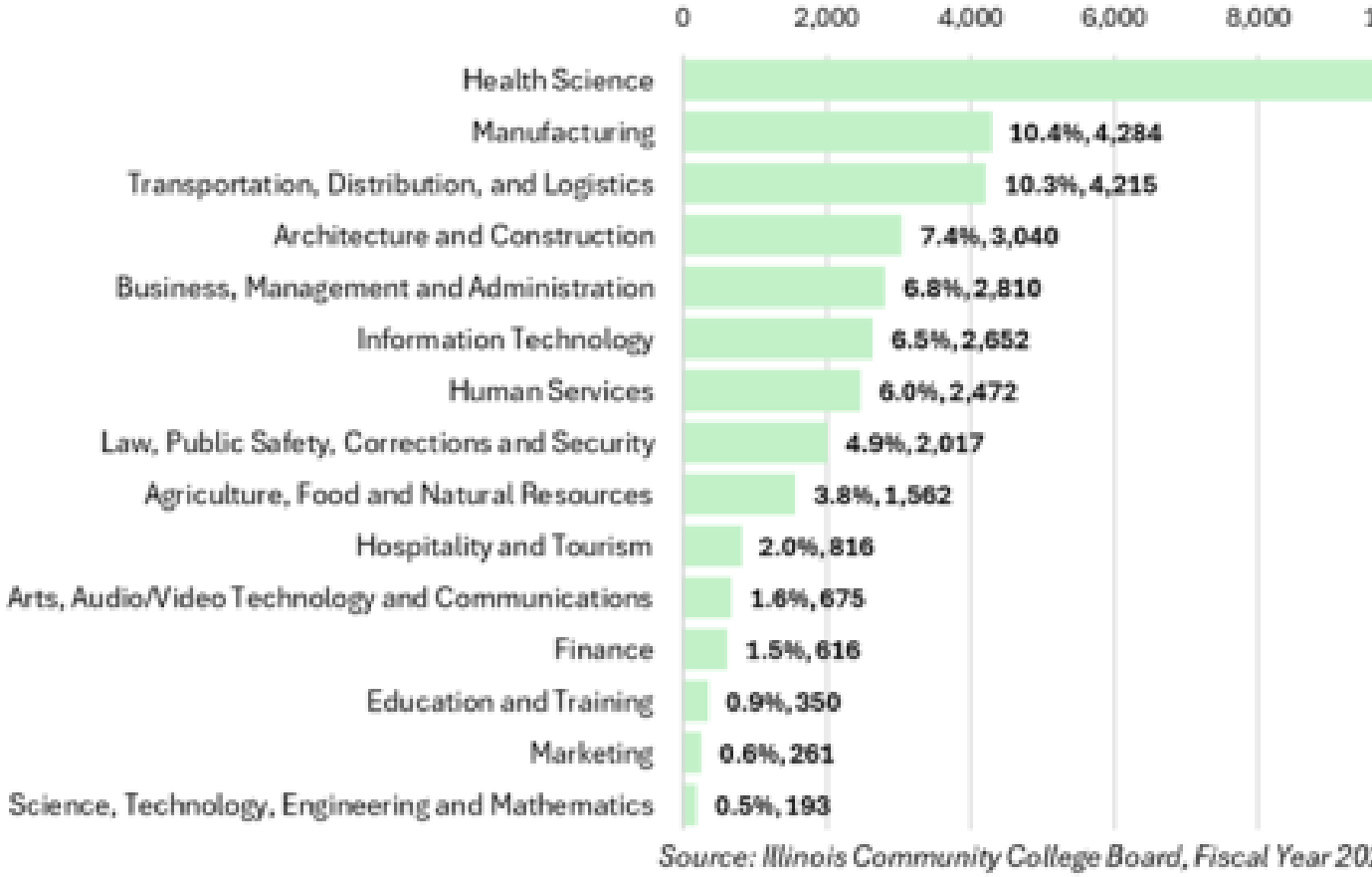
iii. Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce

The most recent completer data for the statewide community college system indicates over 19,600, or 40%, of awards earned were at the associate level. Of that, 9,053 associate level awards earned in FY 2024 were designed for students transitioning directly into the workforce. 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 and certificates earned by individuals, 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 Completions by Career Cluster



Source: Illinois Community College Board, Fiscal Year 20

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)	Compl
Total, all Bachelor's Degrees	
Health Professions and Related Programs	
Business, Management, Marketing, and Related Support Services	
Visual and Performing Arts	
Computer and Information Sciences and Support Services	
Engineering	
Psychology	
Education	
Social Sciences	
Biological and Biomedical Sciences	
All Other, <5% Each	

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)	Completi
Total, All Masters Degree Completions	4
Business, Management, Marketing, and Related Support Services	1
Health Professions and Related Programs	
Computer and Information Sciences and Support Services	
Education	
Public Administration and Social Service Professions	
Engineering	
Psychology	
Social Sciences	
Multi/Interdisciplinary Studies	
Visual and Performing Arts	
All Other, <2% Each	

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

[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 or 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.

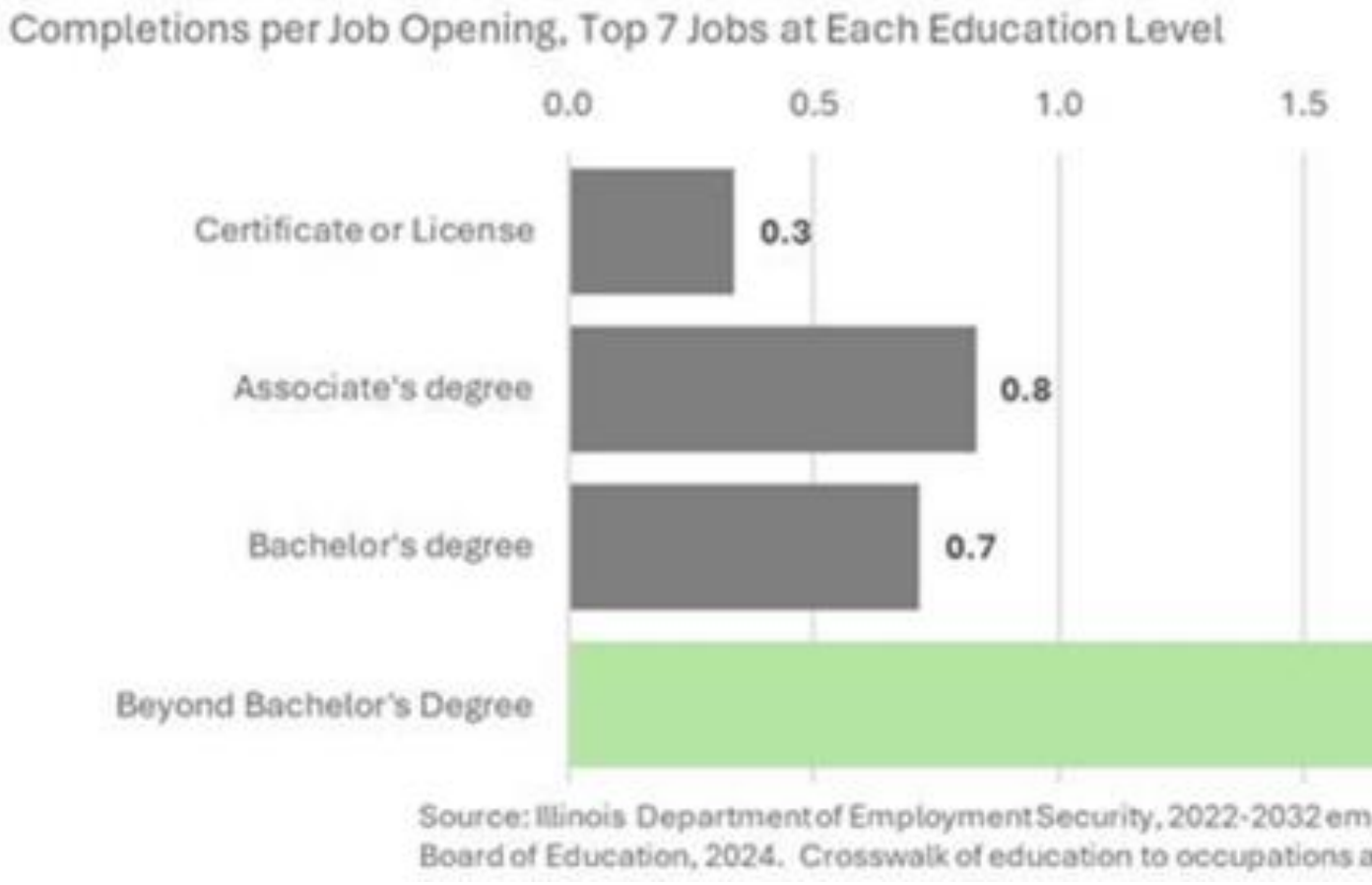
The gap analysis is based on occupational employment forecasts from the Illinois Department of Employment Security, counts of completers by curriculum from the Illinois Board of Higher Education, and a crosswalk of occupations to curricula from Lightcast. Lightcast developed their crosswalk from data 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.[1]

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.

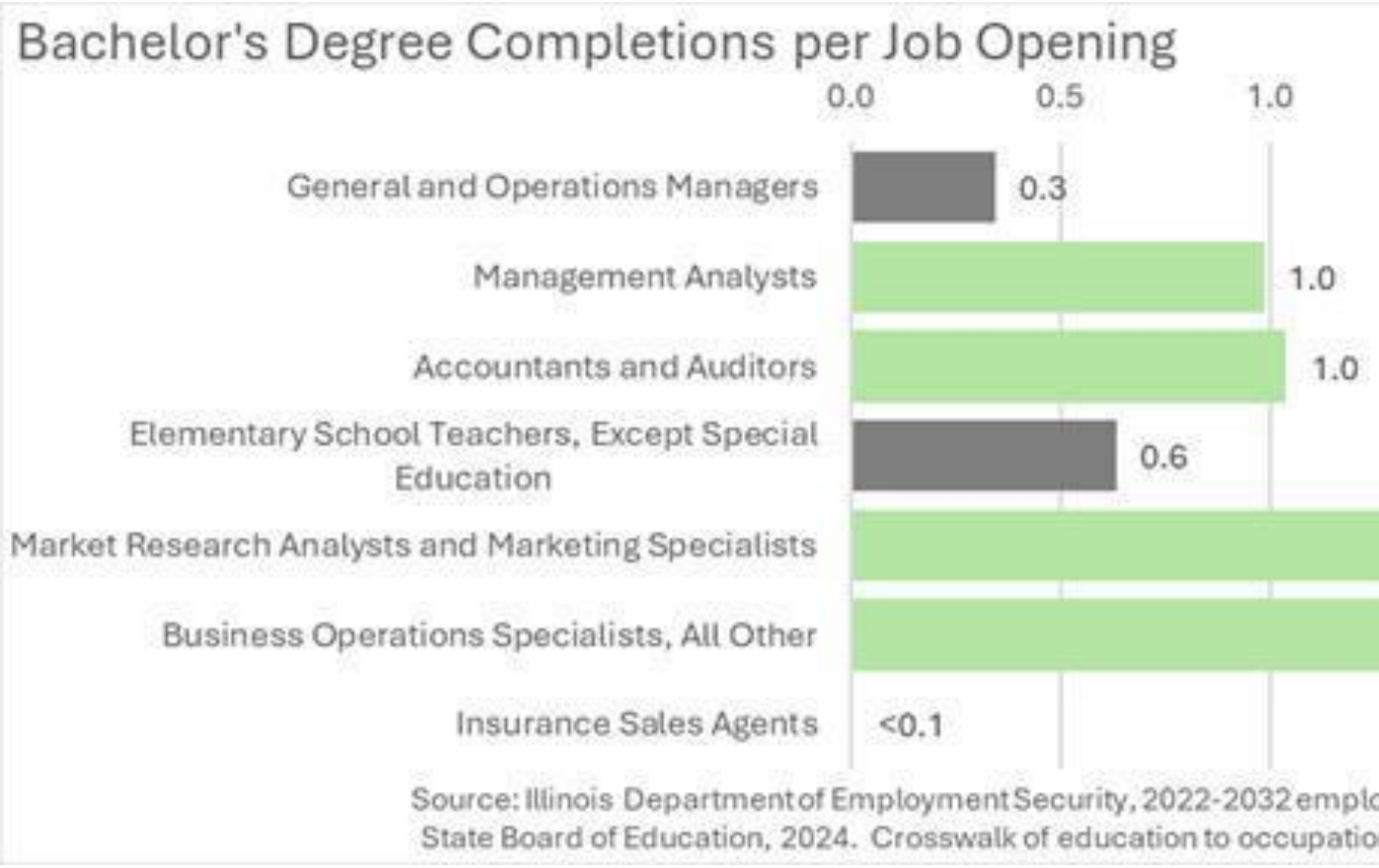
Overall, Illinois has a shortage of completers for the top 7 occupations at all education levels below a graduate level, and there is a surplus of completers for the top 7 occupations requiring more than a bachelor's degree.



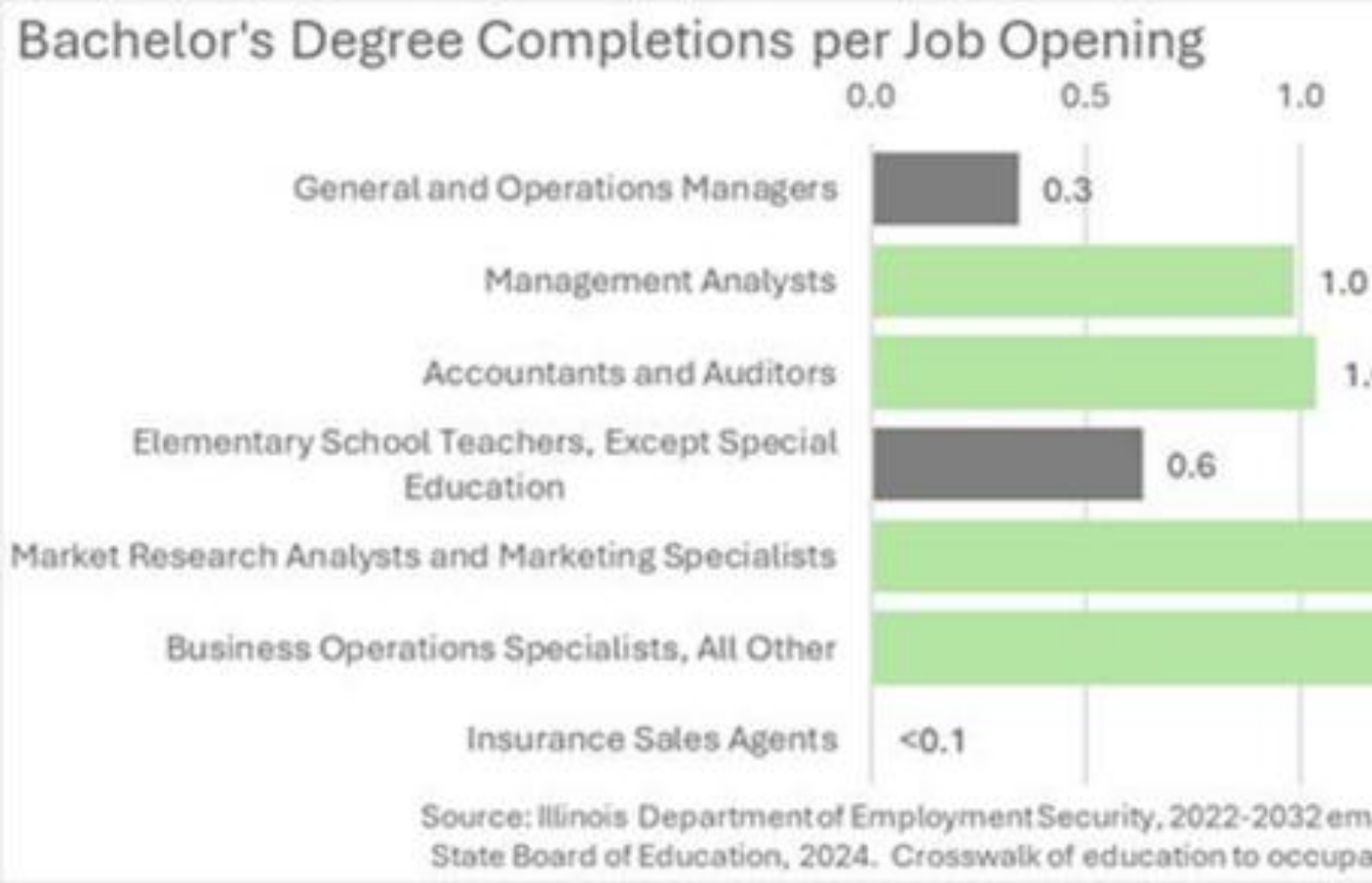
There was a shortage of completers for the top 7 occupations requiring a certificate or license. Truck driving has about 10 job openings per completer (gap ratio of 0.1), and nursing assistants and teaching assistants have about 5 job openings per completer. Registered nursing has a slight shortage of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



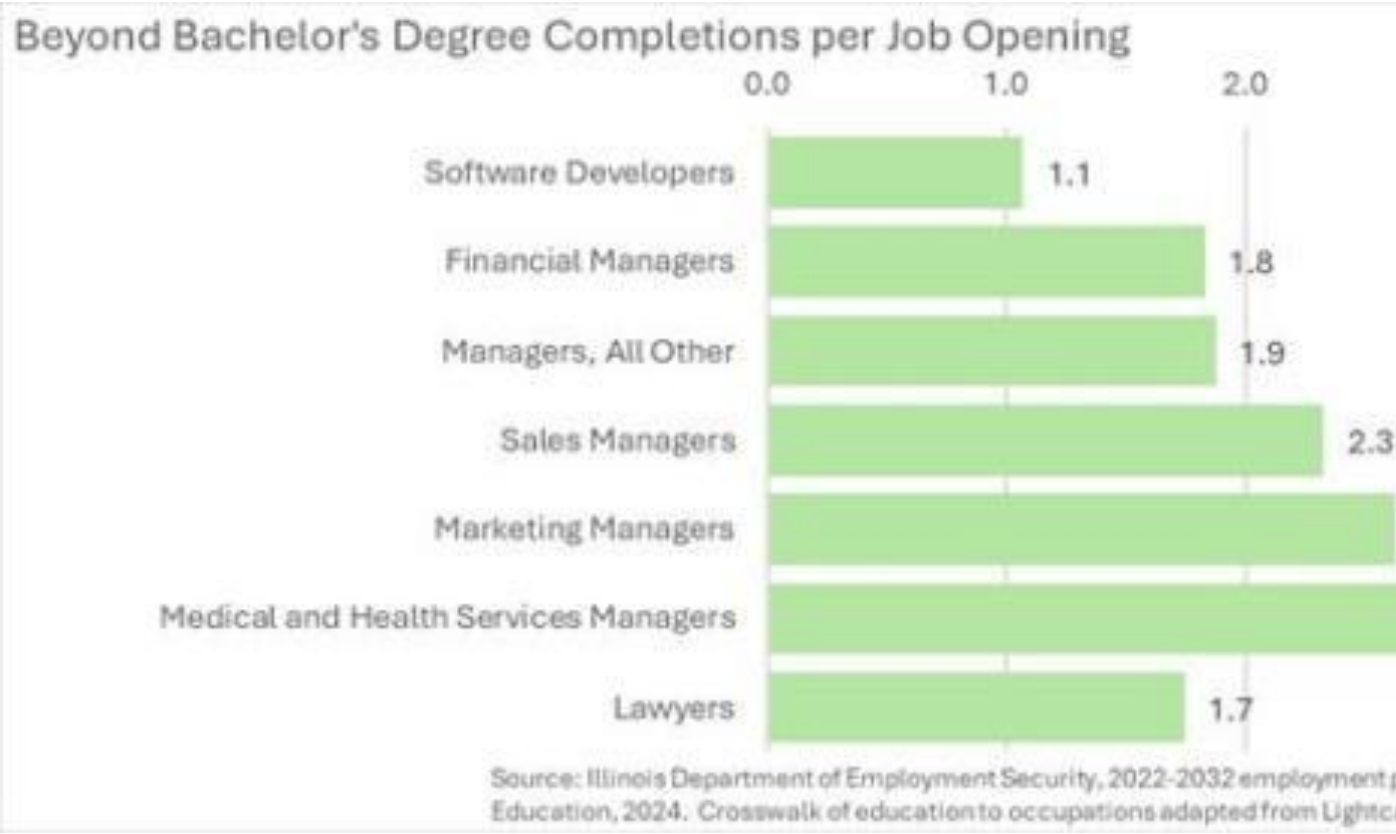
At the associate's degree level, some occupations have surpluses while others have shortages. There were 7 associate's degree completions for clinical lab technicians per job opening. There were 2.4 completers per job opening for computer network support specialists and 1.8 completers per opening for 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.



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.



[1] 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

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

A. THE STATE'S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

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

[6] Required one-stop partners: In addition to the core programs, the following partner programs are required to provide access through the one-stops: Career and Technical Education

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

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

B. THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

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

C. STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY

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

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

CEJA

The CEJA is comprehensive energy legislation that:

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

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

- The *Energy Transition Navigators Program* will provide outreach, education, and recruitment to eligible individuals to participate in CEJA workforce programs, and work with local job markets and workforce organizations to help place trainees in careers. The Energy Transition Navigator Program will prioritize outreach and recruitment for the Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program and the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Hubs. They will provide support and career guidance for participants enrolling in these two workforce programs. They will engage with local workforce innovation boards, community organizations, and educational institutions to promote the CEJA workforce and contractor programs. They will engage with employers, apprenticeship programs and local economic development organizations to facilitate job and apprenticeship placement.
- Through the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program, thirteen Workforce Hubs across Illinois will offer training, certification preparation, and skill development for entry-level jobs in clean energy-related industries. This program will utilize a Clean Jobs Curriculum developed by DCEO and its implementation partners and prepared via a

broad stakeholder process. This curriculum will identify career pathways, a training curriculum, and skill sets needed for participants to enter clean energy jobs.

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

Illinois Works Pre-apprenticeship Program

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

Illinois Community College Board

U.S. Dept. of Education Funded Programs

WIOA TITLE II: Adult Education and Family Literacy Act

The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), 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 learners' 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.

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 CEJA 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

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

1. VISION

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

2. GOALS

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

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

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

[8] Individuals with barriers to employment include displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers (as defined at section 167(i) of WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 35-14); individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed individuals.

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

3. PERFORMANCE GOALS

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

4. ASSESSMENT

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

IWIB members, state agency leaders representing core, required and other workforce partners, various employers and representatives of community-based organizations came together as part of the development of the WIOA State Plan for Illinois to envision what the workforce system in the state should focus its efforts in the near future..

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.

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' 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

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.

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 IB programs, this will be followed by local negotiations for each of the twenty-two local areas with their Local Workforce Innovation Board (LWIB) negotiation teams. New policy and procedures supported with technical assistance will be developed to guide the process.

Based on an analysis of historical and current participant outcomes, each core partner will negotiate WIOA performance measures for each indicator, as applicable for Program Years 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 IWOA 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 2nd Quarter after Exit;
- Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit;
- Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit;
- Credential Attainment Rate;
- Measurable Skill Gains;
- The Overall State Program Scores; and
- The Overall State Indicator Scores for Employment Rate 2nd 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 2nd 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[4];
- Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit, Employment Rate 4th 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%	77.5%	75.0%	78.5%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	75.5%	77.5%	75.5%	78.5%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$8,500	$9,500	$8,500	$9,500
Credential Attainment Rate	72.0%	72.0%	72.0%	72.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	65.0%	65.0%	65.0%	65.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable 1	Not Applicable 1	Not Applicable 1	Not Applicable 1

[1] *The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.*

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	78.5%	78.5%	78.5%	78.5%

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
After Exit)				
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	79.5%	79.5%	79.5%	79.5%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$10,500	$11,400	$10,500	$11,400
Credential Attainment Rate	72.5%	72.5%	72.5%	72.5%
Measurable Skill Gains	64.0%	66.0%	64.0%	68.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable 1	Not Applicable 1	Not Applicable 1	Not Applicable 1

[1]*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.*

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%	75.0%	75.0%	75.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	75.0%	75.0%	75.0%	75.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$4,500	$5,400	$4,500	$5,400
Credential Attainment Rate	70.0%	70.0%	70.0%	70.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	63.0%	63.0%	63.0%	63.0%

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable 1	Not Applicable 1	Not Applicable 1	Not Applicable 1

[1] *The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.*

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%	65.0%	65.0%	65.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	66.0%	66.0%	66.0%	66.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$8,100	$8,500	$8,100	$8,500
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 1	Not Applicable 1	Not Applicable 1	Not Applicable 1

[1] *The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.*

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

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 1	Not Applicable 1	Not Applicable 1	Not Applicable 1

[1] The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

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)	56.30%	57.30%	56.10%	57.80%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	50.50%	50.50%	51.00%	51.00%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$4,550	$4,550	$4,600	$4,600
Credential Attainment Rate	34.80%	34.80%	35.10%	35.40%

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Measurable Skill Gains	68.0%	64.70%	69.0%	65.20%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable 1	Not Applicable 1	Not Applicable 1	Not Applicable 1

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

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

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

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

Goal 1 Strategies

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 meaningful employment, 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;
- Aligning regional sector partnership priorities and employer-validated skill needs with Perkins Comprehensive Local Needs Assessments (CLNAs) and career and technical education programs of study to ensure coordinated planning, modernization, and training investments across WIOA and CTE systems;
- 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 be 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 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 Strategies

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.

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.

Illinois will assess how artificial intelligence is reshaping job roles and skill requirements across industries and work with workforce, education, and industry partners to integrate AI-related competencies—such as digital literacy and automation awareness—into existing training programs and career pathways. In parallel, the state will explore the responsible use of AI to enhance workforce service delivery, including opportunities to improve customer experience, streamline processes, and better support staff in connecting individuals and employers to services.

III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an Operational Planning Elements section that supports the State's strategy and the system-wide vision described in Section II(c) above. Unless otherwise noted, all Operational Planning Elements apply to Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan as well as to core programs. This section must include—

A. STATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include–

1. STATE BOARD FUNCTIONS

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

The Governor-appointed Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB), mandated by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), includes leaders from business, industry, state agencies, education, labor, and community-based organizations to evaluate and meet the workforce needs of Illinois' employers and workers. WIOA requires that state workforce boards take a leadership role in guiding the workforce system through policies, strategies, and performance that address the needs of employers, consumers, employees, community members, and partners. The boards oversee the 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 Illinoisians. 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, II, 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

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

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

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

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.

4. **ACTIVITY:** In developing this modification, Illinois engaged Career and Technical Education (CTE) partners, including the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Community College Board, to review alignment across sector strategies, career pathway implementation, work-based learning expansion, and performance priorities.As Illinois prepares for the 2028 State Plan cycle, the State will conduct a formal analysis of the feasibility of submitting a Combined WIOA and Perkins State Plan. This analysis will include review of planning cycle alignment, shared performance structures, governance integration, stakeholder input processes, and reporting system interoperability. Findings will inform recommendations to the Governor and State Board regarding future structural alignment.

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 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

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

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
- 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 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 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.

To further institutionalize cross-system alignment, Illinois will formalize a Workforce–CTE Strategy Alignment Workgroup composed of leadership from the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board, Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois Community College Board, and Title programs. This workgroup will:

- Assess alignment between WIOA strategies and CTE programs of study; and
- Recommend policy or guidance adjustments to strengthen integration.

C. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS

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

Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Individuals

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.

Illinois will explore coordinating regional WIOA planning timelines with the Perkins Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA) cycle to ensure structured review of labor market demand and credential attainment trends. Illinois will explore the feasibility, beginning in the next planning cycle, of regional workforce plans including a documented review of relevant findings from postsecondary and secondary CLNAs within the geographic footprint of the region, and how CLNA updates could incorporate sector partnership data and employer input gathered through WIOA regional strategies. The State will explore issuing joint planning guidance to Local Workforce Innovation Boards and Perkins recipients to formalize this coordinated review process.

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 provide guidance on integrating approved secondary and postsecondary Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs of study into career planning and training service strategies delivered through American Job Centers and partner programs. Guidance will address how staff can use labor market information and sector priorities to assist individuals with identifying CTE pathways aligned with their skills and employment goals; facilitate transitions into programs of study, including dual credit, articulation agreements and stackable

credentials; and promote co-enrollment across Title I, Title II and Perkins-funded programs, where appropriate. Technical assistance will further 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, coordinate supportive services, and ensure targeted populations facing barriers to employment are fulling incorporated into sector-based career pathway initiatives.

Coordinated Case Management and Supportive Services

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

- **Aligning and implementing the best practices for projects that address employment to people with disabilities.** The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the Illinois Community College Board and the Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) will work with regional and local partners to increase the participation of individuals with disabilities (aged 18 and above) in integrated career pathway and academic programs through community colleges and non-profit organizations in cooperation with American Job Centers, Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIB), employment networks and other regional partners.

- **Aligning and developing work-based learning programs, pre-apprenticeships, and bridge programs for low-literacy and low-skilled adults to sequentially bridge the gap between the initial skills of individuals and what they need to enter and succeed in post-secondary education and career path employment.** The state's bridge programs prepare adults with limited academic or limited English skills to enter and succeed in post-secondary education and training leading to career path employment in-demand occupations. The state agency partners will focus on expanding access and success in sector-based bridge programs that provide opportunities for low-skilled and low-literate youth and adults. The state will support new initiatives that promote sector-based pre-bridge, bridge programs and integrated education and training models that expand access and success of low-skilled youth and adults in career pathways. These programs are designed to introduce individuals to career pathway programs of interest.

- **Aligning and coordinating WIOA Title I services with efforts that currently address justice-involved youth.** Illinois is exploring a range of career pathway models for justice-involved youth seen nationally and statewide as best practices and examining ways to braid and blend funding for maximum impact. Where possible, these models will be folded into existing juvenile justice efforts for seamless service alignment to add the expertise of WIOA service providers to strengthen employment and training models.

- **Aligning and coordinating critical programs and services for veterans.** Through the federal Department of Labor-Veterans Employment and Training Services Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) funding, the Illinois Department of Employment Security employs Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists, who must be fellow

VA-Service Connected disabled veterans and provide individualized career services in compliance with Veterans Program Letter 03-14 to eligible veterans and other eligible individuals to meet their employment needs, prioritizing service to special disabled and other disabled veterans, as defined by 38 U.S.C. 4211, and to other eligible individuals in accordance with priorities determined by the Assistant Secretary – Veterans Employment and Training Services. Illinois veterans will be served through the WIOA priority of service, as well as targeted initiatives administered by the workforce and education partners and the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs. As the WIOA definition of case management describes, it takes a community of resources to assist veterans to overcome/mitigate the identified barriers to employment and get them back into the workforce.

- **Aligning and coordinating WIOA Title I with Title II Adult Education services to ensure immigrants and other individuals who are English language learners have access to services, such as workforce readiness, bridge programs, and Integrated Education and Training through the Illinois workNet American Job Centers.** As an example, in areas with high populations of English language learners, the resource room in a one-stop will offer online classes for students learning English.

D. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS

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

Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Employers

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

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

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

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

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

Integrated Business Services Framework

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

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

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

- **Allowable** – Partners' federal mandates to provide specific, related services must still be met when developing the state framework.

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

- **Organizational structure** – At both the State and regional level, organizational structures will be developed that enable communication between partners to develop a single, reliable, agreed-upon strategy to support engagement and contact between employers and the workforce/economic development system. The form of these organizational structures will vary according to economic development region and sector. Leveraging existing relationships between and among businesses and public partners is recommended as the most reliable initial strategy for engagement with particular employers and sectors. The ten economic development regions will develop mechanisms that will connect business to the full range of partner services—regardless of source.

- **Management of business intelligence** – Given the need to share information across partners—at the State level, but particularly at the regional/local level—management of business intelligence is critical. Recognizing the challenges of creating a statewide cross-agency Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, the State's initial strategy will focus on supporting creative approaches to meeting these regional/local level responsibilities. It is important for regional partners to understand the grassroots nature of business intelligence development. Perhaps the most important data development issue will always be the creation of methods to record and access partner knowledge regarding employer needs, to share that knowledge across the partner network and then to utilize that knowledge to jointly develop and implement proactive solutions to business and sector needs.

- **Solutions-based service offerings** – The service offerings provided to businesses must be focused on delivering timely solutions to expressed business needs. Each region should have its own standardized process for contacting employers in each targeted industry sector and have the capability of providing direct access to appropriate services or referral to all partners who can provide those services. Solutions-based service first requires a focus on listening to what business communicates that it needs, and then requires flexible, creative and timely responses to those needs—a process that builds a portfolio of customized solutions for businesses without merely "dumping" pre-packaged programs and processes on them.

- **Emphasis on work-based learning and other business-focused services** –Closely tied to the solutions sought by businesses is the expanded use of work-based learning (On Site Work-Based Education, Registered Apprenticeships, Youth Apprenticeships, Pre-Apprenticeships, Customized Training, On-the-Job Training, Incumbent Worker Training and others). This emphasis recognizes work-based learning as often the most effective mechanism for delivering Training and Education solutions in an environment that is directly shaped to and for the needs of the employer—their own business.

- **Accountability and performance measurement –** The four framework elements discussed so far will bring significant changes in the focus, intent and utilization of

business services. Along with those changes comes the need to develop appropriate measures of performance. This will enable the measurement (and dissemination) of the meaningful results of those business services activities and will also serve to establish feedback loops that will facilitate data-driven course corrections to the other four framework elements. In particular, these measures should be focused on the value of these services to businesses through measures, such as reduced turnover, reduction in the time required to fill vacancies, enhanced employee retention, additional viable candidates applying for work and enhanced productivity.

Employer engagement conducted through WIOA business services and regional sector partnerships will be coordinated with secondary and postsecondary CTE partners to expand high-quality work-based learning opportunities. Employer partnerships developed through workforce strategies will support internships, pre-apprenticeships, registered apprenticeships, and other experiential learning opportunities that are accessible to learners enrolled in approved programs of study. In priority and emerging sectors, employer input will inform both curriculum alignment and competency expectations across workforce and CTE initiatives.

Integrated business services teams will coordinate outreach to reduce duplication of employer engagement efforts across workforce and CTE systems.

Support Employer-Driven Regional Sector Initiatives

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

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

Apprenticeship Expansion Strategies

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

Talent Pipeline Management

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Strategy 1: Organize for Employer Leadership and Collaboration

Strategy 2: Project Critical Job Demand

Strategy 3: Align and Communicate Job Requirements

Strategy 4: Analyze Talent Supply

Strategy 5: Build Talent Supply Chains

Strategy 6: Engage in Continuous Improvement and Resiliency Planning

Apprenticeship Navigators and Integrated Business Service Teams

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

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

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

- OUTREACH: Serve as a point of contact to assist in the development of apprenticeship and work-based learning opportunities
- PARTNER COORDINATION: Support the regional coordination of apprenticeship and work-based learning opportunities with employers and workforce / education / economic development partners.
- DIRECT ASSISTANCE IN DEVLOPING 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 support 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 OneStop 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.

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

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.

Establishing a State Attainment Workgroup

Illinois' workforce development efforts are further informed by Executive Order 2026-03, issued on March 13, 2026, which establishes a State Attainment Working Group within the Office of the Governor. The Working Group is charged with recommending, by December 1, 2026, a statewide postsecondary attainment goal focused on degrees and credentials of value that align with state and regional workforce needs, support economic mobility, and address disparities in educational and economic outcomes.

The Executive Order directs the Working Group to conduct a comprehensive review of existing state and regional education and workforce plans, including the WIOA Unified State Plan and the Perkins V State Plan, and to ensure alignment with ongoing State initiatives related to workforce and education, including Career and Technical Education and Workforce Pell implementation. The Working Group is also required to engage a broad range of stakeholders, including local workforce boards, postsecondary institutions, employers, labor organizations, and community-based organizations, to support coordinated, cross-system input.

In addition, the Working Group will analyze national, state, and regional data to assess projected workforce needs through 2040, evaluate the types and levels of postsecondary attainment required to meet those needs, define "credentials of value" based on labor market alignment and economic outcomes, and identify gaps between projected workforce demand and current attainment levels.

The establishment of the State Attainment Working Group reinforces Illinois' ongoing efforts to align workforce, education, and economic development systems. As an example of this alignment, the Working Group's required coordination across WIOA core partners, Career and Technical Education programs, and postsecondary institutions supports greater integration between workforce and education planning and complements the State's broader efforts to strengthen alignment between WIOA and Perkins V. The inclusion of WIOA and Perkins V plans in the required review, along with representation from core workforce and education agencies and the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board, further supports coordination across systems and alignment of workforce investments with long-term labor market needs.

Recommendations developed through the State Attainment Working Group will help inform Illinois' future workforce and education planning, including the State's exploration of a combined planning process between WIOA and Perkins V, and will support continued alignment of performance, planning, and investment decisions across systems.

Illinois will incorporate, as appropriate, the findings and recommendations of the State Attainment Working Group into future workforce planning and subsequent updates to the WIOA Unified State Plan.

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 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:

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 Broadband READY strategic partnerships is a regionally based partnership with local universities and programs to deliver digital and broadband services, including community based digital literacy education and training. These 10 projects operate in each of the 10 DCEO economic development regions.

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 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 comprehensive and user-friendly web-based resource. In addition to strengthening alignment across workforce, postsecondary, and economic development systems, the updated Illinois Career Pathways Dictionary now more explicitly integrates Career and Technical Education (CTE) frameworks, terminology, and program design elements to ensure coherence across secondary, postsecondary, and workforce career pathway initiatives.

The first-of-its-kind Illinois Career Pathways Dictionary includes expanded and updated definitions, resources, and implementation guidance on a new website, pathwaysdictionary.org. The resource is designed to promote a shared understanding of high-quality career pathways that align with CTE programs of study, industry-recognized credentials, work-based learning models, and sector-based strategies.

As career pathways systems continue to scale across education, CTE, and workforce systems throughout Illinois, the dictionary is geared toward equipping policymakers, educators, and practitioners with common definitions, tools, and standards to implement high-quality, industry-aligned college and career pathways. By reinforcing shared language and expectations across WIOA, Perkins V, and related education and workforce initiatives, the dictionary supports stronger cross-system alignment and more seamless transitions for learners across the P–20 and workforce continuum.

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 expanded 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.

In addition, Illinois has strengthened alignment between the ETPL and the State's Career and Technical Education (CTE) system to promote greater transparency and coherence across workforce and education programs. Where appropriate, approved CTE programs of study offered by postsecondary institutions are aligned with ETPL eligibility standards to ensure that industry-recognized credentials, work-based learning components, and sector strategies are consistently reflected across systems. This coordination supports clearer pathways for participants transitioning from secondary CTE to postsecondary education and WIOA-funded training opportunities.

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

Developing Green Career and Technical Education Pathway Program

The Office of Employment and Training (OET) is allocating $10 million in state funding to work on a Green Career and Technical Education Pathway Program with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). This funding will allow the OET and the ISBE to expand Green CTE pathway programs statewide. These efforts will be connected to the Illinois Community College Board's Rev Up EV Community College Program. The OET and the ISBE will align efforts with the ICCB to ensure dual credit opportunities are available and EV curriculum is established. The program's overall goal is for secondary education and post-secondary education to align curriculum and experiences to create a true program of study.

F. IMPROVING ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS

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

Illinois will continue to strengthen secondary-to-postsecondary transitions within aligned career pathways. Through dual credit alignment, articulated programs of study, and coordinated employer engagement, the State supports seamless progression from high school to postsecondary credential attainment and related employment. Workforce and education partners will review transition data and pathway outcomes to identify opportunities to reduce duplication, accelerate time to credential, and improve employment outcomes across systems.

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

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

Coordination of Regional and Local Planning

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

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

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 AND POLICIES

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

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

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 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.

Illinois coordinates labor market analysis across workforce and education partners to ensure programmatic alignment with in-demand sectors and occupations. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) utilize labor market information provided by the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), alongside the State and regional WIOA plans, to inform program approval, Comprehensive Local Needs Assessments (CLNAs), and sector prioritization. Postsecondary Career and Technical Education, as a required WIOA partner, participates in regional and local WIOA planning processes, and ICCB reviews WIOA plans to ensure coherence between workforce strategies and CTE program offerings. Through collaboration with the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB), DCEO, IDES, and other WIOA core partners, these shared analyses drive identification of high-demand occupations, stackable credential pathways, and work-based learning expansion, ensuring coordinated sector strategies across secondary, postsecondary, and workforce systems.

2. THE STATE POLICIES THAT WILL SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE'S STRATEGIES (FOR EXAMPLE. CO-ENROLLMENT POLICIES AND UNIVERSAL INTAKE PROCESSES WHERE APPROPRIATE). IN ADDITION, PROVIDE THE STATE'S GUIDELINES FOR STATE-ADMINISTERED ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO A ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM AND ANY ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE FOR ONE-STOP PARTNER CONTRIBUTIONS.

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

- General implementation of WIOA
- Designation of Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIAs)
- Chief Elected Official (CEO) agreements and functions
- Local workforce board composition and certification
- Eligibility for youth, dislocated worker and adult populations
- Eligible training providers and their programs
- Certification of One-Stop Centers

- Minimum Training Expenditures
- One-Stop Operator Procurement
- Service Integration
- Designation of Centers within Illinois' One-Stop System

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

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

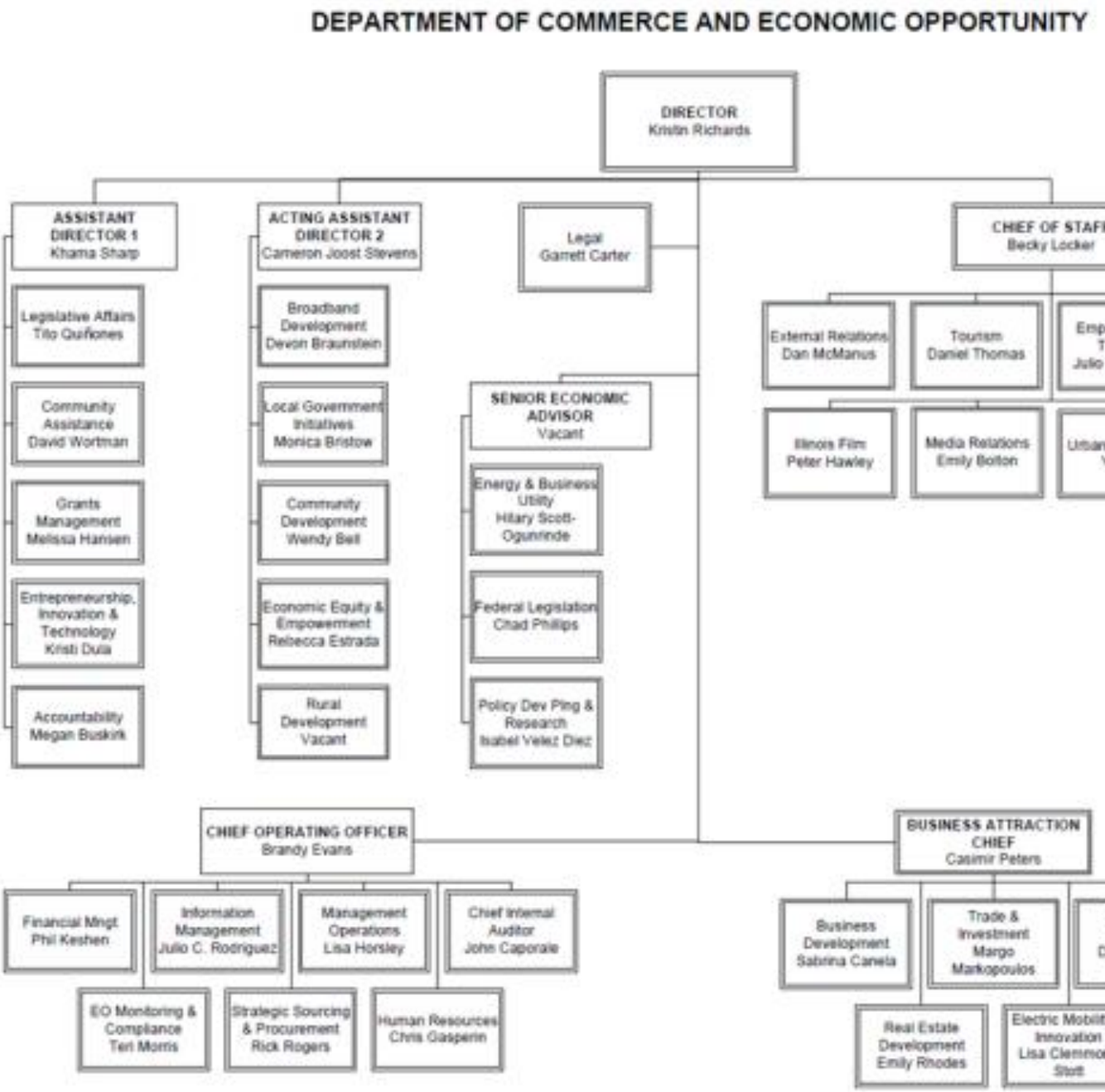
A. STATE AGENCY ORGANIZATION

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

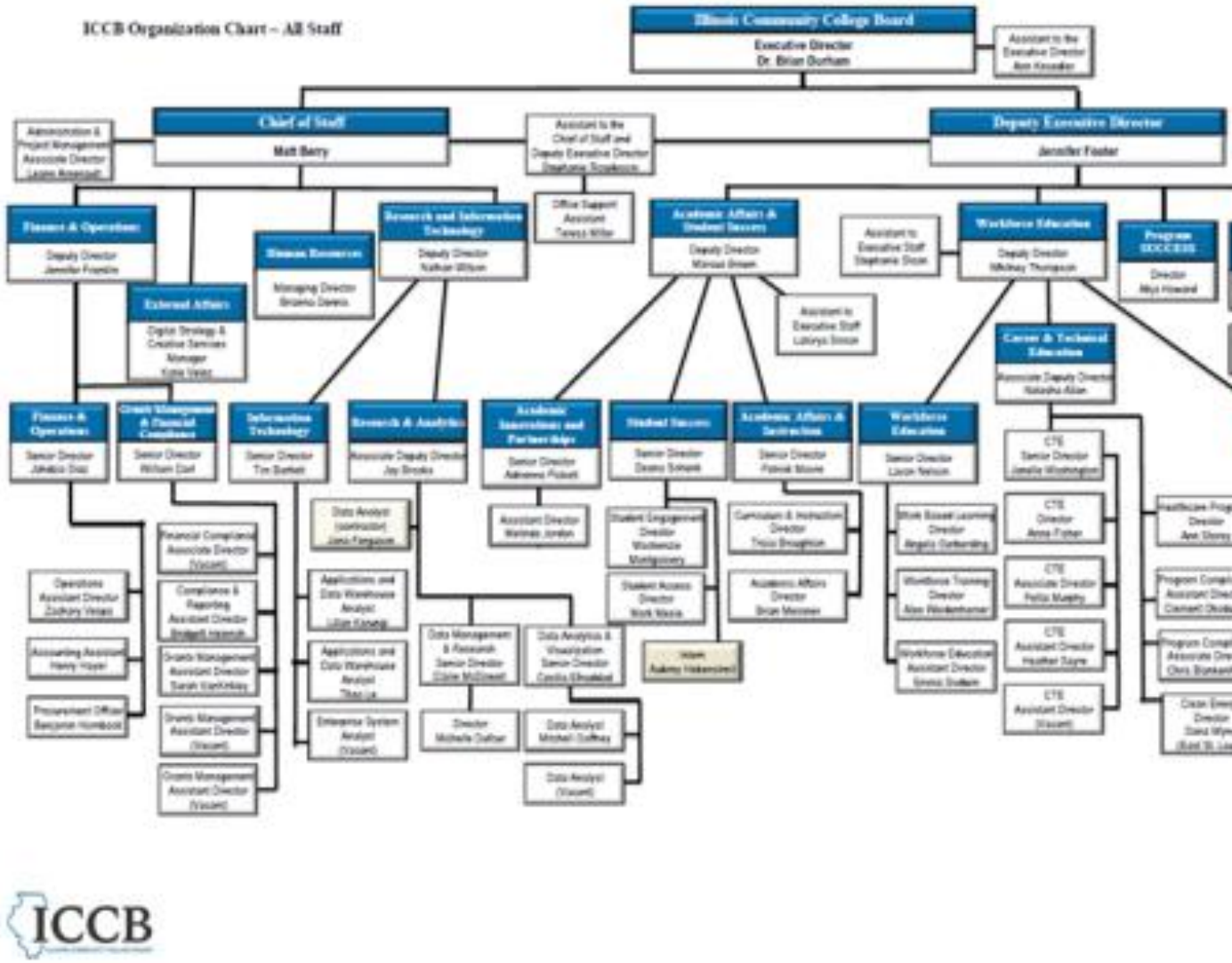
State Agency Organization Charts

Images for each organization chart are also shown below:

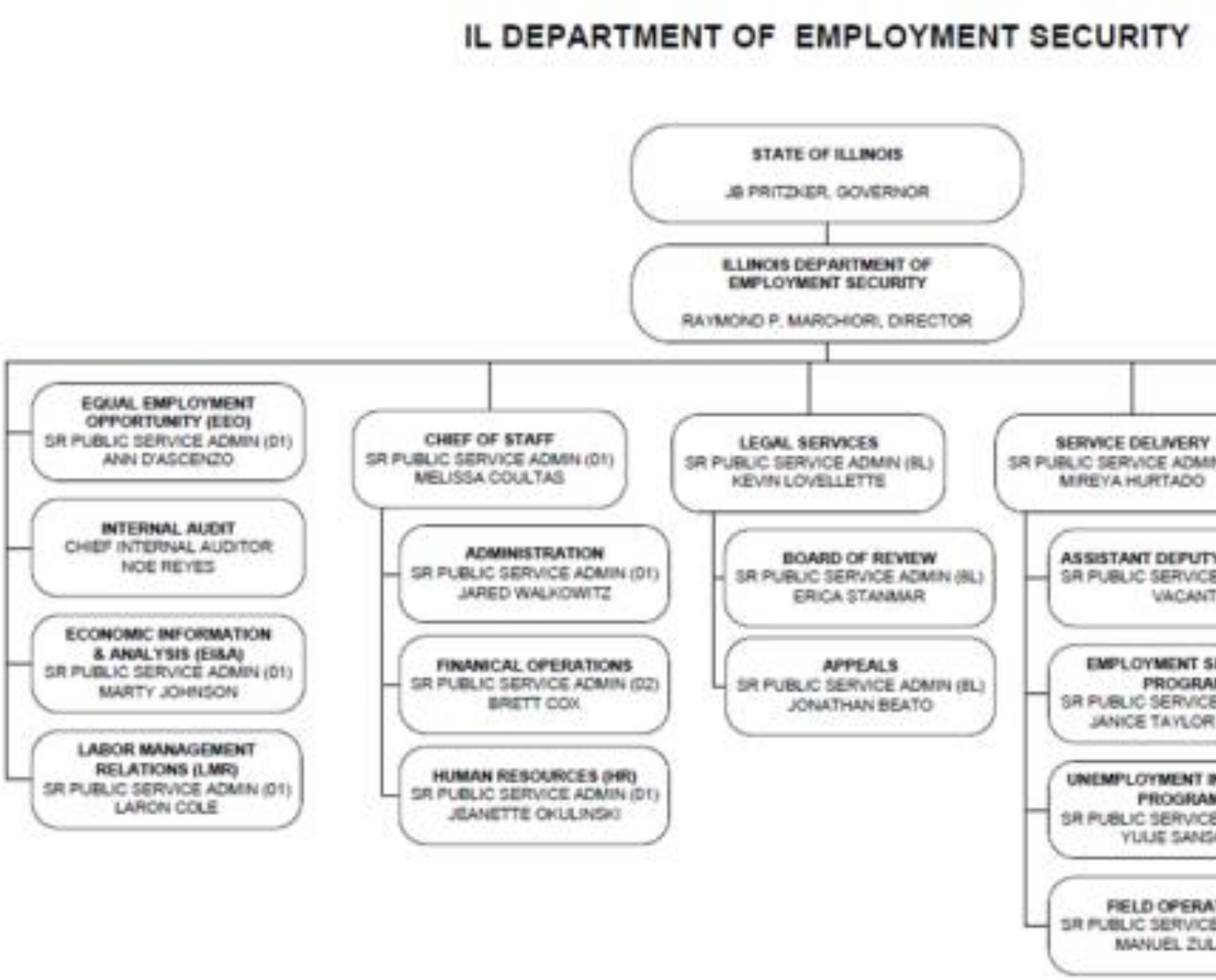
Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Chart



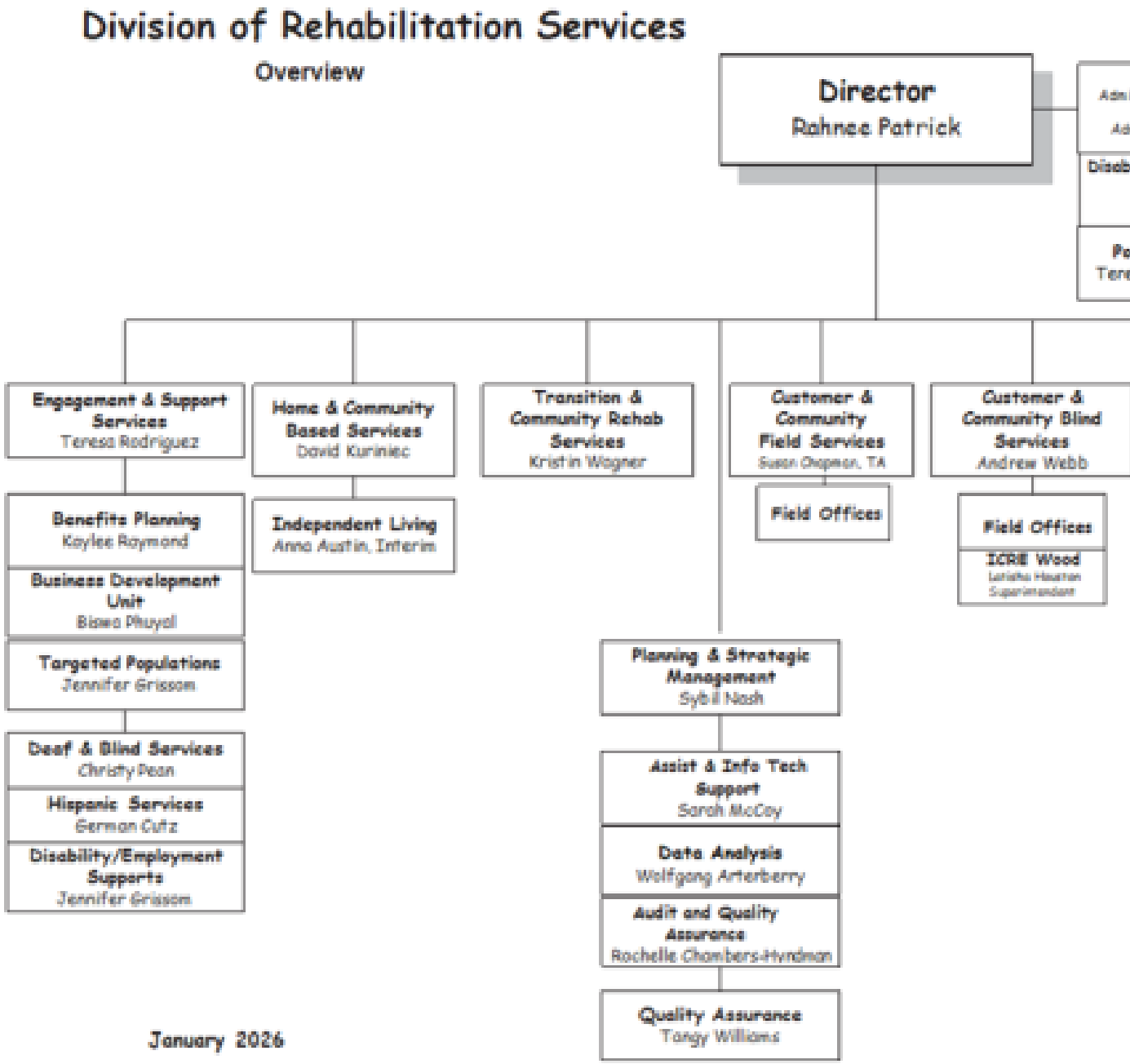
Illinois Community College Board Chart



Illinois Department of Employment Security Chart



Illinois Department of 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 previous 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 though 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 (LWIB).

B. STATE BOARD

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

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

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

The 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
Durham, Dr. Brian	Ex-Officio, Non-Voting Member - Other representatives - 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 representatives - State agency officials	Director, Illinois Department of Labor
Foster, Jennifer	Voting Member, Title II Adult	Executive Deputy Director, Illinois Community College

Name	Board Representation	Title
	Education Representative	Board
Garcia, Karina	Member, Business	President/CEO, Aurora Regional Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Hammond, Rep. 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
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 representatives - 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 of CBOs	President of the Illinois Workforce Alliance
Pritzker, JB	Member	Governor

Name	Board Representation	Title
Purcell, Alexander	Member, Business	Director HR Partner, United Airlines
Quintero, Dulce	Ex-Officio, Non-Voting Member - Other representatives - State agency officials	Secretary, Illinois Department of Human Services
Rayapati, Sangeetha Ann	Member, Chief Elected Official	Mayor, City of Moline
Richards, Kristin	Co-Chair, Voting Member, Title I - Workforce Development Activities	Director, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
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 representatives - higher education, 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. 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.
        - .
        - Provide job seekers with information about job quality and retention.
    - 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.
- 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:

- 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.

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

The Core Partners continue to monitor program enrollment, obligations, and expenditures to assess the ability of local workforce areas and the State 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

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

Service Integration Update and Assessment

Led by the IWIB Service Integration Workgroup, Illinois assessed service integration in each LWIA in 2019-2020. Each local area 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

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

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board's (IWIB) Continuous Improvement 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

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

A. FOR TITLE I PROGRAMS

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

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

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)

Illinois will distribute WIOA Adult funds according to Section 133(b)(2)(A). Illinois also does not intend to distribute funds to local areas for adults based on the adult discretionary allocation formula contained in Section 133(b)(3)(B). As with the discretionary youth allocation described above, utilizing the additional factors contained in Section 133(b)(3)(B) would likely undermine the decisions by the Governor and the Illinois Workforce Board regarding the local workforce area boundaries. In many instances, local areas would likely be left without the amount of funding necessary to allow them to operate viable adult programs.

III. DISLOCATED WORKER EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) AND BASED ON DATA AND WEIGHTS ASSIGNED

Illinois intends to allocate WIOA dislocated worker funds on the basis of the formula described below, pursuant to section 133(b)(2)(B). The state applies the required minimum provision requirements found in WIOA 133(b)(2)(B)(iii) to the Dislocated Worker funds just as it does for the Adult and Youth funding streams. Each of the following factors will be used to distribute 25 percent of the funds to be allocated:

- Insured unemployment data: Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) unemployment insurance (UI) claimant data for the most recently completed calendar

year will be used. Each local workforce area's share of the state total of such claimants is determined, and the area is allocated that share of the funds apportioned by this factor.

- Unemployment concentrations: Unemployment figures for the most recently completed program year will be used. Only counties with unemployment rates above the statewide average will be included in the formula. Each workforce area's share of the state total of such unemployment is determined, and the area is allocated that share of the funds apportioned by this factor.
- Declining industries data: For each workforce area, employment by three-digit North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code is determined for the first calendar quarter (January-March) of the two most recent years for which data is available from IDES' ES-202 UI-covered employment report. The number of jobs lost within industries showing an employment loss from one year to the next is totaled for each area. Each workforce area's share of the state total of such employment loss is determined, and the area is allocated that share of the funds apportioned by this factor.
- Long-term unemployment data: IDES data for the number of UI claimants who were unemployed for 15 or more weeks during the most recently completed calendar year will be used. Each workforce area's share of the state total of such long-term claimants is determined, and the area is allocated that share of the funds apportioned by this factor.
- The plant closing and mass layoff data factor will be given zero weighting under the WIOA dislocated worker allocation formula, due to a lack of public use data sources with sufficient geographic detail to adequately serve the requirements of an allocation formula.
- The farmer-rancher economic hardship factor will be given zero weighting under the WIOA dislocated worker allocation formula, due to a lack of public use data sources with sufficient geographic detail to adequately serve the requirements of an allocation formula.

B. FOR TITLE II

I. DESCRIBE THE METHODS AND FACTORS THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL USE TO DISTRIBUTE TITLE II FUNDS.

Multi-year grants or contracts

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) is the state's eligible agency for adult education and literacy programs. ICCB is responsible for administering funds and providing fiscal, programmatic, and performance oversight to grantees. The ICCB will provide funding to eligible local entities for the provision of adult education services through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). Funding for the AEFLA funds, Corrections Education, and Integrated English Language and Civics Education funds are allocated based on an equitable grant competition. Continuation of funding is provided within the designated continuation period if the grantee adheres to all state and federal grant expectations measured through annual applications, quarterly financial and program performance reports, and student outcomes measured by the Title II Management and Information System.

Through this funding process, the ICCB will identify, assess, and award multi-year grants to eligible providers throughout the state. AEFLA, Corrections Education, and IELCE funding reflect a number of variables, including availability of funding, 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. DESCRIBE HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL ENSURE DIRECT AND EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ALL ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS TO APPLY AND COMPETE FOR FUNDS AND HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL ENSURE THAT IT IS USING THE SAME GRANT OR CONTRACT ANNOUNCEMENT AND APPLICATION PROCEDURE FOR ALL ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS [(WIOA TITLE II SECTION 231(C)(1)-(2)].

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:
2. Local educational agencies (LEAs)
3. Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) or Faith-Based Organization (FBO)
4. Volunteer Literacy Organizations
5. Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs)
6. Public or Private nonprofit agencies
7. Libraries
8. Public-housing authorities
9. Non-profit institutions that are described previously and have the ability to provide adult education and literacy services to eligible individuals
10. Consortium or coalition of agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities as described previously
11. Partnership between an employer and an entity as described above
12. Respond to the Request for Proposal by the due date
13. Complete all required portions of the application, including registration through the State of Illinois Grants Accountability and Transparency Act portal.
14. Meet all deadlines and other elements as specified in the Request for Proposal
15. Meet all eligibility requirements The past effectiveness of an eligible applicant in improving the literacy skills of adults is a strong factor in the delivery of adult education instruction and supportive services. In addition, the alignment of local adult education activities with the local area plans and services, as well as local regional workforce plans are essential.

All grants awarded through the State of Illinois are now subject to the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA), based on EDGAR, the Education Department General Administrative Regulations and FFATA, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act. Notification of continuation plan application availability will be via listserv. Eligible providers must then complete a thorough pre-qualification and application process through the public web portal, Grants.Illinois.gov. Eligible providers may then apply for grants. The continuation of an applicant is contingent upon the availability of federal and state funding; a sufficient appropriation of funding, as well as the applicant's demonstrated effectiveness in serving the target population, achieving the state negotiated performance targets, and the ability to meet all grant eligibility requirements.

C. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

In the case of a State that, under section 101(a)(2)(A)(i) of the Rehabilitation Act designates a State agency to administer the part of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under which VR services are provided for individuals who are blind, describe the process and the factors used by the State to determine the distribution of funds among the two VR agencies in the State.

Vocational Rehabilitation

This is not applicable to the State of Illinois.

6. PROGRAM DATA

A. DATA ALIGNMENT AND INTEGRATION

Describe the plans of the lead State agencies with responsibility for the administration of the core programs, along with the State Board, to align and integrate available workforce and education data systems for the core programs, unemployment insurance programs, and education through postsecondary education, and to the extent possible, the Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan. The description of the State's plan for integrating data systems should include the State's goals for achieving integration and any progress to date.

Describe data-collection and reporting processes used for all programs and activities, including the State's process to collect and report data on co-enrollment, and for those present in the one-stop centers.

I. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PLANS TO MAKE THE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR THE CORE PROGRAMS INTEROPERABLE TO MAXIMIZE THE EFFICIENT EXCHANGE OF COMMON DATA ELEMENTS TO SUPPORT ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

The Illinois core partners have long-standing data sharing agreements in place whereby the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) and Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) request data matching of the Unemployment Insurance Wage Record Data from the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES). The agencies continue to look closely at the long-term agreements and determine if changes need to be made to accommodate the new and innovative sharing of data between the agencies.

The agreements facilitate cross-program access to data about common participants while minimizing duplicative systems costs. In addition to one-on-one data access, the Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS) and the Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) fully executed a multiple agency data sharing agreement with all the State of Illinois educational and workforce agencies. This data sharing agreement allows for the sharing of agency data via the newly established Centralized Demographic Dataset Administrator (CDDA). The interagency agreements and the CDDA arrangement establish a 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

II. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PLANS TO INTEGRATE DATA SYSTEMS TO FACILITATE STREAMLINED INTAKE AND SERVICE DELIVERY TO TRACK PARTICIPATION ACROSS ALL PROGRAMS INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN

Illinois' 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.

III. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE BOARD WILL ASSIST THE GOVERNOR IN ALIGNING TECHNOLOGY AND DATA SYSTEMS ACROSS REQUIRED ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS (INCLUDING DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMON INTAKE, DATA COLLECTION, ETC.) AND HOW SUCH ALIGNMENT WILL IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY TO INDIVIDUALS, INCLUDING UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS

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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.

IV. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S DATA SYSTEMS AND PROCEDURES TO PRODUCE THE REPORTS REQUIRED UNDER SECTION 116, PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM. (WIOA SECTION 116(D)(2)).

The four core partner programs currently collect all data necessary to develop and produce performance accountability reports required under Section 116(d)(2). Each partner submits quarterly and annual reports to the Departments of Labor and Education as appropriate to meet federal reporting requirements. These reports are reviewed with state and local program administrators to ensure Illinois continues to meet and exceed negotiated performance levels.

The State has in existence the ability to develop and produce reports required by sec. 116(d)(2) of WIOA and submit them annually using the template the Departments disseminate and, therefore, provide the required minimum levels of performance achieved with respect to the primary indicators of performance levels achieved consistent with § 677.175. The core state partners in collaboration with local workforce innovation boards and education institutions utilize existing database management systems to meet all the elements required for full WIOA reporting via Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) formatted submission on Workforce Integrated Performance System (WIPS).

B. ASSESSMENT OF PARTICIPANTS' POST-PROGRAM SUCCESS

Describe how lead State agencies will use the workforce development system to assess the progress of participants who are exiting from core programs in entering, persisting in, and completing postsecondary education, or entering or remaining in employment. States may choose to set additional indicators of performance.

Lead state agencies are continually assessing the progress of participants who are exiting from core programs entering into and completing postsecondary education, or entering or remaining in employment. Via accountability and transparency dashboards and reports, student and participant activities are tracked, monitored and follow-up services are conducted. State and local staff maintain regular contact with the individuals and/or employers during follow-up services.

Performance experts from the WIOA core and required partners continue to work with the Illinois Department of Innovation Technology to connect data systems that will allow the state to assess the progress of participants that exit the program and continue on with education programs and enter employment. This cross-agency workgroup is exploring the development of a common information system using the existing Illinois Framework for Healthcare and Human Services. Ongoing discussions include the possibility of adapting that framework for WIOA purposes, including tracking participant exits from all programs. Two additional initiatives that will support this effort are the Longitudinal Data System and the Work Readiness Through Apprenticeship and Pathways.

Partners established a common vision and built the Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS) with data-sharing agreements with universities and others to ensure consistently high levels of quality, reliability and security in matching and managing participant-level data across agency and university partners. The ILDS Agencies and the Governing Board have made substantial

progress on activities that relate to the ILDS Functions. As detailed in this Section, this progress includes:

- Development and adoption of the Initial Annual Report and Plan;
- A number of intra-agency enhancements that support the broader LDS effort;
- The selection and establishment of the Centralized Demographic Dataset Administrator; and
- Significant work and accomplishments in the end-user service priorities established by the Governing Board.

The Unemployment to Reemployment data environment, an established program between states and the Coleridge Initiative, has implemented longitudinal record linkage between the following Illinois administrative data sources:

- quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW);
- weekly Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimant files;
- weekly Program for Measuring the Insured Unemployed Statistics (PROMIS) files;
- quarterly Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage records;
- monthly Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage records;
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I training data; and
- Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) services data.

The workforce system will leverage this record-linkage best practice to integrate the state's new hires file and design portal reports to address key reemployment questions, such as:

- Does the reemployment rate of individuals following a spell of unemployment differ by education and training?
- What is the relationship between the new job and their prior job loss?
- Are claimants in some education categories reemployed with the same employer at a higher rate than others?
- If not, are they reemployed in the same industry?

The portal will display timely reemployment metrics for diverse claimant subgroups. State agencies faced an immediate need in March of 2020 to provide an effective, data-based, response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to an unprecedented workload, the occupational composition of the unemployed changed drastically to a population unused to job loss. Within some industries, new occupational strata of unemployed emerged, in others the concentration of layoff activity intensified in traditional occupational groups, and, as well, there was greater concentration and geographic dispersion of some occupations than others. The Midwest Collaborative moved swiftly to develop an unemployment-to-reemployment portal (a UI portal) to inform policy makers. The structure of the portal highlights weekly (timely),

county-based (local), and actionable information on Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimant composition and transitions.

While the unprecedented claims volume has dissipated for much of the country, local workforce boards are struggling for data-driven, reemployment strategies in an effort to reengage large unemployed populations with the workforce. The pandemic labor market has necessitated and catalyzed a range of labor market behaviors among job seekers that requires policy makers and program administrators to find new data and information sources to plan and allocate resources. Of greatest importance is timely and locally-relevant information on reemployment pathways for workers by education/training. This project uses existing data in new ways to deepen understanding and increase timeliness of information, helping to fill that data gap as local economies quickly evolve. The project proposes to:

- create Tableau visualizations on local unemployment spell behavior for 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

Explain how the State will meet the requirements to utilize quarterly UI wage records for performance accountability, evaluations, and as a source for workforce and labor market information, consistent with Federal and State law. (This Operational Planning element applies to core programs.)

The Illinois Department of Employment Security will provide reporting for three employment-related performance indicators (employment rate in the second and fourth quarters after exit and median earnings in the second quarter after exit), status in unsubsidized employment and quarterly earnings through direct Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage match and State Wage Interchange System (SWIS) wages match. Under "Effectiveness in Serving Employers" the State has selected the measures of "Retention with the same employer" and "Employer Penetration Rate." Employment Security will report performance data for Retention by providing (UI) wage match keeping in mind that this is a shared outcome across all six core programs within the State and will be a combined reporting measure. Wage records will identify a participant's employment using an establishment identifier – FEIN for example. The Employer Penetration Rate will be determined by each core provider tracking of the number of establishments served within a program year, and the State will collect that data and compare it to the aggregate number of employers in a given State and/or county.

The Unemployment to Reemployment portal presents a series of data-analytic visualizations that are: 1. claimant based (UI certified status); 2. structured by cohort (anchored in the benefit week as determined when the claimant files a new initial claim (time stamp)); 3. longitudinal (sequenced by receipt of a weekly unemployment benefit (i.e., depletion of the maximum benefit amount)); and 4. made locally relevant (geographic coding of each claimant record by place of residence). The success of the portal culminated in a U.S. DOL/ETA-funded Applied Data Analytics training program in the Spring of 2021 that was attended by 120 participants representing 30 states.

D. PRIVACY SAFEGUARDS

Describe the privacy safeguards incorporated in the State's workforce development system, including safeguards required by section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g) and other applicable Federal laws.

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.

A. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT THE PRIORITY OF SERVICE PROVISIONS FOR COVERED PERSONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE JOBS FOR VETERANS ACT, CODIFIED AT SECTION 4215 OF 38 U.S.C., WHICH APPLIES TO ALL EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS FUNDED IN WHOLE OR IN PART BY THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR.

B. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL MONITOR PRIORITY OF SERVICE PROVISIONS FOR VETERANS.

C. DESCRIBE THE TRIAGE AND REFERRAL PROCESS FOR ELIGIBLE VETERANS AND OTHER POPULATIONS DETERMINED ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE SERVICES FROM THE JOBS FOR VETERANS STATE GRANTS (JVSG) PROGRAM'S DISABLED VETERANS' OUTREACH PROGRAM (DVOP) SPECIALIST/CONSOLIDATED POSITION.

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

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners), will comply with section 188 of WIOA (if applicable) and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities. This also must include a description of compliance through providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. Describe the State's one-stop center certification policy, particularly the accessibility criteria.

Illinois is committed to ensuring both programmatic and physical accessibility to the one-stop delivery system by maintaining compliance with WIOA Section 188, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and all other applicable statutory and regulatory requirements. Compliance monitoring is conducted at the state and local level to make certain that all comprehensive one-stop facilities, programs, services, technology and materials are accessible and available. These services must be provided "on-demand" and in "near real time" in the physical comprehensive one-stop center location or via technology consistent with the "direct linkage" requirement defined in WIOA.

Another significant role in ensuring the physical and programmatic accessibility is the IWIB's One-Stop Center Certification policy discussed in the State Operating Systems and Policies portion of the Unified Plan. The certification criteria specified by the IWIB to evaluate the Comprehensive One-Stop Center's programmatic accessibility ensures equal access to all required programs, services, and activities to eligible participants and employers regardless of their range of abilities, mobility, age, language, learning style, intelligence or education level. Services must be made available without unlawful discrimination. Primary criteria include equal access to career services, equal access to program services, direct linkage and reasonable accommodations. The indoor space is evaluated to make sure there is "equal and meaningful" access to programs for individuals with disabilities. Examples include computer accessibility, ergonomic set-up, screen-reading software programs (JAWS and DRAGON) and access to interpreters.

In addition to the role of the EOMC, the state has participated in or funded initiatives through the one-stop system that expand access to services for individuals with disabilities and that focus on developing relationships by leveraging resources and enhancing employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Opportunity Youth are participating in sector-based training such as Information Technology through a connection between the school district and the one-stop system to make their existing "career pathways" systems fully inclusive of and accessible to individuals with disabilities. A significant improvement in this pilot is the development of an Individualized Career Development Plan (ICDP). The ICDP provides an overview of planned experiences for students participating in secondary school beginning at age 14½, or upon entry to high school. It also aligns with the Illinois Individualized Education Program (IEP) Transition Plan and Summary of Performance components to alleviate duplication of document development for students with disabilities and to provide comprehensive information about goals and avenues for meeting post-high school goals. It is

important to note that the ICDP is a result of discussions between the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and DCEO. Furthermore, ISBE adopted the ICDP for use by special education programs.

Finally, staff training is integral to making sure all services are programmatically and physically accessible. The state has hosted a series of webinar events that include updated provisions on WIOA Section 188, technical assistance provided by Diversity Partners project on leveraging business relations to benefit job seekers with disabilities, and the requirements of Comprehensive One-Stop Center certification. Additionally, the state has and will continue to conduct summits that provide best practices for serving individuals with disabilities.

The Departments of Commerce and Employment Security developed an agreement to better align the ADA monitoring process of American Job Centers. This agreement will allow for better alignment of office inspection timing and for improved cross-agency communication regarding inspection findings. In facilities where both Title III and Title IB staff are located, DCEO will conduct the ADA inspections in order to avoid duplication of services and better align findings and related reports. DCEO will provide IDES with the ADA inspection report after the inspection has been completed. If IDES is the leaseholder, IDES will then work with Central Management Services and/or the landlord to correct any findings.

9. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners) will ensure that each one-stop center is able to meet the needs of English language learners, such as through established procedures, staff training, resources, and other materials. Describe how English language learners will be made aware of the opportunity to enroll and/or co-enroll in all the core programs for which they are eligible.

Addressing the Accessibility of the One-Stop Delivery System for Individuals who are English Language Learners

In Illinois, there is a great need for interpreters due to limited English proficiency in many portions of the state. Staff members are trained to ensure that an interpreter is provided in these situations “in real time” to meet the needs of English Language Learners. The State of Illinois has a master contract with an interpreting service provider to offer these services to assist English Language Learners.

Adult Education and Literacy is the key education program in the state that provides English language instruction. These services will be coordinated within the one-stop delivery system. The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) English language programs provide instruction to approximately 36,000 students annually. This instruction includes services to adults 16 years and over to achieve competence in reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension of the English language.

Adult Education English language programs provide instruction in civics education, workforce readiness, bridge programs, and Integrated Education and Training to English Language Learners at varying educational functioning levels. Adult Education has recently expanded online instructional efforts to connect more students to English language activities. In addition, the Integrated Education Literacy and Civics Education (IEL/CE) activities are being expanded

to include more instruction offered concurrently in English language instruction, Workforce Preparation, Civics Education, and concurrently Integrated Education and Training. ICCB Adult Education has also developed an IEL/CE toolkit that will assist programs in the development of these instruction offerings. The trainings are provided to administrators, support staff, and instructors through the Professional Development Network. Additionally, as stated previously, WIOA Title I and Title II, Adult Education will partner within the one-stop center resource rooms to provide an online digital solution for language learning.

One of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's Department of Equal Opportunity Monitoring Compliance (EOMC)'s most essential ongoing goals is to ensure access to all. By working with the LWIAs, EOMC has outlined strategies to prevent discrimination based on national origin by failing to provide language services to someone with limited English proficiency (LEP). As such, under the new rules, recipients must take reasonable steps to ensure that individuals with LEP have meaningful access to aid, benefits, services and training. Together with Central Management Services (CMS), EOMC has secured language transcription and translation services that are utilized statewide with the assistance from contracts executed by the Governor's Office. Multilingual Connections holds the Translation and Interpretation Services Master Contract (19-416CMS-BOSS4-P-8618) through May 13, 2023. Under this contract, Multilingual Connections provides the written translation, audio transcription and in-person interpretation services in dozens of languages. Together, with Propio Language Services, another DoIT communication contract that provides language interpreter services, EOMC can include oral interpretation and written translation of both hard-copy and electronic materials in non-English languages. This service ensures that individuals with LEP are informed about or able to participate in covered programs or activities.

The Illinois workNet portal consolidates resources for job seekers and businesses into one online forum that provides career, education, and work support information. Illinois workNet is designed to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their level of English proficiency, can access workforce services through the portal. Toward this effort, workNet has incorporated Spanish language content. Specifically, local and state content published in Spanish with a language switcher link is available to toggle between Spanish and English pages. The Spanish site provides the model to allow information in additional languages with minimal effort.

The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) collects data on participants' preferred languages. Service providers record the preferred language of applicants who seek to participate in the Workforce Development System to help ensure they have the necessary information to serve LEP individuals as effectively as English-speaking applicants.

By utilizing this front-end approach to language determination, diverse non-English speaking participants will have meaningful access to aid, benefits, services, and training by utilizing the language of choice as administered during applicant inquiry. Breaking down the communication barriers ensures that individuals with LEP are informed about and able to participate in covered programs or activities. EOMC continues to clarify which documents are "vital" and thus must be translated into languages spoken by a significant number or portion of the population eligible to be served or likely to be encountered.

Each recipient must also record the limited English proficiency and preferred language of each applicant, registrant, participant, and terminee. To that end, EOMC continues to clarify which documents are "vital" and thus must be translated into languages spoken by a significant

number or portion of the population eligible to be served or likely to be encountered. U.S. DOL CRC has identified and required vital information be offered in the most prevalent languages spoken by a significant number or portion of the population eligible to be served and/or likely to be encountered. EOMC reserves the right to add additional languages as appropriate and has adopted the following list of specific languages as follows: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, French Creole, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

EOMC continues to educate LWIAs during continuous training seminars on the promising practices to help recipients comply with their legal obligations and includes the components of a plan to facilitate meaningful access for individuals with limited English proficiency. With these increased provisions to provide universal access throughout the workforce system, annual on-site monitoring of all recipients was enacted to provide assurances that recipients are complying with all nondiscriminatory provisions of the law.

Copies of all monitoring reviews are submitted to U.S. DOL during their review schedule. These reports include findings, as well as corrective actions taken to ensure recipients of WIOA funding adhere to the assurance clauses of their contracts. Affirmative outreach efforts are also discussed and reviewed as part of the annual monitoring process at each LWIA. If EOMC determines there is insufficient outreach being performed (either through monitoring or data analysis review), the LWIA is required to complete a corrective action plan detailing how they will improve their efforts to attract the under-represented group(s).

The Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) ensures meaningful and equal access to the Limited English Proficient (LEP) Population so that they may enjoy the benefits, services and programs IDES offers in the same or similar way as English-speaking Illinoisans. Additionally, in August of 2021, IDES created and designated a Language and Disability Access Coordinator position to assist the agency in ensuring compliance with the Nondiscrimination laws.

Language and disability access as well as community outreach, are just a few ways that IDES has supported and furthered its DEI Plan's goals and objectives. There are various ways in which IDES documents these services. Illinois Benefit Information System (IBIS) is a computer software programs that IDES uses to implement and assist in issuing Unemployment Insurance (UI) services to claimants. IBIS tracks LEP claims filed and claimant's preferred languages. This data is used to determine whether IDES is meeting its language needs. IDES also documents the provision of language assistance services via the tracking of its webpages. IDES gathers and monitors data regarding the number of visits on each public facing webpage, including its multilingual pages. IDES uses this data to analyze whether it is meeting its requirements under the U.S. DOL LEP provisions. Economic Information and Analysis (EI&A) is a division within IDES that tracks labor market data on a quarterly basis. EI&A's data analysis also assists in ensuring that IDES can forecast trends and see where its services are needed.

The Office of Equal Opportunity Monitoring and Compliance (EO) Compliance Reporting Unit conducts an analysis and completes various reports which review the agency's LEP services and needs. These reports are the Illinois Bilingual Needs and Bilingual Pay Survey, the Affirmative Action Plan Report, the Illinois State Services Assurances Act Report and the Employment Plan Surveys. The Compliance Unit also reviews all hires and promotions to assess whether IDES employs sufficient bilingual staff to meet the LEP communities' needs. Also, EO's Monitoring Unit reviews Local Offices annually to determine the nature of LEP services that are sufficient to

meet the needs of the LEP communities. Additionally, IDES' language line vendor compiles a report regarding the number of calls to the language line, what languages are being requested and the minutes being used on each call. This data is used on a continual basis to ensure IDES is staffed appropriately according to geographic location.

Below is an overview of all language services to be provided to LEP individuals as of January 2022. IDES will or is in the process of providing the following language services to LEP individuals:

- Language Translations Widget on website - IDES has a Google translation widget on its public facing website. This widget allows all IDES webpages to be translated into multiple languages, including but not limited to the 6 most common Illinois languages at an instant. Additionally, IDES has performed a human review for accuracy of the multilingual widget to ensure the integrity of the translation.

- Language Line Services - DES contracts with various vendors to provide language translation services via the telephone. IDES also has created the multilingual telephony AI bot which assists callers in their preferred language. The language line vendor assists IDES in answering calls in hundreds of languages. Additionally, they provide IDES with vital data regarding language needs by geographical location. These services assist IDES in meeting U.S. DOL LEP requirements and determining where additional bilingual staff may be needed.

- Bilingual Employees - IDES employs 148 bilingual employees within its workforce to assist the LEP community in receiving its services and benefits. The languages that the bilingual employees speak are Spanish, Polish and Chinese. All other translation services are conducted via interpreters with our language line services.

- Advisory Councils - IDES has a representative on several Illinois Employment Plan Advisory Councils. The Councils in which IDES has a representative are the Hispanic, Asian American, African American and the Native American Employment Advisory Councils. Each Council is comprised of advocates that represent the specific group's interests and needs with a focus on State services and employment. These Councils offer advice and recommendations for how IDES as well as other State agencies may effectively reach and service, in a meaningful way, the LEP communities that they represent. IDES also holds roundtable discussions with legal aid clinics, the Illinois Language Justice Coalition and other stakeholders and community groups.

IV. COORDINATION WITH STATE PLAN PROGRAMS

Describe the methods used for joint planning and coordination among the core programs, and with the required one-stop partner programs and other programs and activities included in the Unified or Combined State Plan.

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

V. COMMON ASSURANCES (FOR ALL CORE PROGRAMS)

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The State has established a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a State Board or local board member, or the entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts;	Yes
2. The State has established a policy to provide to the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of State Boards and local boards, and information regarding activities of State Boards and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes;	Yes
3. The lead State agencies with optimal policy-making authority and responsibility for the administration of core programs reviewed and commented on the appropriate operational planning elements of the Unified or Combined State Plan, and approved the elements as serving the needs of the populations served by such programs;	Yes
4. (a) The State obtained input into the development of the Unified or Combined State Plan and provided an opportunity for comment on the plan by representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administrating the core programs, required one-stop partners and the other Combined Plan	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
programs (if included in the State Plan), other primary stakeholders, including other organizations that provide services to individuals with barriers to employment, and the general public, and that the Unified or Combined State Plan is available and accessible to the general public; (b) The State provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by the State Board, including State agency official(s) for the Unemployment Insurance Agency if such official(s) is a member of the State Board;	
5. The State has established, in accordance with WIOA section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments made for the core programs to carry out workforce development activities;	Yes
6. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with uniform administrative requirements in this Act, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA section 184(a)(3);	Yes
7. The State has taken the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA section 188, Nondiscrimination, as applicable;	Yes
8. The Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program;	Yes
9. The State will pay an appropriate share (as defined by the State board) of the costs of carrying out section 116, from funds made available through each of the core programs;	Yes
10. The State has a one-stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
accessibility of all one-stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA);	
11. Service providers have a referral process in place for directing eligible populations to DVOP services, when appropriate.	Yes
12. Priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses is provided in accordance with 38 USC 4215 in all workforce preparation, development or delivery of programs or services funded directly, in whole or in part, by the Department of Labor.	Yes

VI. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

The State must address all program-specific requirements in this section for the WIOA core programs regardless of whether the State submits either a Unified or Combined State Plan.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE I-B

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following with respect to activities carried out under subtitle B—

A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

1. REGIONS AND LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS

A. IDENTIFY THE REGIONS AND THE LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS DESIGNATED IN THE STATE

For purposes of WIOA, the 102 counties in Illinois are grouped into ten Economic Development Regions (EDR) and twenty-two (22) Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIA). The regions range from a relatively compact four counties in the Northern Stateline region to the much larger nineteen (19) county Southern region.

The 22 LWIAs range from six (6) single-county LWIAs to an area with 14 counties. All but one of the single-county LWIAs are located in the Northeastern Economic Development Region that covers the greater Chicagoland area. There are a small number of instances where the EDRs cross LWIA boundaries. The Governor designated ten EDRs that are also used for the purposes of alignment with workforce development. Here is a list of counties in each region:

- Region 1 (Central (12 counties)) - Cass, Christian, Greene, Logan, Macon, Macoupin, Menard, Montgomery, Morgan, Sangamon, Scott, Shelby Counties.
- Region 2 (East Central (6 counties)) - Champaign, Douglas, Ford, Iroquois, Piatt, Vermilion Counties.
- Region 3 (North Central (10 counties)) - De Witt, Fulton, Livingston, Mc Lean, Marshall, Mason, Peoria, Stark, Tazewell, Woodford Counties.

- Region 4 (Northeast (10 counties)) - Cook, De Kalb, Du Page, Grundy, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Lake, Mc Henry, Will Counties.
- Region 5 (Northern Stateline (4 counties)) - Boone, Ogle, Stephenson, Winnebago Counties.
- Region 6 (Northwest (10 counties)) - Bureau, Carroll, Henry, Jo Daviess, La Salle, Lee, Mercer, Putnam, Rock Island, Whiteside Counties.
- Region 7 (Southeastern (13 counties)) - Clark, Clay, Coles, Crawford, Cumberland, Edgar, Effingham, Fayette, Jasper, Lawrence, Marion, Moultrie, Richland Counties.
- Region 8 (Southern (19 counties)) - Alexander, Edwards, Franklin, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Jackson, Jefferson, Johnson, Massac, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Saline, Union, Wabash, Wayne, White, Williamson Counties.
- Region 9 (Southwestern (9 counties)) - Bond, Calhoun, Clinton, Jersey, Madison, Monroe, Randolph, St. Clair, Washington Counties.
- Region 10 (West Central (9 counties)) - Adams, Brown, Hancock, Henderson, Knox, McDonough, Pike, Schuyler, Warren Counties.

The current LWIA boundaries trace their origins back to the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act program of the 1970s. Through the transitions to the Job Training to the Job Training Partnership Act, Workforce Investment Act and now WIOA, the LWIA boundaries remained largely unchanged, save for the consolidations mentioned previously.

The Governor established ten Economic Development Regions (EDR) in 2003 based on contemporary economic data. These regional boundaries were reexamined in 2015 and 2017 and 2018 based on the latest economic data and were found to generally still be valid. While the EDR boundaries largely follow the pre-existing LWIA structure, the overlay is not 100 percent and there are a handful of outlier counties that cause their LWIA to cross into another EDR. These counties are: DeWitt, Ogle and Livingston.

Throughout 2018 and early 2019, the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) used updated labor-market information provided by the Department of Employment Security (IDES) to facilitate local negotiations for realigning selected outlier counties between four local workforce areas. Effective July 1, 2019, Calhoun and Jersey counties transitioned from LWIA 21 to LWIA 22; and Douglas county transitioned from LWIA 23 to LWIA 17.

The State is requesting a waiver, described further later in this section, to extend the deadline for bringing all LWIA boundaries into full alignment with the EDRs.

B. DESCRIBE THE PROCESS AND POLICY USED FOR DESIGNATING LOCAL AREAS, INCLUDING PROCEDURES FOR DETERMINING WHETHER THE LOCAL AREA MET THE CRITERIA FOR "PERFORMED SUCCESSFULLY" AND "SUSTAINED FISCAL INTEGRITY" IN ACCORDANCE WITH 106(B)(2) AND (3) OF WIOA. DESCRIBE THE PROCESS USED FOR IDENTIFYING REGIONS AND PLANNING REGIONS UNDER SECTION 106(A) OF WIOA. THIS MUST INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE STATE CONSULTED WITH THE LOCAL BOARDS AND CHIEF ELECTED OFFICIALS IN IDENTIFYING THE REGIONS

Procedures for Determining if Local Areas Met the Criteria for "Performed Successfully"

Illinois issued the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Transition Policy 1 to address the initial designation of local areas as required by WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) Number 27-14 that was issued by the United States Department of Labor (DOL). The process for designating Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIA) under WIOA was established by WIOA Transition Policy 1, issued on April 23, 2015. This policy letter describes conditions necessary for the Governor to approve a request to designate an area, defines "performed successfully" and "sustained fiscal integrity" as required by the Act. "The term "performed successfully" used with respect to a local area, means the local area met or exceeded the adjusted levels of performance for core indicators of performance described in Section 136(b)(2)(A) of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, as in effect the day before the date of enactment of WIOA for each of the last two (2) consecutive years for which data are available preceding the determination of performance under this paragraph;" "The term "sustained fiscal integrity", used with respect to a local area, means that the Secretary of Labor has not made a formal determination, during within of the last two (2) consecutive years preceding the determination regarding such integrity, that either the grant recipient or the administrative entity of the area misappropriated funds provided under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (as in effect prior to the effective date of WIOA subtitle B) due to willful disregard of the requirements of the provision involved, gross negligence, or failure to comply with accepted standards of administration." The conditions necessary for the governor to designate a local area as described in the policy letter are:

- The local area was designated under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 on or before July 1, 2012.
- The local area successfully met or exceeded adjusted performance requirements for core indicators under Section 136(b)(2)(A) of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 for each of the most recent two consecutive years for which data are available.
- The local area did not receive a declaration of having failed to sustain fiscal integrity for the two prior program years by the Secretary of Labor.
- All county Chief Elected Officials (CEO) within a current LWIA, following a review of all current operations of the local area and by signature on the request, agree to all matters with regard to the request for designation by the state of the current local area. The majority (20 of 22) of the local workforce areas in Illinois met the criteria outlined in Section 1.A of TEGL 27-14. All of the Chief Elected Officials that met these criteria, in consultation with the local workforce boards, submitted a request to be designated as a local area under WIOA.

Procedures for Determining if Local Areas Sustained Fiscal Integrity
In determining whether the grant recipient/administrative entity in the local area sustained fiscal integrity, the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity reviewed the following for the two-year period immediately preceding Program Year 2015: 1) Formal determinations of disallowed costs and non-compliance as documented by reports of the results of the state's WIA/WIOA monitoring, single audits and DOL monitoring (if applicable); 2) Results of investigations of incident reports alleging gross negligence, fraud, abuse or other misconduct; and 3) Formal communication of high-risk status and/or suspension of cash payments resulting from continued violations of administrative requirements and grant terms and conditions and the subsequent corrective actions implemented by the local area to correct the violations. The

implementation of the Illinois Grant Accountability and Transparency Act established standard pre-award, establishment and grant administration procedures across all state agencies. This added another set of tools to ensure grant recipients sustain fiscal integrity.

Process Used to Determine Regions and Planning Regions
Regional Planning Areas were designated to align with the state's ten Economic Development Regions (EDR). These ten regions address the WIOA Section 106 requirement that the Governor identify and organize local workforce boards and core program partners into regional planning areas to engage in joint planning, coordinate service delivery, share administrative costs and enter regional coordination efforts with economic development agencies operating in the same region. The ten regions were first established in 2003 by the Governor based on the analysis of statewide commuting patterns surrounding major and minor metropolitan centers and other economic factors.

As mentioned in the prior section, the state completed a new economic analysis in 2018 and the data confirmed this regional alignment is still appropriate. In early 2015, the Department collaborated with the Illinois Community College Board on creating a strategic plan for workforce and education. The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (Commerce) and the Department of Employment Security (Employment Security) and the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) made the local areas and community college districts aware the data indicated the EDRs were still valid. Furthermore, we jointly announced our intent to strengthen the linkages of all our efforts to economic development by using these regions as the base for community college and WIOA planning regardless of community college district and LWIA alignments. As part of the ICCB planning, data packets for each region were prepared that included a map showing how the community college districts and LWIAs overlapped with the planning regions. To promote continuity from the ICCB planning, these data packets were also used by WIOA regional planning teams. Updated data packets were prepared by the State Interagency Data Team and distributed to regional planning teams for each WIOA planning cycle.

C. PROVIDE THE APPEALS PROCESS AND POLICY REFERRED TO IN SECTION 106(B)(5) OF WIOA RELATING TO DESIGNATION OF LOCAL AREAS

Illinois WIOA Transition Policy 1 provides that the Governor's decision regarding local area requests for initial designation may be appealed in accordance with Sections 679.290 of the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. The policy also describes conditions under which the governor may approve a request for initial designation as a local workforce development area under WIOA from any area that was designated as a local area under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998, but failed to meet all the aforementioned requirements; and conditions under which the governor may also designate a local workforce development area upon the request of the State Workforce Development Board. Furthermore, the policy describes the appeals process that may be used should a local area disagree with the Governor's determination and provides an application form to be filed by local area CEOs. Local areas may appeal to the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board, which has 60 days to render a decision. If a decision has not been made by that time or if the appeal does not result in a designation, the entity may appeal to the Secretary of Labor. There were no local workforce areas that appealed the Governor's decision regarding initial designation.

D. PROVIDE THE APPEALS PROCESS AND POLICY REFERRED TO IN SECTION 121(H)(2)(E) OF WIOA RELATING TO DETERMINATIONS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

The appeals process relating to the determinations for infrastructure funding and the State Funding Mechanism is outlined in the Governor's Guidelines for MOU Development (Revision 4), included as Attachment G, formerly Attachment J in the Unified State Plan. Specifically, the appeals process is described in Part VI, Section 3, pp. 23-24, and is as follows:

From Part VI, Section 3:
24. Grounds for Appeal: As provided in 20 CFR Part 678.750, a required partner may appeal the Governor's determination based on a claim that:

a. The Governor's determination is inconsistent with the proportionate share requirements of 20 CFR Parts 678.735, 678.736 and 678.737; or

b. The Governor's determination is inconsistent with the cost contribution caps described in 20 CFR Part 678.738;

25. Appeals process: An appeal to the interagency work groups comprised of representatives of core and required partners established to act on behalf of the Governor must be made within 21 days of the Governor's determination of each required partner's proportionate share of comprehensive one-stop center infrastructure costs;

a. Action at the State level on the appeal must occur within 30 days of the date of an appeal.

b. Following State action on the appeal, a required partner may request a review of this determination through an appeal to the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board.

c. The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board has 30 days to either hear the appeal and render a decision or to inform the required partner of its decision not to hear an appeal.

d. In instances where the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board refuses to hear a required partner appeal, the State-level decision stands.

2. STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES

A. PROVIDE STATE POLICIES OR GUIDANCE FOR THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM AND FOR USE OF STATE FUNDS FOR WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES

The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (Commerce) oversees the administration of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title IB and Trade Adjustment Assistance Training programs. As administrator, Commerce issues policy guidance through its series of policy letters and notices that are posted on the Illinois workNet portal (https://apps.il-work-net.com/WIOAPolicy/Policy/Home). Commerce has issued guidance on the implementation and administration of WIOA for the following activities:

- Data Management and Reporting
- Fiscal Reporting and Accountability
- General Administration

- Governance
- Performance Management
- Planning
- Program Eligibility
- Training

More specifically, the following policies have been developed and issued through Commerce's Office of Employment and Training (OET):

- Guidance was issued to provide the Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIB), Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIA), core partner programs, service and training providers, sub-grantees and other interested parties with an overview of the implementation steps Commerce, primarily through OET, has taken to implement the provisions of WIOA. This insured a seamless transition for the customers during intake and the continued provision of career and training services, including the expanded training services described in WIOA. This guidance also addressed reporting requirements during and after the transition period as changes to the workforce data reporting system, Illinois Workforce Development System (IWDS), is being updated.
- Membership and certification of LWIBs under WIOA is governed under policies that are consistent with the new provisions including the assurance of more streamlined boards, but with a majority of business members and minimum percentage of labor and community service organizations represented. Emphasis was placed on ensuring the business representatives reflect the regional industry sectors, labor market information (LMI) and the make-up of the population. This policy provided new forms for completion for nominated applicants to the board, as well as reiterated the process for appointees with fixed and staggered terms. Certification (and recertification) of the boards is conducted by OET only after a review of the requisite information on each local board member to ensure appropriate composition is maintained. This process further includes reviews of LWIB bylaws, and compliance with the Sunshine Provision and parliamentary procedures.
- Policy was implemented to address chief elected officials (CEO) in each LWIA to include an understanding of their required functions, which is confirmed through a CEO agreement signed by each CEO in the LWIA. The agreement further addresses those LWIAs that have multiple CEOs when there is more than one unit of general local government residing within the boundaries of the area. CEOs are given the authority as the local grant recipient, including the authority to designate local grant sub-recipients and fiscal agents for the Title IB funds of WIOA. It also defines each CEO's liability for WIOA funds determined to be misspent or used for unallowable purposes.
- Eligibility policies have been written to ensure all the requirements of WIOA are clearly outlined for the local areas and their staff providing the intake and registration of customers. ALL customers of the system, whether served by local one-stop staff, through technology, or self-served, are included in the general eligibility policy. Those seeking

more than self-service assistance are then determined eligible based on the funding stream they will be served under including the youth, adult and dislocated worker populations. Detailed descriptions of the eligibility requirements and documentation sources allowed confirming such eligibility decisions provide guidance to the career planner in their decision making. The documentation is further outlined to determine low-income status, veteran or qualified spouse of a veteran status, and identity and employment eligibility. Priority of service is emphasized throughout to all population identified as priority of service within WIOA taking into account preference to veterans. A stand-alone priority of service policy will be created. Priority of service is also given for individualized career services and training services for adults who are either recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient.

- WIOA policy was issued to provide guidance to all training providers (including new providers and those previously provided transitional eligibility) and the LWIB and LWIA on the process for determining eligibility of providers and training programs. Illinois has required LWIAs to develop and implement local policies as necessary. The policy includes initial and continued eligibility of all providers, with separate guidance for those Registered Apprenticeships choosing to be added to the eligible training provider list (ETPL). In limited instances, there are exceptions for when a training provider is not required to apply for eligibility determination by the local boards. In addition to the IWDS system which is the main intake point for applications of eligibility by training providers and for their training programs, the state's online workforce system, Illinois workNet, will maintain information on all eligible training providers and their programs, as well as performance information as it becomes available. This list highlights those programs that meet the state's requirements for in-demand occupations. The current procedures are currently under review by a work group to address the performance collection requirements for all students, streamline the current approval process for eligibility, and make suggestions for changes to the reporting system.

- The IWIB approved procedures for communications between the board, its executive committee, and the Interagency Technical Assistance Team especially as they pertain to the continued implementation of WIOA. The State developed guidance and instructions regarding 1) Regional and Local Planning Requirements, 2) Governor's Guidelines to State and Local Program Partners Negotiating Costs and Services under WIOA, and 3) Criteria and Procedures for Certifying Comprehensive One-Stop Centers under WIOA. The State issued policy and procedures for the procurement of the One-Stop Operator (OSO) as required by *Training and Employment Guidance Letter* 15-16 (*TEGL* 15-16). The policy emphasizes the requirements of TEGL 15-16 and the contractual provisions in 2 CFR 200.318 through 200.326. Part of this requirement is for the LWIB and the selected *One-Stop Operator* to enter into a legally binding agreement which may take the form of a written contract or another type of agreement, such as a *Memorandum of Understanding* (*MOU*) which is explained in the Competition Requirements section below. Following Illinois WIOA assessment, the State updated the OSO policy and procedures and conducted a monitoring review of all OSO Agreements.

- Under a work group structure, Illinois continues development of policy to address all the types of training services allowed under WIOA. The first of these training options

was on-the-job training (OJT) for which recent policy was issued. General requirements for all OJTs outline the guidance for potential new employees or eligible underemployed workers that provide an opportunity for acquisition of new skills or knowledge essential to job performance. Eligibility of participants and employers, including apprenticeships, addresses the types of customers (job seeker, incumbent worker and business) allowed through OJT contracts. To ensure proper implementation, local workforce boards are required to set policy for OJTs. The employer reimbursement scale is detailed to both attract businesses and ensure they have a level of accountability to the training program and customer's success. Monitoring and evaluation guidance assures further accountability.

- The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity is currently working with the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation to encourage LWIBs to include legal aid services as an allowable supportive service as outlined under § 680.900 and § 681.570 of the WIOA Final Rule into state policy. Legal aid can help support WIOA's goals by expunging or sealing old criminal records; obtaining, reinstating revoked or suspended driver's licenses; assisting with securing occupational licenses when a criminal record is a discretionary obstacle; untangling outstanding court debt issues; negotiating wage garnishments, such as for child support orders; securing certificates of rehabilitation for the formerly incarcerated; stabilizing lives by preventing illegal evictions, resolving credit report problems, or filing for domestic violence restraining orders; and assisting veterans with accessing healthcare, education grants, and housing services. The Ready-to-Work ("R2W") Initiative is a "community redevelopment" project designed "to help individuals overcome legal barriers to getting and or keeping a job." Under the initiative, legal aid grantees partner with workforce development agencies to provide on-site intake and develop referral relationships to help job seekers address obstacles including criminal records, driver's license suspensions, wage theft, and related civil legal issues. As part of the Ready-to-Work initiative, legal aid groups (specifically Cabrini Green Legal Aid, LAF, Prairie State Legal Services, Land of Lincoln Legal Aid and Illinois Legal Aid Online) have forged partnerships with 12 workforce development agencies and 26 community-based programs across the state. Partners include the North Lawndale Employment Network, Jane Addams Resource Center, National ABLE (Pilsen & Chicago Heights), CARA, Growing Home, Man-Tra-Con, Madison County Employment & Training, Vermillion County Works, the Job Center of Lake County, and Illinois workNet Centers (Champaign & Peoria).

- Title IB ePolicy Chapter 6.1 titled *Annual Allocation and Modification Requirement of WIOA Formula Grant Funds* provides guidelines by which the Title IB Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) formula grants shall be established and modified. The State will provide additional guidance through an annual funding notice that includes information regarding the formula allocations and any additional guidance that is applicable to the program year funds.

- Title IB ePolicy Chapter 3.5 titled *Incentives and Sanctions for Performance* a required statewide activity policy related to the Title IB incentive bonus awards and sanctions associated with exceeding and failing negotiated performance standards. In addition, it provides the bonus incentive measures related to completion of training in a demand occupation and subsequent employment in that occupation.

- Title IB ePolicy Chapter 6.2.1 titled *Dislocated Worker Emergency Assistance Application* outlines a statewide Rapid Response policy to provide additional assistance to local areas that experience disasters, mass layoffs, or plant closings, or other events that precipitate substantial increases in the number of unemployed individuals, carried out in local areas by the State, working in conjunction with the local boards and the chief elected officials for the local areas.

Beginning in March 2020, a small number of policy notices were issued in response to Covid-19 social distancing mandates with guidance on holding virtual local workforce board meetings, handling digital signatures and how local boards and one-stop operators should work with one-stop partners to safely reopen American Job Centers.

B. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE INTENDS TO USE GOVERNOR'S SET ASIDE FUNDING FOR MANDATORY AND DISCRETIONARY ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING HOW THE STATE WILL CONDUCT EVALUATIONS OF TITLE I ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES.

Commerce works with the IWIB and WIOA core partners to implement the strategies and activities outlined in the Unified Plan. Governor's set aside funding will be used as appropriate and available for statewide initiatives that support the vision, principles, goals and strategies articulated within the WIOA Unified State Plan. Projects must also align with the priorities outlined in the Regional and Local Workforce Plans. There are four general categories of activity that Illinois will support with these funds.

Sector Partnership Projects

- Implement new or expanded local and regional sector-based partnerships that increase the workforce investment system's capacity to provide critical training that aligns with the needs of businesses and industries. Activities include regional planning and sector strategies that will align resources to address skills, competency and credential realignment with training providers and other needs of in-demand industries, including Talent Pipeline Management training academies. Regional planning and sector strategies support participants by assessing the regional economic landscape to identify new or growing employment opportunities in the region. They also help ensure that partnerships and regional assets from the workforce investment system, industry, community colleges, labor unions, nonprofits, and other stakeholders are aligned and integrated under strategies that can be used to respond to economic shocks, such as plant closings, natural disasters, and long-term unemployment within the regional workforce.

Innovative Workforce Pilot and Research Projects

- Implementing innovative programs and strategies designed to meet the needs of business, which may include incumbent worker training programs, customized training, sectoral and industry cluster strategies and implementation of industry or sector partnerships, career pathway programs, apprenticeships, microenterprise and entrepreneurial training and support programs, utilization of effective business intermediaries, layoff aversion strategies, activities to improve linkages between

workforce partners, and other business services and strategies that better engage employers in workforce investment activities and make the workforce development system more relevant to the needs of State and local businesses.

- Developing or identifying education and training programs that respond to real-time labor market analysis; that utilize direct assessment and prior learning assessment to measure and provide credit for prior knowledge, skills, competencies, and experiences; that evaluate such skills and competencies for adaptability; that ensure credits are portable and stackable for more skilled employment and that accelerate course or credential completion.

Priority Population Projects

- Developing strategies for effectively serving individuals with barriers to employment and for coordinating programs and services among workforce partners. Projects may include, but are not limited to, the coordination of employment and training activities with:

- Child support services, and assistance provided by State and local agencies carrying out Part D of Title IV of the Social Security Act (42 USC 651 et seq.);

- Cooperative extension programs carried out by the Illinois Department of Agriculture;

- Programs carried out in local areas for individuals with disabilities, including programs carried out by State agencies relating to intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities, activities carried out by Statewide Independent Living Councils established under section 705 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 USC 796d), programs funded under Part B of Chapter 1 of Title VII of such Act (29 USC 796e et seq.), and activities carried out by centers for independent living, as defined in section 702 of such Act (29 USC796a);

- Adult education and literacy activities, including those provided by public libraries;

- Activities in the corrections system that assist returning citizens as they reenter the workforce;

- Financial literacy activities;

- Supporting the development of alternative, evidence-based programs and other activities that enhance the choices available to eligible youth and encourage such youth to re-enter and complete secondary education, enroll in postsecondary education and advanced training, progress through a career pathway, and enter unsubsidized employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency.

Statewide Technical Assistance and WIOA Implementation Projects

- Providing technical assistance to local boards, chief elected officials, one-stop operators, workforce partners, and eligible providers in local areas, such as: the development and training of staff, identification and development of exemplary program activities, and assistance in abandoning less effective or less efficient but well-entrenched practices.

- Providing technical assistance to improve the integration of case management, training services, supportive services, business services, and employer engagement among workforce, education and economic development partners.
- Provide professional development training for Title I and Title III staff focusing on business sector partnerships to assist in the development of career pathways, onboarding and upskilling training opportunities while developing a comprehensive pipeline of talent to meet the local industry needs.
- Statewide activity funds will be used to support implementation of the Illinois Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA). This Act aims to transition the state away from the generation of fossil fuels in favor of renewable energy sources. The Act provides dedicated funding for training new workers and re-training incumbent workers. State and local workforce staff will be providing complimentary service and support as CEJA is implemented across the state.
- Set aside funds are being used to develop a replacement for the antiquated Illinois Workforce Development System (IDWS) used to track and report on Title IB customers. The current system was initially deployed approximately three decades ago. Creation of the replacement system is in its first phases and is slated to go active in approximately two years.

Evaluations of program activities and outcomes will be undertaken by State staff in conjunction with the various State Workforce Board committees and work groups and may include the assistance of outside contractors. Potential evaluations under consideration are related to apprenticeship activity and balanced service delivery, including disproportionate impact analysis for Title IB program outcomes; geographic balance in service delivery and outcomes; and the National Dislocated Worker Grant QUEST initiative, among others.

C. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL UTILIZE RAPID RESPONSE FUNDS TO RESPOND TO LAYOFFS AND PLANT CLOSINGS AND COORDINATE SERVICES TO QUICKLY AID COMPANIES AND THEIR AFFECTED WORKERS. STATES ALSO SHOULD DESCRIBE ANY LAYOFF AVERSION STRATEGIES THEY HAVE IMPLEMENTED TO ADDRESS AT RISK COMPANIES AND WORKERS.

Layoff Aversion Strategies

Illinois has long believed the best layoff aversion strategy is prevention. Layoff aversion begins as soon as a company realizes it must adjust to remain competitive in its market. Such adjustments could be streamlining operations for improved productivity or taking advantage of a market opportunity to create new revenue streams or otherwise increase profitability. Often these operational adjustments require upskilling incumbent workers and/or access to new skilled workers. The challenge lies in being able to help businesses before it's too late.

A key Title IB layoff aversion activity is incumbent worker training. We encourage and support skill upgrades that create new or improve existing revenue streams for employers, increase productivity, improve operational efficiencies or reduce employee turnover. Each of these types of training contribute to layoff aversion.

Rapid Response Support for Layoff Aversion

The state of Illinois wants to prepare workers for careers. Helping workers find ways to refresh their skills and credentials to stay competitive gives those workers an advantage in the labor market over the long run. One promising and efficient way to refresh skills is through work-based learning opportunities. Sometimes, learning on the job can also save a worker from being laid off and, continue to contribute to the company's growth and success. Companies make decisions daily that may affect workers' employment status, including needing to downsize to remain competitive, eliminate jobs that are not needed anymore, or lay off workers when their skills are no longer relevant to the company's mission.

Proactive investments in layoff aversion benefit the state, businesses and workers by retaining jobs and helping workers pivot into a new role in the company or find employment quickly elsewhere. New grant opportunities will be offered as funds are available throughout the plan term.

Programs generally address one or more of the activities listed below:

- projects to connect talent strategies with business needs
- projects to support businesses and workers that are impacted or at risk of being impacted by company closures or layoffs
- projects to expand work-based learning opportunities including apprenticeships for targeted populations
- projects to provide skill upgrading/training services to businesses and workers impacted or at risk of being impacted by company closures or layoffs.

For Rapid Response Activity, the State of Illinois considers a layoff averted when:

- A worker's job is saved with an existing employer that is at risk of downsizing or closing; or
- A worker at risk of dislocation transitions to a different job with the same employer or a new job with a different employer and experiences no or minimal unemployment.

A successful layoff aversion program averts layoff costs and reduces the financial risks to the employer and community as well as the Unemployment Insurance benefit costs. Further, the worker continues paying payroll and other taxes which results in a positive outcome for all. Layoff aversion provides workers with new skills to retain their existing job or quickly transition to a new one and maintain financial stability. The value for employers is remaining competitive in the global economy and saving operational, overhead and productivity costs by training current, reliable employees rather than going through the process of replacing them. Applicants that administer layoff aversion projects are required to identify the factors that contribute to the "risk" of layoffs. Below are some of the "risk" indicators Illinois identified to determine if a business needs training assistance to maintain a competitive workforce.

- Declining Sales
- Misalignment of competency skill sets
- Supply Chain Issues

- Industry/Market Trends
- Changes in Management Philosophy or Ownership
- Worker Does Not Have the Necessary Skills
- Strong Possibility of a Job If a Worker Attains New Skills
- Other "At-Risk" Indicators

As part of layoff aversion strategies, the Rapid Response Team connects companies to Unemployment Insurance programs, such as WorkShare IL, a program designed to prevent layoffs or to reemploy dislocated workers quickly. WorkShare IL allows an employer to reduce the number of hours worked in any unit of their business in order to avoid permanent layoffs. This is a voluntary program that provides employers facing a decline in business with an alternative to layoffs. Employees receive a corresponding percentage of unemployment benefits during the period of temporary reduction to offset the reduction in earnings. Retaining compensation and benefits during the decline can increase the likelihood that experienced workers will be available to resume full-time work as business demand increases.

D. DESCRIBE THE STATE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES TO PROVIDE RAPID RESPONSES IN CASES OF NATURAL DISASTERS INCLUDING COORDINATION WITH FEMA AND OTHER ENTITIES.

The Department of Commerce is the lead state agency for coordinating rapid response activity in Illinois. The Rapid Response Team includes the Department of Commerce Rapid Response Staff, IDES Staff, Local Workforce Area Staff and other partners, as appropriate. These partners coordinate efforts to make impacted workers and businesses aware of available services, eligibility requirements and the application process.

The Illinois Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act, requires employers to provide 60 days advance notice of pending plant closures or mass layoffs. The law applies to "business enterprises" with 75 or more employees (excluding part-time employees). A covered "mass layoff" under Illinois WARN is a reduction in force ("RIF") at a single site of employment that is not the result of a "plant closing" and results in employment losses during any 30-day period (or, in some cases, during any 90-day period) for at least 33% of the employees and at least 25 employees, or at least 250 employees regardless of the percentage. Pursuant to the Illinois and Federal Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act (WARN) requirements, Illinois initiates an annual mailing to over 12,000 employers. The mailing includes information on reporting requirements and layoff aversion services such as WorkShare IL and Rapid Response.

While rapid response is required for closures and mass layoffs, it is the Department of Commerce's policy that effective rapid response services are to be provided to as many workers and companies as possible. Rapid Response funds will be used to administer all of the required and allowable activities outlined in WIOA, including, but not limited to:

- Layoff aversion activities;
- Immediate and on-site contact with the employer, representatives of the affected workers and the local community;

- The provision of information and access to unemployment compensation benefits and programs, such as short-time compensation, comprehensive one-stop system services, and employment and training activities, including information on the Trade Adjustment Assistance program, Pell Grants, the GI Bill, and other resources;
- The delivery of other necessary services and resources including workshops and classes, use of worker transition centers, and job fairs, to support reemployment efforts for affected workers;
- Partnership with the local board(s) and chief elected official(s) to ensure a coordinated response to the dislocation event and, as needed, obtain access to state or local economic development assistance. Such coordinated response may include the development of an application for a national dislocated worker grant as provided under WIOA;
- The provision of emergency assistance adapted to the particular layoff or disaster;
- Developing systems and processes for identifying and gathering information for early warning of potential layoffs or opportunities for layoff aversion, analyzing, and acting upon, data and information on dislocations and other economic activity in the state, region, or local area; and tracking outcome and performance data and information related to the activities of the rapid response program;
- Developing and maintaining partnerships with other appropriate federal, state and local agencies and officials, employer associations, technical councils, other industry business councils, labor organizations, and other public and private organizations, as applicable, in order to:
    - Conduct strategic planning activities to develop strategies for addressing dislocation events and ensuring timely access to a broad range of necessary assistance;
    - Develop mechanisms for gathering and exchanging information and data relating to potential dislocations, resources available, and the customization of layoff aversion or rapid response activities, to ensure the ability to provide rapid response services as early as possible;
- Delivery of services to worker groups for which a petition for Trade Adjustment Assistance has been filed;
- The provision of additional assistance and funding to local areas that experience disasters, layoffs, or other dislocation events when such events exceed the capacity of the local area to respond with existing resources; and
- Provision of guidance and financial assistance as appropriate, in establishing a labor management committee if voluntarily agreed to by the employee's bargaining representative and management. The committee may devise and oversee an implementation strategy that responds to the reemployment needs of the workers.

Natural disasters create more significant impacts than economically-driven layoffs because multiple facets of individuals' lives are disrupted, sometimes

permanently and often without warning. Natural disasters in Illinois are typically related to: tornadoes, flooding, ice and snow, drought, and less frequently, earthquakes and fires. State rapid response staff mobilize upon learning that a natural disaster is underway to assist in the provision of allowable and appropriate services. The State reserves statewide rapid response funds that are available to quickly provide resources to the local workforce area(s) to serve eligible participants. In instances where the Federal Emergency Management Agency declares a *public assistance* disaster area the State will typically submit a National Dislocated Worker Grant.

In October 2019 the State of Illinois received approval of a waiver to allow the use of statewide funds reserved by the Governor to provide statewide rapid response activities (i.e. WIOA section 134(a)(2)(A)), and for use to provide statewide employment and training activities (i.e. WIOA section 134(a)(2)(B) and (3)) in order to provide comprehensive Disaster Recovery assistance to affected areas as described in WIOA 170(d) and 20 CFR 687.100(b). Under this waiver permitted WIOA statewide fund use includes expeditious allocation of funds to a local workforce innovation board, or local board, so they may respond quickly to a disaster, emergency, or other qualifying event as described at 20 CFR 687.l00(b). Only those events, and cascading events caused by a qualifying event, that have been declared as an emergency or disaster by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), by the chief official of a Federal Agency with jurisdiction over the Federal response to a disaster with potential significant loss of employment, or the Governor of Illinois qualify for the use of WIOA statewide funds.

E. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE PROVIDES EARLY INTERVENTION (E.G., RAPID RESPONSE) AND ENSURES THE PROVISION OF APPROPRIATE CAREER SERVICES TO WORKER GROUPS ON WHOSE BEHALF A TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE (TAA) PETITION HAS BEEN FILED. (SECTION 134(A)(2)(A) AND TAA SECTION 221(A)(2)(A) .) THIS DESCRIPTION MUST INCLUDE HOW THE STATE DISSEMINATES BENEFIT INFORMATION TO PROVIDE WORKERS IN THE GROUPS IDENTIFIED IN THE TAA PETITIONS WITH AN ACCURATE UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROVISION OF TAA BENEFITS AND SERVICES IN SUCH A WAY THAT THEY ARE TRANSPARENT TO THE DISLOCATED WORKER APPLYING FOR THEM (TRADE ACT SEC. 221(A)(2)(A) AND SEC. 225; GOVERNOR-SECRETARY AGREEMENT). DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE FUNDS THAT HAVE BEEN RESERVED FOR RAPID RESPONSE TO PROVIDE SERVICES FOR EVERY WORKER GROUP THAT FILES A TAA PETITION AND HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THE PROVISION OF APPROPRIATE CAREER SERVICE TO WORKERS IN THE GROUPS IDENTIFIED IN THE PETITION (TAA SEC. 221(A)(2)(A)).NOTE: UNTIL THE TAA PROGRAM IS REAUTHORIZED, THE REQUIREMENTS TO PROVIDE RAPID RESPONSE AND APPROPRIATE CAREER SERVICES TO WORKER GROUPS ON WHOSE BEHALF A PETITION HAS BEEN FILED IS NOT APPLICABLE.

The state will use the information developed by the interagency data team, feedback from regional sector partnerships and intelligence from economic development officials to expand layoff aversion efforts and respond to the needs of businesses before layoffs occur. As the Department of Commerce Office of Employment and Training receives notice of potential layoffs and petition filings, the Rapid Response team organizes and establishes logistics for informational meetings for Trade impacted and non-Trade Act impacted worker groups. In addition to members of the Rapid Response team investigating news articles, the Trade Unit

reviews all WARN filings, Mass Layoff Statistics and the USDOL website for filed petitions and certifications that may have ties to Illinois. These activities ensure early petition filing and outreach to workers who may be affected by foreign trade. The Rapid Response team includes partners from IDES and Title 1B administrators from the local workforce areas, as well as other partner programs based on worker and situational needs. An overview of the Trade Adjustment Assistance benefits and services including the next steps if the petition is certified is presented. Since workers oftentimes are not all scheduled for layoff on the same date, multiple workshops are held to provide the Trade specific information to the workers. Staff, including Title 1B, has access to updated Trade Program forms and information on Illinois workNet, and ongoing support and technical assistance from the Department of Commerce and the Department of Employment Security UI and Trade program staff.

Once certified, the Benefits, Rights and Obligations document, along with Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Trade Readjustment Assistance (TRA) and RTAA/ATAA benefits are covered at length with the affected workers. Rapid Response Reserve funds are dedicated to layoff aversion strategies and to assist businesses and laid-off workers. Funding supports businesses and workers impacted or at risk of being impacted by company closures or layoffs. The goal of this program is to help businesses avert layoffs where possible and help current workers retrain to meet the companies' current workforce needs and to help those workers who were laid off successfully and quickly re-enter the workforce.

Commerce is interested in investing in projects that specifically identify employers that are at-risk and to serve WIOA-eligible workers; including projects for recently separated veterans; projects that connect employers to WIOA eligible dislocated workers, eligible incumbent workers through short-term, on-the-job and customized training programs; and registered apprenticeships before or after layoff and prior to new employment.

Training projects must provide workers with new skills to retain their existing job or meet new company workforce needs. In the case of a layoff, the goals are to quickly transition to a new job and maintain financial stability. The value for employers is remaining competitive in the global economy and saving operational, overhead and productivity costs by training current, reliable employees rather than going through the process of replacing them. For laid-off workers, Rapid Response Reserve funds offer additional assistance for outreach and recruitment, training, supportive services and in the case of large layoffs, these funds also provide assistance for transition centers to supply additional support for affected workers and accommodate serving more individuals.

As the Department of Commerce Office of Employment and Training receives notice of potential layoffs and petition filings, the Rapid Response team organizes and establishes logistics for informational meetings for Trade impacted worker groups. The Rapid Response team includes partners from IDES and Title 1B administrators from the local workforce areas, as well as other partner programs based on worker and situational needs. An overview of the Trade Adjustment Assistance benefits and services including the next steps if the petition is certified is presented. State and local staff are available to answer questions about the Trade program. Attendees are encouraged to make an individual appointment to begin WIOA enrollment for career services and training. Since workers oftentimes are not all scheduled for layoff on the same date, multiple workshops are held to provide the Trade specific information to the workers.

B. ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKERS PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

1. WORK-BASED TRAINING MODELS

If the State is utilizing work-based training models (e.g. on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, transitional jobs, and customized training) as part of its training strategy and these strategies are not already discussed in other sections of the plan, describe the State's strategies for how these models ensure high quality training for both the participant and the employer.

Work-based training is one of the highest priorities for Illinois under WIOA. The underlying advantage of work-based learning is that by definition, it incorporates skill competencies needed by the business. Trainees learn specific skills needed, and how to apply skills in the way the employer prefers. This practically guarantees individuals that complete training are positioned to immediately add value in the workplace and have gained marketable skills to provide upward mobility and move forward along a career pathway.

Illinois remains committed to supporting all types of work-based learning. Over the next four years we will explore options to expand current efforts through grants and develop new strategies to promote work-based learning.

Incumbent Worker Training

Illinois recognizes one of the best ways for local areas to help key industries remain globally competitive and establish good relationships with businesses is through incumbent worker training projects. Illinois has a long history of supporting incumbent worker training at the state, regional and local levels and will continue this support over the next four years. Illinois is requesting an extension of the waiver of the six-month employment requirement. Additional information is provided in the waivers section.

On-the-Job Training

While standalone OJT continues to be supported, its use is projected to diminish as more and more OJT placements are incorporated into apprenticeships. OJT will be encouraged as a potential onramp for companies to eventually engage with apprenticeship programs.

Customized Training

Customized training will be made available to companies on an as-needed basis. Like OJT, this form of training is expected to be utilized less as apprenticeships continue to become more prevalent.

2. REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

Describe how the State will incorporate Registered Apprenticeship into its strategy for service design and delivery (e.g., outreach to sponsors and prospective sponsors, identifying potential participants and connecting them to apprenticeship opportunities).

Illinois incorporates Registered Apprenticeship (RAP) into its service design and delivery strategy by embedding apprenticeship within a broader work-based learning (WBL) framework and aligning it across workforce, education, and economic development systems. RAP is positioned as a high-quality, employer-driven "earn and learn" model within career pathways, supported through coordinated outreach, integrated service delivery, and statewide capacity building.

Illinois operates as a U.S. Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship (OA) state and advances apprenticeship through a cross-agency approach with core WIOA partners, including the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Department of Employment Security, Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services, and the Illinois Community College Board.

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship (WBLA) Committee provides strategic leadership for integrating Registered Apprenticeship and other work-based learning strategies across Illinois' workforce system.

The Committee represents a broad cross-section of Illinois' workforce ecosystem, including employers, business and industry associations, organized labor, workforce development partners, education and training providers, community-based organizations, philanthropic partners, local workforce innovation areas, and state agency leadership. This diverse representation ensures alignment with industry needs, participant access, and statewide economic priorities. The WBLA Committee operates under four core charges:

- Fully integrate apprenticeship and other work-based learning strategies into state workforce, education, and economic development systems
- Support the rapid development and expansion of apprenticeship programs
- Strengthen and diversify the pipeline of apprentices
- Build statewide capacity to make it easier for businesses to adopt apprenticeship and for individuals to access opportunities

To support these charges, the Committee convened a time-limited Work-Based Learning Workgroup, which produced key recommendations that continue to guide Illinois' strategy:

- Strengthening data systems for work-based learning
- Expanding and supporting employer engagement and participation
- Strengthening statewide infrastructure for WBL
- Supporting youth apprenticeship development
- Addressing barriers to participation

The WBLA Committee is actively advancing these recommendations, beginning with a focused effort to address barriers to participation, most notably transportation. Recognizing transportation as a critical barrier to both participation and completion, the Committee is convening cross-sector partners and key stakeholders, including car rental companies, financial institutions supporting auto loans, insurance providers, vehicle retailers, and mobility platforms such as Uber and Lyft. This effort is designed to identify scalable, practical solutions and inform policy that improves access to work-based learning and apprenticeship opportunities across diverse regions of the state.

A primary strategy for incorporating RAP into service delivery is through Illinois' Apprenticeship Expansion Framework, which embeds Apprenticeship Specialists within local workforce innovation areas' business services teams. These Specialists operate within the

Illinois Workforce Innovation Board Integrated Business Services framework and conduct outreach to sponsors and prospective sponsors by positioning apprenticeship as a practical workforce solution. Apprenticeship Specialists work directly with employers to:

- Identify workforce needs
- Design and register apprenticeship programs
- Connect employers to training providers and workforce partners

To support implementation, Apprenticeship Intermediaries coordinate partnerships, assist with program operations, and support recruitment and participant success. Through funding from U.S. Department of Labor State Apprenticeship Expansion Formula (SAEF) grants, including a SAEF Competitive award of $5 million paired with $5 million of WIOA Statewide Activities funding, Illinois has expanded this model to include 26 Apprenticeship Intermediaries, significantly increasing statewide capacity to develop programs and connect participants to RAP opportunities.

Illinois incorporates RAP into service delivery by leveraging its broader WBL continuum. Pre-apprenticeship and other work-based learning activities serve as intentional on-ramps to apprenticeship, enabling workforce partners to identify potential participants and connect them to RAP opportunities based on employer demand.

WIOA-funded programs play a key role in identifying, preparing, and supporting participants, particularly those facing barriers to employment. This ensures equitable access to apprenticeship and career pathways.

Illinois prioritizes employer engagement as the primary driver of RAP expansion. The WBLA Committee's Apprentice Ambassador Initiative is a key strategy designed to engage employers through real-world examples rather than traditional outreach. Apprentice Ambassadors serve as credible concepts of proof, helping employers:

- See what apprenticeship looks like in practice
- Understand the value apprentices bring to the workplace
- Build confidence that apprenticeship is a viable workforce strategy

Hearing directly from apprentices is often more influential than programmatic explanations, particularly for employers unfamiliar with apprenticeship. This approach helps employers visualize how they can develop talent over time rather than rely solely on fully skilled hires. To further expand this strategy, Illinois launched *The Apprentice Perspective* podcast in 2026, featuring Apprenticeship Ambassadors and guest hosts from business, workforce, and education to broaden employer awareness and engagement.

The WBLA Committee also leads the WBLA Catalysts Initiative, an annual recognition program that highlights exemplary employers and programs demonstrating effective, scalable WBL and RAP models. By recognizing one Exemplar Employer and one Exemplar Program each year, Illinois is building a library of proven, replicable approaches that can be adapted across industries and regions to support broader adoption.

Illinois continues to invest in system capacity through its annual Apprenticeship Bootcamps, which provide intensive, hands-on training for workforce, education, and economic development professionals. Held each year, these Bootcamps are the flagship capacity-building strategy to build practitioner expertise, strengthen cross-system alignment, and accelerate the development and expansion of high-quality Registered Apprenticeship and work-based learning programs statewide.

These efforts are complemented by ongoing technical assistance and engagement strategies, including webinars, regular office hours, and peer learning opportunities that support continuous learning and problem-solving across the field. Illinois also maintains www.ApprenticeshipIllinois.com as the State's centralized resource hub, providing employers, workforce partners, and training providers with tools, guidance, and connections to develop and expand apprenticeship programs. Together, these strategies, along with sector-based approaches and Talent Pipeline Management, strengthen system alignment and support scalable, industry-driven program development.

Additionally, the State also supports employer participation through the apprenticeship education tax credit, which provides up to $5,000 to offset related training instruction costs for Registered Apprentices.

Through coordinated leadership, employer-centered outreach, integrated service delivery, and targeted efforts to address systemic barriers such as transportation, Illinois is embedding Registered Apprenticeship into its workforce system. By aligning RAP within a broader WBL strategy and focusing on scalable, employer-driven solutions, Illinois is expanding access to high-quality apprenticeship opportunities for both businesses and individuals statewide.

3. TRAINING PROVIDER ELIGIBILITY PROCEDURE

Provide the procedure, eligibility criteria, and information requirements for determining training provider initial and continued eligibility, including Registered Apprenticeship programs (WIOA Section 122).

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board continues to revise the Illinois Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) policy 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 improving 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. It is anticipated that additional technical edits to the ETPL policy and procedures will go into effect with the launch of the Illinois Workforce Development System 2.0 (IWDS 2.0) that will have expanded reporting capabilities for all programs on the ETPL. 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.

WIOA POLICY 7.3 - WIOA Training Provider and Training Program Eligibility

Illinois' Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) Policy ensures customers have access to quality Eligible Training Providers across all geographies, especially in communities and neighborhoods disproportionately impacted by adverse economic conditions. An ETPL is a list of approved training providers and programs that expands participants' options for training when purchased through an Individual Training Account (ITA). As a key piece of the State's one-stop job center system, the ETPL must be universally available and accessible to the public. However, Local Workforce Innovation Boards may identify priority occupations within programs for funding purposes. The ETPL gathers and maintains helpful information on training providers, their services, and the quality of their programs. This policy provides information and guidance for training providers, as required by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Informed consumer choice in selecting an eligible training provider, job-driven training programs, training provider performance, accountability, and continuous improvement measures are woven throughout this policy.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provides resources to help job seekers access the education, training, and support services they need to succeed in the labor market. It also matches employers with a pipeline of skilled workers needed to compete in the global economy. The federal WIOA legislation empowers states to develop processes for determining eligible programs and training providers. Using these processes, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Office of Employment and Training (OET), will be responsible for making a list of eligible programs and providers. This ETPL documents relevant information about training programs available to job seekers eligible for WIOA benefits under Title I, Subtitle B Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Out-of-School Youth (OSY) aged 16-24.

In developing ETPL policies and procedures, the State has consulted with stakeholders to identify the following essential principles:

- Simplicity – Avoid imposing burdens that inhibit a customer's ability to access conveniently quality training providers and programs
- Customer Focus – Eligible participants and career planners can easily access reliable occupational wages, demand information, and available training programs.
- Informed Consumer Choice – Industries and occupations identified as high-growth, high-demand, project skills shortages, pay family-sustaining wages, and play vital roles in regional economies are well-represented on the ETPL.
- Training Delivery Flexibility – Policies and procedures will include several learning and training modalities (in-person, virtual, synchronous, asynchronous, daytime, and nighttime, accommodating persons with disabilities) to expand consumer opportunities in varying life circumstances.
- Program Quality – Training programs included in the ETPL will meet measurable, minimum performance quality standards and develop skills valued by priority industry sectors. Program information will be accurate, transparent, and easily accessible.
- Local Input – The policy utilizes the ability of the State to allow local input as granted by WIOA to Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIBs).

7.3.1 Training Service Delivery Mechanisms

Training services under WIOA Title IB Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs can be provided through various contract mechanisms or funded through an Individual Training Account (ITA) used to purchase training from an Eligible Training Provider (ETPL). Training providers on the ETPL, including Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs), are not guaranteed to receive WIOA funding. Factors that may prevent receipt of funds may include availability, individual participant career planning, which addresses suitability in a career pathway, and informed customer choice about training programs on the ETPL.

- An ITA is a payment agreement established by a Local Workforce Innovation Board (LWIB) on behalf of a participant with a training provider. It may be used to pay for any allowable type of training and associated costs, such as books, tests, and fees, as described in the Individual Training Account section of this policy manual, found in the ePolicy of Illinois workNet. The training program (also referred to as a "program of study" or "program of training service") must be on the state list of eligible training providers. It is the most used training funding mechanism because it provides participants flexibility in "purchasing" training
- The ITA can pay for occupational skills training, upgrading, and retraining. It is the most used training funding mechanism because it provides participants flexibility in "purchasing" training. Additionally, the ITA can pay for any training and associated fees as described in this policy manual's Individual Training Account section if the training program is on the ETPL
- Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) registered with the United States Department of Labor (USDOL), Office of Apprenticeship are automatically eligible for inclusion on the State list of eligible training providers and programs.
- An LWIB has the flexibility to determine how it will deliver training. Therefore, it must develop WIOA policies and procedures, as described in the Training section of this policy manual.
- Training such as On-the-Job Training (OJT), Incumbent Worker Training (IWT), and customized training is provided through a direct contract with the training provider/employer and the Local Workforce Innovation Board (LWIB). The providers of these types of training do not have to be Eligible Training Providers (ETP).

7.3.2 Eligible Training Providers and Programs of Study

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) statute and Final Rule distinguish between Eligible Training Providers (ETPs) and programs of study, as one training provider may provide multiple programs of study for various occupations. Both training providers and their programs must meet the eligibility and performance requirements in WIOA and its Final Rule. Therefore, determining Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) eligibility is a two-tier approach outlined in the ETPL Training Provider and Program Determination Flow Chart (see the Attachments tab). First, the training provider must be an eligible entity, and second, the training program(s) offered by the provider must meet eligibility and performance criteria.

Performance criteria will be outlined in the Performance Data and Reporting Requirements for Eligible Training Providers section of this policy. For a training provider to receive WIOA Title I-B (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth program) Individual Training Account (ITA) funds, its program(s) must be listed on the ETPL.

Eligible Training Providers Entities Are:

- Institutions of higher education that provide a program(s) that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials, as defined in the Recognized Postsecondary Credentials section of this policy manual;
    - This may include programs receiving approval or accreditation by the U.S. Department of Education, Illinois Board of Higher Education, Illinois Community College Board, or Illinois State Board of Education.
- Entities that carry out a program(s) registered under the National Apprenticeship Act recognized in Illinois by the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL), Office of Apprenticeship;
- Eligible providers of adult education and literacy activities under WIOA Title II if activities are provided in combination with occupational skills training;
- Programs that the industry has recognized as meeting the standards necessary for approval or accreditation when such standards exist;
- Other public or private providers of a program(s) of training services may include community-based organizations (CBOs) and joint labor-management organizations.
    - Training providers must provide a private school license, or appropriate exemption issued by the Illinois Board of Higher Education, Illinois Community College Board, Illinois Department of Financial & Professional Regulation, and/or other relevant licensures. Private school licensure must be submitted with the application, and the status will be verified accordingly.

Eligible Training Programs (also referred to as a "program of study" or "program of training service") is defined as one (1) or more courses or classes or a structured regimen that directly leads to employment in an in-demand occupation delivered in person, online, or a blended approach. However, the training provider must provide a high-quality experience in meeting instructional and skills assessment needs. Eligible training programs must lead to the following:

- An industry-recognized certificate or certification, a certificate of completion of a registered apprenticeship, a license recognized by the state involved or the federal government, or an associate or baccalaureate degree;
- A secondary school diploma or its equivalent when provided in conjunction with training known as the Integrated Career & Academic Preparation System (ICAPS);
- Employment;
- Measurable skill gains as outlined in the Measurable Skill Gains section of this policy manual toward a credential described in paragraph (1) or (2) above; or

- Placement in a Demand Occupation, as identified on the Demand Occupation Training List (DOTL).

7.3.3 State and Local Roles and Responsibilities

The Governor, in consultation with the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB), establishes the criteria, information requirements, and procedures for the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). These procedures include identifying the respective roles of the State and local areas governing the eligibility of providers and training programs to receive funds through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs).

State Roles

The Governor has designated the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Office of Employment and Training (OET), to assist in carrying out the process and procedures for determining the eligibility of training providers and programs. The OET is responsible for the following:

- Overseeing the development and maintenance of the State list of eligible training providers and programs;
- Ensuring that providers and programs meet eligibility criteria and performance levels established by the State, including verifying the accuracy of the information before the program is added to the State ETPL;
- Removing providers and programs that do not meet State-established criteria or performance levels;
- Taking appropriate enforcement actions against providers that intentionally provide inaccurate information or substantially violate the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA);
- Presenting the information in a format that facilitates comparisons and is searchable, user-friendly, and easily understood by individuals seeking information on training outcomes;
- Disseminating the State list of eligible training providers and programs, accompanied by performance and cost information relating to each program, to the public and the Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIBs) throughout the State as described in WIOA; and
- Requiring Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIBs) to maintain sufficient records and to make these records available for monitoring or audit by either the State and/or the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) outlined in the Monitoring and Oversight section of this policy.

Local Workforce Innovation Board Roles

The WIOA requires all states to establish a procedure for Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIBs) to determine eligibility for training programs. The LWIB must:

- Carry out the procedures assigned to the LWIB by the State outlined in this policy. These procedures include assisting in determining the initial eligibility of entities providing a training program, renewing the eligibility of providers and programs, and considering the possible termination of an eligible training provider due to the provider's submission of inaccurate eligibility and performance information or the provider's substantial violation of WIOA requirements;
- Work with the State to ensure that there are sufficient numbers and types of providers of training services, including eligible providers with expertise in assisting individuals with disabilities and eligible providers with expertise in helping adults in need of adult education and literacy activities, serving the local area;
- Ensure the dissemination and appropriate use of the State list of eligible training providers and programs through the local one-stop delivery system, including formats accessible to individuals with disabilities; and
- Set policies for service provisions that ensure local workforce practitioners:
    - Present the State list to participants and consult with the individual so they can make an informed choice of training services from the multiple providers and programs on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL);
    - Discuss and offer the ETPL to all applicable participants even if they have identified a preferred training provider and program before meeting with career planning staff; and
    - Document in the Individual Employment Plan (IEP) for adult or dislocated worker participants or the Individual Service Strategy (ISS) for youth participants, and case notes how and why the chosen training program and the provider were selected by the participant in consultation with the career planner, and that the training selection is the most appropriate for the participant, as described in the Career Planning section of the policy manual.
- Except for registered apprenticeship programs, which are described in the Registered Apprenticeship Programs section of this policy, LWIBs may:
    - Make recommendations to the Governor through OET on the procedure used in determining the eligibility of providers and programs;
    - Require additional criteria and information from local providers to focus WIOA training services on supporting the LWIB priorities and the demand occupations within the local labor market; and
    - Set higher levels of performance for local training programs than those required by the State to support LWIB priorities.
- Following the criteria, information requirements, and procedures developed by the Governor and IWIB, LWIBs will assist the state in:
    - Gathering the initial eligibility of entities providing a training program, as outlined in the Initial Eligibility of Training Providers section of this policy;

- Providing input on renewing the eligibility of providers and programs, as described in the Continued Eligibility Process for Training Providers section of this policy; and
- Considering the possible termination of an eligible training provider due to the provider's submission of inaccurate eligibility and performance information or the provider's substantial violation of WIOA requirements, as depicted in the Denial or Revocation of Eligibility of Training Providers section of this policy.

- The LWIB must establish local policies that provide sufficient consumer protection and oversight of training providers. These policies must meet the minimum requirements of the procedures outlined in this policy and may include additional requirements determined appropriate by the LWIB. Such policies must include, but are not limited to, processes and/or procedures that achieve the following:
  - Priority consideration for programs that lead to recognized post-secondary credentials aligned with in-demand industry sectors or occupations identified in the local plan;
  - Include a process for referring a customer to a program that does not meet the demand occupation list for the local workforce area to support consumer choice.
  - Establishment of additional criteria for training programs to ensure provider performance, job-driven training, continuous improvement, and cost-effective investment of public funds. These may include, but are not limited to:
    - Additional performance requirements;
    - Program location;
    - Accreditation requirements; and
    - Costs associated with the program.
  - Ensure participants are aware of and can obtain grievance/complaint procedures as outlined in the Complaint and Grievance Procedures (Nondiscrimination) section of this policy manual;
  - Recover WIOA training funds;
  - Include the timeline for initial and continued eligibility review for inclusion on the ETPL as outlined in this policy;
  - Process for working with the OET to remove training providers/programs for failure to meet established criteria from the ETPL as outlined in this policy;
  - Require providers to maintain sufficient records and to make these records available for monitoring or audit by either the LWIB and/or the state outlined in the Monitoring and Oversight section of this policy;
  - Describe the appeal process as outlined in this policy; and
  - Ensure there are no conflicts of interest between the Local Board and the provider, which includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- A prohibition on the payment of referral fees by training providers to LWIB staff, including Illinois workNet Center one-stop operator staff; and
- Decisions made by the LWIB regarding eligible training programs (ETPs) and their programs comply with WIOA.

7.3.4 State and Local ETPLs

The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Office of Employment and Training (OET), and Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIBs) are responsible for working together to identify eligible training providers (ETPs) for the State Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL).

State ETPL

- A State ETPL contains eligible training providers and programs, accompanied by performance and cost information relating to each program. This list will be distributed to the public and Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIBs) throughout the State, as described in WIOA.
- The state list of eligible training providers consists of training providers who have been reviewed by an LWIB(s), approved by the OET, and have met the criteria established by the state discussed in the Initial and Continued Eligibility Sections of this policy.
- When LWIBs review provider applications, they must use only the State's requirements discussed in this policy's Initial and Continued Sections.
- The State ETPL creates a pool of eligible training providers (ETPs) that LWIBs can use to establish a local ETPL.

Local ETPLs

A Local ETPL highlighting the programs that meet the demand occupations of the local labor market area may accompany the State ETPL that is provided to customers that are enrolled in a ITA training service. These lists must meet the minimum requirements of the procedures outlined in this policy and may include additional requirements the LWIB determines appropriate.

- LWIBs may add additional requirements than the ones established by the state for training programs, except for Registered Apprenticeship Programs. These additional requirements must be stated in the local policies and any other required information outlined in the State and Local Roles and Responsibilities section of this policy.
- If an LWIB chooses to require additional criteria, an LWIB may include:
    - Information on programs of training services linked to demand occupations in the local area;
    - Performance and cost information, including program-specific performance and cost information, for multi-site eligible training providers;
    - Information that shows how programs are responsive to local requirements; and

- Other appropriate information related to the objectives of WIOA.
- Set higher levels of performance than those required by the State as criteria for programs to become or remain eligible to provide services in that local area.

- The authority that LWIBs may use to restrict the duration of ITAs or restrict funding amounts must not be used to establish limits that arbitrarily exclude eligible training providers.
- A local ETPL can only be used if the LWIB approves setting additional criteria and/or higher performance levels set by the State. However, it must accompany the State ETPL and be identified as programs that lead to jobs in the local workforce area.
- An LWIB that does not add restrictions and requirements must include all State ETPs on its local ETPL, while an LWIB that adds eligibility restrictions may have a subset of the State list.

Use of the State and Local ETPLs

As stated in the Career Planning Policy of this policy manual, LWIBs must ensure that local career planners assist the participant in making an informed choice of the training provider and program options available to them. This is done by presenting and reviewing the State ETPL and Local ETPL (if applicable), as outlined in the State and Local Roles and Responsibilities section of this policy. Information that is to be discussed with the participant includes, but is not limited to, how the program:

- Assists them in meeting their goals of education and/or employment;
- Aligns with demand, industry sectors and occupations;
- Leads to a recognized postsecondary credential;
- Fits their individual needs regarding distance to travel, online class availability, or schedule, for example; and

Performance and cost information.

Additionally, the career planner should explain any limitations to an ITA based on the policy set by the LWIB, as outlined in the ITA section of this policy manual, to the participant.

- In relation to training, it is the intent that the WIOA funding is the payer of last resort. A comprehensive assessment of the cost of the ITA, which involves applying and accessing other grants or funding, including Federal Pell Grants, Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), and scholarships, must be conducted to ensure the best utilization of WIOA funds.
- An eligible participant may, after the consultation with the career planner, select a training provider from these lists.

7.3.5 Application Process by Provider Category

In-State Training Provider

- All training providers with a training site(s) in Illinois and wish to be listed on the ETPL must be registered following the procedures outlined in the Application for Initial Eligibility of Training Providers section of this policy.
- Training providers should use the ETPL Training Provider and Program Determination Flow Chart (see the Attachments tab) to determine if they are eligible providers.
- The training provider shall provide all the information required in the Requirements for Initial Eligibility and Continued Eligibility of Training Providers and Training Programs under WIOA Title I (see the Attachments tab).
- The Local ETPL Coordinator will make an initial determine if an in-state training provider is eligible to be on the ETPL using the initial eligibility criteria in this policy and recommend approval to the OET State ETPL Coordinator.
- If the in-state training provider is a Department of Labor (DOL) Registered Apprenticeship, see the Registered Apprenticeship Programs section of this policy.

Distance Education and Out-of-State Training Providers

- All distance education (education not offered at a physical location) and out-of-state training providers that wish to be listed on the ETPL must be registered.
- Training providers should use the ETPL Training Provider and Program Determination Flow Chart (see the Attachments tab) to determine if they are eligible providers.
- The training provider shall provide all the information required in the Requirements for Initial Eligibility and Continued Eligibility of Training Providers and Training Programs under WIOA Title I (see the Attachments tab) to the OET State ETPL Coordinator at CEO.OET.etplcoord@illinois.gov.
- The OET State ETPL Coordinator will determine if a distance education or out-of-state training provider is eligible to be on the ETPL using the initial eligibility criteria in this policy and the Distance Education and Out-of-State Eligible Training Programs section of this policy.
- If a Local ETPL Coordinator is contacted by a distance education or out-of-state training provider, the provider should be referred to CEO.OET.etplcoord@illinois.gov for assistance.

7.3.6 Initial Eligibility of Training Providers

This section provides the requirements for initial eligibility on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) for training providers and programs. New training providers with programs of study, except for Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs), must apply for Initial Eligibility following the following guidance:

Application for Initial Eligibility of Training Providers and Training Programs

Applications for initial eligibility must be submitted according to the geographical location of the training program. In-state providers can enter their zip code in the ETPL Data Entry and

Maintenance Portal, following the Guidance for ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal (see the Attachments tab) to determine which LWIA the provider resides. The system will list the appropriate LWIB contact information.

Training providers should apply for each training program, as follows:

- Training programs located within the boundaries of a single Local Workforce Innovation Area (LWIA) must apply to the LWIB where its program is geographically located;
- Training programs offered in multiple LWIAs and identical across each of the LWIAs must apply to the LWIB in which the training provider has identified as its headquarters and/or primary location;
- Training programs offered in multiple LWIAs - but the program is not substantially the same across the various LWIAs - must apply to each LWIB in which the training program is offered; or
- Training programs located out-of-state or not offered at a physical location (e.g., distance learning) must apply to the OET State ETPL Coordinator.

A training provider is prohibited from applying for training program eligibility in LWIAs where the program site is not geographically located, unless the LWIA in which the program is located denies eligibility or fails to act on the application within sixty (60) calendar days of the date of application.

Information Needed for Application

- Training providers must gather the mandatory information found in the Requirements for Training Program Initial Eligibility and Continued Eligibility (see the Attachments tab).
- The training provider will be required to confirm their agency fully complies with the nondiscrimination, equal opportunity, and disability provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which include:
    - WIOA Section 188 prohibits discrimination against all individuals in the United States based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, political affiliation, or belief, and against beneficiaries based on either citizenship/status as a lawfully admitted immigrant authorized to work in the United States or participation in any WIOA Title I financially assisted program or activity;
    - Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, prohibits discrimination based on race, color, and national origin;
    - Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities;
    - The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 prohibits discrimination against qualified people with disabilities;
    - The Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, prohibits discrimination based on age;

- Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended, prohibits discrimination based on sex in educational programs;
- 29 CFR Part 37 and all other regulations implementing the laws listed above; and
- This assurance applies to the grant applicant's operation of the WIOA Title I financially assisted program or activity, and to all agreements the grant applicant makes to carry out the WIOA Title I financially assisted program or activity. The grant applicant understands that the United States has the right to seek judicial enforcement of this assurance.

Initial Applicant Review and Establishment in the ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal

In-State Providers

- The LWIB must verify that the provider is an eligible entity to be a training provider when an in-state provider submits their training provider basic information in the ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal, following the Guidance for ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal (see the Attachments tab).
- The LWIB must set up a Training Provider record as outlined in the Requirements for Initial Eligibility and Continued Eligibility of Training Providers and Training Programs under WIOA Title I (see the Attachments tab) once they have verified the eligibility of a training provider, and may provide the training provider with the following:
    - A user ID for the primary contact generated by the ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal to be used by the training provider when they log into the system to request eligibility for training programs or need to update information on a training program;
    - The temporary password for the primary contact generated by the ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal to be used by the training provider to log into the system the first time (the primary contact for the training provider should then change the password to a personally selected unique password); and
    - The web address to the ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal will direct the training provider to the appropriate system screen. (See the References tab).
    - If the LWIB does not provide a user ID, they are responsible for entering the data into the ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal.
- Once the LWIB has provided a user ID and password, the provider must begin adding training program(s) information found in the Requirements for Training Program Initial Eligibility and Continued Eligibility (See the Attachments tab), including contacts for each program, into the ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal, following the Guidance for ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal (See the Attachments tab), to be determined eligible.
    - LWIBs reserve the right to impose additional criteria through local policy that is unique to conditions within a particular LWIA, so long as they meet, at a

minimum, federal, and state requirements as outlined in the State and Local ETPLs Section of this policy.

- LWIBs must ensure that all training programs for which a training provider seeks eligibility have met the guidelines. The training provider:
    - Has submitted the mandatory information found in the Requirements for Training Program Initial Eligibility and Continued Eligibility (see the Attachments tab) and the information has been entered in the ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal.
    - Specified training provider and training program performance data, as outlined in the Performance Measures for Eligible Training Providers section of this policy, has been provided when available;
    - Confirmed the program of training services leads to a recognized postsecondary credential;
    - Demonstrated the program is intended to lead to placement in a Demand Occupation as identified on the Demand Occupation Training List (DOTL) found in the attached WIOA Notice on Demand Occupation Training List; and
    - Attested that they fully comply with the nondiscrimination, equal opportunity, and disability provisions of the WIOA.
- LWIBs may review the additional information required by the LWIB; however, it may not be considered for purposes of approving the provider and program for the state ETPL. The additional information may be used to determine whether the LWIB should include the provider and program on the local ETPL.
- LWIBs should consider economic, geographic, and demographic conditions in the area, as well as the characteristics of the population served by the provider.
- If the LWIB determines after the review that the training provider and program(s) have met all the requirements listed above, the LWIB then attests that the provider and program(s) are recommended to be approved as an eligible training program for the state to add to the Eligible Training Provider List in the ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal.

Distance Education and Out-of-State Providers

- The OET State ETPL Coordinator must verify that the provider is an eligible entity to be a training provider when a distance education or out-of-state provider submits their training provider basic information in the ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal.
- The OET State ETPL Coordinator must set up a Training Provider record as outlined in the Requirements for Initial Eligibility and Continued Eligibility of Training Providers and Training Programs under WIOA Title I (see the Attachments tab) once they have verified the eligibility of a training provider, and may provide the training provider with the following:

- A user ID for the primary contact generated by the ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal to be used by the training provider when they log into the system to request eligibility for training programs or need to update information on a training program;
- The temporary password for the primary contact generated by the ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal to be used by the training provider to log into the system the first time (the primary contact for the training provider should then change the password to a personally selected unique password); and
- The web address to the ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal, which will direct the training provider to the appropriate system screen. (See the References tab).
- If the OET State ETPL Coordinator for distance education and out-of-state training providers does not provide a user ID, they are responsible for entering the data into the ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal.

- Once the OET State ETPL Coordinator has provided a user ID and password, the provider must begin adding training program(s) information found in the Requirements for Training Program Initial Eligibility and Continued Eligibility (see the Attachments tab), including contacts for each program, into the ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal to be determined eligible.
- The OET State ETPL Coordinator will review and ensure the training provider:
  - Has submitted the mandatory information found in the Requirements for Training Program Initial Eligibility and Continued Eligibility (see the Attachments tab) and the information has been entered in the ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal.
  - Specified training provider and training program performance data, as outlined in the Performance Measures for Eligible Training Providers section of this policy, has been provided when available;
  - Confirmed the program of training services leads to a recognized postsecondary credential;
  - Demonstrated the program is intended to lead to placement in a Demand Occupation as identified on the Demand Occupation Training List (DOTL) found in the attached WIOA Notice on Demand Occupation Training List; and
  - Attested that they fully comply with the nondiscrimination, equal opportunity, and disability provisions of the WIOA.
- The OET State ETPL Coordinator should consider economic, geographic, and demographic conditions in the area, as well as the characteristics of the population served by the provider.
- If the OET State ETPL Coordinator determines after the review that the training provider and program(s) have met the requirements listed in b. above, the OET State

ETPL Coordinator approves the training program to be added to the Eligible Training Provider List in the ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal.

Final Approval for Inclusion on ETPL

- In-state programs the LWIB determines have met the requirements of this policy must be submitted to the OET State ETPL Coordinator, as described in the Initial Eligibility Local Workforce Innovation Board Timeline section of this policy.
- The OET State ETPL Coordinator will review the information submitted and verify for accuracy.
- If the In-State program meets the requirements of this policy then the State ETPL-approved training providers will then be placed on the state ETPL.

7.3.7 Initial Eligibility Local Workforce Innovation Board Timeline

In-State Providers

- The Local Workforce Innovation Board (LWIB) must determine whether to recommend a program for eligibility within sixty (60) calendar days of the application to the LWIB.
- One exception to this requirement may exist if the LWIB has provided authority to a committee of no less than two (2) individuals to conditionally approve programs, in place of waiting for the LWIB's determination of eligibility.
- If the LWIB (or committee designated by the LWIB) decides to recommend initial eligibility, they must notify the OET State ETPL Coordinator to indicate the program is being recommended for approval.
    - If LWIBs recommend multiple programs for approval at one time, they may submit a report with the programs they recommend for approval highlighted to the OET State EPTL Coordinator.
- If the LWIB (or committee designated by the LWIB) recommends denying or rejecting eligibility for the program, the following actions will occur:
    - The LWIB should notify the training provider if a training program does not meet the mandatory criteria for initial eligibility or is not accepted by the LWIB for some other reason within sixty (60) calendar days, the training provider can:
        - Appeal its acceptance status following the procedures found in the Reinstatement on the Statewide List section of this policy and if accepted, the program will be registered on the ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal and given full eligibility status, if the application process has been completed; or
        - Wait thirty (30) calendar days from the denial of acceptance by the LWIB and reapply with another LWIB.
    - The program is placed in a capture list on the ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal after ninety (90) calendar days of the application unless it was denied "for

cause" as described in the Monitoring and Oversight of Eligible Training Providers section of this policy.

- Training programs placed on the capture list are available for one hundred twenty (120) calendar days to be selected by another LWIB and determined eligible by their LWIB. Once the one hundred twenty (120) calendar day period passes, the training program will be removed from the capture list.
- Training programs that did not meet the state performance criteria (as outlined in the Performance Measures for Eligible Training Providers section of this policy) or were denied "for cause" will not be placed on the capture list and cannot be determined eligible as an approved training program for a period of two (2) years.

Distance Education and Out-of-State Providers

- The OET State ETPL Coordinator must determine whether a program is eligible within sixty (60) calendar days of receiving the application
- If the OET State ETPL Coordinator denies or rejects eligibility for the program within sixty (60) calendar days of the application, the following actions will occur:
  - The OET State ETPL Coordinator should notify the training provider if a training program does not meet the mandatory criteria for initial eligibility or is not accepted by the OET State ETPL Coordinator within sixty (60) calendar days for some other reason, the training provider can:
    - Appeal its acceptance status following the procedures found in the Reinstatement on the Statewide List section of this policy. If accepted, the program will be registered on the ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal and given full eligibility status, if the application process has been completed.
  - The program is placed in a capture list on the ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal after ninety (90) calendar days of the application unless it was denied "for cause" as described in the Monitoring and Oversight of Eligible Training Providers section of this policy.
  - Training programs placed on the capture list are available for one hundred twenty (120) calendar days to be determined eligible. Once the one hundred twenty (120) calendar day period passes, the training program will be removed from the capture list.
  - Training programs that did not meet the state performance criteria (as outlined in the Performance Measures for Eligible Training Providers section of this policy) or were denied "for cause" will not be placed on the capture list and cannot be determined eligible as an approved training program for a period of two (2) years.

Initial Eligibility Date

- Once a training program has been determined eligible, the LWIB must enter the date the LWIB approved the program in the "Initial Cert. Date" field of the Training Program Basic Information screen on the ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal.
- The LWIB must also enter the date for continued eligibility of the training program in the "Next Cert. Date" field of the same screen. (Note: If the LWIB fails to enter a date in this field, the system automatically generates a date of one (1) year from the "Initial Cert. Date".)
    - The next eligibility (next certification) date must be within one (1) year of the initial eligibility date.
    - The next eligibility date (next certification) may be selected based on local or training provider needs and agreements. For example:
        - The LWIB would like to coordinate training programs' continued eligibility dates, so that they coincide with regularly scheduled LWIB meetings;
        - An LWIB may select continued eligibility dates distributed throughout the year to allow the LWIB to spread out its eligibility determination workload, thus avoiding the potential bottleneck of review and approval actions once per year; or
        - A training provider may wish to have all or some of their training program determinations of continued eligibility as a group to streamline the process.

7.3.8 Continued Eligibility Process for Training Providers

This section provides the requirements for continued eligibility and continued inclusion on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) for training providers and programs previously approved for initial eligibility, except for Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs).

In-State Providers

- Local Workforce Investment Board (LWIB) must ensure that all training providers have their eligible training programs determined for continued eligibility on at least a biennial (at least every two (2) years) basis to maintain their status as an eligible training program.
- LWIBs must inform each training provider of any upcoming continued eligibility dates (i.e., a notice sent to the training provider ninety (90) calendar days before the continued eligibility date).
    - Continued eligibility is based on the date entered during the initial eligibility or most recent continued eligibility determination of the training program (as outlined in f. below).
- The training provider expresses intent for continued eligibility for a training program by resubmitting the Training Program Basic Information application in the ETPL Data

Entry and Maintenance Portal, following the Guidance for ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal (see the Attachments tab). If they do not provide a user ID for entry into the system, they must submit in writing their intention to the LWIB.

    - The LWIB must receive the training provider's intent to apply for continued eligibility of a training program or programs in sufficient time to meet the following continued eligibility timeline requirements.
        - If a training program has only had changes in information that are not significant information (as outlined in the Training Provider or Training Program, Change in the Information section of this policy), changes must be made to the Training Program Basic Information record and saved.
        - If a training program has had no changes in its information, the Training Program Basic Information record must be saved.
        - Once the Training Program Basic Information record has been saved, the Initial Criteria Status record will change to "Pending ReCert".
        - The change to "Pending ReCert" status will prompt the LWIB to review and decide.

- The LWIB can provide a report to identify any training programs with a "Pending Continued Eligibility" status.
    - The frequency of producing these reports will be a local decision.
    - The LWIB must use due diligence to produce this report routinely throughout the year. Keep in mind that training programs may be jeopardized if they are not approved for continued eligibility promptly.
    - The report is titled "Training Programs Currently Pending" (Initial or Recertification)
- The LWIB should continue to make available and enroll customers in any training program with a "Pending" status.
- The LWIB should review the following items once submitted:
    - A current copy of the Training Program Basic Information record;
    - Identification of items that have changed since the initial eligibility or most recent continued eligibility determination;
    - Performance data (as outlined in the Performance Measures for Eligible Training Providers section of this policy) for the training program; and
    - Any additional information the training provider has submitted for review.
- The LWIB must recommend continued eligibility for a training program to be on the state ETPL based on the following:
    - State eligibility criteria are still being met;
    - State performance criteria (if any have been established) have been met;

- One (1) or more O*Net codes associated with the training program remain on the current Demand Occupation Training List; and
- The training provider has maintained timely updates to information on the training program.

- LWIBs may choose not to include an entity for which they have granted continued eligibility for the state ETPL or the local ETPL (as described in the State and Local ETPL section of this policy) if those programs do not meet local eligibility or performance criteria.
- LWIBs must decide the continued eligibility of the training program within sixty (60) calendar days of receiving the application for continued eligibility from the provider.
    - The LWIB must update the Training Program Basic Information record within ten (10) business days. The update should include the following:
        - The Initial Criteria Status must be changed from "Pending ReCert" to "Accept" to indicate an accepted continued eligibility application.
        - The Program Status must be listed as "Approved" to indicate to the OET State ETPL Coordinator that the program is being recommended for approval.
        - The "Last Cert. Date" must be listed as the date the LWIB recommended approval of the continued eligibility, not the date the entry is made.
        - The "Next Cert. Date" should be listed as the date for which the next continued eligibility should take place (and should consider the same factors for initial eligibility as outlined in the Initial Eligibility of Training Providers section of this policy).
- If an LWIB neither accepts nor rejects a training program, it will remain in "Pending ReCert'' status for one hundred twenty (120) calendar days past its "Last Cert. Date" and then moved to the capture list.
- (Note: This provision intends to automatically clear training programs from the ETPL when they have not been approved for continued eligibility in a timely fashion. Such programs will not be available for selection and thus are removed.)
- LWIBs must cease to enroll customers in any training program that has been moved to the capture list. Customers who have already been enrolled in training programs that are on the capture list will be allowed to complete such training programs.
- Training programs that are denied (rejected) eligibility will be removed from the approved program list and may reapply after one (1) year.
- A training provider may reapply for eligibility for any training program that was not determined eligible for any reason other than "for cause" reasons.

Distance Education and Out-of-State Training Provider

- The OET State ETPL Coordinator must ensure all training providers have their eligible training programs determined for continued eligibility on at least a biennial (at least every two (2) years) basis to maintain their status as an eligible training program.
- OET State ETPL Coordinator must inform each training provider of any upcoming continued eligibility dates (i.e., a notice sent to the training provider ninety (90) calendar days before the continued eligibility date).
    - Continued eligibility is based on the date entered during the initial eligibility or most recent continued eligibility determination of the training program (as outlined in f. below).
- The training provider expresses intent for continued eligibility of a training program by resubmitting the Training Program Basic Information application in the ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal following the Guidance for ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal (See the Attachments tab) or if not provided a user ID for entry into the system, must submit the to the OET State ETPL Coordinator.
    - The OET State ETPL Coordinator must receive the training provider's intent to apply for continued eligibility of a training program or programs in sufficient time to meet the following continued eligibility timeline requirements.
        - If a training program has had only changes in information that are not significant information (as outlined in the Training Provider or Training Program, Change in the Information section of this policy), changes must be made to the Training Program Basic Information record and saved.
        - If a training program has had no changes in its information, the Training Program Basic Information record must be saved.
        - Once the Training Program Basic Information record has been saved, the Initial Criteria Status record will change to "Pending Continued Eligibility (recertification)".
        - The change to "Pending Continued Eligibility (recertification)" status will prompt the LWIB to review and decide.
- A report will be available for the OET State ETPL Coordinator to identify any training programs with a "Pending Continued Eligibility" status.
    - The OET State ETPL Coordinator must utilize due diligence in producing this report routinely throughout the year keeping in mind training programs may be jeopardized if they are not approved for continued eligibility promptly.
    - The report is titled "Training Programs Nearing Continued Eligibility (recertification) Date".
    - The report is titled "Training Programs Currently Pending" (Initial or Recertification)
- The OET State ETPL Coordinator should review the following items once submitted:
    - A current copy of the Training Program Basic Information record;

- Identification of items that have changed since the initial eligibility or most recent continued eligibility determination;
- Performance data (as outlined in the Performance Measures for Eligible Training Providers section of this policy) for the training program; and
- Any additional information the training provider has submitted for review.

- The State must approve continued eligibility for a training program to be on the state ETPL based on the following:
  - State eligibility criteria are still being met;
  - State performance criteria (if any have been established) have been met;
  - One (1) or more O*Net codes associated with the training program remain on the current Demand Occupation Training List; and
  - The training provider has maintained timely updates to information on the training program.
- The OET State ETPL Coordinator must decide the continued eligibility of the training program within sixty (60) calendar days of receiving the application for continued eligibility from the provider.
  - The OET State ETPL Coordinator must update the Training Program Basic Information record within ten (10) business days. The update should include the following:
    - The Initial Criteria Status must be changed from "Pending ReCert" to "Accept" to indicate an accepted continued eligibility application.
    - The Program Status must be listed as "Approved" to indicate that the program is being approved.
    - The "Last Cert. Date" must be listed as the date the OET State ETPL Coordinator approved the continued eligibility, not the date the entry is made.
    - The "Next Cert. Date" should be listed as the date for which the next continued eligibility should take place (and should take into consideration the same factors for initial eligibility as outlined in the Initial Eligibility of Training Providers section of this policy).
- If the OET State ETPL Coordinator neither accepts nor rejects a training program, it will remain in "Pending ReCert" status for one hundred twenty (120) calendar days past its "Last Cert. Date" and then moved to the capture list.
- (Note: This provision intends to automatically clear training programs from the ETPL when they have not been approved for continued eligibility in a timely fashion. Such programs will not be available for selection and thus are removed.)

- LWIBs must cease to enroll customers in any training program that has been moved to the capture list. Customers who have already been enrolled in training programs that are on the capture list will be allowed to complete such training programs.
- Training programs that are denied (rejected) eligibility will be removed from the approved program list and may reapply after one (1) year.
- A training provider may reapply for eligibility for any training program that was not determined eligible for any reason other than "for cause" reasons.

Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) provide a unique combination of structured learning with on-the-job training. The five Core Components of Registered Apprenticeship Programs include employer involvement, structured on-the-job learning, related instruction, rewards for skill gains, and national occupational credentials. Related instruction, technical training, or other certified training is provided by apprenticeship training centers, technical schools, community colleges, and/or institutions employing distance and computer-based learning approaches. The goal is to provide workers with advanced skill sets that meet the specific needs of employers. Upon completion of a Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP), participants receive an industry-issued, nationally recognized credential that certifies occupational proficiency and is portable. All RAPs registered with the United States Department of Labor (USDOL), Office of Apprenticeship are automatically eligible to be included in the State list of eligible training providers and programs.

- RAPs must opt-in to the ETPL;
- RAPs that have opted-in the State ETPL must be on all Local ETPLs in the State; and
- National Program RAPs do not need to register as an apprenticeship program in individual states for ETPL access.
- Newly approved RAP sponsors will be notified of their automatic eligibility to be included on the ETPL and instructed to contact the OET State ETPL Coordinator if they wish to be on the ETPL.
- RAPs are not subject to the same requirements as other providers such as initial or continued eligibility or performance since they go through a detailed application and vetting procedure to become a Registered Apprenticeship program sponsor approved by the National Office of Apprenticeship.
- Given that RAPS are a link to demonstrated hiring needs and WIOA provides automatic training provider eligibility to RAPS, the USDOL has determined that RAPs qualify as occupations in-demand in the local labor market.To opt-in to the ETPL, RAPs must:
- Submit the Registered Apprenticeship Program Opt-In Request attachment (See Attachments tab) to the OET State ETPL Coordinator at CEO.OET.etplcoord@illinois.gov; and
- Either the Sponsor, Training Provider, or the Employer with the RAP must complete the registration in the ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal following the Guidance for ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal (See the Attachments tab).

- For proper identification and reporting purposes, the title of the ETPL training program must match the name that is registered with the USDOL as an apprenticeship program.
- A RAP expressing interest in being included on the ETPL will be added on a statewide basis; thus, if it has multiple locations, the RAP will only need to show interest once, but must still provide information on every program it is providing.RAPs will remain on the ETPL until:
- The program becomes deregistered under the National Apprenticeship Act;
- The RAP program notifies the state agency it no longer wants to be included on the list; or
- The program is determined to have intentionally supplied inaccurate information or to have substantially violated any provision of Title I of WIOA or the WIOA regulations.
- The OET State ETPL Coordinator will review available information to assure RAPs on the ETPL have retained their RAP approval through USDOL. Any program no longer having such approval will be removed and notified by the State and will have an opportunity to apply for eligibility as a non-RAP training provider and training program.
- The apprenticeship programs are monitored regularly by the USDOL apprenticeship staff.
- Deregistered apprenticeships will be reclassified as non-registered apprenticeships and their exemption status removed. If the registered apprenticeship was listed on the ETPL at the time of their removal from the national apprenticeship registry, the training provider will be held accountable to the same rules, regulations, and performance criteria as a regular training provider.
- A RAP whose eligibility is terminated must be terminated for not less than 2 years and is liable to repay all youth, adult, and dislocated worker training funds it received during the period of noncompliance. This is described further in the Enforcement of Eligible Training Providers Violations section of this policy.
- Pre-apprenticeship programs do not have the automatic eligible training provider status under WIOA and are subject to the initial and continued eligibility procedures.

7.3.10 Training Provider or Training Program, Change in Information

- Training programs will be subject to renewal of eligibility status by the Local Workforce Innovation Board (LWIB), or a committee designated by the LWIB of no less than two (2) Local Workforce Innovation Area (LWIA) staff whenever significant information for the training provider or training program has changed.
    - Significant information includes all of the "mandatory" fields on the Training Program Basic Information record in the ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal. (These items are identified by a ** on the Requirements for Initial Eligibility and Continued Eligibility of Training Providers and Training Programs

under WIOA Title I (See the Attachments tab). Failure to provide mandatory information will result in proceeding potentially leading to possible suspension.

- Change(s) in any significant information must be entered in ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal within ten (10) business days.
- Submission of a change in significant information indicates a training provider's intent to renew eligibility and prompts the same requirements as under the current eligibility determination.
- A decision under this provision that is made by a designated committee is deemed eligible until the LWIB can review and approve the determination for renewal of eligibility.

- Training programs should be subject to renewal of eligibility status by the LWIB, or a committee designated by the LWIB of no less than two (2) LWIA staff whenever non-significant information on the training program changes before the continued eligibility date.
  - Non-significant information is any information that is a "mandatory" field (but not considered “significant”, as outlined in Training Provider or Training Program, Change in Information, paragraph 1.a.) on the Training Program Basic Information in ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal, including O*Net codes associated with the training program. These items are identified by a * on the Requirements for Initial Eligibility and Continued Eligibility of Training Providers and Training Programs under WIOA Title I (See the Attachments tab).
  - The LWIB or committee should review the training program and the changes to determine if the changes have affected the conditions of the initial eligibility or continued eligibility determinations.
  - If the changes have significantly altered the training program, the committee should send the training program to the LWIB for renewal of the current eligibility approval.
  - If the changes have not significantly altered the training program, the committee should provide "Approval" of the program to continue its eligibility until its next scheduled continued eligibility date.

7.3.11 Denial or Revocation of Eligibility of Training Providers

- Following the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), a Local Workforce Innovation Board (LWIB) or the OET State ETPL Coordinator has the authority to deny approval of initial or continued eligibility or revoke the status of eligibility and remove it from the eligible training provider list (ETPL) for a training provider or a training program.
- After review, if an LWIB determines the training provider/program does not meet the requirements outlined in this policy to be listed on the state ETPL, the LWIB must inform the training provider in writing with the reason(s) for the denial and provide

information on the appeal process within sixty (60) calendar days of receipt of the application.

    - LWIBs must copy the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Office of Employment and Training (OET) on the correspondence.

- The training program may be removed from the approved list of training programs under any of the following circumstances:

    - The training provider has lost its accreditation or its approval to operate from its regulating agency;

    - The training provider no longer meets the criteria for which its eligibility was determined;

    - The pre-apprenticeship program no longer has a Letter of Commitment from a DOL registered apprenticeship program, or no longer leads to an industry-recognized postsecondary credential;

    - The nonprofit Community-Based Organization no longer qualifies under Section 501(c)(3) of the Federal Internal Revenue Code;

    - The provider is not in compliance with any of the assurances, such as WIOA Section 188, made during initial or continued eligibility;

    - Its annual performance fails to meet the minimum standards set by the State of Illinois for the WIOA performance measures;

- (Note: At the time of issuance of this policy, the State of Illinois has not set minimum performance measures other than the requirement to provide performance data, if available.)

    - The training provider has not demonstrated a good faith effort in providing the eligible training provider report data to the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Office of Employment and Training (OET);

    - The training provider voluntarily chooses to cease being an eligible training provider or goes out of business;

    - If it is determined at any time that the training provider intentionally supplied inaccurate information in its application for eligibility or continued eligibility;

    - The training provider substantially violated any requirement under WIOA; or

    - The training provider's top-level leadership (e.g., owner, CEO, Director, etc.) is convicted of violating any federal or state law associated with the operation of the institution.

- Training programs that are removed from the ETPL because of a failure in performance cited in the Performance Data and Reporting Requirements for Eligible Training Providers section of this policy must remain off the list for a period of at least one (1) year after which time the training provider may re-apply for continued eligibility of the program.

- Following WIOA, training programs that have been removed from the list of approved training programs are based on the reasons found in paragraph 1.i., 1. j. or 1. k. above:
    - Must remain off the ETPL for a period of at least two (2) years after which time the training provider may re-apply for continued eligibility of the training program;
    - May prompt the revocation and removal of all other training programs of the training provider for a period of at least two (2) years as determined by the LWIB; and
    - May result in the following actions being taken against the training provider:
        - The eligibility of the training provider may be revoked;
        - The eligibility of the training provider to receive funds for the program in question may be terminated;
        - Any disallowed costs may be recovered; and
        - The State of Illinois or LWIB may take any other action it deems appropriate.
- LWIBs must cease to enroll customers in a training program that has had its eligibility revoked.
    - Customers who have already been enrolled in such training programs will be allowed to remain through completion.
    - If it is deemed necessary to immediately close a training program (for such reasons as the training provider committed egregious violations or went out of business) the customers of such program(s) should be provided the opportunity to enroll in a similar program.

7.3.12 Notification and Appeal Procedures for Training Providers

- A Local Workforce Innovation Board (LWIB) that does not recommend the approval of a training program or recommends the revocation of the initial or continued eligibility of a training provider and/or any of its training programs for which it has sought approval must notify the affected provider in writing of its decision. Likewise, if the State does not approve the training program or revokes the initial or continued eligibility of a training program they must notify the affected training provider in writing of its decision. The local or state issued notice must include the following information:
    - The training program(s) that are being denied or revoked eligibility;
    - The reason(s) for the denial or revocation; and
    - Information about the opportunity for the provider to appeal the decision.

- The notice must be sent within seven (7) business days of the decision to the training provider with a copy sent to the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Office of Employment and Training (OET).
- The training provider has twenty-one (21) business days, from the date of receipt of the notice of denial or revocation of eligibility in which to file an appeal to the LWIB or state. The appeal must include the following information:
    - A statement that the training provider is appealing the denial or revocation of its eligibility;
    - The reason(s) the eligibility should be granted;
    - Contact information for additional information; and
    - The signature of the chief executive of the training provider.
- The appeal must be submitted, in writing, and must be sent no later than the twenty-first (21st) day from the date of receipt of the notice of denial or revocation.
- The State or LWIB will review the request for appeal within twenty-one (21) business days of its receipt.
    - If an administrative error was made or if additional information submitted by the training provider changes the basis upon which the original decision to deny or revoke eligibility was issued, the decision may be reversed, and the training program(s) granted the appropriate initial or continued eligibility for inclusion on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL).
    - If the State or LWIA reverses its decision, it will notify the training entity of its action in writing within seven (7) business day. The LWIA will also forward a recommendation to OET for inclusion on the ETPL.
    - If the State or LWIB does not reverse its decision it must notify the provider within twenty-one (21) business days from the receipt of the request that the program(s) was not determined eligible.
    - The notice must be sent in writing. The notice will include information about the opportunities for the provider to appeal its denial of eligibility with OET. A copy of the letter will be forwarded to OET.
- A provider will have twenty-one (21) business days from the receipt of the final decision by the State or LWIB to appeal the denial or revocation to OET.
    - OET will have thirty (30) business days to complete its investigation into the matter, gather additional information from the affected LWIB(s) file and the provider (such as the completed local appeal), and issue a final determination of eligibility.
    - OET will convene a meeting with the affected parties during this time if requested.

- This final determination will be forwarded to the training provider and the LWIB(s) in writing.
- If OET overturns the decision of the LWIB, the program(s) will be included on the statewide list within seven (7) business days.
- OET will not make a final decision to overturn the decision of an LWIB without convening a meeting with the affected parties.

- OET can deny or revoke a training provider or its program(s) eligibility and have it removed from the list "for cause".
  - If such a decision is made, OET must send a formal written notice of its concerns to the affected LWIB(s). The notice will require local action on the matter.
  - The LWIB(s) will have the option of providing OET with additional information that would clarify and substantiate the provider's eligibility status or of initiating the removal of the provider or its program(s) from the ETPL.
  - Both the notice from OET to the affected LWIB(s) and the board's response to the notice must be sent in writing.
  - The LWIB(s) has twenty-one (21) business days to respond in writing to the OET notice.

7.3.13 Reinstatement on the Training Provider Statewide List

- A training provider who was denied initial eligibility may re-apply after a period of at least one (1) year if the following conditions are met:
  - The training provider must comply with the requirements for initial eligibility;
  - The training provider must demonstrate it has corrected all performance and other deficiencies which resulted in their being denied from being for the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL); and
  - The OET State ETPL Coordinator must determine the eligibility of the program for reinstatement on the ETPL.
- A training provider who was denied continued eligibility may apply for reinstatement after a period of at least one (1) year if the following conditions are met:
  - The provider must re-apply for program eligibility subject to the policies and procedures for continued eligibility found in the Initial Eligibility of Training Providers, paragraph 3 section of this policy.
  - If the program meets the minimum state or local performance standards (if established), along with any other eligibility criteria in place at the time of re-application, the LWIB must determine the program eligible and submit it for reinstatement on the statewide list of eligible training programs.

- The LWIB or OET State ETPL Coordinator as applicable must reaffirm that a program previously accredited is still accredited or the accreditation has been renewed.

7.3.14 Performance Data and Reporting Requirements for Eligible Training Providers

DISCLAIMER: The procedures in this section (7.3.14 1.d.4)) will be finalized with the release of the updated policy and launch of IWDS 2.0

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires all states to collect and report performance information on all individuals and WIOA title I core program participants (of Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs) served by each training program (also referred to as a "program of study" or "program of training service"), on the state list of Eligible Training Providers (ETP list). Additionally, WIOA identifies requirements and criteria that states must establish for use in determining the eligibility of training providers and programs of study which includes performance information.

Reporting Requirements

- The State Education Agencies must assist in overseeing ETP performance and facilitating the production and dissemination of ETP performance reports. They are responsible for:
- Facilitating data matches between ETP records and unemployment insurance (UI) wage data in order to produce the report;
- The creation and dissemination of the reports; and
- Coordinating the dissemination of the performance reports with the ETPL and the information required to accompany the ETPL.
- The information the state collects is reported in the Eligible Training Provider (ETP) Report with the federal WIOA Annual Performance Report on October 1st of each year utilizing a template developed jointly by the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) and U.S. Department of Education (USDOE). This report includes all WIOA and non-WIOA participants served by each training program listed on the ETPL. The DOL has made the ETP Report data available to the public via www.trainingproviderresults.gov.
- Per 34 CFR part 99.35 Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), State Education Agencies must access education records for the enforcement of or compliance with Federal legal requirements that relate to WIOA reporting.
- To the greatest extent practicable, State Education Agencies are responsible for utilizing reasonable methods to ensure it:
- Uses personally identifiable information only to carry out reporting requirements related to WIOA;
- Protects the personally identifiable information from further disclosures or other uses; and
- Destroys the personally identifiable information in accordance with federal guidelines.

- The ETP Report gathers critical information, including the employment, earnings, and credentials obtained by participants in the training program during a program year (July 1 – June 30). This information is widely disseminated through the WIOA Approved Training Provider Search to assist participants and members of the public in identifying effective training providers and programs. This information will also benefit the training provider by providing awareness of their program and serving as a tool to potentially enhance their programs and support continuous improvement.
- Providers of training services, excluding Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPS), are required to collect and report specific information on the training program for each eligible program for the State to meet its requirement for reporting data and information on participants enrolled in training programs (also known as programs of study) funded partially or wholly by WIOA funds.
- All eligible training providers (ETPs), except for Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs), are required to provide basic performance data, when available, on their training programs to be approved for initial or continued eligibility.
- As part of the initial application to be an Eligible Training Provider, training providers must agree that they will collect and report individual record data.
- Providers must submit appropriate, accurate, and timely information for ALL individuals (aggregate of WIOA and non-WIOA individuals) the:
    - Individuals Served – the total number of individuals enrolled in the training program during the reporting period;
    - Individuals Exited – the total number of individuals who completed, withdrew, or transferred from this training program during the reporting period;
    - Training Program Completed – the total number of individuals who completed which is defined as those individuals who did not withdraw or transfer from the training program during the reporting period;
    - Credential Attainment - the number of those individuals who completed the training program AND attained a credential associated with the training program within one year after training completion or exit from the WIOA program.
    - This includes individuals enrolled in this training program who:
    - Attained a recognized postsecondary credential during the program or within one year after training completion or exit from the WIOA program; or
    - Attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent during the program or within one year after training completion or WIOA program exit AND who were also employed or enrolled in an education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within one year after training completion or exit from the WIOA program.
- The following chart indicates the performance reporting requirements and the corresponding data element training providers are required to submit for each training

program on the ETPL to the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Office of Employment and Training (OET):

- The social security number must be used as an identifier for tracking enrollments and completers.
- Student employment and wage data will be determined by the state using the social security number submissions and are not required to be reported individually by the training providers.
- The appropriate State Education Agency will use the data provided by the training provider to calculate the performance outcomes for the following three measures for non-WIOA students which are described in Assessing Performance of Eligible Training Providers: employed in the second quarter after training completion; employed in the fourth quarter after training completion; and median hourly wage at placement.
- The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Office of Employment and Training (OET) will use data from the appropriate case management system to report demographic information and calculate the performance outcomes for WIOA Title I program exiters.
- The performance of training providers is a factor the state must use in determining both the initial and continued eligibility of a provider to be included on a state's ETP list.
- Like the RAP exemption from the eligibility requirements, RAPs also are exempt from ETP reporting requirements in WIOA, including any additional ETP reporting requirements that have been added by the state or local area; however, RAPs may voluntarily report performance outcomes.
- The State recognizes the reporting burden this causes, and understands the data limitations, so the State will work with training providers to assist them in meeting the reporting requirements above.

Assessing the Performance of Eligible Training Providers

- All eligible training providers, except for Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs), are required to meet minimum levels of performance for each of the Primary Indicators of Performance outlined in WIOA section 116 to be approved for initial eligibility and continued eligibility.
- Information regarding performance accountability indicators and performance reporting requirements established in WIOA section 116 to assess the effectiveness of States and local areas in achieving positive outcomes for individuals served by the workforce development system, including those receiving training services, can be found in the applicable sections under Chapter 3 of this policy manual.
- While the ETPL Policy will not impose state-wide minimum performance targets as eligibility criteria for training programs to remain on either the State or Local ETPL, a Local Board, at its discretion, may continue (or commence) to apply Local Area performance standards (or “targets’) as part of its local ETP criteria. Performance information for each program will be posted on the ETPL to help consumers make

informed decisions. However, due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic and the United State Department of Labor (USDOL) no longer grants the All-Student Data Waiver to states, the state is researching minimum statewide performance measures that bolster training opportunities across the state of Illinois while maintaining accountability. The policy may be revised to establish minimum performance targets, by the State for statewide application or by Local Boards for Local Area application, for training providers and their programs to remain on the State or Local Area ETPL.

7.3.15 Monitoring and Oversight of Eligible Training Providers

All programs approved for either initial or continued eligibility status will be subject to routine monitoring by the Local Workforce Innovation Board (LWIB) and the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Office of Employment and Training (OET).

Monitoring - LWIB Responsibilities

- The LWIB is required to conduct annual monitoring of assigned eligible training providers and eligible training programs in the area. The LWIB, at minimum, should:
    - Ensure eligible training providers have maintained all criteria for which they were determined eligible;
    - Reaffirm that a training program is still accredited, or the accreditation has been renewed;
    - Ensure all eligible training program basic information in ETPL Data Entry and Maintenance Portal has been updated to reflect current information; and
    - Conduct routine visits at each location for which eligible training programs are conducted to ensure all assurances outlined in the Initial Eligibility of Training Providers, paragraph 2.b. section of this policy, continue to be met.
- This includes the provision that the LWIB-designated Equal Opportunity Officer among their other duties must monitor and investigate any entities receiving local WIOA funding for compliance with the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity obligations under WIOA Title I and 29 CFR Part 38.
- In determining the frequency of visits, the LWIB should prioritize as follows those locations:
    - With training programs approved for initial eligibility;
    - For eligible training programs exhibiting poor performance;
    - That has had the longest period since the last visit; and
    - That warrant a visit based on local criteria.
- Providers that coordinate and conduct e-learning training programs must have visits conducted at their locations consistent with ensuring compliance with this section.

- Routine monitoring visits to eligible training providers located outside of the local area (including in another LWIA or out-of-state) may be a coordinated effort so long as the monitoring is consistent with this section; and
- Ensure that all eligible training programs have met the required performance measures as outlined in the Performance Measures for Eligible Training Providers section of this policy.
- The LWIB is required to cooperate with the OET during any monitoring and oversight activities.

Monitoring - State Responsibilities

- Oversee the LWIB monitoring activity of Eligible Training Providers and Programs
- If the program occurs in another local area, arrangements must be made to ensure either the local board recommending the eligibility of the program or the local area in which the program is provided (or both) will conduct monitoring.
- If the program occurs in another state or is a distance learning opportunity, monitoring arrangements will be conducted by the OET State ETPL Coordinator. The OET State ETPL Coordinator will work to ensure adequate monitoring is provided by the out-of-state programs.

Violations

- WIOA funds will be suspended, and the provider and its programs will be removed from the ETPL for a minimum of two years if monitoring by the LWIB or OET identifies a provider has violated Section 122 of WIOA by doing one of the following:
- Intentionally Supplying Inaccurate Information
- Substantial Violations of any requirement
- A provider of training services whose eligibility is terminated as a result of violation may be liable for the repayment of ITA funds received.

4. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR FOR THE ADULT PRIORITY OF SERVICE REQUIREMENT IN WIOA SECTION 134 (C)(3)(E) THAT REQUIRES AMERICAN JOB CENTER STAFF, WHEN USING WIOA ADULT PROGRAM FUNDS TO PROVIDE INDIVIDUALIZED CAREER SERVICES AND TRAINING SERVICES, TO GIVE PRIORITY OF SERVICE TO RECIPIENTS OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE, LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS, AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT (INCLUDING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS).

All Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) inquirants are asked to identify if they are on public assistance, are low-income, or are basic skills deficient. Inquirants are asked to provide documentation of earning diplomas, degrees and certificates and those without post-secondary credentials and degrees are tested for math and reading skills at intake to determine eligibility for the Adult program. Individuals that become participants in the Adult and Dislocated Worker streams have information on their income, basic skills and enrollment in other social service programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recorded and tracked in the Illinois Workforce Development System (IWDS). IWDS is a web-

based client tracking and reporting system that serves as the central repository of data on all WIOA participants. Tracking of participants with these indicators is done routinely at the local and state level to ensure that priority of service requirements are met.

On October 29, 2015, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (Commerce) issued WIOA ePolicy Chapter 4.2 and other related policy letters that outline Commerce's WIOA Title IB general and funding stream eligibility and documentation requirements. Allowable supporting documentation is listed in the attachment to the policy letter and there are many items that can be used to support eligibility and identification for priority of service. We require the use of TABE and other tests to verify basic skills deficiency. Identifying public assistance registrants is supported by data from the Illinois Department of Human Services systems. Veteran status is documented using the DD214 form.

Additionally, Commerce implemented a policy establishing a Basic Skills Screening Tool for Priority of Service to help identify if an individual is basic skills deficient for the purposes of priority of service.

In Illinois, the state is aligning WIOA Title I policy with the Title II Illinois Adult Education Assessment policy when determining the basic skills levels of customers for enrollment. The adoption of this policy increases the likelihood that customers stay engaged with the WIOA one-stop system. Furthermore, increased collaboration among WIOA partner programs regarding assessment selection decreases the likelihood of customers having to complete multiple assessments to achieve the same purpose and ultimately creates greater efficiency in the overall workforce system. The result is optimal performance outcomes for the entire system. This partnership will extend to ensuring seamless coordination for English Language Learners through an online learning platform.

Commerce continues to update its online monitoring instrument to reflect both state policy, WIOA Final Rules and subsequent guidance. The updated monitoring instrument will provide for a review of general eligibility as well as priority of service based on the new requirements. In addition, the state's monitoring instrument will verify all local areas have established written policies and procedures to ensure priority for public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals, individuals who are basic skills deficient and veterans. Until updates to Commerce's online monitoring instrument are completed, Commerce continues to use WIOA-specific participant file review worksheets to monitor eligibility for participants served in the WIOA Adult program. Commerce conducts on-site programmatic and fiscal monitoring of all local areas at least once annually.

5. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S CRITERIA REGARDING LOCAL AREA TRANSFER OF FUNDS BETWEEN THE ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAMS

The Annual Funding Notice for the Title 1B funds provides that the local workforce areas can transfer up to one hundred percent (100%) of funds between the adult and dislocated worker funding streams. The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity works with the local workforce areas to make sure that funding is aligned with the local workforce board priorities as outlined in the local / regional plans. It is the Department's expectation that LWIBs will budget the funds to avoid waiting lists for Adult and Dislocated Worker services to the extent that it is possible.

6. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S POLICY ON WIOA AND TAA CO-ENROLLMENT AND WHETHER AND HOW OFTEN THIS POLICY IS DISSEMINATED TO THE LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARDS AND REQUIRED ONE-STOP PARTNERS. TRADE ACT SEC. 239(F), SEC. 235, 20 CFR 618.325, 20 CFR 618.824(A)(3)(I).

Per State of Illinois policy, Trade participants must be co-enrolled in the WIOA Dislocated Worker Program and any other appropriate partner programs. Most participants meet the eligibility criteria of a dislocated worker defined at WIOA sec. 3(15). However, some participants are ineligible for the WIOA dislocated worker program, including those that do not meet the Selective Service registration requirement, and will be exempt from the co-enrollment requirement. Co-enrollment allows for coordination of funds for training and services and can occur at any point. Documentation supporting eligibility for WIOA must be obtained and verified at time of enrollment. Participants may choose to decline co-enrollment in WIOA. The participant cannot be denied benefits or services under the Trade program based on ineligibility for or declining co-enrollment in WIOA. The Trade policy is available on the Illinois workNet website.

7. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S FORMAL STRATEGY TO ENSURE THAT WIOA AND TAA CO-ENROLLED PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE NECESSARY FUNDED BENEFITS AND SERVICES. TRADE ACT SEC. 239(F), SEC. 235, 20 CFR 618.816(C)

Per State of Illinois policy, employment and case management services and necessary referrals are offered to every Trade certified participant. Participants are provided the services and referrals they need based on testing and assessment provided at intake and are evaluated throughout the participant's journey. Additional benefits and services are provided as necessary. The delivery of these services is recorded on the Individual Employment Plan and in our electronic case management system. State merit staff review the provision of these services when approving benefits and services

8. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PROCESS FOR FAMILIARIZING ONE-STOP STAFF WITH THE TAA PROGRAM. 20 CFR 618.804(J), 20 CFR 618.305

In Illinois, the Trade program is integrated into the WIOA system. Trade career planners are located in the local areas and in most cases serve as both WIOA and Trade program staff. Trade program training is provided as necessary and as requested. The training is open to all one-stop staff and state Trade Program subject matter experts are available to provide hands-on technical assistance as needed

C. YOUTH PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.

With respect to youth workforce investment activities authorized in section 129 of WIOA, States should describe their strategies that will support the implementation of youth activities under WIOA. State's must-

1. IDENTIFY THE STATE-DEVELOPED CRITERIA TO BE USED BY LOCAL BOARDS IN AWARDING GRANTS OR CONTRACTS FOR YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES AND DESCRIBE HOW THE LOCAL BOARDS WILL TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE ABILITY OF THE PROVIDERS TO MEET PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES BASED ON PRIMARY INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE FOR THE YOUTH PROGRAM AS DESCRIBED IN SECTION 116(B)(2)(A)(II) OF WIOA.[11] FURTHER, INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE STATE

ASSISTS LOCAL AREAS IN DETERMINING WHETHER TO CONTRACT FOR SERVICES OR TO PROVIDE SOME OR ALL OF THE PROGRAM ELEMENTS DIRECTLY.

[11] Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(i)(V)

Currently, Commerce embeds policy related to youth within the relevant chapters in the ePolicy manual. However, over the next four years, Commerce plans to put into place policy specific youth that will not only be inclusive of WIOA statute and regulations, but also lessons learned through the Governor's Statewide Activities funding that supports youth grants. As part of this policy development, Illinois will put into place a robust technical assistance plan for local areas and youth providers.

Illinois provides guidance to the Local Workforce Innovation Boards in Chapter 3 - Vision, Goals, and Implementation Strategies of the Local/Regional Planning Guidance. Specifically, this Chapter requires the LWIB to describe how they will coordinate, the regional workforce, education and economic development activities with regional activities that are carried out in the local areas. Their responses must illustrate that business, education and workforce development stakeholders have provided input and are involved with the development of the strategies and to ensure alignment with other plans. These goals and coordinated activities must include youth and show how the LWIB intends to meet performance indicators related to goals. In Chapter 4 Operating Systems and Policies – Local Component, the LWIB must describe how the local area will provide youth activities including assessment, provision of the 14 program elements, activities, and meeting expenditure rates.

The State Workforce Board's Career Pathways for Targeted Populations Committee (CPTP) overall charge expands beyond youth; however, this population remains a primary focus. While the CPTP focuses on creating opportunities to provide funding and technical assistance for local systems in developing Career Pathways, the State of Illinois through the Workforce Readiness through Apprenticeship and Pathways brings together education, workforce, and human services to develop a common framework for career pathways. This framework provides a foundational policy to guide local boards as they develop career pathways within their local areas.

The funding opportunities of the Youth Career Pathways Initiative continues refinement and is another avenue to providing guidance to the local system for creating a robust model for serving youth and creating sustainable career pathways. Technical Assistance offered through these opportunities include engaging business, best practices for dropout prevention, family focused coaching, supportive services, and general case management.

The State acknowledges the requirement to create state-developed criteria for use by local areas in awarding contracts for youth workforce activities. These criteria are embedded in State Policy in the Youth Services and Competitive Procurement of Youth Providers section of the policy manual. This policy outlines the State's vision of program design and the requirements for procurement of the fourteen elements. The policy also addresses how local boards determine to provide services directly or use a service provider. The policy was developed through our established procedure involving consultation with partners, Local Workforce Areas and the IWIB.

2. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE ASSISTS LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARDS IN ACHIEVING RESULTS FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL AND IN-SCHOOL YOUTH. DESCRIBE PROMISING PRACTICES OR

PARTNERSHIP MODELS THAT LOCAL AREAS ARE IMPLEMENTING AND THE STATE'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING AND SCALING THOSE MODELS WITHIN THE STATE FOR BOTH IN-SCHOOL AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH.

Illinois aims to build a strong culture of fairness in the Illinois workforce system. In the youth career pathways program, this is no different. One area of emphasis for local workforce boards is tracking disaggregated outcomes and identifying disparities for in-school and out-of-school youth.

Illinois' Unified State Plan seeks to frame recommendations for creating sustainable career pathways for youth throughout the state, with a focus on the needs of young people who are not in school and not working, a group we refer to as "Opportunity Youth."

Through the IWIB Youth Committee, Illinois has leveraged the input of the business community, the Illinois P-20 Council, state boards, agencies and other partners to create a set of criteria for career pathway programs that meet the needs of Illinois youth that have barriers to employment.

Illinois core WIOA partners blend together various funding streams to support business-led sector initiatives based on career pathways that fully mainstream this youth population, while pointing the way to a sustainable integration of services across agencies and partnerships.

The State issues Notices of Funding Opportunities (based on the availability of funding) designed to support career pathway projects focused on a platform of work-based learning, the development of foundational skills, continuous improvement through education and training, and sustainability - all with the support of public-sector and business partners. Ten success elements for workforce pilot programs serving opportunity youth were identified by the task force and are included as the pillars of the program, as well as key activities identified towards the accomplishment of Illinois' goals for youth activities. These elements demonstrate the principles, strategies, and criteria in the WIOA Unified State Plan and how various funding sources may be blended for full regional ownership and sustainability.

The State of Illinois was granted a waiver to allow the use of Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for in-school youth. The waiver is designed to increase program flexibility, enhance informed customer choice, allow all youth to benefit from the services provided by Illinois' certified training providers, and expand training options without requiring Illinois workNet (One-Stop) operators to register in-school youth participants 18 years old or older in the adult program. Additional details are provided in the section on waivers, including recent outcomes.

Using ITAs also allows youth service providers an opportunity to promote and encourage training as another option to enter into an increasingly tough labor market. This waiver allows youth to select approved training programs from Illinois' list of demand occupation training programs.

Illinois' workforce development system should work for users on every level. This means that staff must be responsive to a full range of user needs, supporting the development of life skills in addition to job skills and providing trauma-informed and culturally competent service delivery. Staff who can show empathy and understanding may be just as important as the career services they can provide.

The state also monitors progress when local workforce areas participate in projects with potential to be replicated elsewhere as a best practice. For example, Lake County Workforce Development (LWIA 1) was chosen to participate in the 2023 US DOL Employment and Training Administration Youth Systems Building Academy, selected from over 50 nationwide nominations. The initiative, involving the Lake County Workforce Development Board, College of Lake County, Lake County Regional Office of Education, and International Union of Operating Engineers Local 150, will enhance employment outcomes for youth and young adults.

Leveraging grant awards through the WIOA formula and Illinois General Revenue Funds, Lake County will implement a Youth Action Plan. Efforts will focus on transforming Lake County's youth workforce development system to create a more integrated, efficient, and accessible approach. The goal is to establish a unified voice and seamless access for marginalized young adults, with a community of practice centered around the Youth Development Practitioner Apprenticeship Program, sponsored by Work & Learning and the nonprofit organization FHI360. The measurable objective is to increase work-based learning opportunities and employment for young adults across key industries and a more integrated, efficient, and accessible system that can better serve and support the varying needs of young adults.

LWIA 22, in the metro-east region near St. Louis, MO, applied lessons learned from prior iterations to develop an apprenticeship model training program for youth with disabilities. Overcoming initial challenges, this program now successfully matches disability youth with workplace mentors to provide on-the-job skill training. The program was highlighted by St. Louis regional media outlets which led to new interest from prospective employers. This program is likely to become a statewide best practice model and could be supported by local and state WIOA funding.

3. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE ASSISTS LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARDS IN IMPLEMENTING INNOVATIVE MODELS FOR DELIVERING YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING EFFECTIVE WAYS LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARDS CAN MAKE AVAILABLE THE 14 PROGRAM ELEMENTS DESCRIBED IN WIOA SECTION 129(C)(2); AND EXPLAIN HOW LOCAL AREAS CAN ENSURE WORK EXPERIENCE, INCLUDING QUALITY PRE-APPRENTICESHIP AND REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP, IS PRIORITIZED AS A KEY ELEMENT WITHIN A BROADER CAREER PATHWAYS STRATEGY.

Illinois will continue to scale innovative models for delivering youth workforce investment activities. One approach will focus on strengthening partnerships between local workforce boards and local education agencies. A model of this begins with backward mapping pathways for at-risk youth, followed by determining the delivery model for high-priority occupations. Pre-apprenticeships and registered apprenticeships are sequenced into the pathway with stackable and accessible industry credentials. The 14 elements are embedded into the pathway, and dual credit opportunities are offered throughout the youth career pathway process. The Career Pathways Dictionary will assist local workforce boards as they are establishing youth work experiences. The purpose of the dictionary is to establish a common language for business sector and education sector stakeholders. The Careers Pathway Dictionary will transform outcomes for youth throughout Illinois.

Illinois will maintain programmatic fidelity to WIOA youth policy through a system of robust monitoring, examination of best practices statewide and nationally, and continuous information sharing and technical assistance.

As mentioned in c. 1 Commerce issues policy guidance through its series of policy letters and notices that are posted on the Illinois workNet portal (https://apps.il-work-net.com/WIOAPolicy/Policy/Home). There is no standalone youth policy, but rather the policy is woven throughout. In ePolicy Chapter 4 Operating Systems and Policies – Local Component, the LWIB is directed to describe how the local area will provide youth activities including assessment, provision of the 14 program elements, activities, and meeting expenditure rates. Commerce put in place policy specific to youth that includes robust technical assistance strategies to ensure the sound implementation of the 14 elements including pre-apprenticeship.

Additionally, mentioned in other parts of the Unified State Plan, Commerce is in the process of updating its online monitoring instrument to reflect both revised state policy and the WIOA Final Rule. The updated monitoring instrument will provide for a review of general eligibility as well as priority of service based on the new requirements. The state's monitoring instrument will verify all local areas have established and follow written policies and procedures to address providing services to youth. Monitoring will also compliment and inform ongoing program evaluation efforts that review trends in the use of services and customer outcomes for the purposes of continuous improvement.

4. PROVIDE THE LANGUAGE CONTAINED IN THE STATE POLICY FOR "REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO ENTER OR COMPLETE AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT" CRITERION FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(B)(III)(VIII) AND FOR "REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO COMPLETE AN EDUCATION PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT" CRITERION FOR IN-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(C)(IV)(VII). IF THE STATE DOES NOT HAVE A POLICY, DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THAT LOCAL AREAS WILL HAVE A POLICY FOR THESE CRITERIA.

Illinois does not have a statewide policy and instructs Local Workforce Innovation Boards they must establish local policy on the definition and use of the "requiring additional assistance to enter or complete and educational program, or to secure and hold employment" criterion for out-of-school youth specified in WIOA section 129(a)(1)(B)(iii)(VIII) and for "requiring additional assistance to complete an education program, or to secure and hold employment" criterion for in-school youth. LWIBs are required to submit their local policies as part of the regional and local planning process.

D. SINGLE-AREA STATE REQUIREMENTS

In States where there is only one local workforce investment area, the governor serves as both the State and local chief elected official. In such cases, the State must submit any information required in the local plan (WIOA section 106(d)(2)). States with a single workforce area must include—

1. ANY COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD THAT REPRESENT DISAGREEMENT WITH THE PLAN. (WIOA SECTION 108(D)(3).)

2. THE ENTITY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISBURSAL OF GRANT FUNDS, AS DETERMINED BY THE GOVERNOR, IF DIFFERENT FROM THAT FOR THE STATE. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(15).)

3. A DESCRIPTION OF THE TYPE AND AVAILABILITY OF WIOA TITLE I YOUTH ACTIVITIES AND SUCCESSFUL MODELS, INCLUDING FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(9).)

This section does not apply to Illinois.

4. A DESCRIPTION OF THE ROLES AND RESOURCE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE ONE-STOP PARTNERS.

This section does not apply to Illinois.

5. THE COMPETITIVE PROCESS USED TO AWARD THE SUBGRANTS AND CONTRACTS FOR TITLE I ACTIVITIES.

This section does not apply to Illinois.

6. HOW TRAINING SERVICES OUTLINED IN SECTION 134 WILL BE PROVIDED THROUGH INDIVIDUAL TRAINING ACCOUNTS AND/OR THROUGH CONTRACTS, AND HOW SUCH TRAINING APPROACHES WILL BE COORDINATED. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL MEET INFORMED CUSTOMER CHOICE REQUIREMENTS REGARDLESS OF TRAINING APPROACH.

This section does not apply to Illinois.

7. HOW THE STATE BOARD, IN FULFILLING LOCAL BOARD FUNCTIONS, WILL COORDINATE TITLE I ACTIVITIES WITH THOSE ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE II. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE BOARD WILL CARRY OUT THE REVIEW OF LOCAL APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED UNDER TITLE II CONSISTENT WITH WIOA SECS. 107(D)(11)(A) AND (B)(I) AND WIOA SEC. 232.

This section does not apply to Illinois.

8. COPIES OF EXECUTED COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WHICH DEFINE HOW ALL LOCAL SERVICE PROVIDERS WILL CARRY OUT THE REQUIREMENTS FOR INTEGRATION OF AND ACCESS TO THE ENTIRE SET OF SERVICES AVAILABLE IN THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM, INCLUDING COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH ENTITIES ADMINISTERING REHABILITATION ACT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.

This section does not apply to Illinois.

E. WAIVER REQUESTS (OPTIONAL)

States wanting to request waivers as part of their title I-B Operational Plan must include a waiver plan that includes the following information for each waiver requested:

1. IDENTIFIES THE STATUTORY OR REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS FOR WHICH A WAIVER IS REQUESTED AND THE GOALS THAT THE STATE OR LOCAL AREA, AS APPROPRIATE, INTENDS TO ACHIEVE AS A RESULT OF THE WAIVER AND HOW THOSE GOALS RELATE TO THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

2. DESCRIBES THE ACTIONS THAT THE STATE OR LOCAL AREA, AS APPROPRIATE, HAS UNDERTAKEN TO REMOVE STATE OR LOCAL STATUTORY OR REGULATORY BARRIERS;

3. DESCRIBES THE GOALS OF THE WAIVER AND THE EXPECTED PROGRAMMATIC OUTCOMES IF THE REQUEST IS GRANTED;

4. DESCRIBES HOW THE WAIVER WILL ALIGN WITH THE DEPARTMENT'S POLICY PRIORITIES, SUCH AS:

A. SUPPORTING EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT;

B. CONNECTING EDUCATION AND TRAINING STRATEGIES;

C. SUPPORTING WORK-BASED LEARNING;

D. IMPROVING JOB AND CAREER RESULTS, AND

E. OTHER GUIDANCE ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT.

5. DESCRIBES THE INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER; AND

6. DESCRIBES THE PROCESSES USED TO:

A. MONITOR THE PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE WAIVER;

B. PROVIDE NOTICE TO ANY LOCAL BOARD AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER;

C. PROVIDE ANY LOCAL BOARD AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER AN OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON THE REQUEST;

D. ENSURE MEANINGFUL PUBLIC COMMENT, INCLUDING COMMENT BY BUSINESS AND ORGANIZED LABOR, ON THE WAIVER.

E. COLLECT AND REPORT INFORMATION ABOUT WAIVER OUTCOMES IN THE STATE'S WIOA ANNUAL REPORT.

7. THE MOST RECENT DATA AVAILABLE REGARDING THE RESULTS AND OUTCOMES OBSERVED THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EXISTING WAIVER, IN CASES WHERE THE STATE SEEKS RENEWAL OF A PREVIOUSLY APPROVED WAIVER.

WAIVER REQUEST 1 - REDUCE OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH EXPENDITURE RATE FROM 75% TO 50%

The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the state would like to waive

The state must clearly cite the statute and/or regulation(s) in its request and ensure that the citations refer to the specific elements the state wishes to waive.

The State of Illinois is seeking a waiver from the following Section(s):

Section 129(a)(4)(A) and 20 CFR 681.410, which require not less than 75 percent of funds allotted to states under Section 127(b)(1)(C), reserved under Section 128(a), and available for statewide activities under subsection (b), and not less than 75 percent of funds available to local areas under subsection (c), shall be used to provide youth workforce investment activities for OSY. Specifically, Illinois is requesting to waive the following requirements:

- A waiver of the requirement to expend 75 percent of funding on the OSY population. Illinois is requesting that this percentage be lowered to 50 percent.

- A waiver of the requirement that local funding must meet the 75 percent minimum expenditure requirement. It is requested to allow a state-level Out-of-School Youth target (See #1 above) instead of requiring individual areas to each meet the minimum expenditure requirement.

- A waiver of the requirement to expend 75 percent of Statewide Activities funding on the OSY population. It is requested to eliminate this percentage to allow flexibility of funding for special projects that meet the vision and mission of the State.

Illinois' current efforts for aligning education, workforce and economic development is laying a solid foundation for promoting leading career pathway models and best practices. Career pathway development in Illinois is being expanded to encompass every level of the education system as well as across the needs of our diverse populations, including those that face multiple barriers to achieving self-sufficiency.

Of importance to the Governor's vision, the IWIB Strategic Plan and the Unified State Plan is the expansion of career pathway systems into the secondary system for opportunity youth. This waiver will allow Illinois to support these visions and provide targeted strategies to youth ages 15-24 living in Illinois, particularly focusing on those who are in poverty and unemployed.

Actions the state has undertaken to remove state or local statutory or regulatory barriers

The state must provide a discussion of the steps it has taken to remove any potential obstacles in the waiver request as appropriate. Quite often, state or local policies do not present a conflict for the request, and a simple statement indicating that there are no state or local barriers is sufficient.

There are currently no state or local statutory or regulatory barriers to implementing the requested waiver. State of Illinois regulations and policy align with current federal law and regulations.

State strategic goal(s)

The state must precisely articulate the goals it seeks to achieve by requesting a waiver. The state must also discuss how these goals relate to its Unified or Combined State Plan.

In the State of Illinois, the Illinois State Career Pathways Dictionary - A Unified State Framework for College and Career Readiness and Success was developed with input from the public and private sector, including education, workforce development, and economic development entities, as well as an extensive base of stakeholders. This college and career pathways approach envisions that Illinois residents, including out-of-school youth, will be enabled to progressively build toward college and career success through aligned education, training, and employment opportunities over their lifetime. This includes partnerships with employers to support participant educational and career advancement through on-the-job training, customized training, corporate training, incumbent worker training, and other work-based training strategies.

In support of the expansion of career pathway systems across the education system, Illinois will use this waiver to provide youth with barriers the necessary support to successfully equip them with the academic and technical skills necessary to improve their employability. Furthermore,

Illinois anticipates that this waiver will provide greater opportunity for blending funds at the federal, state, and local levels across the partners to increase innovative strategies for improving career pathway opportunities for youth.

The State of Illinois issues various funding opportunities using Statewide Funds throughout the program year. One such funding opportunity is the Youth Career Pathways grants, which are typically out for proposal once during each program year. This Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) soliciting proposals from eligible organizations (Eligible Applicants) capable of developing a framework that strengthens career pathway systems that will improve youth college and career readiness, create employment opportunities, address service gaps in underserved communities and expand partnerships between the workforce system, education, and business. Proposals must integrate workforce services, education, and economic development to address the challenges youth face in obtaining marketable and in-demand skills. All projects must include essential employability skills and digital literacy assessment programming. Additionally, applicants must demonstrate how they will implement the program components below as well as address the applicable program requirements.

Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from the implementation of the waiver

The state must provide an estimate of how the waiver will improve outcomes or provide other tangible benefits for jobseekers or employers. States have the discretion to determine how to measure a waiver's success and the specific data sources it intends to use to evaluate its impact.

- The US Department of Labor has encouraged the States to request this waiver in Training and Employment Guidance Letter 5-25 titled Maximizing Innovation in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Programs. This waiver will allow Illinois to support innovative solutions for building a skilled workforce in alignment with the US Department of Labor's strategic pillars for workforce investment.

- As a result of this waiver, Illinois will provide 4-7 local workforce innovation areas with additional flexibility to serve in-school youth participants based on the specific needs of the local workforce area. The State of Illinois recognizes that the total number of in-school youth may generally stay the same or even decrease over the next two years at the state level; however, this waiver will provide flexibility that is needed in a state that has significant differences in the strategies that are needed to build talent pipelines and support career pathways in urban, suburban, and rural areas.

- It is anticipated that the performance accountability outcomes for overall WIOA Youth (including both in- and out-of-school youth) will remain steady or increase for the majority of the WIOA Youth performance indicators. Based on an analysis of the current performance data, it is projected that this waiver will support Illinois in achieving the negotiated performance goals. Illinois will continue to analyze the WIOA youth service strategies and performance projections for both in-school and out-of-school youth to ensure that the local application of this waiver authority is consistent with the state's strategic goal for this waiver.

Alignment with the Department of Labor's policy priorities

Describe how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as:

- *Supporting employer engagement;*
- *Connecting education and training strategies;*
- *Supporting work-based learning;*
- *Improving job and career results; and*
- *Other priorities as articulated in guidance*.

This waiver aligns with not only the Department of Labor's priorities but also with those of the State of Illinois. Within the Illinois Unified Plan are examples of initiatives demonstrating the importance of ensuring career and work readiness at all levels and how Illinois is moving toward strategies that integrally tie education to workforce development. Expanding the career pathway opportunities across the education and workforce system by allowing additional funds toward in-school youth supports our common goal to expand career pathway opportunities through more accelerated work-based training while aligning and integrating programs of study that lead to industry-recognized credentials and improved employment and earnings. This alignment will truly address the P-20 pipeline by providing the necessary career readiness and occupational skills necessary to succeed in the job market.

As Illinois continues the engagement of educational institutions to create a job-driven education and training system, the state will be making significant and strategic system improvements that address workforce development needs through flexible, responsive, and progressive programs informed by labor market information. Not only will this continue to occur through the 48 comprehensive community colleges and multi-college centers, but the state will also be expanding the reach to integrate meaningful career readiness programs and work-based learning models that focus on high-demand occupations for students and workers at all levels.

The State of Illinois is aligned with the Department of Labor's commitment to providing high-quality services for youth, beginning with career exploration and guidance, continued support for educational attainment, opportunities for skills training, such as pre-apprenticeships or internships, for in-demand industries and occupations, and culminating with employment, enrollment in postsecondary education, or a Registered Apprenticeship.

Local areas are taking steps to address challenges locating, retaining, and serving out-of-school youth in their WIOA-funded programs, including increasing their recruiting efforts and strengthening partnerships with other WIOA programs such as the adult education program, state and local government agencies, and community-based organizations. Additionally, partners are working together to build career pathways that are a combination of rigorous and high-quality education, training, and support services that align with local skill needs and prepare youth and young adults to be successful in secondary or postsecondary education programs and the labor market.

Individuals, groups, or populations affected by the waiver

States must describe the potential impact of a waiver on various system stakeholders, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations, persons with barriers to employment, or businesses.

Both the education and workforce systems will be able to provide the benefits of this waiver to our youth with barriers. This includes the at-risk youth population, educational entities, American Job Centers (AJC) subcontracted service provider staff, employers, parents, and school counselors.

State plans for monitoring waiver implementation, including collection of waiver outcome information

States must describe how they intend to oversee effective waiver implementation and any unique protocols that may be used in their waiver requests.

The State will use the following approach for monitoring progress in implementation:

- State staff involved with the administration of youth programming will provide ongoing technical assistance and oversight as it relates to the appropriateness and effectiveness of this waiver. This information will be submitted regularly to the IWIB Continuous Improvement Committee.
- Annual WIOA on-site programmatic reviews will include an evaluation of the impact the waivers have on programmatic goals and outcomes.
- Additionally, the IWIB Continuous Improvement Committee will have the responsibility of ensuring the specific goals and outcomes achieved by the waiver are realized. Furthermore, the information gathered from the waiver will inform new or changes to policy as well as provide best practices. The outcomes of the waiver will be reported in the WIOA Annual Report.

This strategy ensures that the goals described above, as well as those outlined in the State's Unified Plan and the IWIB Strategic Plan, are consistent with established objectives of the WIOA and federal and state regulations.

Assurance of state posting of the request for public comment and notification to affected local workforce development boards

WIOA does not prescribe a specific amount of time for states to post a potential waiver for comment, but it does require the state to demonstrate a reasonable opportunity for public review and comment by all stakeholders, including businesses and organized labor. Submit any comments or concerns collected in this manner and the outcome of the state's review of the public comments received. The state must also provide affected local boards with notice and opportunity to comment on the proposed waiver.

In accordance with the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.135, Illinois is submitting its Unified State Plan, which is subject to the requirements outlined in the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.130(d) for public review and comment. As such, Illinois's waiver request was posted on our website for comment and review by required parties and the public.

Local Boards via Board members and Board staff, WIOA partners, and other interested stakeholders participate in policy development. Additionally, LWIBs receive the opportunity to participate in the public comment period that includes informational webinars.

Waiver outcomes for existing waivers.

The Secretary may require that States provide the most recent data available about the outcomes of the existing waiver in cases where the state seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver.

Illinois has seen the following as a result of this waiver:

- The number of in-school youth (ISY) served initially increased over the PY19 level.
- PY 20 – The state served 1,123
- PY 21 – The state served 1,284
- PY 22 – The state served 1,228
- PY 23 – The state served 1,139
- PY 24 – The state served 1,017
- Performance accountability outcomes for overall WIOA Youth (including both ISY and OSY) slightly increased in PY 2021, which is the latest year performance outcomes are available. The majority of the WIOA Youth performance indicators remained steady or increased for PY 2024.

Program Year	Employment/Education Rate 2nd Quarter	Employment/Education Rate 4th Quarter	Median Earnings	Credential Rate	Measurable Skill Gains
PY 2019	73.43%	73.07%	$3,715.41	70.59%	44.25%
PY 2020	71.79%	67.78%	$4,234.28	69.88%	52.18%
PY 2021	73.67%	69.32%	$4,668.31	70.72%	54.71%
PY 2022	74.83%	74.40%	$5,371.45	70.32%	71.29%
PY 2023	77.56%	74.30%	$5,798.68	69.79%	71.23%
PY 2024	75.41%	73.94%	$6,006.14	70.94%	73.19%

WAIVER REQUEST 2 – PROVIDING ITAS TO WIOA IN-SCHOOL YOUTH

The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the state would like to waive

The state must clearly cite the statute and/or regulation(s) in its request and ensure that the citations refer to the specific elements the state wishes to waive.

The State of Illinois is seeking a waiver from the following Section(s):

Illinois requests a waiver on the requirement of providing Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) to only out-of-school youth (OSY) ages 16-24 enrolled in the WIOA Youth program.

20 CFR 681.550 states, "In order to enhance individual participant choice in their education and training plans and provide flexibility to service providers, the Department allows WIOA Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for OSY, ages 16 to 24 using WIOA youth funds when appropriate."

Background

The request is made to permit LWIBs to use the state's list of eligible training providers to secure training for all youth, including the in-school youth who are preparing to graduate and extend their educational goals into post-secondary opportunities. The waiver is designed to increase program flexibility, enhance informed customer choice, allow all youth to benefit from services provided by Illinois' certified training providers, and expand training options without requiring Illinois workNet (One-Stop) operators to register in-school youth participants 18 years old or older in the adult program. Funds used for ITAs would be tracked separately for each funding stream.

Using ITAs also allows youth service providers an opportunity to promote and encourage training as another option to entry into an increasingly tough labor market. Approval of this waiver would allow youth to select approved training programs from Illinois' list of demand occupation training programs.

Actions the state has undertaken to remove state or local statutory or regulatory barriers

The state must provide a discussion of the steps it has taken to remove any potential obstacles in the waiver request as appropriate. Quite often, state or local policies do not present a conflict for the request, and a simple statement indicating that there are no state or local barriers is sufficient.

There are currently no state or local statutory or regulatory barriers to implementing the requested waiver. State of Illinois regulations and policy align with current federal law and regulations.

State strategic goal(s)

The state must precisely articulate the goals it seeks to achieve by requesting a waiver. The state must also discuss how these goals relate to its Unified or Combined State Plan.

Providing occupational training to youth via an ITA will maximize the service delivery capacity of the WIOA Youth Program by allowing those youth who are focused on employment to have the same access as adults and dislocated workers to the advantages of ITAs. In addition, this waiver will maximize flexibility based on youth customers' assessed needs in terms of training that leads to employment in high-growth industries and occupations.

Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from the implementation of the waiver

The state must provide an estimate of how the waiver will improve outcomes or provide other tangible benefits for jobseekers or employers. States have the discretion to determine how to measure a waiver's success and the specific data sources it intends to use to evaluate its impact.

- The US Department of Labor has encouraged the States to request this waiver in Training and Employment Guidance Letter 5-25 titled Maximizing Innovation in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Programs. This waiver will allow Illinois to support innovative solutions for building a skilled workforce in alignment with the US Department of Labor's strategic pillars for workforce investment.

- As a result of this waiver, it is anticipated that 12-15 local workforce innovation areas in Illinois will use the additional flexibility to offer Individual Training Accounts for all applicable youth based on the specific needs of the LWIA. It is anticipated that 100-150 In-School Youth will be provided with the training services funded under an Individual Training Accounts annually. This waiver will support Illinois' efforts to prepare for the implementation of Workforce Pell Grants connecting jobseekers and students with high-quality short-term training as outlined in Training and Employment Guidance Letter 7-25.
- It is anticipated that the performance accountability outcomes for overall WIOA Youth (including both in- and out-of-school youth) will remain steady or increase for the majority of the WIOA Youth performance indicators. Based on an analysis of the current performance data, it is projected that this waiver will support Illinois in achieving the negotiated performance goals. Illinois will continue to analyze the WIOA youth service strategies and performance projections for both in-school and out-of-school youth to ensure that the local application of this waiver authority is consistent with the state strategic goal for this waiver.

Alignment with the Department of Labor's policy priorities

Describe how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as:

- *Supporting employer engagement;*
- *Connecting education and training strategies;*
- *Supporting work-based learning;*
- *Improving job and career results; and*
- *Other priorities as articulated in guidance*.

This waiver aligns with not only the Department of Labor's priorities but also with those of the State of Illinois. Within the Illinois Unified Plan are examples of initiatives demonstrating the importance of ensuring career and work readiness at all levels and how Illinois is moving toward strategies that integrally tie education to workforce development. By allowing both in-school and out-of-school youth to use ITAs to access training services, in-school youth will be able to use the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) of approved programs, which include registered apprenticeships. Expanding the training program opportunities for in-school youth will allow them to better connect to training programs that match their interest, support their learning style, and better prepare them for employment and work-based learning. Youth who complete occupational skills or adult education programs may be better prepared to obtain employment. Serving in-school and out-of-school youth with the same policy and procedures allows for a continuity of services for all youth.

Individuals, groups, or populations affected by the waiver

States must describe the potential impact of a waiver on various system stakeholders, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations, persons with barriers to employment, or businesses.

The waiver will positively impact the eligible youth population, youth service and eligible training providers, and the workforce system through access to a broader variety of providers for youth pursuing post-secondary education and training opportunities and the flexibility of services offered by those providers. Current eligible training providers will be able to expand the population served by including all eligible youth.

State plans for monitoring waiver implementation, including collection of waiver outcome information

States must describe how they intend to oversee effective waiver implementation and any unique protocols that may be used in their waiver requests.

The State will use the following approach for monitoring progress in implementation:

State staff who administer youth programming will provide ongoing technical assistance and oversight regarding the appropriateness and effectiveness of this waiver. This information will be submitted regularly to the IWIB Continuous Improvement Committee.

- Annual WIOA on-site programmatic reviews will include an evaluation of the waivers' impact on programmatic goals and outcomes.
- Additionally, the IWIB Continuous Improvement Committee will ensure the specific goals and outcomes achieved by the waiver are realized. Furthermore, the information gathered from the waiver will inform new or policy changes and provide best practices.

This strategy ensures that the goals described above, as well as those outlined in the State's Unified Plan and the IWIB Strategic Plan, are consistent with established objectives of the WIOA and federal and state regulations.

Assurance of state posting of the request for public comment and notification to affected local workforce development boards

WIOA does not prescribe a specific amount of time for states to post a potential waiver for comment, but it does require the state to demonstrate a reasonable opportunity for public review and comment by all stakeholders, including businesses and organized labor. Submit any comments or concerns collected in this manner and the outcome of the state's review of the public comments received. The state must also provide affected local boards with notice and opportunity to comment on the proposed waiver.

In accordance with the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.135, Illinois is submitting its Unified State Plan, which is subject to the requirements outlined in the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.130(d) for public review and comment. As such, Illinois's waiver request was posted on our website for comment and review by required parties and the public.

Local Boards via Board members and Board staff, WIOA partners, and other interested stakeholders, participate in policy development. Additionally, LWIBs receive the opportunity to participate in the public comment period that includes informational webinars.

Waiver outcomes for existing waivers.

The Secretary may require that States provide the most recent data available about the outcomes of the existing waiver in cases where the state seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver.

Illinois has seen the following as a result of this waiver:

- Increase in the number of local workforce innovation areas that offer ITAs to in-school youth.
- Through PY 2024, 16 of the state's 22 local workforce innovation areas, spread across eight of the ten Economic Development Regions, have ISY with an ITA, indicating a broad geographic use of the waiver.
- Increase in the number of youth that utilize an ITA to receive an industry recognized and/or some other post-secondary credentials has remained steady after an initial increase in excess of 12% .
- Increase in performance accountability measures for youth as found in section 116(b)(2)(A)(ii) of WIOA (e.g., increases in credential attainment and measurable skills gains).

The outcomes achieved for ISY exiters in PY 2024 that received an ITA are:

- 33 received a measurable skills gain
- 27 successfully completed training
- 31 received an industry recognized credential
- 12 entered employment with an average wage of $18.07.

WAIVER REQUEST 3 – AMEND THE DEFINITION OF INCUMBENT WORKER BY ELIMINATING OR REDUCING THE SIX-MONTH EMPLOYMENT REQUIRMENT

The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the state would like to waive

The state must clearly cite the statute and/or regulation(s) in its request and ensure that the citations refer to the specific elements the state wishes to waive.

The State of Illinois is seeking a waiver from 20 CFR 680.780 to amend the definition of "incumbent worker" by either reducing or, preferably, eliminating the six-month employment requirement. Several local workforce areas collaborated to jointly ask the State to submit this waiver request.

Actions the state has undertaken to remove state or local statutory or regulatory barriers

The state must provide a discussion of the steps it has taken to remove any potential obstacles in the waiver request as appropriate. Quite often, state or local policies do not present a conflict for the request, and a simple statement indicating that there are no state or local barriers is sufficient.

There are currently no state or local statutory or regulatory barriers to implementing the requested waiver. State of Illinois regulations and policy align with current federal law and regulations.

State strategic goal(s)

The state must precisely articulate the goals it seeks to achieve by requesting a waiver. The state must also discuss how these goals relate to its Unified or Combined State Plan.

The overarching goal is to eliminate an arbitrary barrier to providing incumbent worker training to companies and workers struggling to stay competitive. Removing this barrier aligns directly with priorities espoused by the Department of Labor, the Governor's Executive Order #3, the Five-Year Economic Development Plan and the WIOA Unified State Plan to:

- Be more responsive to the needs of businesses;
- Support establishing long-term relationships between businesses and the workforce system;
- Promote the expansion of Registered Apprenticeships to more businesses as a means to meet their workforce needs;
- Provide upward mobility for workers into career pathways; and
- Promote increased use of work-based learning that allows workers to learn and earn at the same time.

Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from the implementation of the waiver

The state must provide an estimate of how the waiver will improve outcomes or provide other tangible benefits for jobseekers or employers. States have the discretion to determine how to measure a waiver's success and the specific data sources it intends to use to evaluate its impact.

Illinois monitors the impact of the waiver through our Incumbent Worker Tracking System. A system modification was deployed to require local areas to identify if a project includes workers who have been at the company less than six months. We are able to track the companies and their location, sector and the number of workers trained in these projects that otherwise would have been denied.

Alignment with the Department of Labor's policy priorities

Describe how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as:

- *Supporting employer engagement;*
- *Connecting education and training strategies;*
- *Supporting work-based learning;*
- *Improving job and career results; and*
- *Other priorities as articulated in guidance*.

Illinois has long been a strong advocate of incumbent worker training as a means of improving the competitive position of workers and businesses. Our Unified State Plan places a strong

emphasis on workforce system responsiveness to the needs of employers, and the six-month requirement is an arbitrary barrier to using incumbent worker training to support Registered Apprenticeships, upskilling workers and keeping companies competitive.

A survey conducted by the local workforce boards indicates that in 2019:

- dozens of employer requests for incumbent worker training were denied due to this requirement; and
- Employers expressed frustration with being able to use incumbent worker training for some employees but not others if they are newly hired. (Local areas are aware they have the flexibility to include new hires if they make up a minority of the training cohort.)

Individuals, groups, or populations affected by the waiver

States must describe the potential impact of a waiver on various system stakeholders, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations, persons with barriers to employment, or businesses.

Individuals impacted by the waiver potentially include:

- all disadvantaged populations that recently entered the workforce through support from community-based programs funded from sources other than WIOA;
- newly hired workers that wish to enter a Registered Apprenticeship;
- newly hired workers who wish to upskill their talents for improved job security.

State plans for monitoring waiver implementation, including collection of waiver outcome information

States must describe how they intend to oversee effective waiver implementation and any unique protocols that may be used in their waiver requests.

The IWIB Continuous Improvement Committee will have the responsibility of ensuring the specific goals and outcomes achieved by the waiver are realized. Furthermore, the information gathered from the waiver will inform new or changes to policy as well as provide best practices. The outcomes of the waiver will be reported in the WIOA Annual Report.

Assurance of state posting of the request for public comment and notification to affected local workforce development boards

WIOA does not prescribe a specific amount of time for states to post a potential waiver for comment, but it does require the state to demonstrate a reasonable opportunity for public review and comment by all stakeholders, including businesses and organized labor. Submit any comments or concerns collected in this manner and the outcome of the state's review of the public comments received. The state must also provide affected local boards with notice and opportunity to comment on the proposed waiver.

In accordance with the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.135, Illinois is submitting its Unified State Plan, which is subject to the requirements outlined in the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.130(d) for public review and comment. As such, Illinois's waiver request was posted on our website for comment and review by required parties and the public.

Local Boards via Board members and Board staff, WIOA partners, and other interested stakeholders participate in policy development. Additionally, LWIBs receive the opportunity to participate in the public comment period that includes informational webinars.

Waiver outcomes for existing waivers.

The Secretary may require that States provide the most recent data available about the outcomes of the existing waiver in cases where the state seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver.

Illinois has seen the following as a result of this waiver:

Overall, 100% of LWIAs were successful in utilizing this waiver to provide workers with valuable new skills through IWT. In PY24, the waiver enabled 48 companies to train 184 workers who would otherwise not have received training without the waiver. Businesses helped under the waiver were from the following sectors: Agriculture, Construction, Education, Government, Healthcare, Hospitality, Manufacturing, Utilities, and Wholesale Trade.

WAIVER REQUEST 4 – PLANNING REGION ALIGNMENT

The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the state would like to waive

The state must clearly cite the statute and/or regulation(s) in its request and ensure that the citations refer to the specific elements the state wishes to waive.

The State of Illinois is seeking a waiver from the following Section(s):

WIOA Sec. 106(a)(2) and 20 CFR § 679.210 (preamble)

"In accordance with WIOA Section 106(a)(2), a single local area may not be split across two planning regions. Local areas must be contiguous to be a planning region and effectively align economic and workforce development activities and resources."

Illinois has been proactive in coordinating regional planning with the implementation of the WIOA requirements. These efforts led to the state identifying meaningful planning regions that resulted in the 10 Economic Development Regions (EDRs). To support this process, Illinois coordinated regional planning, including guidelines, regional and statewide planning events, as well as coordinated technical assistance resources as part of the development of the initial regional plans in 2016. With the release of the final WIOA rules, planning resources were updated in 2017 and then again in early 2018 to garner consultation with local chief elected officials, local workforce board members and other interested stakeholders for the purposes of subsequent designation and alignment with planning regions.

Under WIOA Sec. 106(b)(2), 20 CFR § 679.250{a), and TEGL 27-14, the Governor must approve a request for initial local area designation from any area that was one under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) for the 2-year period preceding the date of enactment of WIOA; provided the local area had performed successfully and sustained fiscal integrity during that two-year period. All twenty-two of Illinois' Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIA) met the requirements for initial designation based on an analysis of fiscal integrity and WIOA performance. Illinois identified ten planning regions that meet the requirements of WIOA Sec. 106(a)(2) and 20 CFR § 679.210.

Five of the 22 LWIAs (4/Ogle, 11/Livingston, 19/DeWitt, 21/Calhoun, Jersey and 23/Douglas) meet the requirements for designation crossover between planning regions. Furthermore, WIOA Sec. 106(b)(2) and 20 CFR § 679.250(a) states the Governor may not reconfigure Illinois' initially-designated local areas for subsequent designation without consultation with local area chief elected officials, Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIBs), and other interested stakeholders. Given these LWIAs, as designated, have sustained fiscal integrity and met performance, the Governor is unable to reconfigure these areas without consultation.

While these LWIAs meet the requirements within statute and regulation, the Governor did undertake an extensive process to consult with the local boards and elected officials to identify a regional planning structure that would not result in any single local area split between two or more regions. This consultative process provided the opportunity for these stakeholders to voice their concerns over realignment and demonstrate why the configurations should remain.

The local feedback expressed concerns that *focusing the realignment decision on labor market information is a "one-size-fits-all" approach that does not focus on the complete composition of the counties and communities*. The State also received feedback expressing concern about the *administrative burden of realigning the counties and that this process would divert time and resources from serving job seekers and businesses in the community.*

The impacted counties and local workforce areas have demonstrated that they have been successful in planning and delivering services in the context of the current regional and local workforce area boundaries. Based on this fact and in response to feedback obtained from the consultation process, Illinois is pursuing this waiver to ensure the continuity of service in the impacted counties. This waiver removes a barrier that impedes the State's efforts to improve the workforce, education, and economic development systems in Illinois.

Actions the state has undertaken to remove state or local statutory or regulatory barriers

The state must provide a discussion of the steps it has taken to remove any potential obstacles in the waiver request as appropriate. Quite often, state or local policies do not present a conflict for the request, and a simple statement indicating that there are no state or local barriers is sufficient.

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) and WIOA Core partners established a working group to develop a plan of action to address this issue. The working group reviewed the regional planning data, identify a compliant regional planning structure, and develop a local consultation process with the Governor's Office, WIOA state agencies, state board, state legislature, chief elected officials, local board members, and other interested stakeholders.

Illinois' regional data has been updated and based on regional economic and labor market data that includes:

- commuting patterns;
- numbers of employers and jobs supported regionally;
- projections of regional job growth; and
- targeted industry growth patterns.

A state-level team on behalf of the Governor convened workshops in the impacted counties. Over 90 employers, elected officials, workforce development board members, community college representatives, one-stop partners, representatives of economic development entities, and others attended these public meetings. Each session provided local chief elected officials and other interested parties with the labor market data, that demonstrated the alignment of the county with the appropriate regional planning area. In addition, the sessions outlined steps and technical assistance available to support the realignment.

The State of Illinois documented the feedback from the consultation workshops. In addition, the State has received and reviewed additional written comments expressing questions, concerns, and objections to the realignment process. Two of the impacted counties have expressly objected to the realignment requirement.

This waiver will provide Illinois with the flexibility to remove a regulatory barrier for counties that have demonstrated the ability to plan and deliver services in the context of the current local workforce area and regional planning area boundaries.

State strategic goal(s)

The state must precisely articulate the goals it seeks to achieve by requesting a waiver. The state must also discuss how these goals relate to its Unified or Combined State Plan.

A waiver from realigning the LWIAs with regional planning areas allows Illinois to comply with WIOA statute and regulations for complying with the Governor's need to allow LWIAs that maintain fiscal sustainability and performance accountability to stay intact.

The intent of the waiver is to not impose an unviable mandate on local Chief Elected Officials (CEOs) and workforce boards not able to restructure their county alignment at this time.

Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from the implementation of the waiver

The state must provide an estimate of how the waiver will improve outcomes or provide other tangible benefits for jobseekers or employers. States have the discretion to determine how to measure a waiver's success and the specific data sources it intends to use to evaluate its impact.

The projected outcome of the waiver is to avoid creating a dysfunctional and disorganized environment that ultimately would have a negative impact on service delivery and customer outcomes if realignment were forced on local CEOs.

Alignment with the Department of Labor's policy priorities

Describe how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as:

- *Supporting employer engagement;*
- *Connecting education and training strategies;*
- *Supporting work-based learning;*
- *Improving job and career results; and*
- *Other priorities as articulated in guidance*.

Illinois' current regional and local structure align with the four identified purposes of Title I of WIOA priorities involving activities at the regional level, which include:

- enhancing the strategic role of states and elected officials, and Local Workforce Innovation Boards in the public workforce system by increasing flexibility to tailor services to meet employer and worker needs at State, regional, and local levels;
- supporting the alignment of the workforce investment, education, and economic development systems in support of a comprehensive, accessible, and high-quality workforce development system at the Federal, state, and local and regional levels;
- improving the quality and labor market relevance of workforce investment, education, and economic development efforts by promoting the use of industry and sector partnerships, career pathways, and regional service delivery strategies; and
- increasing the prosperity and economic growth of workers, employers, communities, regions, and States.

Individuals, groups, or populations affected by the waiver

States must describe the potential impact of a waiver on various system stakeholders, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations, persons with barriers to employment, or businesses.

This waiver benefits the entire state workforce system, reduces unnecessary administrative expenses caused by realignment, and keeps consistent with current Local Workforce Innovation Area structures. Those specifically impacted include:

- Employers;
- Job seekers, including WIOA priority population groups;
- Local area one-stop partners and delivery systems;
- LWIBs;
- Economic development entities;
- the IWIB; and
- WIOA state agency staff, including planning, performance, policy, reporting, and fiscal.

State plans for monitoring waiver implementation, including collection of waiver outcome information

States must describe how they intend to oversee effective waiver implementation and any unique protocols that may be used in their waiver requests.

The State will use the following approach for monitoring progress in implementation:

- State staff involved with the administration governance provisions will provide ongoing technical assistance and oversight as it relates to the appropriateness and effectiveness of this waiver. This information will be submitted regularly to the IWIB Evaluation and Accountability Committee.

- Annual WIOA on-site programmatic reviews will include an evaluation review of the impact the waivers have on programmatic goals and outcomes.
- Additionally, the IWIB Evaluation and Accountability Committee will have the responsibility of ensuring the specific goals and outcomes achieved by the waiver are realized. Furthermore, the information gathered from the waiver will inform new or changes to policy as well as provide best practices to assist in preparing for the Program Year 2024 planning process.

This strategy ensures that the goals described above, as well as those outlined in the State's Unified Plan and the IWIB Strategic Plan, are consistent with established objectives of the WIOA and federal and state regulations.

Assurance of state posting of the request for public comment and notification to affected local workforce development boards

WIOA does not prescribe a specific amount of time for states to post a potential waiver for comment, but it does require the state to demonstrate a reasonable opportunity for public review and comment by all stakeholders, including businesses and organized labor. Submit any comments or concerns collected in this manner and the outcome of the state's review of the public comments received. The state must also provide affected local boards with notice and opportunity to comment on the proposed waiver.

In accordance with the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.135, Illinois is submitting its Unified State Plan, which is subject to the requirements outlined in the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.130(d) for public review and comment. As such, Illinois's waiver request was posted on our website for comment and review by required parties and the public.

Local Boards via Board members and Board staff, WIOA partners, and other interested stakeholders participate in policy development. Additionally, LWIBs receive the opportunity to participate in the public comment period that includes informational webinars.

Waiver outcomes for existing waivers.

The Secretary may require that States provide the most recent data available about the outcomes of the existing waiver in cases where the state seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver.

Illinois has seen the following as a result of this waiver:

To date the burden of contributing to multiple regional plans has not risen to the level of the locally perceived burden of realignment. As mentioned previously, Illinois successfully brokered realignment of several counties during the current planning cycle. Our position is to continue to encourage local areas to consider realignment and offer technical assistance to implement but stopping short of imposing this requirement on local CEOs determined to maintain the status quo.

The local areas that were allowed not to realign have continued to effectively plan and deliver services while maintaining fiscal sustainability and performance accountability under the current local workforce area and regional planning boundaries.

WAIVER REQUEST 5 – INCREASE ON-THE-JOB TRAINING REIMBURSEMENT

The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the state would like to waive

The state must clearly cite the statute and/or regulation(s) in its request and ensure that the citations refer to the specific elements the state wishes to waive.

Illinois currently has the authority under WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(H)( ) to provide reimbursements to employers of on-the-job training programs up to 75 percent and is seeking expansion of the authority to the current allowable employer reimbursement for the wage rate of an On-the-Job Training (OJT) participant for the extraordinary costs of providing training and additional supervision related to the OJT as described in WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(H)(i) and further outlined at 20 CFR 680.720 (b).

Illinois is proposing a sliding reimbursement scale to the employer based on its size and capability. Under this waiver, employers with fifty (50) or fewer employees would be reimbursed up to ninety percent (90%), those with between 51 and 250 employees up to seventy-five (75%) reimbursement and all other employers up to the statutory limit of 50%. Further, Illinois has developed a policy as documentation of the factors used when deciding to increase the wage reimbursement level above 50 percent (50%) as required under WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(H)(i)(I) and 680.730.

This waiver is being requested to apply for all OJT contracts supported by WIOA formula funds, including Adult, Dislocated Workers, and Youth, as appropriate.

Many small businesses are facing unprecedented demands to keep their doors open and avoid layoffs. Extra incentives such as the increased wage reimbursement are a tool to support a strengthened recovery strategy. Illinois needs to have the flexibility to provide an increased incentive to establish new on-the-job training opportunities during a time of uncertainty and recovery.

Actions the state has undertaken to remove state or local statutory or regulatory barriers

The state must provide a discussion of the steps it has taken to remove any potential obstacles in the waiver request as appropriate. Quite often, state or local policies do not present a conflict for the request, and a simple statement indicating that there are no state or local barriers is sufficient.

There are no State or Local barriers to implementing the provisions requested within this proposed waiver.

State strategic goal(s)

The state must precisely articulate the goals it seeks to achieve by requesting a waiver. The state must also discuss how these goals relate to its Unified or Combined State Plan.

This waiver is consistent with a national focus to develop the workforce system that is more responsive to the needs of business and individual customers and with Illinois' strategic direction, goals and priorities as outlined within its Unified State Plan, for which it is awaiting approval, the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board's Strategic Plan, and the preliminary priorities of a new IWIB standing committee of business engagement. OJTs are a proven model

for providing individual customers with information, instruction and training needed to meet the unique needs of businesses that have prepared them to be retained upon successful completion. It would allow for more flexibility for smaller businesses experiencing limited resources. This is especially true during times of recovery following a disaster.

Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from the implementation of the waiver

The state must provide an estimate of how the waiver will improve outcomes or provide other tangible benefits for jobseekers or employers. States have the discretion to determine how to measure a waiver's success and the specific data sources it intends to use to evaluate its impact.

The state estimates that the waiver will improve outcomes and provide other tangible benefits in the following ways:

- Increase in the number of OJT placements.
- Increase in the number of OJT placements in targeted sectors and occupations.
- Increase in the employment retention rates in the OJT-related industry 2nd and 4th quarters following exit.
- Increase in the number of unique employer work sites using OJT.

Alignment with the Department of Labor's policy priorities

Describe how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as:

- *Supporting employer engagement;*
- *Connecting education and training strategies;*
- *Supporting work-based learning;*
- *Improving job and career results; and*
- *Other priorities as articulated in guidance*.

This waiver aligns with not only the Department of Labor's priorities but also with those of the State of Illinois. Within the Illinois WIOA Unified State Plan are examples of initiatives demonstrating the importance of work-based learning and how critical it is to meet the needs of businesses.

Individuals, groups, or populations affected by the waiver

States must describe the potential impact of a waiver on various system stakeholders, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations, persons with barriers to employment, or businesses.

The waiver would benefit employers and individual customers. It would be especially beneficial to small businesses, including new start-ups, as a cost-effective incentive to utilize the proven method of utilizing OJTs to hire and train new workers. It will allow Illinois businesses to quickly adapt to the changing landscape by improving capacity and remain competitive. Individuals, such as dislocated workers transitioning to new occupations or industries, long-term unemployed attempting to return to the workforce and be introduced to new skills or

entry-level workers such as youth will be seeking to start careers in a weak economic climate. This waiver would expand the potential training options for WIOA-eligible job seekers and workers.

State plans for monitoring waiver implementation, including collection of waiver outcome information

States must describe how they intend to oversee effective waiver implementation and any unique protocols that may be used in their waiver requests.

The state will use the following approach for monitoring progress in implementation:

State staff who administer programming will provide ongoing technical assistance and oversight as it relates to the appropriateness and effectiveness of this waiver. This information will be submitted regularly to the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) Continuous Improvement Committee. Furthermore, the information gathered from the waiver will inform new or changes to policy as well as provide best practices.

Annual WIOA on-site programmatic reviews will include an evaluation of the impact the waivers have on programmatic goals and outcomes.

Assurance of state posting of the request for public comment and notification to affected local workforce development boards

WIOA does not prescribe a specific amount of time for states to post a potential waiver for comment, but it does require the state to demonstrate a reasonable opportunity for public review and comment by all stakeholders, including businesses and organized labor. Submit any comments or concerns collected in this manner and the outcome of the state's review of the public comments received. The state must also provide affected local boards with notice and opportunity to comment on the proposed waiver.

In accordance with the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.135, Illinois is submitting its Unified State Plan, which is subject to the requirements outlined in the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.130(d) for public review and comment. As such, Illinois's waiver request was posted on our website for comment and review by required parties and the public.

Local Boards via Board members and Board staff, WIOA partners, and other interested stakeholders participate in policy development. Additionally, LWIBs receive the opportunity to participate in the public comment period that includes informational webinars.

Waiver outcomes for existing waivers.

The Secretary may require that States provide the most recent data available about the outcomes of the existing waiver in cases where the state seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver.

Illinois has seen the following as a result of this waiver:

The number of OJT placements (including those in apprenticeships) and the number of unique OJT employer worksites has steadily increased each program year. Additionally, the overwhelming majority of the OJT placements have been in the manufacturing sector.

	OJT Placements	Unique OJT Work Sites	OJT Participants w/ Training Related Job at Exit
PY 2019	343	134	320
PY 2020	353	162	232
PY 2021	424	162	170
PY 2022	488	206	258
PY 2023	463	213	281
PY 2024	480	235	237

For PY 2023, which is the latest year performance outcomes are available, employment retention rates for OJT participants that exited with a job in a related industry in which they were trained in the second (2nd) and fourth (4th) quarters following exit have increased.

WAIVER REQUEST 6 – USE OF STATEWIDE FUNDS FOR QUALIFYING EVENTS

The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the state would like to waive

The state must clearly cite the statute and/or regulation(s) in its request and ensure that the citations refer to the specific elements the state wishes to waive.

Specifically, the State of Illinois is requesting from the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) a waiver to allow flexibility in the use of the funds reserved by the Governor for use to provide statewide rapid response activities (i.e., WIOA section 134(a)(2)(A)), and for use to provide statewide employment and training activities (i.e. WIOA section 134(a)(2)(B) and (3)) in order to provide comprehensive Disaster Recovery assistance to affected areas as described in WIOA 170(d) and 20 CFR 687.100(b). The state may continue to apply for applicable grants as they may be made available.

Additionally, this waiver requests approval to exclude individuals from the calculation of state and local performance measures found in WIOA §§ I l 6(b) and (c). Specifically, the exclusion request is for participants who receive only disaster relief employment and no other allowable career and training services through the grant or through co-enrollment in another WIOA core or partner program. This request is consistent with the performance allowance in TEGL 12-19. The state understands that it must include these participants in various reports and the state's annual Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) submissions, using the “Special Project ID field. In addition, Illinois will segregate the *Disaster Recovery* projects from other Statewide Rapid Response grants. The services to the participants will be limited to the time that is needed to respond and recover from the disaster.

Under this waiver allowance, permitted WIOA statewide fund use includes, but is not limited to:

- Expeditious allocation of funds to a local workforce innovation board so they may respond quickly to a disaster, emergency, or other qualifying event as described at 20 CFR 687.l00(b). Only those events and cascading events caused by a qualifying event

that have been declared as an emergency or disaster by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), by the chief official of a Federal Agency with jurisdiction over the Federal response to a disaster with potential significant loss of employment, or the Governor of Illinois qualify for the use of WIOA statewide funds.

- To alleviate the effects that a qualifying event causes within affected local area(s) and/or planning regions, WIOA statewide funds will allow comprehensive disaster relief employment and/or employment and training activities, and the provision of needed humanitarian resources and services, including other services or resources deemed necessary as described at 20 CFR 687.180(b)(1).
- State Disaster grant policies and procedures will mirror those of Disaster Recovery National Dislocated Worker Grants (DWG) in terms of eligibility, allowable services, wage and health and safety requirements, etc. to ensure continuity of services between the State and Federal Disaster grants as necessary.
- An individual's disaster relief employment is limited to 12 months or 2080 hours for work related to recovery from a single emergency or disaster. OET may extend an individual's disaster relief employment for up to an additional 12 months or 2080 hours if requested and sufficiently justified by the local board.
- Supportive services may be provided to enable individuals to participate in disaster relief employment and employment and training activities, including such costs as transportation, childcare, and personal safety equipment and clothing consistent with local policies.
- Individuals shall be eligible to be offered disaster relief employment and employment and training services if such individual is a dislocated worker; is a long-term unemployed individual as defined by the State; is temporarily or permanently laid off as a consequence of the emergency or disaster; or in the case of an individual who is self-employed, becomes unemployed or significantly underemployed as a result of the emergency or disaster.

Actions the state has undertaken to remove state or local statutory or regulatory barriers

The state must provide a discussion of the steps it has taken to remove any potential obstacles in the waiver request as appropriate. Quite often, state or local policies do not present a conflict for the request, and a simple statement indicating that there are no state or local barriers is sufficient.

The state established the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) to act as the lead agency in the event of an emergency and/or disaster when a county is declared a disaster area by the Governor. Within all Illinois local workforce innovation areas or local areas, there are responsible entities marshaled by local government or its agents should a qualifying event occur. The state works in concert with these entities to provide resources and expertise.

Illinois's WIOA Unified State Plan articulates many of the WIOA-related statewide activities it does or can do when facing a qualifying event. For example, the Office of Employment and Training is responsible for applying and administering applicable National Dislocated Worker

Grants (NDWG), consistent with WIOA Sec. 170 and its corresponding regulatory requirements. These grants are helpful once allocated, but in the time between the event and allocation, aid is urgently needed and there is much work to be done. If months pass before the NDWG allocation occurs, damage can be exacerbated, and work is not completed. The state is mindful of this time gap and strives to apply as soon as the state is eligible for NDWG funding assistance, as appropriate. The efficient use of time right after a qualifying event occurs is a critical variable in how well recovery is measured. This is a serious barrier the state wants to reduce.

The State of Illinois' waiver request to allow flexibility in the use of the funds reserved by the Governor for use to provide statewide rapid response activities (i.e., WIOA section 134(a)(2)(A)), and for use to provide statewide employment and training activities (i.e. WIOA section 134(a)(2)(B) and (3)) in order to provide comprehensive Disaster Recovery assistance to affected areas as described in WIOA 170(d) and 20 CFR 687.100(b) was approved in 2019; however, the approval did not address the State's request regarding the performance requirements for individuals that are only provided with disaster recovery employment.

State strategic goal(s)

The state must precisely articulate the goals it seeks to achieve by requesting a waiver. The state must also discuss how these goals relate to its Unified or Combined State Plan.

This waiver will allow the State of Illinois to efficiently and effectively respond to disasters by aligning the program requirements of a disaster recovery project regardless of if they are funded with WIOA Statewide Rapid Response funds or the National Dislocated Worker Grant Program.

The objective of improved outcomes, varied as they may be, is best served when available funding is put to quick and effective use for all parties involved. Illinois' WIOA Unified State Plan articulates that the Governor's WIOA statewide funds will generally be used to promote a vision of jobs that pay, schools that teach, and government that works. To that end, in the case of a qualifying event, the state intends to use WIOA statewide funds so that relevant workforce development responses are provided in a timely manner. WIOA statewide funds may be provided to local areas deemed in need of financial resources as a result of being affected by a qualifying event.

The use of WIOA statewide funds associated with this waiver supports the state's goal of local WIOA-based programs and activities that better serve targeted groups of workforce development system customers. The use of WIOA statewide funds offers greater flexibility so that the state and local governing entities can expand their ability to coordinate resources, services and activities for individuals, workers and employers affected by the qualifying emergency and/or disaster event. The state will use WIOA statewide funds to ensure that critical, time-sensitive work can be performed and the potential participant pool is widened. The waiver flexibility permits local areas the latitude to marshal available labor, conduct appropriate training, enable required resources to be requisitioned quickly, and provide immediate and comprehensive disaster recovery assistance, including efforts to minimize further disaster impacts.

Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from implementation of the waiver

The state must provide an estimate of how the waiver will improve outcomes or provide other tangible benefits for jobseekers or employers. States have the discretion to determine how to measure a waiver's success and the specific data sources it intends to use to evaluate its impact.

The state estimates that the waiver will improve outcomes and provide other tangible benefits in the following ways:

- Increase statewide and local area workforce development response times to a qualifying event;
- Increase public safety and help support humanitarian activities;
- Availability of disaster relief employment will provide grant participants with access to employment and training activities;
- Increasing eligible grant participants' employment and training activities will lead to a higher probability of securing unsubsidized employment; and
- Alleviation of some of the time-sensitive variables arising from a qualifying event affecting an employer and lessening the severity of possible layoffs or business closings.

Alignment with the Department of Labor's policy priorities

Describe how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as:

- *Supporting employer engagement;*
- *Connecting education and training strategies;*
- *Supporting work-based learning;*
- *Improving job and career results; and*
- *Other priorities as articulated in guidance*.

This waiver aligns with not only the Department of Labor's priorities but also with those of the State of Illinois. Within the Illinois Unified Plan are examples of initiatives demonstrating the importance of ensuring career and work readiness at all levels. This will allow the state to temporarily expand service capacity at the local level through time-limited funding assistance in response to significant disasters.

Expanding the ability of the state to provide disaster-related employment opportunities through statewide funding allows participants to develop skills that will better prepare them to obtain permanent employment.

Individuals, groups, or populations affected by the waiver

States must describe the potential impact of a waiver on various system stakeholders, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations, persons with barriers to employment, or businesses.

The waiver will positively impact:

- All eligible participants as identified in WIOA section 170 and 20 CFR 687.170, which include dislocated workers, long-term unemployed individuals as defined by the State,

temporarily or permanently laid off workers as a consequence of the emergency or disaster, or in the case of an individual who is self-employed, becomes unemployed or significantly underemployed as a result of the emergency or disaster; and

- Non-WIOA eligible recipients include affected businesses and employers, residents and other individuals that benefit from the qualifying event clean-up, restoration and humanitarian activities, and resources provided.

State plans for monitoring waiver implementation, including collection of waiver outcome information

States must describe how they intend to oversee effective waiver implementation and any unique protocols that may be used in their waiver requests.

The state will use the following approach for monitoring progress in implementation:

OET workforce development leadership will determine if the qualifying event requires the use of WIOA statewide funds and will approve parameters for the project, be the operational lead, and be tasked with WIOA fund administration and project management or activities. Applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, policies and procedures will be used to ensure fiscal accountability. Unless otherwise authorized in this waiver, the financial and administrative rules contained in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; Final Rule (i.e., 20 CFR 683) will apply.

At a minimum, the funding recipient will supply the OET with the following information for review:

- Completed Request for Funds form with local board signatory authorizing request;
- Official declaration documenting the emergency and/or disaster event;
- Narrative will include, at a minimum, a summary of the event, a preliminary assessment of the clean-up, and humanitarian needs of the affected areas, and will demonstrate whether there is a sufficient population of eligible individuals to conduct the planned work;
- Budget and budget justification; and
- Completed worksite summary.

The OET will receive monthly project status reports and will host teleconferences with project stakeholders as necessary to monitor project status. At a minimum, funding recipients will provide the OET with the following information for review:

- Revised narrative and associated attachments when a modification is required;
- Monthly Financial Status Reports;
- Monthly project status report of project activities; and
- Data entry for all participant services in the Illinois Workforce Development System (IWDS).

Only local boards will be the recipient of WIOA statewide funding for qualifying events. If a qualifying event occurs in a local area, the state requires the respective local board to collaborate with local governments and other recognized entities to determine whether workforce development-oriented services and activities are warranted. Local boards may work with their respective local area fiscal agents to complete and submit the funding request to OET. Local boards will work with the one-stop operator(s) to communicate the funding parameters to workforce development system partners and other service providers. Participant activity is to be recorded in the state system of record, the IWDS. All funds obligated will be accounted for in the financial management system, the GRS. Case management and related source documentation associated with the emergency and/or disaster must include the qualifying event as a point of reference.

State staff who administer programming will provide ongoing technical assistance and oversight as it relates to the appropriateness and effectiveness of this waiver. This information will be submitted regularly to the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) Continuous Improvement Committee.

Annual WIOA on-site programmatic reviews will include an evaluation of the impact the waivers have on programmatic goals and outcomes.

Additionally, the IWIB Continuous Improvement Committee will have the responsibility of ensuring the specific goals and outcomes achieved by the waiver are realized. Furthermore, the information gathered from the waiver will inform new or changes to policy as well as provide best practices.

Assurance of state posting of the request for public comment and notification to affected local workforce development boards

WIOA does not prescribe a specific amount of time for states to post a potential waiver for comment, but it does require the state to demonstrate a reasonable opportunity for public review and comment by all stakeholders, including businesses and organized labor. Submit any comments or concerns collected in this manner and the outcome of the state's review of the public comments received. The state must also provide affected local boards with notice and opportunity to comment on the proposed waiver.

In accordance with the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.135, Illinois is submitting its Unified State Plan, which is subject to the requirements outlined in the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.130(d) for public review and comment. As such, Illinois's waiver request was posted on our website for comment and review by required parties and the public.

Local Boards via Board members and Board staff, WIOA partners, and other interested stakeholders participate in policy development. Additionally, LWIBs receive the opportunity to participate in the public comment period that includes informational webinars.

Waiver outcomes for existing waivers.

The Secretary may require that States provide the most recent data available about the outcomes of the existing waiver in cases where the state seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver.

Illinois has seen the following as a result of this waiver:

The Rapid Response disaster and emergency waiver has allowed the State and local areas to respond to disasters using readily available State Rapid Response funds and assist laid-off workers with obtaining temporary disaster recovery employment as well as permanent employment. Since receiving this waiver, three local workforce innovation boards have received an award and provided disaster recovery employment to twenty-two participants at five disaster worksites. All disaster activity has concluded, and no grants are currently active

Because all WIOA services beyond basic, non-staff assisted career services must be provided to an individual who is compliant with the MSSA, costs incurred by the grantee in providing services to an individual who is non-compliant will be considered disallowed costs.

WAIVER REQUEST 7 (NEW) - EXCLUSION FROM WIOA PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SNAP WORK-REQUIREMENT REFERRALS TO WIOA TITLE I

The statutory and/or regulatory requirements that the state would like to waive. *The state must clearly cite the statute and/or regulation(s) in its request and ensure that the citations refer to the specific elements the state wishes to waive.*

The State of Illinois is seeking a waiver under WIOA sec. 189(i)(3) and 20 CFR 679.610–679.620 from the following Section(s): WIOA Section 116(b) and 20 CFR 677.155 (and related performance reporting requirements in 20 CFR part 677). Specifically, Illinois requests approval to exclude from the statewide WIOA Title I performance numerator and denominator SNAP recipients referred by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) who are subject to federal SNAP work requirements (including Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) and any other individuals newly subject to SNAP work requirements) and who receive services to meet or maintain SNAP work requirement obligations ("SNAP work requirement referrals"). This request is a time limited, narrowly defined adjustment to performance outcomes intended to preserve accountability and comparable performance outcomes under WIOA Title I for Adult and Dislocated Worker participants. It is not intended to diminish accountability or suspend overall performance expectations for WIOA Title I participants. Furthermore, Illinois believes we are not seeking a waiver beyond the Secretary's authority under 20 CFR 679.610(a)(12) and 20 CFR 675.100, which set out Title I requirements of WIOA, including promoting accountability through core performance indicators, sanctions, and high-quality evaluations. WIOA provides broad waiver authority that allows the U.S. Department of Labor to waive specific statutory and regulatory requirements under WIOA Title I when doing so advances system improvement goals. ETA has previously approved a waiver affecting performance-related requirements, including performance measures used for negotiation and accountability. Illinois' request will protect the integrity of statewide performance accountability while ensuring Illinois can serve this high-volume SNAP compliance cohort without creating incentives to delay or deny access to needed services. Accountability for SNAP work requirement referrals will be maintained through:

• Tracking this cohort separately using auditable coding in the performance reporting file/PIRL.

• Reporting outcomes for this cohort transparently in the annual performance narrative and/or a supplemental attachment; and

• Using evaluation and continuous improvement methods (including periodic analysis of service patterns and outcomes) to assess effectiveness and improve service delivery.

These steps ensure the waiver supports, rather than undermines, the Title I purpose in 20 CFR 675.100, which is to promote accountability and improve service delivery through data, sanctions where applicable, and high-quality evaluation. Illinois administers the SNAP program through the Department of Human Services and oversees the WIOA Title I program through the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's Office of Employment and Training. Each month, about 2 million Illinois residents—representing over 1 million households—rely on SNAP benefits. Program participants often face barriers to employment and training, including economic instability, limited English proficiency, transportation challenges, housing instability, and other unmet supportive service needs. These challenges make timely, customer centered career, training, and supportive services essential.

Additionally, many customers may have limited recent work history due to Illinois's prior statewide SNAP work requirement waiver. In November 2025, the most recent month with complete data, the Illinois Department of Human Services estimated that more than 247,000 adult SNAP recipients could be subject to new work requirements and risk losing benefits due to strengthened enforcement under H.R. 1, the "One Big Beautiful Bill," signed into law in July 2025. Following the implementation of these new work requirements on February 1, 2026, many individuals referred to WIOA Title I programs require immediate support. While some will need only minimal assistance from WIOA staff—such as researching local job opportunities, conducting job searches, and completing applications, many others will require more extensive services through the Illinois workNet® System.

SNAP recipients referred to Illinois workNet Centers, either in-person or virtually, often have limited time to participate. They require prompt engagement in career services to determine whether they are ready to enter the workforce immediately or need training to earn recognized post-secondary credentials for long-term employment. Further, Illinois' current workforce system, composed of twenty-two local workforce innovation areas, lacks adequate staffing to support the anticipated influx of SNAP recipients and the capacity to provide a sustained series of services while maintaining professional relationships, thoughtful service delivery, and strong performance outcomes.

In the most recent complete Program Years, 2023 and 2024, Illinois served approximately 25,574 and 25,234 individuals (including WIOA-enrolled and reportable individuals), respectively, across all three WIOA Title I programs. While not all of the more than 247,000 individuals projected to be subject to SNAP work requirements will seek staff assisted services at an Illinois workNet American Job Center, even a small share can significantly increase system volume. For example, if approximately one percent (about 2,470 individuals) present for staff assisted services in a program year, that volume alone would represent an increase of more than 10 percent over recent annual WIOA Title I participant counts, straining local capacity and potentially distorting negotiated performance outcomes if included in statewide Title I indicators.

Review of PY2021-2024 performance outcomes shows that WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker participants consistently perform below the overall Title I population. This pattern holds across all five performance indicators, with some showing double-digit declines.

Actions the state has undertaken to remove state or local statutory or regulatory barriers

The state must provide a discussion of the steps it has taken to remove any potential obstacles in the waiver request as appropriate. Quite often, state or local policies do not present a conflict for the request, and a simple statement indicating that there are no state or local barriers is sufficient.

There are no state or local statutory or regulatory barriers to implementing the requested waiver. Illinois regulations and policies align with current federal law. The Office of Employment and Training, in coordination with the Department of Innovation and Technology (DoIT), will implement the data and reporting controls needed to identify the SNAP work-requirement cohort, ensure the cohort is excluded from statewide WIOA Title I performance numerator and denominator calculations, and maintain appropriate case-level documentation for program integrity and partner reporting.

State strategic goal(s)

The state must precisely articulate the goals it seeks to achieve by requesting a waiver. The state must also discuss how these goals relate to its Unified or Combined State Plan. Illinois' Unified State Plan (USP) advances the Governor's vision for an integrated workforce, education, and economic development system that expands economic opportunity for job seekers and workers while meeting employer needs.

In partnership with the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) and WIOA core partners, Illinois emphasizes demand-driven strategies—including sector partnerships and career pathways—that connect customers to career, training, and supportive services aligned with local, regional, and statewide priorities. 1Statewide Performance Reports, Participants Served with Career Services defined in WIPS for Program Years referenced. The anticipated increase in SNAP work-requirement referrals from the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) will require nimbler, expedited coordination of intake, triage, referrals, and service delivery across Illinois workNet American Job Centers (AJCs), grantees/subgrantees, and community partners. This waiver supports timely, customer-centered service delivery for SNAP work-requirement referrals while preserving meaningful WIOA Title I performance accountability through a clearly defined cohort approach with separate tracking and transparent reporting. This waiver also aligns with the pillars of America's Talent Strategy by supporting industry-driven talent pipelines (Pillar I), improving worker mobility through navigation, barrier reduction, and modernized data and technology (Pillar II), strengthening integrated service delivery through IDHS referrals (Pillar III), preserving meaningful performance accountability through separate, transparent reporting (Pillar IV), and leveraging statutory flexibility to scale innovative service models (Pillar V). Illinois seeks to achieve the following goals through this waiver request:
• Maintain the integrity of WIOA Title I performance accountability: Exclude a clearly defined, auditable, time-limited SNAP work-requirement compliance cohort from statewide Title I indicator calculations, while separately tracking and reporting outcomes to ensure transparency.

• Provide rapid, customer-centered access and appropriate service sequencing for SNAP work-requirement referrals: Use triage, navigation, and barrier-informed service planning, supported by technology and labor market data, to quickly connect customers to the right mix of career

services, allowable work activities, education and training, and supportive services (e.g., Illinois workNet AJC navigator-led triage supported by the IWDS 2.0 referral system).

• Sustain employer-driven strategies and work-based learning pathways at scale: Preserve local capacity for business services, sector partnerships, and work-based learning so employers continue to receive timely talent support and customers can connect with hiring opportunities and access earn-and-learn pathways (e.g., Apprenticeship Illinois / Illinois Works and CEJA workforce pathways).
• Strengthen cross-agency coordination, data use, and continuous improvement: Implement shared referral and tracking protocols with IDHS; monitor outcomes for this cohort; and use results to drive continuous improvement, support streamlined, coordinated service delivery, and reduce duplicative intake and reporting across partners (e.g., IWIB Continuous Improvement and Accountability Committee review). These goals directly support Illinois' Unified State Plan and IWIB Strategic Plan priorities, such as customer-centered service delivery, employer engagement, work-based learning, and data-driven improvement.

Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from the implementation of the waiver

The state must provide an estimate of how the waiver will improve outcomes or provide other tangible benefits for jobseekers or employers. States have the discretion to determine how to measure a waiver's success and the specific data sources it intends to use to evaluate its impact.

As a result of this waiver, Illinois expects that: • SNAP workrequirement referrals will engage more quickly and progress toward employment and training outcomes while meeting compliance requirements. Illinois will measure waiver success using cohortlevel metrics, including: time from IDHS referral to first staffassisted service/triage; completion of required workactivity verification; referrals to training, credential programs, and workbased learning; credential attainment; and entry into unsubsidized employment. • Excluding this defined cohort from statewide Title I indicator calculations will allow career specialists to provide individualized planning and appropriate service sequencing without incentives to delay access or avoid staffassisted engagement because of negotiated performance concerns. Illinois will preserve performance discipline by maintaining comparable negotiated Title I results for Adult and Dislocated Worker participants while separately tracking and reporting SNAP cohort outcomes to support transparency, evaluation, and continuous improvement.

Alignment with the Department of Labor's policy priorities

Describe how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as: • Supporting employer engagement; • Connecting education and training strategies; • Supporting work-based learning; • Improving job and career results; and • Other priorities as articulated in guidance.

This waiver aligns with the Department's policy priorities. It advances the pillars of America's Talent Strategy by preserving industry-driven talent pipeline capacity, improving worker mobility through technology-enabled navigation and barrier reduction, and strengthening integrated cross-system referral and tracking. Illinois will maintain accountability by separately tracking and transparently reporting outcomes for this defined cohort, using those results for continuous improvement and evaluation, and preserving the integrity of Title I performance measures while enforcing an outcome focus for the SNAP referral strategy. • Supporting employer engagement: Preserves local capacity for Illinois workNet business services, sector partnerships, and rapid access to hiring opportunities (e.g., AJC employer outreach and

recruiting events informed by Illinois Employment Business System (IEBS) data). • Connecting education and training strategies: Supports career-pathway navigation and referrals to training aligned with regional sector demand (e.g., coordinated referrals to community college career pathways and bridge/credential programs via Illinois workNet and IWDS 2.0). • Supporting work-based learning: Protects and strengthens earn-and-learn pathways as volume increases (e.g., Apprenticeship Illinois, Illinois Works, and CEJA workforce pathways). • Improving job and career outcomes: Enables rapid, customer-centered triage and barrier-informed planning, paired with supportive service coordination, to help customers meet requirements and progress toward employment and advancement. • Other priorities as articulated in guidance: Advance customer-centered, data driven integration and cross-agency coordination (e.g., shared IDHS referral protocols, IWDS 2.0 development and continuous improvement review through IWIB), including scaling navigator-led triage and technology-enabled routing to manage volume and improve service matching.

Individuals, groups, or populations affected by the waiver

States must describe the potential impact of a waiver on various system stakeholders, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations, persons with barriers to employment, or businesses.

This waiver applies to SNAP work requirement referrals served through Illinois workNet American Job Centers and the local workforce system partners that support them, including Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIBs), local WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker providers, and community partners. The waiver does not change eligibility, access, or service priority; it only excludes this clearly defined SNAP work requirement referral cohort from statewide Title I performance numerator and denominator calculations, while outcomes for the cohort are tracked and reported separately. By preserving meaningful negotiated performance accountability, the waiver supports timely triage, individualized planning, supportive service coordination, and referrals to training and work based learning for customers with employment barriers, while maintaining capacity for employer services and sector strategies that benefit Illinois employers. State plans for monitoring waiver implementation, including the collection of waiver outcome information States must describe how they intend to oversee effective waiver implementation and any unique protocols that may be used in their waiver requests. The State will use the following approach for monitoring progress in implementation: • State staff involved in administering the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs will provide ongoing technical assistance to inform and respond to local workforce professionals who are expected to provide intake, develop career plans,coordinate appropriate services, and ensure the success of the SNAP work requirement referrals referred to their local Illinois workNet Centers. • Annual WIOA on-site programmatic reviews will include an evaluation of the impact of the waivers on programmatic goals and outcomes. • State and local performance management staff will provide continuous monitoring of outcomes for the SNAP work-requirement cohort, which is tracked separately from the general WIOA Title I population using a dedicated participant-cohort flag in the case-management and performance reporting systems. The annual performance report narrative will summarize those outcomes separately from negotiated WIOA performance. • Additionally, the IWIB Continuous Improvement and Accountability Committee will be apprised of this Waiver Request and the resulting decision, as they implement their charge of continuous improvement across the system through evaluations, partner collaboration, and technical assistance. This strategy ensures that the goals described above, as well as those outlined in the

State's Unified Plan and the IWIB Strategic Plan, are consistent with established objectives of the WIOA and federal and state regulations.

Assurance of state posting of the request for public comment and notification to affected local workforce development boards

WIOA does not prescribe a specific amount of time for states to post a potential waiver for comment. Still, it does require the state to demonstrate a reasonable opportunity for public review and comment by all stakeholders, including businesses and organized labor. Submit any comments or concerns collected in this manner, and the outcome of the state's review of the public comments received. The state must also provide affected local boards with notice and opportunity to comment on the proposed waiver.

In accordance with the WIOA regulations governing Unified State Plan modifications (20 CFR 676.135) and the public review and comment requirements applicable to Unified State Plans (20 CFR 676.130(d)), Illinois will post this waiver request for a reasonable public comment period and notify affected Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIBs) and other required stakeholders. Posting dates: March 1, 2026 – March 19, 2026. Illinois will accept written comments via WIOAPlansandMOUs@illinoisworknet.com and provide at least one informational webinar during the comment period. Illinois will summarize the comments received and describe any resulting changes to the waiver request in the Unified State Plan modification submission. Local Boards, via Board members and staff, WIOA partners, and other interested stakeholders, participate in policy development. Additionally, LWIBs have the opportunity to participate in the public comment period, which includes informational webinars.

Waiver outcomes for existing waivers.

The Secretary may require that States provide the most recent data available about the outcomes of the existing waiver in cases where the state seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver.

Not applicable. This is a new waiver request. If approved, Illinois will report waiver implementation status and outcomes, including any cohort-level tracking summaries, in subsequent State Plan modifications or required reports.

WAIVER REQUEST 8 (NEW) – POST-EXIT SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR EMPLOYMENT RETENTION

The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the state would like to waive

The state must clearly cite the statute and/or regulation(s) in its request and ensure that the citations refer to the specific elements the state wishes to waive.

The State of Illinois requests a waiver of the following statutory and regulatory requirements under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA):

• WIOA Section 134(d)(2) – which limits the provision of supportive services to periods of active participation and does not authorize their use during the twelve (12)-month period following exit for Adult and Dislocated Worker participants; and

• 20 CFR 680.910 – which implements Section 134(d)(2) and similarly restricts supportive services to pre-exit participation periods.

Under current law and regulations, supportive services for Adult and Dislocated Worker participants are only available to individuals engaged in career or training services who cannot access such support through other programs. Illinois seeks a waiver to extend supportive services to participants after they exit the program, particularly during the critical transition to stable employment. This is especially crucial for those who have recently started unsubsidized work and may face short-term barriers that could jeopardize their job retention.

Illinois intends to utilize this flexibility for targeted, time-limited, and documented supportive services directly related to maintaining unsubsidized employment. Examples of these services may include transportation, childcare, work-related tools or equipment, costs for required testing or licensing, and other temporary expenses essential for helping participants keep their jobs. The supportive services utilized with approval of this waiver would only be provided when they are necessary, and the individual is unable to obtain them through other programs providing such services. Services provided under this waiver will still adhere to local policy and require case-by-case documentation to confirm that similar assistance is not otherwise accessible.

Illinois is submitting this waiver in response to Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 05-25, which encourages states to work in partnership with ETA to mitigate or remove barriers, including through the use of statutory waivers, to support innovative, industry-driven strategies that build a skilled workforce aligned with the Administration's strategic pillars for workforce investment, enhance worker mobility, promote system integration and resource alignment, optimize service delivery, strengthen accountability for participant outcomes, and advance innovation.

Actions the state has undertaken to remove state or local statutory or regulatory barriers

The state must provide a discussion of the steps it has taken to remove any potential obstacles in the waiver request as appropriate.Quite often, state or local policies do not present a conflict for the request, and a simple statement indicating that there are no state or local barriers is sufficient.

There are currently no state or local statutory or regulatory barriers to implementing the requested waiver. Illinois policy currently conforms to federal statute and regulation. If this waiver is approved, Illinois will issue state policy guidance establishing uniform parameters for eligibility, documentation, allowable costs, duration, coordination with other resources, fiscal tracking, and monitoring.

State strategic goal(s)

The state must precisely articulate the goals it seeks to achieve by requesting a waiver. The state must also discuss how these goals relate to its Unified or Combined State Plan.

Illinois seeks this waiver to promote the strategic goals of its Unified State Plan through a focused employment retention strategy for Adult and Dislocated Worker participants after they leave. Illinois' workforce vision is based on a customer-focused, interoperable, inclusive, and accessible system that supports employers, jobseekers, and communities, helping to connect individuals to quality career pathways rather than just short-term placements. The state's Unified State Plan sets goals to strengthen collaboration and customer service, improve

employers' ability to hire and keep skilled workers, use customer-centered and data-informed practices to enhance the jobseeker experience, and support career pathways that address emerging economic needs.

This waiver supports those goals by enabling local workforce areas to address short-term barriers that occur after employment begins but before it stabilizes. Illinois considers employment retention a vital continuation of effective workforce service delivery. A participant who secures a job but loses it due to temporary transportation issues, childcare disruptions, work-related expenses, unstable housing, or other short-term barriers has not fully gained the intended benefits of the workforce system. By allowing targeted post-exit supportive services, Illinois can better align workforce investments with ongoing labor force attachment, long-term career growth, and improved employer outcomes.

The primary goals of this waiver are to:
• Increase employment retention outcomes for Adult and Dislocated Worker participants in the 2nd and 4th Quarters After Exit;
• Strengthen employer retention outcomes by helping newly hired workers remain attached to employment during the early months after placement;
• Reduce early job separation or job loss by mitigating transitional financial barriers; and
• Support wage progression and reduce benefit cliffs that can push participants out of employment.

This waiver also aligns with the Department of Labor's current workforce priorities and the five pillars by helping employers retain workers and safeguard workforce investments. It promotes worker mobility by removing barriers to stable employment and career advancement. By enabling Illinois to operate as a coordinated system and breaking down silos, the waiver encourages integrated systems. Connecting flexibility to outcomes such as employment and earnings enhances accountability. Additionally, the waiver fosters flexibility and innovation by addressing operational challenges in a targeted, data driven manner.

Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from the implementation of the waiver
The state must provide an estimate of how the waiver will improve outcomes or provide other tangible benefits for jobseekers or employers.States have the discretion to determine how to measure a waiver's success and the specific data sources it intends to use to evaluate its impact.

- The US Department of Labor has encouraged the States to request this waiver in Training and Employment Guidance Letter 5-25 titled Maximizing Innovation in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Programs. This waiver will allow Illinois to support innovative solutions for building a skilled workforce in alignment with the US Department of Labor's strategic pillars for workforce investment.

- As a result of this waiver, it is projected that 3-5- of Illinois' 22 local workforce innovation areas will update the local supportive service policies to allow for supportive services for WIOA participants after they exit the program. It is anticipated that employer retention and the effectiveness in serving employers will be positively impacted by this waiver. This waiver will also support the State in meeting the *Effectiveness in Serving Employers* WIOA performance goal – specifically the retention with the Same Employer in the second and fourth quarters following a participant's exit from a WIOA core program. From an employer perspective, Illinois aims for stronger

retention of workers placed through the workforce system, less disruption from early turnover, and increased employer confidence in the system's ability to support reliable talent pipelines. These outcomes align directly with the State Plan's goal of improving employers' ability to hire and keep skilled workers, as well as with federal focus on industry-driven talent strategies.

- Illinois also expects greater employment stability for those facing post-exit barriers, aiming for improvements in employment rates, earnings, career continuity, and fewer re-entries. This aligns with the State Plan's focus on a customer-centered, data-driven, responsive, inclusive, and accessible jobseeker experience. Illinois expects this waiver to improve programs, aligning with the Illinois Unified State Plan and federal framework. It aims to enhance workforce support, foster long-term employment, reduce early turnover, and better outcomes for participants and employers. The waiver should also improve service quality by allowing local areas to address retention barriers in a customer-centered, coordinated, and outcome-driven way. Instead of ending support at exit regardless of needs, the waiver should help local areas align workforce activities with partner resources and stabilization supports. Illinois expects stronger service continuity across programs and partners after placement. This aims to improve case management, reduce service disruptions, and strengthen links between the workforce, education, and support systems. Illinois further expects the waiver to reinforce the core principles of its Unified State Plan by improving customer experience, reducing barriers, increasing the value of workforce investments, and supporting a system that is collaborative, employer-responsive, inclusive, and accountable for results.
- Illinois' submitted performance goal for the *Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit* is 75% for the Adult program and 78.5% for the Dislocated Worker program. Illinois' submitted performance goal for the *Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit* is 75.5% for the Adult program and 79.5% for the Dislocated Worker program. It is projected that this waiver will support Illinois in achieving these performance goals.

Alignment with the Department of Labor's policy priorities

Describe how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as:
- *Supporting employer engagement;*
- *Connecting education and training strategies;*
- *Supporting work-based learning;*
- *Improving job and career results; and*
- *Other priorities as articulated in guidance.*

This waiver aligns with the U.S. Department of Labor's current policy direction because it strengthens employer-facing results, supports worker advancement, reinforces coordination across systems, ties flexibility to measurable outcomes, and uses waiver authority to solve a practical workforce system challenge.

Furthermore, this waiver directly supports the five strategic pillars in America's Talent Strategy, which call for a workforce system that provides reliable talent pipelines, helps more Americans progress, reduces fragmentation, enhances accountability, and encourages innovation that improves outcomes. It also reinforces Illinois' Unified State Plan goals for a customer-centered, employer-responsive, data-driven workforce system.

Pillar I: Industry-Driven Strategies. This waiver encourages industry-led workforce development by supporting employers in retaining their current workers through the public workforce system. When newly hired workers lose their jobs due to short-term issues like transportation, childcare disruptions, work tools, or temporary needs, employers face unnecessary turnover, and the workforce system loses the benefit of prior investments. Providing targeted post-exit support services helps Illinois turn placements into sustainable employment, builds employer confidence in the workforce system, and better aligns workforce investments with current labor market and talent demands.

Pillar II: Worker Mobility. This waiver significantly promotes worker mobility by tackling the specific barriers that often disrupt the transition from training or career services into stable jobs. America's Talent Strategy focuses on increasing the number of Americans in the workforce, helping them advance, and overcoming common obstacles to enrollment, completion, and career growth. For many Adult and Dislocated Worker participants, the first few weeks and months after being hired are when issues like transportation costs, childcare needs, temporary housing instability, or benefit cliffs are most likely to cause employment instability. Targeted post-exit supportive services enable Illinois to intervene during this crucial period, maintain workforce attachment, and foster upward mobility instead of allowing avoidable job loss.

Pillar III: Integrated Systems. This waiver promotes a more unified workforce system by enabling local areas to provide continuous support during the transition from program participation to unsubsidized employment. Illinois' Unified State Plan emphasizes an interoperable, inclusive, and accessible system that looks beyond program and funding silos, improves coordination among workforce and education partners, and removes barriers for job seekers. This waiver would help Illinois function as a coordinated bridge rather than a sudden drop-off at exit by allowing local areas to coordinate workforce assistance with childcare, transportation, public benefits, housing stabilization, and other partner supports during this critical transition period. In this way, the waiver enhances system alignment around the participant's actual needs instead of just administrative boundaries.

Pillar IV: Accountability. This waiver promotes accountability by linking flexibility to measurable outcomes. Illinois is not seeking broad discretion to expand supportive services without limits; it is seeking targeted authority to improve the very performance outcomes by which the workforce system is judged. Illinois expects this waiver to improve the Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit, the Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit, the Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit, and, where available, retention with the same employer. The waiver, therefore, supports performance discipline and return on investment by protecting placements already achieved and increasing the likelihood that those placements result in sustained employment and earnings growth.

Pillar V: Flexibility and Innovation. This waiver aligns with the Department's focus on using statutory authority to encourage practical innovation. TEGL 05-25 specifically mentions waiving WIOA section 134(d)(2) and 20 CFR 680.910 to provide supportive services within 12 months after exit for employment retention. Illinois aims to utilize that flexibility in a limited, controlled, and data-driven manner to address a known gap between program exit and employment stabilization. This is a practical innovation: it enables the workforce system to address short-

term retention issues right when they occur, rather than ending support as soon as employment begins.

This waiver supports the Department's current policy by enhancing employer-facing talent pipeline results, promoting worker mobility, improving system coordination, linking flexibility to measurable outcomes, and using waiver authority to address a specific operational issue. Illinois will use this waiver as a targeted retention strategy that boosts both worker success and employer outcomes while advancing the federal five pillar framework and Illinois' Unified State Plan goals.

Individuals, groups, or populations affected by the waiver

States must describe the potential impact of a waiver on various system stakeholders, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations, persons with barriers to employment, or businesses.

The waiver will support Adult and Dislocated Worker participants who have exited the WIOA program and are in unsubsidized employment but face short-term barriers that impact job retention. This includes, but is not limited to:

• Participants with low incomes or limited financial reserves at the time of job entry;
• Participants transitioning off public assistance or experiencing benefit cliffs;
• Participants with employment barriers, such as transportation issues, caregiving responsibilities, disability-related needs, or housing instability; and
• Employers who benefit from better early retention of workers referred or trained through the public workforce system.

Illinois does not expect negative effects on other participant groups. Instead, the waiver aims to improve the effectiveness of current workforce investments by supporting successful placements. convert into sustained employment.

State plans for monitoring waiver implementation, including collection of waiver outcome information*States must describe how they intend to oversee effective waiver implementation and any unique protocols that may be used in their waiver requests.*

The State will use the following approach for monitoring progress in implementation:

• State staff responsible for Adult and Dislocated Worker programming will provide technical assistance to local areas on eligibility, documentation standards, allowable services, coordination with other resources, and fiscal reporting. Waiver implementation and outcomes will be reviewed through annual WIOA programmatic and fiscal monitoring. This information will be submitted regularly to the IWIB Continuous Improvement and Accountability (CIA) Committee.
• Illinois will require local areas to document, at a minimum, the participant's exit date; date employment began; type of supportive service provided; amount and duration of the service; why the service was necessary for retention in employment; and the basis for determining that the service was not otherwise available from another source.
• Illinois will report waiver implementation and outcomes through the WIOA Annual Report and will share relevant results with the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board Continuous Improvement and Accountability Committee to support continuous improvement, policy refinement, and identification of promising practices.

This strategy ensures that the goals described above, as well as those outlined in the State's Unified Plan and the IWIB Strategic Plan, are consistent with established objectives of the WIOA and federal and state regulations.

Assurance of state posting of the request for public comment and notification to affected local workforce development boards

WIOA does not prescribe a specific amount of time for states to post a potential waiver for comment, but it does require the state to demonstrate a reasonable opportunity for public review and comment by all stakeholders, including businesses and organized labor. Submit any comments or concerns collected in this manner and the outcome of the state's review of the public comments received. The state must also provide affected local boards with notice and opportunity to comment on the proposed waiver.

In accordance with the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.135, Illinois is submitting its Unified State Plan, which complies with the requirements outlined in the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.130(d) for public review and comment. Therefore, Illinois's waiver request was posted on our website for review and feedback from required parties and the public.

Local Boards via Board members and Board staff, WIOA partners, and other interested stakeholders participate in policy development. Additionally, LWIBs can participate in the public comment period, which includes informational webinars.

WAIVER REQUEST 9 (NEW) – ALLOW SUPPORTIVE SERVICES TO COUNT TOWARD YOUTH WORK EXPERIENCE EXPENDITURE REQUIREMENT

The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the state would like to waive

The state must clearly cite the statute and/or regulation(s) in its request and ensure that the citations refer to the specific elements the state wishes to waive.

The State of Illinois requests a waiver solely to permit local workforce development boards to count supportive services that are directly tied to an eligible youth participant's active work experience placement toward the 20 percent minimum youth work experience expenditure requirement. Specifically, the waiver would be from the following statutory and regulatory requirements under WIOA:

• WIOA Section 129(c)(4) – which establishes the 20% minimum expenditure requirement for Youth Work Experience (WEX) activities, specifying allowable costs; and

• 20 CFR 681.590–681.650 – which implements the youth program WEX expenditure requirement, traditionally excluding supportive services from WEX calculation.

• TEGL 21-16 – which states that supportive services are a separate program element and cannot be counted toward the work experience expenditure requirement, even if supportive services assist the youth in participating in the work experience.

Current federal guidance restricts the inclusion of supportive services in the calculation of WEX expenditures. Supportive services, including transportation, childcare, work-related clothing or equipment, and other short-term supports, are essential for many youth participants to fully engage in WEX activities.

This waiver is requested to allow Illinois to count the provision of supportive services for youth participants directly involved in Work Experience activities toward meeting the WEX expenditure requirement, thereby providing greater flexibility in addressing barriers that can limit youth participation and increase access to meaningful work experience, improve work experience completion rates, and increase employer engagement.

Illinois seeks this waiver not to weaken the youth work experience requirement but to acknowledge that certain supportive services directly linked to an active work experience placement are essential for successful participation, completion, and employer-facing talent pipeline outcomes.

Actions the state has undertaken to remove state or local statutory or regulatory barriers

The state must provide a discussion of the steps it has taken to remove any potential obstacles in the waiver request as appropriate. Quite often, state or local policies do not present a conflict for the request, and a simple statement indicating that there are no state or local barriers is sufficient.

There are no state or local statutory or regulatory barriers to the implementation of the requested waiver if approved. Illinois policy currently aligns with existing federal law and guidance. If the waiver is approved, Illinois will issue a state policy establishing uniform criteria for what supportive services may be counted, what documentation is required, how expenditures must be tied to a specific work experience placement, and how monitoring for compliance will occur.

State strategic goal(s)

The state must precisely articulate the goals it seeks to achieve by requesting a waiver. The state must also discuss how these goals relate to its Unified or Combined State Plan.

Illinois requests this waiver to enhance participation in high-quality work-based learning and to remove practical barriers that hinder youth from engaging successfully in work experiences. The waiver aligns with Illinois' goals of improving access, boosting work readiness, promoting equitable participation, and helping youth connect to career pathways that lead to good jobs. The primary goals of this waiver are to:

- Increase youth engagement and participation in Work Experience activities.
- Improve retention and completion of youth experience placements
- Support stronger outcomes by ensuring that work experience placements are fully accessible to eligible youth with barriers to participation.
- Reduce barriers to participation such as transportation, childcare, or other necessary supports.
- Improve work experience completion rates and increase employer engagement.

This waiver advances Illinois's strategic objectives to improve youth work readiness, gain employment experience, and support long-term career achievement. It also aligns with federal workforce priorities that focus on industry-driven approaches, worker mobility, accountability, and the promotion of flexibility and innovation by increasing work-based learning with defined outcomes and proper documentation.

Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from the implementation of the waiver

The state must provide an estimate of how the waiver will improve outcomes or provide other

tangible benefits for jobseekers or employers. States have the discretion to determine how to measure a waiver's success and the specific data sources it intends to use to evaluate its impact.

If approved, Illinois expects the waiver to increase the number of youth who are able to enter, persist in, and complete work experience placements. Illinois anticipates:
• Higher youth enrollment and retention in WEX activities.
• Increased completion rates of WEX assignments and placements.
• Enhanced skill development and career readiness outcomes for youth participants.
• Improved compliance with the 20% WEX expenditure requirement, while simultaneously supporting youth participation through necessary supportive services.

Illinois will evaluate the impact of the waiver through program and fiscal data, including youth enrollment in work experience, placement completion, hours completed where available, types and costs of supportive services counted under the waiver, and subsequent employment, education, or training outcomes.

Alignment with the Department of Labor's policy priorities

Describe how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as:
• *Supporting employer engagement;*
• *Connecting education and training strategies;*
• *Supporting work-based learning;*
• *Improving job and career results; and*
• *Other priorities as articulated in guidance.*

This waiver aligns with the priorities of the U.S. Department of Labor as well as the workforce strategies outlined in the Illinois Unified State Plan under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The Illinois Unified Plan emphasizes expanding career exploration, work-readiness, and work-based learning opportunities for youth while ensuring that participants have the support necessary to successfully engage in workforce programs.

By allowing Illinois to count supportive services provided to youth who are directly participating in Work Experience (WEX) activities toward meeting the WEX expenditure requirement under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, this waiver supports the Department of Labor's priority of increasing access to meaningful work-based learning. Many youth require services such as transportation assistance, work clothing, or other resources in order to fully participate in work experience opportunities.

Recognizing supportive services tied to WEX participation ensures that youth can engage in and complete these activities, helping them build workplace skills, gain exposure to real-world work environments, and better prepare for employment or further education. This flexibility allows local programs to address barriers to participation while strengthening youth engagement in work-based learning, ultimately supporting improved employment outcomes and long-term career success.

Individuals, groups, or populations affected by the waiver

States must describe the potential impact of a waiver on various system stakeholders, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations, persons with barriers to employment, or businesses.

This waiver would primarily benefit in-school and out-of-school youth who are enrolled in WIOA youth services and who need targeted, placement-specific supports to participate in work experience. This includes youth who:
• Have low incomes or limited access to reliable transportation;
• Need work clothing, tools, or other required items for placement;
• Need childcare in order to participate in scheduled work experience activities;
• Are justice-impacted, parenting, homeless, disabled, or otherwise face barriers to employment; or
• Would be unable to begin or complete a work experience placement without short-term support directly tied to that placement.

The waiver is also expected to benefit employers and host sites by improving youth participation and completion in work-based learning opportunities.

State plans for monitoring waiver implementation, including collection of waiver outcome information*States must describe how they intend to oversee effective waiver implementation and any unique protocols that may be used in their waiver requests.*

The State will use the following approach for monitoring progress in implementation:
• State staff involved with the administration of youth programming will provide ongoing technical assistance to local areas regarding allowable supportive services, required documentation, expenditure tracking, and the distinction between general supportive services and those that may be counted under the waiver.
• Annual WIOA programmatic and fiscal reviews will include review of waiver implementation and local compliance. This information will be submitted regularly to the IWIB Continuous Improvement and Accountability (CIA) Committee.
• Illinois will require local areas to document, at a minimum: the youth participant receiving the support; the specific work experience placement; the dates of the placement; the type, cost, and duration of the supportive service; why the service was necessary for participation in the placement; and how the expenditure was directly tied to beginning, participating in, or completing that placement.
• Additionally, the IWIB Continuous Improvement and Accountability (CIA) Committee will have the responsibility of ensuring the specific goals and outcomes achieved by the waiver are realized. Furthermore, the information gathered from the waiver will inform new policies or changes to policy, as well as provide best practices. The outcomes of the waiver are reported in the WIOA Annual Report.

This strategy ensures that the goals described above, as well as those outlined in the State's Unified Plan and the IWIB Strategic Plan, are consistent with established objectives of the WIOA and federal and state regulations.

Assurance of state posting of the request for public comment and notification to affected local workforce development boards
WIOA does not prescribe a specific amount of time for states to post a potential waiver for comment, but it does require the state to demonstrate a reasonable opportunity for public review and comment by all stakeholders, including businesses and organized labor. Submit any comments or concerns collected in this manner and the outcome of the state's review of the public comments received. The state must also provide affected local boards with notice and opportunity to comment on the proposed waiver.

In accordance with the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.135, Illinois is submitting its Unified State Plan, which is subject to the requirements outlined in the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.130(d) for public review and comment. As such, Illinois's waiver request was posted on our website for review and comment by required parties and the public.

Local Boards via Board members and Board staff, WIOA partners, and other interested stakeholders participate in policy development. Additionally, LWIBs can participate in the public comment period, which includes informational webinars.

TITLE I-B ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The State has implemented a policy to ensure Adult program funds provide a priority in the delivery of training services and individualized career services to individuals who are low income, public assistance recipients and basic skills deficient;	Yes
2. The State has implemented a policy to ensure local areas have a process in place for referring veterans with significant barriers to employment to career services provided by the JVSG program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist;	Yes
3. The State established a written policy and procedure that set forth criteria to be used by chief elected officials for the appointment of local workforce investment board members;	Yes
4. The State established written policy and procedures to ensure local workforce investment boards are certified by the governor every two years in accordance with WIOA section 107(c)(2);	Yes
5. Where an alternative entity takes the place of a State Board, the State has written policy and procedures to ensure the alternative entity meets the definition under WIOA section 101(e) and the legal requirements for membership;	No
6. The State established a written policy and procedure for how the individuals and entities represented on the State Workforce	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
Development Board help to determine the methods and factors of distribution, and how the State consults with chief elected officials in local areas throughout the State in determining the distributions;	
7. The State will not use funds received under WIOA Title I to assist, promote, or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA section 181(b)(7);	Yes
8. The State distributes adult and youth funds received under WIOA equitably throughout the State, and no local area suffers significant shifts in funding from year-to-year during the period covered by this plan;	Yes
9. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I;	Yes
10. The State agrees to report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in its WIOA Annual Report.	Yes
11. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance under section WIOA 184(a)(3);	Yes

ADULT PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the two years covered by the plan modification. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the two years of the plan modification.

While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

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%	77.5%	75.0%	78.5%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	75.5%	77.5%	75.5%	78.5%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$8,500	$9,500	$8,500	$9,500
Credential Attainment Rate	72.0%	72.0%	72.0%	72.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	65.0%	65.0%	65.0%	65.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]

1

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.

DISLOCATED PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the two years covered by the plan modification. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the two years of the plan modification.

While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level

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%	78.5%	78.5%	78.5%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	79.5%	79.5%	79.5%	79.5%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$10,500	$11,400	$10,500	$11,400
Credential Attainment Rate	72.5%	72.5%	72.5%	72.5%
Measurable Skill Gains	64.0%	66.0%	64.0%	68.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]

1

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.

YOUTH PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the two years covered by the plan modification. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the two years of the plan modification.

While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

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%	75.0%	75.0%	75.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter	75.0%	75.0%	75.0%	75.0%

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
After Exit)				
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$4,500	$5,400	$4,500	$5,400
Credential Attainment Rate	70.0%	70.0%	70.0%	70.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	63.0%	63.0%	63.0%	63.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]

1

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR WAGNER-PEYSER PROGRAM (EMPLOYMENT SERVICES)

All Program-Specific Requirements provided for the WIOA core programs in this section must be addressed for either a Unified or Combined State Plan.

A. EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL STAFF THE PROVISION OF LABOR EXCHANGE SERVICES UNDER THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT, SUCH AS THROUGH STATE EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO STATE MERIT STAFF EMPLOYEES, STAFF OF A SUBRECIPIENT, OR SOME COMBINATION THEREOF.

The State of Illinois will continue to staff the provision of labor exchange services under the Wagner-Peyser Act through state merit employees.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL UTILIZE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF TO ENSURE STAFF IS ABLE TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES TO BOTH JOBSEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS

Professional development activities have been and will continue to be utilized by the Employment Services program to ensure staff are able to provide high quality services to both job seekers and employers. Employment Services staff participate in federally sponsored professional opportunities offered by the Employment and Training Administration's Workforce GPS, viewing the webinars, and then using the information for discussion topics during program meetings. In addition, Employment Services staff participate in the State Monitor Advocate webinars hosted by the National Monitor Advocate to ensure staff receive training regarding how to best serve the Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers population as well as

other topics that impact both MSFW population and other populations who may receive services through the Employment Services program. Employment Services staff are encouraged to participate in National Veterans Training Institute training opportunities as appropriate where staff are provided with information regarding working with veterans as well as other special populations.

At the state level, the Employment Services staff have participated and will continue to participate in Clear Language training opportunities to help ensure clear communication with those seeking employment services. In addition, regular Illinois Workforce Academy webinars are made available to all workforce staff. These webinars include topics including but not limited to: trauma informed service delivery; human centered design; program-specific information; collaboration between workforce partners; workforce system procedure updates; best practices for working with special populations; and accommodations and universal design. The Illinois Workforce Academy, along with the four core WIOA partners hold a statewide Workforce Summit each year to bring staff together to learn about various workforce-related topics as well as provide networking opportunities for staff from across the state. In addition, the RESEA program will procure a contract for training development services. The trainings developed will not only benefit the RESEA staff and participants but will also be made available to all Employment Services staff to use with individuals daily.

Wagner Peyser staff from the Business Services Team (BST) will continue to seek opportunities to participate in professional training opportunities with state agency partners and professional development training providers. The IDES BST has identified cross-training on partner programs as an essential priority in delivering efficient and comprehensive employer services. The BST will continue to seek opportunities to train with business service teams in the 22 identified local workforce areas. IDES BST staff will effort to build upon the experience and knowledge gained through participation in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) Academy. This course provided the fundamental elements in creating employer-led talent pipeline initiatives. This will include assistance and training provided by program partner collaboratives that are designed to be developed and led by private sector employers. A special emphasis will be placed on sectors identified in local planning. The BST will receive training internally from IDES' Labor Market Experts (LMEs). This training will illustrate to use of data in building resources for gaining valuable insights employers can use for making hiring decisions. The BST will continue to work with other internal partners to be up to date on new developments in employment service programs. The BST will also continue to support community resource groups promoting the training and hiring of justice impact citizens throughout the state, utilizing program essentials such as federal bonding and the Work Opportunity Tax Credits to further assist the hiring of underserved populations.

Wagner Peyser employment services staff who provide workforce resources to both job seekers and employers, attended the DCEO sponsored Apprenticeship Bootcamp. Staff attending the Bootcamp are all part of workforce integrated Business Service Teams (BST) that promote, market, connect, and provide access to initiatives that allow businesses to interact and implement available workforce programs and services applicable to their needs. The Illinois Apprenticeship Illinois program directly supports the creation of industry sector partnerships using the TPM framework described previously, and apprenticeships are vetted to ensure

alignment with industry standards for apprentices to train in highly skilled, in-demand occupations.

3. DESCRIBE STRATEGIES DEVELOPED TO SUPPORT TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACROSS CORE PROGRAMS AND THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) PROGRAM AND THE TRAINING PROVIDED FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND WIOA STAFF ON IDENTIFICATION OF UI ELIGIBILITY ISSUES AND REFERRAL TO UI STAFF FOR ADJUDICATION

All Wagner-Peyser Employment Services staff are trained in both the Unemployment Insurance program as well as Employment Services program. Employment Services staff are trained to identify Unemployment Insurance claimant eligibility issues regarding claimants' able and available status as well as conducting proper work searches. Staff are trained to assist claimants with their work search efforts, explaining to the claimants what constitutes an appropriate work search, what information is required, and how/where to document those efforts. Eligibility issues that come to the attention of Employment Service staff are referred to Unemployment Insurance program by ES staff posting issues in the UI system (IBIS) for adjudication.

Cross training Employment Services staff in UI eligibility provides onsite knowledgeable staff in all American Job Centers who can assist other program partners by answering general UI eligibility questions and concerns, and if appropriate posting issues in IBIS for adjudication.

B. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE WILL PROVIDE INFORMATION AND MEANINGFUL ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUALS REQUESTING ASSISTANCE IN FILING A CLAIM FOR UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION THROUGH ONE-STOP CENTERS, AS REQUIRED BY WIOA AS A CAREER SERVICE

Meaningful assistance to individuals requesting guidance in filing a claim for unemployment insurance benefits through comprehensive one-stop centers will be provided by the Employment Service staff located at those centers. ES staff members have knowledge of UI program, UI eligibility issues, and the claim-filing process. Onsite ES staff may answer general questions about the UI program. Direct linkage which provides on-demand, real-time access to additional agency staff is also available in comprehensive one-stop centers that lack full-time UI staff. The direct linkage line is available to assist with specific UI inquiries.

C. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S STRATEGY FOR PROVIDING REEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE TO UI CLAIMANTS AND OTHER UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS

Strategies utilized to provide reemployment assistance to both UI claimants and all other unemployed individuals include encouraging non-UI customers to register with the employment service system and requiring UI claimants to register with the employment service labor exchange system as an eligibility requirement to receive benefits. Immediately after filing a claim for benefits and registering with the employment service system, easily accessible online training, educational, labor market and career information resources are made available for individuals who are job-ready and seeking to explore new career options. The Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment program is a UI program funded by the U.S. Dept. of Labor to assist unemployment insurance claimants who have been identified as those

individuals with the highest propensity for exhausting UI benefits, return to work faster. Those identified as participants in the program are required to participate in a one-on-one appointment which includes an orientation to American Job Center services, the development of an individual employment plan, the review of UI eligibility such as being able, available, and actively seeking work, reviewing customized labor market information, and assistance with resume development and other work search activities. All RESEA participants are referred to local Title I Dislocated Worker program services, and referrals are made to other program partners and community services as appropriate. The RESEA program is transitioning to a new approach requiring claimants to complete online pre-appointment steps and allowing claimants to self-schedule their RESEA appointments. Claimants may choose between virtual or in-person one-on-one appointments with staff. Follow up services for RESEA participants are provided by Employment Services staff. During the follow up, ES staff discuss how goals included in the reemployment plan are going and inquire about new or promising employment opportunities.

D. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE W-P FUNDS TO SUPPORT UI CLAIMANTS, AND THE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN W-P AND UI, AS APPROPRIATE INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:

1. COORDINATION OF AND PROVISION OF LABOR EXCHANGE SERVICES FOR UI CLAIMANTS AS REQUIRED BY THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT;

Coordination between Wagner-Peyser and Unemployment Insurance programs begins with the requirement that all UI claimants register with the employment service system, Illinois JobLink, to fulfill the UI eligibility requirement. A key component of employment service registration is that claimants must have at least one resume created or uploaded in their Illinois JobLink account. Regardless of the claim filing method via online, by phone or in person, the claimant is immediately transitioned to Wagner Peyser Employment Service by being informed of the requirement to register with employment services before benefits are issued. As a result of UI claimants being registered in Illinois JobLink, the ES staff can target claimants, conduct outreach, and provide labor exchange services Outreach to UI claimants is conducted via phone calls and emails by the employment service staff, through e-mail blast notifications, and through social media.

2. REGISTRATION OF UI CLAIMANTS WITH THE STATE'S EMPLOYMENT SERVICE IF REQUIRED BY STATE LAW;

Section 500A of the Illinois Unemployment Insurance Act states: An unemployed individual shall be eligible to receive benefits with respect to any week only if the Director finds that: He [or she] has registered for work at and thereafter has continued to report at an employment office in accordance with such regulations as the Director may prescribe, except that the Director may, by regulation, waive or alter either or both of the requirements of this subsection as to individuals attached to regular jobs, and as to such other types of cases or situations with respect to which he [or she] finds that compliance with such requirements would be oppressive or inconsistent with the purposes of this Act, provided that no such regulation shall conflict with Section 400 of this Act. A process is established in which an eligibility issue will automatically be created after a designated amount of time for those individuals who fail to fully register with employment services after filing an initial claim for benefits.

3. ADMINISTRATION OF THE WORK TEST FOR THE STATE UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION SYSTEM, INCLUDING MAKING ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENTS (FOR REFERRAL TO UI

ADJUDICATION, IF NEEDED), AND PROVIDING JOB FINDING AND PLACEMENT SERVICES FOR UI CLAIMANTS; AND

Section 500C of the Illinois Unemployment Insurance Act states: An unemployed individual shall be eligible to receive benefits with respect to any week only if the Director finds that: He is able to work and available for work; provided that during the period in question he was actively seeking work and he has certified such. UI claimants who are determined to be unable, unavailable, and not actively seeking work will not be eligible to receive benefits. UI claimants that are required to register and receive employment services and the population of UI claimants identified through the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment program will be required to comply with the above section of the UI Act. Failure to participate in reemployment activities as required will be documented in Illinois JobLink and trigger the posting and scheduling of an adjudication issue in the UI benefits system. If an eligibility issue arises while providing employment services, the case will either be investigated and determined by the employment service staff or be referred to the UI staff for immediate resolution.

4. PROVISION OF REFERRALS TO AND APPLICATION ASSISTANCE FOR TRAINING AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES.

Individuals that may require additional assistance with his/her reemployment efforts may be identified through various means including participation in the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program; agency correspondence; in-person contact at an American Job Center; contact by phone; e-mail; or through an automated self-assessment process. It is through these methods that requests are made to targeted individuals to participate in a self-assessment and development of an Individual Reemployment Plan, with assistance from the Wagner-Peyser Employment Services staff. The self-assessment and development of an Individual Reemployment Plan will assist in identifying the existence of any barriers to obtaining and maintaining meaningful employment. The barriers identified in the assessment will be the basis in which the individual is referred to additional services that will assist with reemployment efforts including, but not limited to, workshops that focus on specific employment needs, job training, adult education or literacy programs, trade assistance, supportive services, veteran outreach services, youth services, career pathways or vocational rehabilitation services. Wagner-Peyser Employment Service staff continue to collaborate with core and required partner staff to ensure proper referrals are made. All RESEA participants are referred to Title I Dislocated Worker program services.

E. AGRICULTURAL OUTREACH PLAN (AOP). EACH STATE AGENCY MUST DEVELOP AN AOP EVERY FOUR YEARS AS PART OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN REQUIRED UNDER SECTIONS 102 OR 103 OF WIOA. THE AOP MUST INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF NEED. AN ASSESSMENT NEED DESCRIBES THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS IN THE AREA BASED ON PAST AND PROJECTED AGRICULTURAL AND FARMWORKER ACTIVITY IN THE STATE. SUCH NEEDS MAY INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO: EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND HOUSING.

1. ASSESSMENT OF NEED. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS IN THE AREA BASED ON PAST AND PROJECTED AGRICULTURAL AND FARMWORKER ACTIVITY IN THE STATE. SUCH NEEDS MAY INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO: EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND HOUSING.

Migrant and seasonal farmworkers, as seen in many agricultural regions, have specific needs and challenges that prevent them from making full use of the services and resources available from IDES, its workforce partners in the American Job Centers (AJCs), and other government agencies such as the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), the Illinois Department Healthcare and Family Services (IDHFS), or the Illinois Department of Labor (IDOL).

In Illinois, due to the state's distinct seasons, MSFWs experience loss of employment during the late fall and winter months, negatively impacting their income and requiring MSFWs to secure alternative employment during the off season or relying on Unemployment Insurance until the spring months when agricultural employment is available again.

Migrant farmworkers and their families, as opposed to some local seasonal farmworkers, experience additional challenges due to their movement within Illinois or between states in search of work as the harvest season move from one crop to another. Migrant farmworkers have issues accessing affordable and safe housing, as well as having access to reliable and adequate transportation to commute to work, especially in rural areas. Housing and transportation often times impact the children of MSFWs such as lack adequate space for learning, lack of internet access for accessing learning tools, and inconsistent transportation to school, other education programs, or childcare.

MSFWs come from diverse backgrounds, some have limited English proficiency, and/or some lack proper work documentation. These language, cultural, and legal barriers can have an impact on their willingness to access social services, including food, healthcare, and legal support. Even with the on-the-job training, presentations, and informational handouts, provided through employers and from government agency representatives, many MSFWs are unaware of the basic safety and health standards and labor rights required in agriculture workplaces. As a result, MSFWs can be hesitant to report housing, worksite, or labor law violations to IDES or other enforcement agencies, necessitating constant monitoring to ensure that IDES and other organizations can identify when laws and regulations are being violated.

Even though training and employment opportunities continue to be available year-round through IDES and its workforce partners in the AJCs, many MSFWs decline such training and employment opportunities because of limited English language proficiency, low or non-existent computer literacy, lack of specific job skills even when the public system can help them to overcome those barriers. This failure to access services is due to a combination of factors including limited access to transportation or permanent low-cost housing; constant movement in search of work; the time commitment required for training or education; lack of childcare, or because they prefer to recover in off-season months from the physically demanding and hazardous working conditions in agriculture.

2. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY IN THE STATE MEANS: 1) IDENTIFYING THE TOP FIVE LABOR-INTENSIVE CROPS, THE MONTHS OF HEAVY ACTIVITY, AND THE GEOGRAPHIC AREA OF PRIME ACTIVITY; 2) SUMMARIZE THE AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS' NEEDS IN THE STATE (I.E. ARE THEY PREDOMINANTLY HIRING LOCAL OR FOREIGN WORKERS, ARE THEY EXPRESSING THAT THERE IS A SCARCITY IN THE AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE); AND 3) IDENTIFYING ANY ECONOMIC, NATURAL, OR OTHER FACTORS THAT ARE AFFECTING AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE OR ANY PROJECTED FACTORS THAT WILL AFFECT AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE

Top five labor-intensive crops in Illinois

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service reports corn, soybeans, wheat, hay, and pumpkins as Illinois' top 5 major labor-intensive crops in 2022.[i] According to the State Agriculture Overview, of the 27 million acres of farm operations, approximately 23 million of the harvested acres were of the before-mentioned crops. Of that amount, corn, and soybeans (combined) yield 21 million acres of crop.

Geographic area of prime activity

The central and northern counties are Illinois' geographic area of prime activity.[ii] These regions see cold, fairly dry winters and warm, humid summers with ample rainfall that allows the land to support many kinds of crops and livestock. The range of temperatures in Illinois generally vary by 10 to 12 degrees from one end of the state to the other. About 89 percent of the state's cropland is considered prime farmland, ranking the state third nationally in total prime farmland acreage.

The central and northern counties (about ¾ of the state) have the highest reported yield estimates for corn and soybeans. The highest concentrated areas of corn and soybean are in the centermost region of Illinois, where Macon, Sangamon, Tazewell, McLean, Woodford, Stark, DeWitt, and Logan counties have some of the highest yields for both crops. The hilly areas in the northwest and south are primarily used as pasture for livestock.

Months of heavy activity

An overview of Illinois' major crop activity, based on The University of Illinois Extension Service - Summary of Illinois Specialty Growers Association, lists the following crops with their respective months of agricultural activity:[iii]

- Asparagus (April to June)
- Strawberries (Late May to Early June)
- Apricots and Cherries (June to July)
- Blueberries (June to August)
- Beans, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cauliflower and Peas (June to October)
- Fresh Herbs (June to October)
- Raspberries (June to November)
- Summer Apples, Blackberries, Peaches, Nectarines (July to August)
- Beets, Corn, Cucumbers, Pickles & Plums (July to September)
- Peppers and Tomatoes (July to October)
- Thornless Blackberries (August)
- Grapes, Muskmelons and Watermelons (August and September)
- Eggplants and Greens (August and November)
- Turnips (September to November)

- Fall Winter Apples (September to November)
- Pumpkins, Squash and Gourds (November to December)

Agricultural employers' needs in Illinois:

Agricultural employers in Illinois have several key needs that are influenced by various factors, primarily, the availability of a reliable workforce, immigration policies, education and training, and regulatory compliance.

Employers report that they struggle to maintain a consistent and reliable labor force to meet seasonal demands for planting, harvesting, and processing crops. This need is particularly pronounced in sectors like fruit and vegetable farming, where labor-intensive tasks are common. As a consequence, many agricultural employers in Illinois rely on immigrant and non-immigrant labor, and they have concerns regarding immigration policies, such as the availability of H-2A visas for temporary agricultural workers and the increasing costs associated with such temporary foreign labor programs.

Employers must also navigate a complex regulatory landscape related to environmental regulations, labor laws, and food safety standards, which oftentimes means they are not fully in compliance. As a result, employers look to agricultural organizations, government agencies, and educational institutions for resources and guidance to remain compliant which, unfortunately, are not always available. However, both farm owners and farmworkers state that they would welcome ongoing training and educational programs that are crucial to stay updated on best practices, safety measures, labor laws, and new technologies in agriculture.

Economic, natural, and/or other factors affecting agriculture in Illinois:

Over the course of the previous AOP, from 2020 to 2023, Illinois also experienced severe weather conditions including precipitation, temperature, and extreme events like droughts and floods, which had a direct and immediate impact on crop yields and overall agricultural productivity.

[i]United States Department of Agriculture: National Agricultural Statistics Service. (2022) *Illinois Agricultural Overview.* USDA/NASS 2022 State Agriculture Overview for Illinois (Retrieved on 8/23/2023)

[ii]*About Illinois Agriculture.* https://agr.illinois.gov/about/facts-about-illinois-agriculture.html#faq-5howdoesagriculturebenefitfromthestatesgeographyandclimate-faq (Retrieved on 8/24/2023)

[iii]https://extension.illinois.edu/sites/default/files/cjmmwhatsinseason.pdf

3. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS MEANS SUMMARIZING MIGRANT AND SEASONAL FARM WORKER (MSFW) CHARACTERISTICS (INCLUDING IF THEY ARE PREDOMINANTLY FROM CERTAIN COUNTRIES, WHAT LANGUAGE(S) THEY SPEAK, THE APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF MSFWS IN THE STATE DURING PEAK SEASON AND DURING LOW SEASON, AND WHETHER THEY TEND TO BE MIGRANT, SEASONAL, OR YEAR-ROUND FARMWORKERS). THIS INFORMATION MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT DATA SUPPLIED BY WIOA SECTION 167 NATIONAL FARMWORKER JOBS PROGRAM (NFJP) GRANTEES, OTHER MSFW ORGANIZATIONS, EMPLOYER ORGANIZATIONS, AND STATE AND/OR FEDERAL AGENCY DATA

SOURCES SUCH AS THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR (DOL) EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Census of Agriculture lists the number of *Hired Farm Labor in* in Illinois as 55,584 in 2017 and 52,989 in 2022 (see: https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_State_Level/Illinois/ilv1.pdf

According to the National Center for Farmworker Health (NCFH), there were 57,857 farmworkers (this is a combination of: full-time, year-round; full-time, seasonal; and full-time, migrant) in Illinois in 2017. The Illinois counties with the highest number of farmworkers were McHenry, Champaign, Bureau, Kane, and Stephenson. Of the counties with more specific crop production data, 85% of crop production workers are seasonal, and 15% are migratory. For Illinois counties (with data available by farmworker category), 23% of farmworkers were animal production workers. Animal and crop production are intrinsically linked because using animals within agroecosystems can benefit plant life (e.g., soil enrichment).[i]

According to the U.S. Department of Labor's Foreign Labor performance data in federal fiscal year 2024, the number of H-2A positions certified in Illinois was 5,198. In FFY 2025, it was 5,747 (see: https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/foreign-labor/performance). The jobs associated with the H-2A visa program are considered temporary/seasonal, lasting ten months or less.

The data from the National Center for Farmworker Health is used for this report because it compiles the most recent (2017), comprehensive, and reliable Illinois data sets with an accompanying explanation of the estimation methodology.[ii] There are no current U.S. Census Bureau data available with this specific information about Illinois agricultural workers.

The 2021-2022 National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS; see: https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/naws/pdfs/NAWS%20Research%20Report%2017.pdf, Executive Summary, p.10) details the *national* survey data for farmworkers' demographic information, but the same information is unavailable at a state level.

- According to NAWS, 61% of crop workers were born in Mexico; 32% were born in the U.S. (including Puerto Rico); and 6% were born in Central America. The remainder originated from various other regions, including South America, the Caribbean, Asia, and the Pacific Island.
- The majority (75%) of respondents identify as Hispanic, with 57% of workers reporting that Spanish was the language in which they were most comfortable conversing.
- Nearly one-third (32%) of crop workers identify as White, and nearly two thirds categorized their race as "other" (64%). Nine percent of crop workers self-identified as indigenous.
- Males comprised 68% of crop workers in 2021–2022. Crop workers had an average age of 39. 42% of crop workers were under the age of 35 and 18% were age 55 or older.

[i]Farmworker population estimates are from NCFH and JBS International's 2020 Estimates based on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Census of Agriculture (2017 and 2022) and the 2015-2019 and 2021-2022 National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS).

[ii]https://www.ncfh.org/number-of-ag-workers.html

4. OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

The local offices outreach activities must be designed to meet the needs of MSFWs in the State and to locate and contact MSFWs who are not being reached through normal intake activities. Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:

A. CONTACTING FARMWORKERS WHO ARE NOT BEING REACHED BY THE NORMAL INTAKE ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED BY THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE OFFICES

Farmworkers who are not reached by normal intake activities by IDES, will be reached by MSFW Outreach Staff, with guidance from the MSFW Outreach Manager, by conducting vigorous outreach throughout Illinois and providing information on services and resources available at American Job Centers. IDES, as the SWA of a non-significant MSFW state, employs five part-time, year-round staff with Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Outreach responsibilities.

In addition to the five part-time, year-round MSFW outreach staff, IDES will temporarily assign five Spanish-speaking Employment Services staff members based in or near each significant office (North Aurora, Peoria, Champaign, Springfield, Mt. Vernon) to serve as full-time MSFW Outreach Staff during the peak season months of June through October.

Based off the U.S. Department of Agriculture's 2022 Census of Agriculture which states that Illinois has a total of 52,989 hired farm labor workers, these staffing levels are sufficient to ensure each service area can fully meet its obligations and responsibly serve the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker population. When separated by their respective service areas, the five Significant Offices anticipate the following numbers of hired farm labor workers in their service areas: North Aurora with 13,956, Peoria with 12,787, Champaign with 10,356, Springfield with 7,403, and Mt. Vernon with 8,487.

IDES uses an MSFW Locator Tool which is a geospatial system developed in-house and piloted during the 2024 season. The tool is used by outreach staff to plan and track their outreach visits. It incorporates several publicly available data sources associated with farms, organizations and housing locations likely to employ or serve Illinois farmworkers. It also includes information regarding locations visited by outreach staff as it became available over the course of the season. The MSFW Locator tool is new, but over time it may provide IDES additional information on MSFW location trends.

MSFW Outreach Staff will provide informational handouts and oral presentations to MSFWs, in both English and Spanish, as part of their outreach. Outreach efforts will involve in person contacts with agricultural employers at their worksite or office locations, attendance at events where MSFWs might be present, visiting farmworkers at their housing and worksite locations, frequenting MSFW gathering locations such as churches, laundromats, and grocery stores, and contacting organizations that provide social services.

The MSFW Outreach Manager, MSFW Outreach Staff, and State Monitor Advocate will continue to reach out to state agencies and community-based organizations to develop working relationships in an effort to locate farmworkers that live in remote and often isolated areas.

To ensure MSFWs are fully informed of the services and resources available through IDES, information will be presented verbally and provided in an outreach packet to all MSFWs in English or the language in which the MSFWs are fluent in.

All outreach packets provided to MSFWs will include:

- Illinois Job Link Registration Form
- Statewide Complaint System Information
- American Job Center locations and information about IDES and workforce partner services
- IDES MSFW Staff Contact List
- Farmworker Fact Sheet
- Information about the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act and relevant federal and state labor and employment laws
- U.S. Department of Labor Contact Information
- Community Resource Guide
- Locations of Nearby State Agencies and Services/Resources Available

B. PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO OUTREACH STAFF.

The MSFW Outreach Manager is responsible for providing training and technical assistance on all topics directly related to MSFWs to all IDES staff, as needed.

Topics covered during training consist of:

- The background and history of the MSFW program and the Judge Richey Court Order
- Overview of core programs, services, and resources available in office/region
- UI program and general identification of UI eligibility issues
- Proper informative presentation of services to MSFWs
- Service delivery while conducting outreach
- Observation and documentation of complaints and violations
- Record keeping of outreach activities and complaints
- Federal and State Labor Laws
- The Employment Services Complaint System and enforcement agencies
- Federal code of regulations governing the MSFW and H-2A programs
- The Agricultural Recruitment System

- Housing inspections and ETA/OSHA standards
- Field checks and field visits

Permanent and temporary MSFW Outreach Staff receive training in April/May, prior to the start of the agricultural peak season months of June through October. Staff also attend virtual training sessions by USDOL, meetings with MSFW organizations, and virtual meetings with outreach staff from other states to discuss best practices, suggestions, and answer questions in an informal setting.

IDES also provides information on the MSFW requirements under Wagner-Peyser as part of the training for all IDES Employment Services staff.

C. INCREASING OUTREACH WORKER TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACROSS CORE PROGRAMS INCLUDING THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) PROGRAM AND THE TRAINING ON IDENTIFICATION OF UI ELIGIBILITY ISSUES

Outlined above is the training provided to all outreach workers. In addition, all IDES Staff, including outreach workers, will have in-person training, webinars, access to online modules, and resources to ensure staff are aware of the different core programs and services, including UI, that are available through IDES. IDES staff also have access to training provided by partners through the Workforce Wednesday webinar series and the annual statewide Workforce Summit. In addition, outreach staff have access to weekly training and technical assistance provided by the IDES Labor Exchange trainer.

D. PROVIDING STATE MERIT STAFF OUTREACH WORKERS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES TO ENSURE THEY ARE ABLE TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES TO BOTH JOBSEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS

To ensure that high quality services are provided to both jobseekers and employers, outreach staff have been or will be participating in the following professional development training, technical assistance, and activities in-person or virtually:

- USDOL ETA WorkforceGPS Webinars, Online Trainings, and Resources
- Weekly training and technical assistance by the IDES Labor Exchange System trainer
- Annual statewide Workforce Summit
- WIOA Illinois Professional Development Workforce Webinars
- National and Regional Monitor Advocate meetings and conferences
- USDOL WHD and OSHA meetings and trainings
- Monthly Illinois Farmworker Advocacy meeting with MSFW Organizations
- NFJP Partner UMOS meetings and trainings
- National Veterans Training Institute
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Talent Pipeline Management Academy

- DCEO sponsored Apprenticeship Bootcamp
- Work Opportunity Tax Credit and Federal Bonding Program training
- Plain Language training

The MSFW Outreach Manager will continue to seek additional professional development opportunities for outreach staff as needed.

E. COORDINATING OUTREACH EFFORTS WITH NFJP GRANTEES AS WELL AS WITH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COMMUNITY SERVICE AGENCIES AND MSFW GROUPS

The Illinois Department of Employment Security will coordinate with WIOA Title I D Section 167 NFJP Grantee, United Migrant Opportunity Services (UMOS), to identify MSFW needs and to facilitate or provide services and information on available resources. This will be facilitated by a Memorandum of Understanding which outlines a quarterly meeting schedule between the SMA and UMOS. Both IDES management and outreach staff prioritize this working relationship, which includes regular meetings and exploration of coordinated outreach. The MSFW Program Manager, in addition to the SMA, will focus on having ongoing coordination at both a management and local outreach level. IDES will also add regular involvement of its ES program manager and regional ES Program managers as appropriate. IDES will also work with other MFSW organizations, such as Community Health Partnership of Illinois, Legal Aid Chicago, and Illinois Department of Human Services for the purpose of identifying and assisting MSFWs and promoting the Statewide Complaint System. The IDES Deputy Director also serves on the External Advisory Committee of the new Great Lakes Center for Farmworker Health and Well-Being at the University of Illinois.

Outreach efforts will involve in person contacts with agricultural employers at their worksite or office locations, attendance at events where MSFWs might be present, visiting farmworkers at their housing and worksite locations, frequenting MSFW gathering locations such as churches, laundromats, and grocery stores, and contacting organizations that provide social services. All interested parties who can provide a beneficial service or resource to MSFWs will be informed by phone, text, email, or at in-person or online meetings and invited to join IDES for outreach. All outreach activity information will be entered and tracked in IDES' MSFW Locator Tool.

5. SERVICES PROVIDED TO FARMWORKERS AND AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS THROUGH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM

Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:

A. PROVIDING THE FULL RANGE OF EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICES TO THE AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY, BOTH FARMWORKERS AND AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS, THROUGH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM. THIS INCLUDES:

I. HOW CAREER AND TRAINING SERVICES REQUIRED UNDER WIOA TITLE I WILL BE PROVIDED TO MSFWS THROUGH THE ONE-STOP CENTERS

II. HOW THE STATE SERVES AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS AND HOW IT INTENDS TO IMPROVE SUCH SERVICES

IDES will ensure that MSFWs are offered services that are qualitatively equivalent and quantitatively proportionate to the services provided to non-MSFWs at all American Job Centers. To maintain compliance with federal regulations, the State Monitor Advocate conducts on-site monitoring reviews to all local offices where significant MSFW activity is expected. During these monitoring visits, the SMA determines whether American Job Centers are operating in the best interests of MSFWs and ensures that staff can properly identify and service MSFWs.

Services Available at American Job Centers will include:

- Assisting job seekers in completing full, quality registrations and resumes in the state's labor exchange system, Illinois JobLink
- Information on the Employment Service Complaint System and Assistance in filing a complaint and summary of farmworkers rights and employment laws.
- Translation Services
- Basic Career Services from IDES Employment Services staff, including resume preparation; job search assistance; labor market information; and assistance with filing an unemployment insurance claim.
- Employment services for special populations from IDES Employment Services staff including customized services for returning citizens and for veterans with significant barriers to employment.
- Referral to services provided by NFJP grantees (UMOS), as well as community organizations that specialize in working with MSFWs.
- Referrals to workforce partner services, including Title I job training and supportive services; Title II ESL and Adult Education; TANF, SNAP and Vocational Rehab provided by the IL Dept of Human Services.
- Referrals to employment opportunities through online job postings in Illinois Job Link; hiring and recruitment events (in person and virtual); and individual job development and referrals to employers.

Services provided to agricultural employers through the American Job Center Network:

Illinois' online labor exchange system, Illinois Job Link, serves as the state's Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) and provides needed services to workers located in the U.S. and to agricultural and food processing employers. Illinois Job Link serves employers by locating, screening, and referring qualified workers from other areas when qualified workers are not available. Through this system, states with an adequate supply of agricultural workers can be referred to employment opportunities in Illinois where agricultural labor is in demand. Similarly, other states can request permission to post-agricultural job opportunities on Illinois Job Link to bring workers into their state. The State Monitor Advocate and outreach workers promote the ARS whenever they conduct outreach or are in communication with agricultural employers._IDES staff have also been trained to find, read and understand the

intrastate/interstate clearance orders, as well as how to match qualified local candidates to these job opportunities and promote them appropriately.

IDES provides the following Wagner-Peyser-funded services to agricultural employers:

- Agricultural Recruitment System (Local, Intrastate, Interstate) through the Illinois Job Link platform that includes either self-service or staff-assisted job orders, and referrals of qualified workers to agricultural job openings in Illinois and other states.
- Housing inspections
- Field checks and visits
- IDES participation in new employee orientation meetings
- Farm Labor Contractor applications and information
- Informational Meetings on: Foreign Labor Certification process; Unemployment Insurance, Wage/Hour, Migrant Law, Worker's Compensation, OSHA and Migrant Camp licensing, etc.
- Informational resources available to all employers: Labor Market Information; referrals to agencies offering business programs or services; assistance with job fairs and hiring events; conference room for recruitment purposes; and WOTC Tax Credit information.

IDES will improve coordination between the MSFW Outreach Program manager and IDES' five Business Services Managers who can ensure that the same information and access to assistance is available for agricultural employers.

B. MARKETING THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE COMPLAINT SYSTEM TO FARMWORKERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

The MSFW Outreach Manager, State Monitor Advocate, and MSFW Outreach Staff promote the Statewide Complaint System to farmworkers and farmworker advocacy groups during outreach, employer orientations, conferences, training sessions, meetings, and whenever it is needed or requested. An overview of the Statewide Complaint System is provided as a presentation and as part of an informational packet to farmworkers and farmworker advocacy groups.

C. MARKETING THE AGRICULTURAL RECRUITMENT SYSTEM FOR U.S. WORKERS (ARS) TO AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS AND HOW IT INTENDS TO IMPROVE SUCH PUBLICITY.

A goal for the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) and United Migrant Opportunity Services (UMOS) is to strengthen employer relationships by informing agricultural employers of the services available to them. Employers will be advised on staff-assisted services such as on-site hiring and recruiting events that could include local training providers and workforce partners. The MSFW Outreach Manager, SMA, and outreach staff will encourage the use of the Agricultural Recruitment System (Illinois Job Link) by promoting it at outreach events, employer orientations, employer round table meetings, agricultural associations, conferences, and with print advertisements.

6. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

A. COLLABORATION

Describe any collaborative agreements the state workforce agency (SWA) has with other MSFW service providers including NFJP grantees and other service providers. Describe how the SWA intends to build upon/increase collaboration with existing partners and in establishing new partners over the next four years (including any approximate timelines for establishing agreements or building upon existing agreements).

The Illinois Department of Employment Security will coordinate with WIOA Title I D Section 167 NFJP Grantee, United Migrant Opportunity Services, to identify MSFW needs and to facilitate or provide services and information on available resources. This will be facilitated by a Memorandum of Understanding.

The MSFW Outreach Manager has informal cooperative agreements with several public and private social service agencies but hopes to establish more MOUs with organizations whose focus is MSFWs. IDES will also coordinate with the Illinois Department of Health and Illinois Department of Labor to share information related to MSFWs to support the outreach efforts of our programs and our community partners.

The MSFW Outreach Manager reestablished communication with several MSFW organizations in Spring of 2023 after the COVID-19 pandemic led to staff turnover and travel restrictions severed collaboration efforts. Ongoing monthly meetings were reestablished as of December 2023 with Illinois Migrant Education Program, Illinois Migrant Council, Community Health Partnership of Illinois, Farmworker Advocacy Project, Legal Aid Chicago, Legal Aid Society of Metropolitan Family Services, and our NFJP Partner United Migrant Opportunity Services (UMOS). Collectively, IDES and all MSFW organizations agreed to share general information to aid in locating MSFWs and to communicate any outreach efforts so any available organization can attend. The number of MSFW organizations participating in this monthly meeting is expected to grow as each of our organizations brings in other organizations we have partnered with.

During these monthly meetings, the MSFW Outreach Manager has communicated the importance of establishing a Memorandum of Understanding between each organization and many expressed their willingness to do so but unfortunately it has not extended beyond the scheduled meetings. IDES continued contacting organizational leaders and proposed drafting an initial MOU to streamline the process. However, despite these efforts, IDES was unsuccessful in finalizing any MOUs before the end of 2025.

B. REVIEW AND PUBLIC COMMENT

In developing the AOP, the SWA must solicit information and suggestions from NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations. In addition, at least 45 calendar days before submitting its final

AOP, the SWA must provide a proposed plan to NFJP grantees, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other organizations expressing an interest and allow at least 30 days for review and comment. The SWA must: 1) Consider any comments received in formulating its final proposed AOP; 2) Inform all commenting parties in writing whether their comments have been incorporated and, if not, the reasons therefore; and 3) Transmit the comments and recommendations received and its responses with the submission of the AOP.

The AOP must include a statement confirming NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations have been given an opportunity to comment on the AOP. Include the list of organizations from which information and suggestions were solicited, any comments received, and responses to those comments.

As part of the full state WIOA plan, the AOP, the plan is available for public comment and the MSFW Outreach Manager sent it to partner organizations to ensure that they had an opportunity to comment.

NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations have been given an opportunity to comment on the AOP.

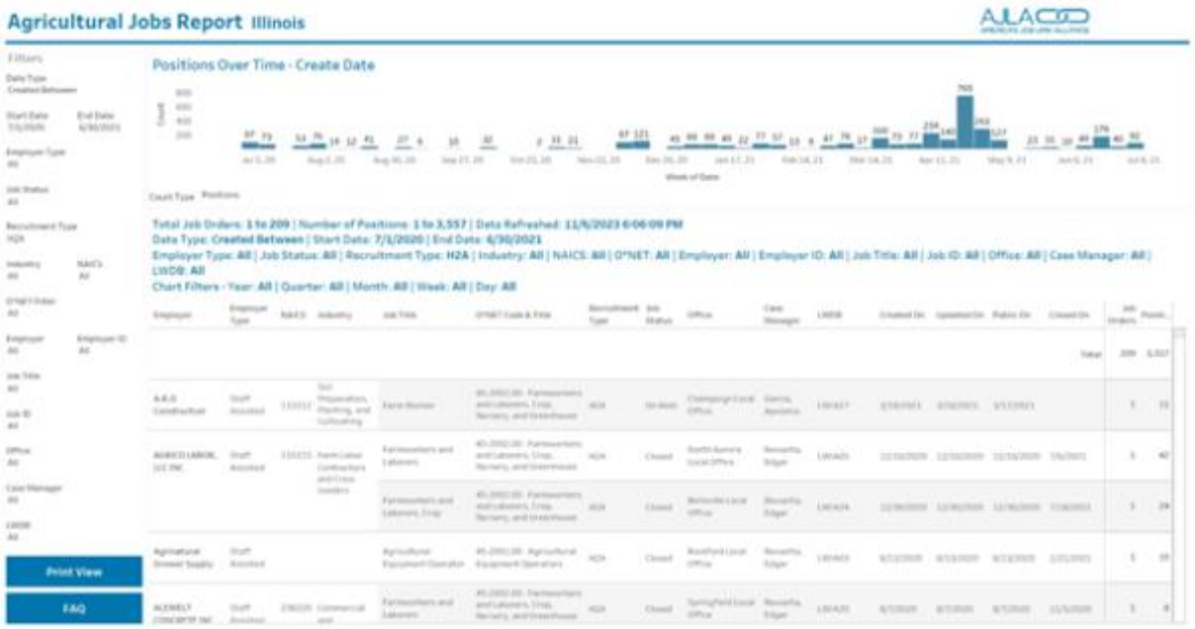
IDES did not receive any comments on the AOP.

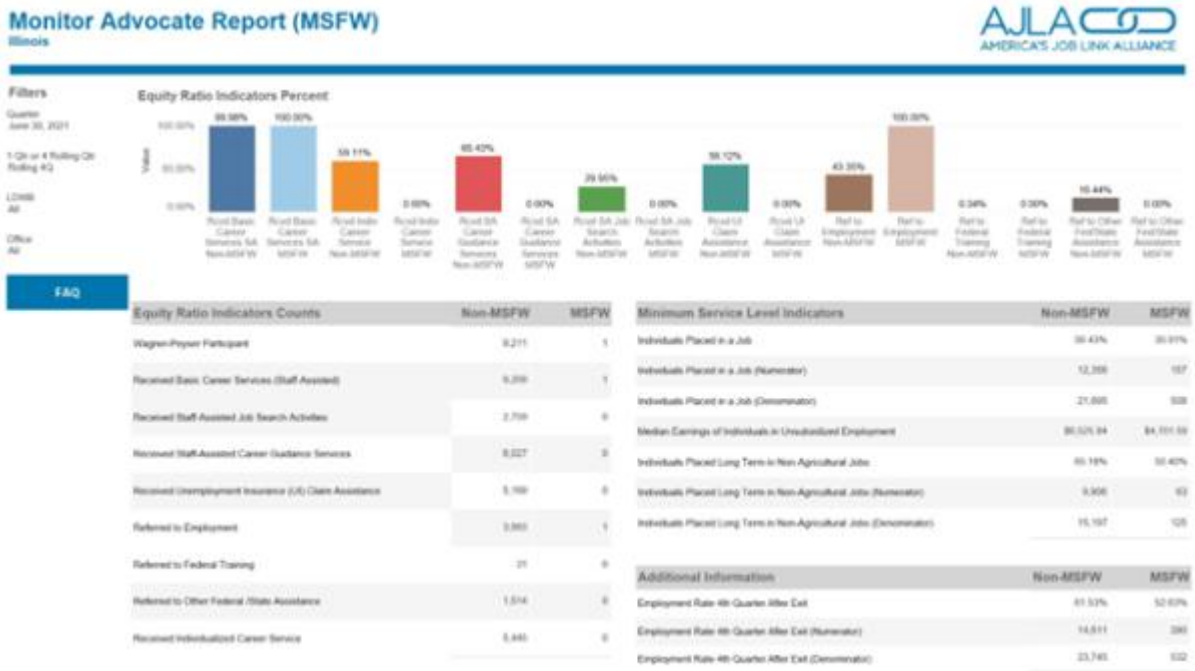
C. DATA ASSESSMENT

Review the previous four years Wagner-Peyser data reports on performance. Note whether the State has been meeting its goals to provide MSFWs quantitatively proportionate services as compared to non-MSFWs. If it has not met these goals, explain why the State believes such goals were not met and how the State intends to improve its provision of services in order to meet such goals.

PY 2020 Data 7/1/2020 to 6/30/2021

IDES received a total of 209 agricultural job orders with 3,557 openings available. 1 MSFW was registered for Wagner-Peyser services and received a Basic Career Service and a Referral to Employment. MSFW Outreach and Foreign Labor Certification Staff reported 0 contacts with MSFWs through MSFW Field Checks, MSFW Field Visits, MSFW Outreach, H2A Field Checks, and H2A Field Visits due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

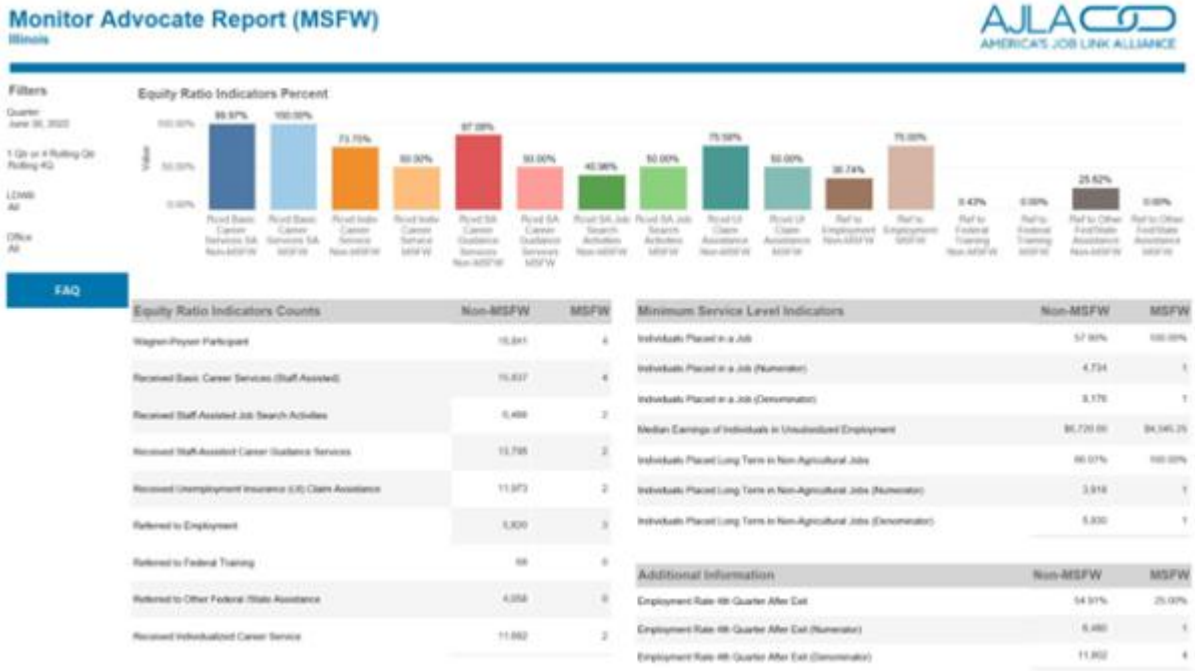




PY 2021 Data 7/1/2021 to 6/30/2022

IDES received a total of 271 agricultural job orders with 4667 openings available. 4 MSFWs were registered for Wagner-Peyser Services, 4 received a Basic Career Service, 2 received a Job Search Activities Service, 2 received a Career Guidance Service, 2 received an Unemployment Insurance Assistance Service, 3 received a Referral to Employment, and 2 received an Individualized Career Service. MSFW Outreach and Foreign Labor Certification Staff reported 595 contacts with MSFWs through MSFW Field Checks, MSFW Field Visits, MSFW Outreach, H2A Field Checks, and H2A Field Visits.





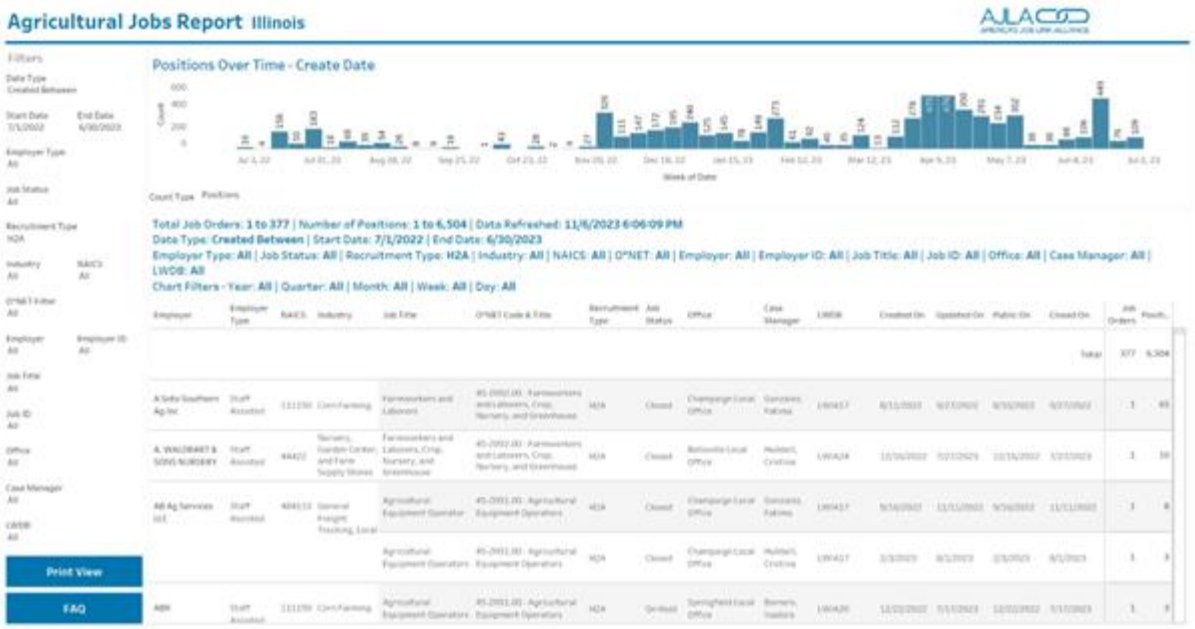
Equity Ratio Indicators Counts	Non-MSFW	MSFW
Wagner-Peyser Participant	15,841	4
Received Basic Career Services (Staff-Assisted)	15,837	4
Received Staff-Assisted Job Search Activities	5,499	2
Received Staff-Assisted Career Guidance Services	13,798	2
Received Unemployment Insurance (UI) Claim Assistance	11,973	2
Referred to Employment	5,830	1
Referred to Federal Training	68	0
Referred to Other Federal /State Assistance	4,058	0
Received Individualized Career Service	11,992	2

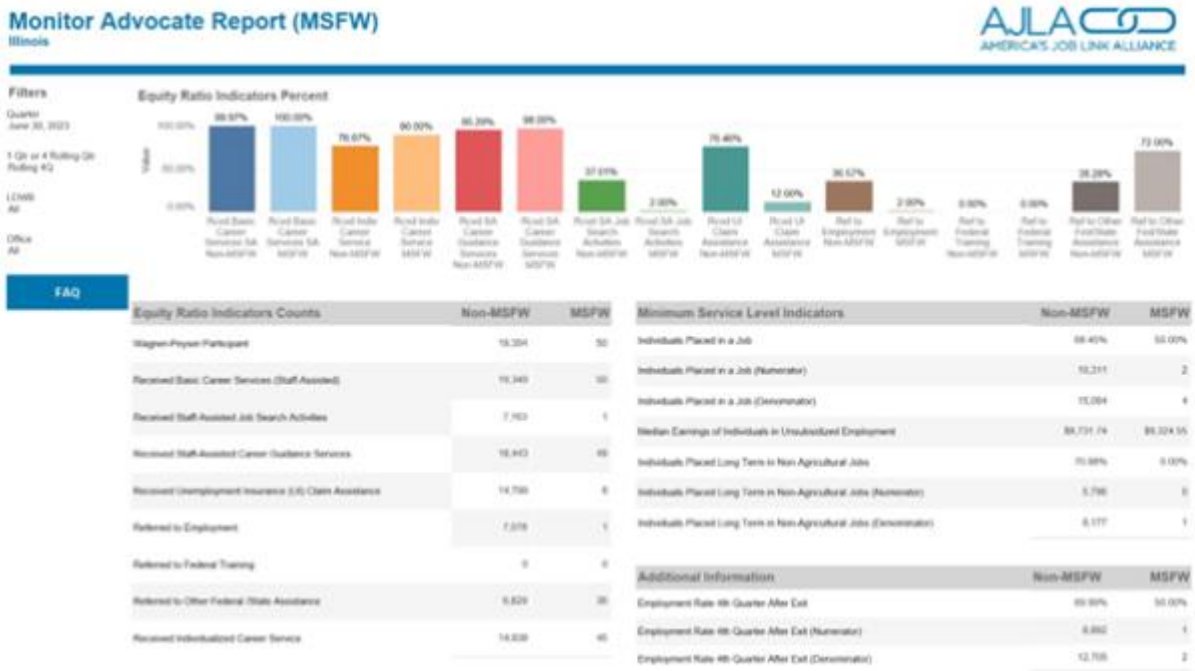
Minimum Service Level Indicators	Non-MSFW	MSFW
Individuals Placed in a Job	57.66%	100.00%
Individuals Placed in a Job (Numerator)	4,734	1
Individuals Placed in a Job (Denominator)	8,176	1
Median Earnings of Individuals in Unsubsidized Employment	$6,720.00	$4,545.25
Individuals Placed Long Term in Non-Agricultural Jobs	46.07%	100.00%
Individuals Placed Long Term in Non-Agricultural Jobs (Numerator)	3,918	1
Individuals Placed Long Term in Non-Agricultural Jobs (Denominator)	8,930	1

Additional Information	Non-MSFW	MSFW
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	54.91%	25.00%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit (Numerator)	5,480	1
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit (Denominator)	11,902	4

PY 2022 Data 7/1/2022 to 6/30/2023

IDES received a total of 377 agricultural job orders with 6504 openings available. 50 MSFWs were registered for Wagner-Peyser Services, 50 received a Basic Career Service, 1 received a Job Search Activities Service, 49 received a Career Guidance Service, 6 received an Unemployment Insurance Assistance Service, 1 received a Referral to Employment, 36 were Referred to other Federal/State Assistance, and 45 received an Individualized Career Service. MSFW Outreach and Foreign Labor Certification Staff reported 687 contacts with MSFWs through MSFW Field Checks, MSFW Field Visits, MSFW Outreach, H2A Field Checks, and H2A Field Visits.

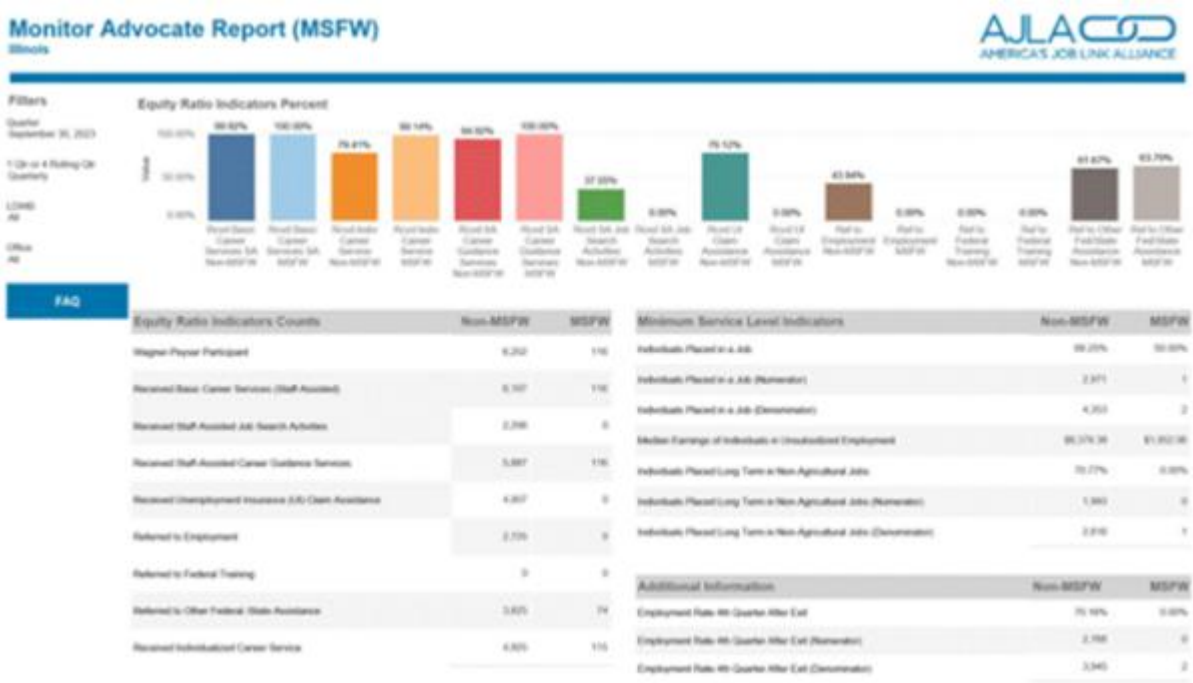




PY 2023 Data 7/1/2023 to 6/30/2024

IDES received a total of 368 agricultural job orders with 6276 openings available. 132 MSFWs were registered for Wagner-Peyser Services, 132 received a Basic Career Service, 3 received a Job Search Activities Service, 130 received a Career Guidance Service, 9 received an Unemployment Insurance Assistance Service, 2 received a Referral to Employment, 80 were Referred to Federal Training, 80 were Referred to other Federal/State Assistance, and 127 received an Individualized Career Service. MSFW Outreach and Foreign Labor Certification Staff reported 1904 contacts with MSFWs through MSFW Field Checks, MSFW Field Visits, MSFW Outreach, H2A Field Checks, and H2A Field Visits.

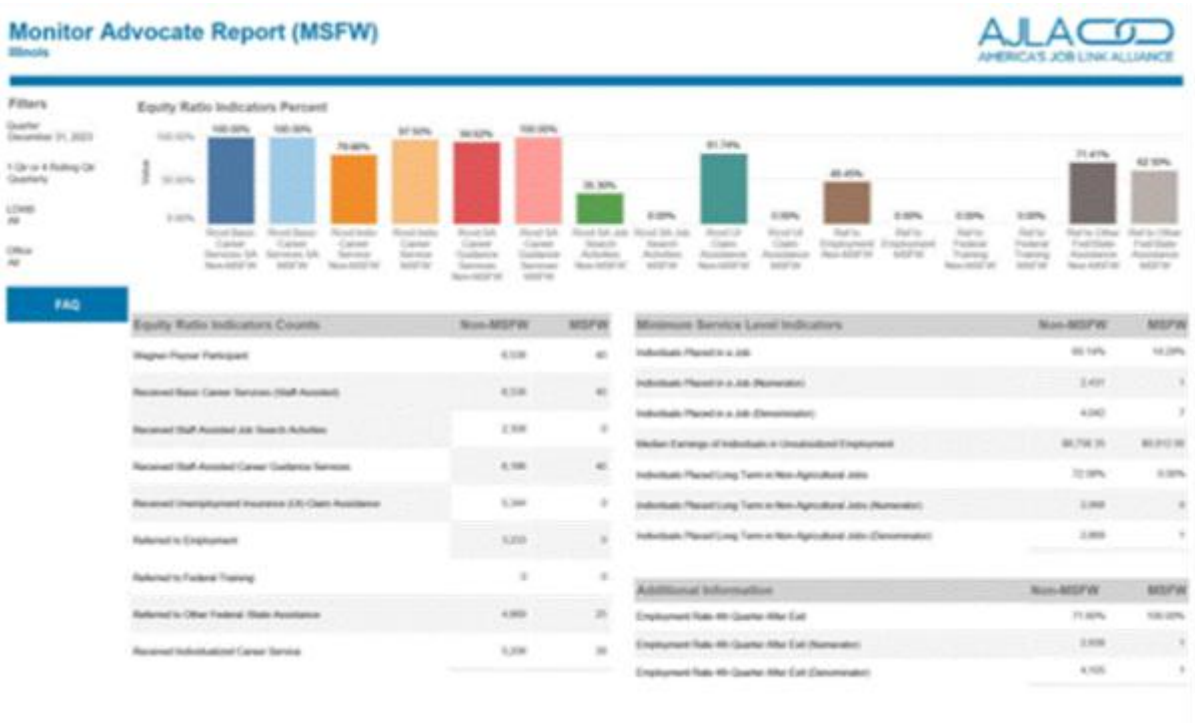

Agricultural Jobs Report Illinois
AJLA
AMERICA'S JOB LINK ALLIANCE
Positions Over Time - Create Data
Print View
FAQ


Monitor Advocate Report (MSFW)
Illinois
AJLA
AMERICA'S JOB LINK ALLIANCE
Filters
Equity Ratio Indicators Percent
FAQ
Equity Ratio Indicators Counts
Non-MSFW
MSFW
Minimum Service Level Indicators
Non-MSFW
MSFW
Additional Information
Non-MSFW
MSFW

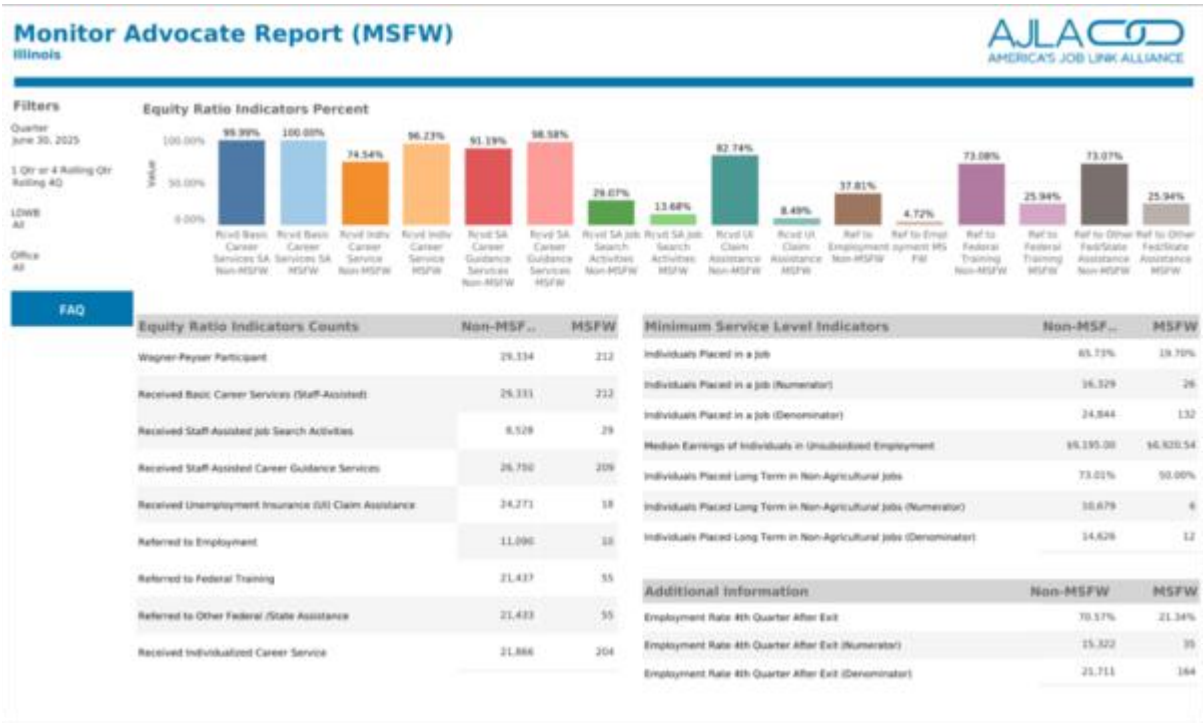


PY 2024 Data 7/1/2024 to 6/30/2025

IDES received a total of 886 agricultural job orders with 10,208 openings available. 212 MSFWs were registered for Wagner-Peyser Services, 212 received a Basic Career Service, 29 received a Job Search Activities Service, 209 received a Career Guidance Service, 18 received an Unemployment Insurance Assistance Service, 10 received a Referral to Employment, 55 were Referred to Federal Training, 55 were Referred to other Federal/State Assistance, and 204 received an Individualized Career Service. MSFW Outreach and Foreign Labor Certification Staff reported 2080 contacts with MSFWs through MSFW Field Checks, MSFW Field Visits, MSFW Outreach, H2A Field Checks, and H2A Field Visits.







Based off the previous four years of Wagner-Peyser Act - Monitor Advocate System data reports (see screenshots above) on performance, the state was unable to meet its goals to provide MSFWs quantitatively proportionate services as compared to non-MSFWs due to several factors:

- The COVID pandemic resulted in MSFW outreach staff not being cleared for in person activities and experiencing some technological limitations that impeded full participation in virtual activities.
- Lack of qualified applicants to fill key outreach positions, and vacancies in key ES positions.
- The State Monitor Advocate position was without a permanent staff person except for Dec. 2020 through June 2021 and then again from May 2022 through July 2022. This was a major deficit in monitoring and guidance. The SMA position has had a permanent staff person since May 2023.
- COVID disruptions to community organizations, including the NFJP provider meant that when in-person outreach expanded again, many of our community contacts were gone or we had to restart with our new staff.

However, IDES has worked on several fronts to remedy the situation.

First, the person who was the permanent SMA from December 2020 through June 2021 was able to complete full training of key ES staff, launch an MOU process with the new NFJP provider, conduct local office monitoring, and on-board two new outreach staff.

Second, management split the former SMA position into two positions to ensure that the SMA activities are separate from MSFW Outreach and FLC activities and to have an MSFW/FLC manager to focus on improving a robust outreach strategy.

Third, a new statewide ES Manager has been trained and given the responsibility of ensuring the self-monitoring of ES services at the agency, as well as training all ES staff on the agency's MSFW responsibilities.

Finally, agency leadership has reinforced that filling all MSFW positions is an agency priority, one result of which was the hiring of a new SMA and also deploying temporary ES staff to expand the MSFW outreach capacity from May through October.

D. ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

The plan must include an explanation of what was achieved based on the previous AOP, what was not achieved and an explanation as to why the State believes the goals were not achieved, and how the State intends to remedy the gaps of achievement in the coming year.

The goals of the previous AOP were not met due to several factors:

- The COVID pandemic resulted in MSFW outreach staff not being cleared for in person activities and experiencing some technological limitations that impeded full participation in virtual activities.
- Lack of qualified applicants to fill key outreach positions, and vacancies in key ES positions.

- The State Monitor Advocate position was without a permanent staff person with the exception of Dec. 2020 through June 2021 and then again from May 2022 through July 2022. This was a major deficit in monitoring and guidance. The SMA position has a permanent staff person since May 2023.
- COVID disruptions to community organizations, included the NFJP provider meant that when in-person outreach expanded again, many of our community contacts were gone or we had to restart with our new staff.

However, IDES has worked on several fronts to remedy the situation.

First, the person who was the permanent SMA from December 2020 through June 2021 was able to complete full training of key ES staff, launch an MOU process with the new NFJP provider, conduct local office monitoring, and on-board two new outreach staff.

Second, management split the former SMA position into two positions to ensure that the SMA activities are separate from MSFW Outreach and FLC activities and to have an MSFW/FLC manager to focus on improving a robust outreach strategy.

Third, a new statewide ES Manager has been trained and given the responsibility of ensuring the self-monitoring of ES services at the agency, as well as training all ES staff on the agency's MSFW responsibilities.

Finally, agency leadership has reinforced that filling all MSFW positions is an agency priority, one result of which was the hiring of a new SMA and also deploying temporary ES staff to expand the MSFW outreach capacity from May through October.

E. STATE MONITOR ADVOCATE

The plan must contain a statement confirming the State Monitor Advocate has reviewed and approved the AOP.

Kynda Buenrostro is the Illinois State Monitor Advocate. She has been given an opportunity to review and comment on this Agricultural Outreach Plan. She approves of this plan.

WAGNER-PEYSER ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service is co-located with one-stop centers or a plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time (sec 121(e)(3));	Yes
2. If the State has significant MSFW one-stop centers, the State agency is complying with the	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
requirements under 20 CFR 653.111, State Workforce Agency staffing requirements;	
3. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser Act services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and	Yes
4. SWA officials: 1) Initiate the discontinuation of services; 2) Make the determination that services need to be discontinued; 3) Make the determination to reinstate services after the services have been discontinued; 4) Approve corrective action plans; 5) Approve the removal of an employer's clearance orders from interstate or intrastate clearance if the employer was granted conditional access to ARS and did not come into compliance within 5 calendar days; 6) Enter into agreements with State and Federal enforcement agencies for enforcement-agency staff to conduct field checks on the SWAs' behalf (if the SWA so chooses); and 7) Decide whether to consent to the withdrawal of complaints if a party who requested a hearing wishes to withdraw its request for hearing in writing before the hearing.	Yes
5. The SWA has established and maintains a self-appraisal system for ES operations to determine success in reaching goals and to correct deficiencies in performance (20 CFR 658.601).	Yes

WAGNER PEYSER PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the two years covered by the

plan modification. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the two years of the plan modification.

While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

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%	65.0%	65.0%	65.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	66.0%	66.0%	66.0%	66.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$8,100	$8,500	$8,100	$8,500
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 [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]

1

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAMS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a description of the following as it pertains to adult education and literacy programs and activities under title II of WIOA, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA).

A. ALIGNING OF CONTENT STANDARDS (WIOA SECTION 102(B)(2)(D)(II)(I))

Describe how the eligible agency has aligned its content standards for adult education with State-adopted challenging academic content standards, as adopted under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(1)).

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) is the eligible agency in the State with the responsibility of administering the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 – Title II Adult Education and Literacy Act.

Illinois' strategic plan for aligning content standards with those adopted under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 as amended (20 U.S.C. 6311 (b) (1)) began in 2014 with the integration of the Illinois Adult Education ABE/ASE content standards with the Illinois Essential Employability Skills Content Standards and the College and Career Readiness (CCR) Standards released by the Illinois State Board of Education as well as the Office of Career Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE). The content standards for English Language Learners were updated in State Fiscal Year 2017 to align with OCTAE's English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards and the Illinois Adult Education ABE/ASE content standards. All Illinois AEFLA Content Standards can be located here: https://excellenceinadulted.org/resources/iccb-statewide-contextualized-curricula.

The ICCB Division of Adult Education and Literacy requires all Adult Education Providers to base their instruction on the rigorous Illinois Adult Education and English Language Proficiency content standards. In an ongoing strategy to sustain high-quality curriculum and instruction, the ICCB oversees the development and implementation of Professional Pathways Training. These instructional pathways include ABE/ASE/ ESL Standard Proficient, Specialist, and Master Teacher. In FY2020, elements of Universal Design were embedded in all Professional Pathway training to further Illinois' focus on quality instruction.

To further aid in program utilization of the Illinois Adult Education Content Standards, the Adult Education Professional Development Network (PDN) developed model standards-aligned curriculum in the following areas: 1) Career Pathways Contextualized Bridge Curriculum, 2) Entrepreneurial Contextualized Bridge Curriculum, 3) Healthcare Contextualized Bridge Curriculum, 4) Information Technology Bridge Curriculum, 5) Manufacturing Contextualized Bridge Curriculum, 6) Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics (TDL) Contextualized Bridge, and 7) Education - including Para Professional Training and Early Childhood Education. These models illustrate how to utilize the Illinois Adult Education Content Standards with work-based learning. Comprehensive professional development and technical assistance, in addition to the pathway trainings, is provided to adult education professionals by the PDN as they provide targeted, engaging, relevant, and standards-aligned classroom instruction. Finally, the AEFLA Competition Submissions or Renewal Plans require program administrators to address how their Title II program will implement content standards in the classroom at the local level.

B. LOCAL ACTIVITIES

Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund each eligible provider to establish or operate programs that provide any of the following adult education and literacy activities identified in section 203 of WIOA, including programs that provide such activities concurrently. The Unified or Combined State Plan must include at a minimum the scope, content, and organization of these local activities.

ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY ACTIVITIES (SECTION 203 OF WIOA)

- Adult education;

- Literacy;
- Workplace adult education and literacy activities;
- Family literacy activities;
- English language acquisition activities;
- Integrated English literacy and civics education;
- Workforce preparation activities; or
- Integrated education and training that—

1. Provides adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster, and
2. Is for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

Special Rule. Each eligible agency awarding a grant or contract under this section shall not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that such agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

In the spring of PY25, the ICCB held a multi-year competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) soliciting statewide eligible providers to apply for funding to provide Title II Adult Education and Literacy services as aligned with goals and activities outlined in the Unified State Plan, Perkins V, and the ICCB Workforce Education Strategic Plan. Illinois runs all the Title II competitions (section 231, 243, and 225) in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C. For renewal years, each provider will be granted continued funding based upon meeting the determined measures of effectiveness.

During a competitive year, to be considered for funding, an applicant of demonstrated effectiveness must,

1. Be an Eligible Applicant, as listed below:
    a. Local educational agencies (LEA)
    b. Community–Based Organizations (CBO) or Faith-Based Organizations (FBO)
    c. Volunteer Literacy Organizations
    d. Institutions of Higher Education (IHE)
    e. Public or Private nonprofit agencies

f. Libraries

g. Public-housing authorities

h. Nonprofit 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 described previously

j. Partnership between an employer and an entity described above

k. Other applicants of demonstrated effectiveness

2. Respond to the NOFO by the due date.
3. Complete all required portions of the application.
4. Meet all deadlines and other elements as specified in the NOFO.
5. Meet all eligibility requirements.

Federal regulations governing AEFLA at 34 CFR part 463 clarify that only an organization that has demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education and literacy services is eligible to apply for AEFLA funds. To demonstrate effectiveness, an applicant must provide performance data on its record of improving the skills of eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy. This must be demonstrated in the following content domains:

- reading,
- writing,
- mathematics,
- English language acquisition, and
- other subject areas relevant to the services contained in the State's application for funds.

Furthermore, the past effectiveness of an eligible applicant in improving the literacy skills of eligible adults is a strong factor in the delivery of adult education instruction and supportive services. In addition, the ICCB will ensure all eligible providers have direct and equitable access to apply and compete for funding.

The ICCB follows the structure and guidance for the Local Workforce Review Boards as provided in Program Memorandum OCTAE 17-1: Clarifications Regarding Competition and Award of Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Funds to Eligible Providers under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/octae-program-memo-17-1.pdf).

Figure 1



During a competitive year, to be considered for funding an applicant of demonstrated effectiveness must: meet the following criteria, as outlined in the *Determining Applicant Eligibility When Conducting a State Competition for Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Funds,* a Technical Assistance Guide. A program must:

- provide data on improving skills of eligible individuals in the following content domains, as appropriate to the services being sought in the application:
    - Reading
    - Writing
    - Mathematics
    - English language acquisition
    - Other subject areas relevant to the application for funds
- provide information on outcomes of participants for:
    - Employment
    - Attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and
    - Transition to postsecondary education and training

The past effectiveness of an eligible applicant in improving the literacy skills of eligible adults is a strong factor in the delivery of adult education instruction and supportive services. Grant proposals will be considered based on the following criteria as outlined in WIOA Title II the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

The ICCB recognizes the following activities are allowable under Adult Education and Literacy under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

- Adult education;
- Literacy;
- Workplace adult education and literacy activities;
- Family literacy activities;
- English language acquisition activities;
- Integrated English literacy and civics education;
- Workforce preparation activities; or
- Integrated education and training.

The ICCB will consider the success of a funded provider in meeting or exceeding such performance measures as identified by the federal National Reporting System (NRS). The ICCB also recognizes the need to build a career pathway system for adult learners that will enhance education and employment opportunities. Furthermore, all submitted applications will be reviewed by the Local Workforce Development Boards for alignment with local plans.

The program/applicants will be required to address the thirteen considerations under federal law and one state consideration. Applications will be evaluated using a rubric that assigns point values for each proposed activity as outlined in the proposal.

1. The documented need of the eligible applicant to serve individuals in the community who are most in need of adult education and literacy services and those who are in need of career pathway services, including individuals who have literacy skills or who are English language learners (i.e., literacy statistics, regional and local needs as identified under the Unified State Plan, etc.).
2. The applicant demonstrates the ability to serve eligible individuals with disabilities, including those with learning disabilities.
3. The past effectiveness of an eligible applicant in improving the literacy skills of adults, including those with low literacy levels; and demonstrates the ability to meet or exceed the levels of performance.
4. The applicants proposed adult education services and activities demonstrate an alignment with local plans and services and with local one-stop partners.
5. The applicant demonstrates the use of instructional practices and activities that research has proven to be effective in teaching to achieve learning gains, is of sufficient intensity and duration, is built on a strong foundation of research and effective educational practice and includes the essential components of reading.
6. The applicant demonstrates the effectiveness in providing instruction in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics and English language acquisition and is based on best practices, scientific valid research and the state standards.

7. The program activities effectively employ advances in technology including the use of computers as a part of instruction including distance education to increase the quality of learning which leads to improved performance.
8. The applicant proposes activities that provide contextualized learning including integrated education and training as well as bridge programs to ensure that an individual has the skills needed to compete in the workplace, transition to post-secondary education and training, advance in employment and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
9. The applicant proposes activities that are delivered by well-trained instructors, counselors, support staff and administrators who meet state guidelines, have access to high quality professional development.
10. The applicant's activities coordinate with other available education, training, and social service resources in the community, such as by establishing strong links with elementary schools and secondary schools, post-secondary educational institutions, institutions of higher education, local workforce investment boards, one-stop centers, job training programs, and social service agencies, business, industry, labor organizations, community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations and intermediaries, for the development of career pathways.
11. The applicant offers flexible schedules and supportive services (such as childcare and transportation) that are necessary to enable individuals, including individuals with disabilities or other special needs, to attend and complete programs.
12. The applicant maintains a high-quality information management system, as determined by the ICCB and has the capacity to report participant outcomes and to monitor program performance measures.
13. The local communities have a demonstrated need for additional English literacy programs and civic education programs.
14. The proposed budget is consistent with the eligible provider's activities, is cost-efficient within administrative guidelines and places emphasis on serving the target populations. (Illinois consideration)

Title II Adult Education and Literacy Providers must provide at minimum one of the following educational activities through direct instruction in a traditional classroom, distance learning, or hybrid learning. Each level of instruction is grounded on the Illinois Adult Education Content Standards or the English Language Proficiency Standards and includes an expectation of technology integration that builds on the digital literacy skills; workforce/employability skills; life skills; career exploration/awareness skills; workplace literacy; and family literacy/parenting are contextualized to meet the diverse needs of eligible adult learners.

Instruction must include contextualization that integrates basic reading, math and language skills and industry/occupational knowledge and career development that includes career exploration, career planning within a career area, and understanding the world of work. Title II providers must include instructional programming in at least one of the following categories.

- **Adult Basic Education (ABE)** curriculum consists of approved courses designed to bring a student from grade zero through the eighth-grade competency level, as determined by standardized testing. This curriculum and instruction must increase a student's ability to read, write, and perform mathematics. This should also lead to the attainment of a secondary school diploma or high school equivalency; and transition to post-secondary education and training; or employment. Beginning level courses cover grade zero through the third-grade competency level. The intermediate level courses cover fourth-grade competency through the eighth-grade competency.
- **Adult Secondary Education (ASE)** curriculum consists of approved instruction designed to bring a student from grade nine through the twelfth-grade competency level, as determined by standardized testing. This curriculum and instruction must increase a student's ability to read, write, and perform mathematics. This should also lead to the attainment of a secondary school diploma or high school equivalency; and transition to post-secondary education and training; or employment.
- **English Language Acquisition (ELA)** curriculum consists of approved instruction designed to include instruction in English Language Acquisition for those whose native language is not English. The curriculum and instruction are designed to help eligible individuals who are English Language Learners achieve competence in reading, speaking, comprehension and mathematics skills that lead to attainment of a secondary school diploma or high school equivalency; and transition to post-secondary education and training; or employment. Student levels are based on proficiency as measured by ICCB–approved standardized tests.
- **Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education** serves English Language Learners who are adults, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, that enables such adults to achieve competency in the English language and acquire the basic and more advanced skills needed to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens in the United States. The curriculum and instruction should prepare adults who are English Language Learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency. The Components of the IELCE Program Include:
    - Literacy and English Language Acquisition
    - Civics Education
    - Workforce Preparation / Bridge
    - Workforce Training / ICAPS (Integrated Career & Academic Preparation System)
- **Workforce Preparation** includes Bridge Programming, Integrated Education and Training, Vocational Education, and Workplace Learning.
    - **Bridge Programming** is a transitional program moving adult learners from Adult Basic Education, typically NRS levels 3 and 4. Core elements of Bridge programming includes contextualized instruction, career development, and transition services. Bridges are often used to prepare adult learners for the

Integrated Career & Academic Preparation System (ICAPS) and incorporates the following:

- industry knowledge such as math skills needed in a particular field,
- career expectations such as types of credentials necessary and how long those credentials take to earn, and
- transition skills such as resume writing, interviewing, and college success.

- **The Integrated Career & Academic Preparation System (ICAPS)** is a quality instructional framework in Illinois for the implementation of Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs, as defined by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). ICAPS provides an accelerated pathway to an industry-recognized credential through training partnerships– such as Career and Technical Education or an approved training provider- to serve adult education students, including English Language Learners, at the same time they are completing their Illinois High School Diploma and/or improving their English Language. Instruction and training are supplemented by support courses, comprehensive student support services, and augmented by collaborative teaching practices between workforce training instructors and basic skills instructors. Planning resources can be found here: https://www.icapsillinois.com/
  - **ICAPS Model 1** utilizes partnerships between Adult Education providers and college and university workforce and career training programs that may not be funded through Perkins or the Illinois Community College Board. This model also provides concurrent enrollment and instruction in a team-taught environment with comprehensive student supports resulting in skill level gains, high school equivalency certifications, college credit, and college and industry-recognized credentials.
  - **The ICAPS Model 2** also utilizes partnerships between Adult Education providers and workforce and career training programs that may or may not be tied to a specific postsecondary institution. This model allows for the participation of community-based and faith-based organizations, local school districts and educational authorities, regional offices of education, and other state-funded Adult Education providers and partnership with corporate and continuing education divisions at community colleges, Local Workforce Innovation Boards, independent and governmental workforce training agencies, as well as individual employers and industry-based training programs. This model also provides integrated instruction and comprehensive student supports resulting in skill level gains, high school equivalency certifications, and industry-recognized credentials as well as the option for employer-specific training programs.
- **Vocational Skills Training (VOC**) consists of an ICCB AEFL–approved course that is short-term in nature and is used primarily for High School Credit

Recovery Programs completing vocational education requirements or as a required component of an ICCB approved ICAP, Bridge, or Workplace Learning program.

- **Workplace Adult Education andLiteracy** may include coordination of workplace education projects that are designed to meet the unique needs of participating workers and employers. Workplace Adult Education and Literacy refers to an individual's ability to read, write, speak, compute, and otherwise solve problems with enough proficiency to meet everyday needs on the job and to pursue professional goals. This includes a knowledge of phonics, word identification and comprehension, which enables the employee to read technical information and complex manuals. Workplace Adult Education and Literacy also refers to the ability of an individual to function in job situations involving higher order thinking and the capacity to evaluate work situations and processes. An employee who is workplace literate has increased job success, experiences fewer frustrations in the workplace, has higher self-esteem and has less need for retraining as the job and technology change. Workplace literacy can be funded with Adult Education and Literacy funds. All other rules of the AEL grant apply as well. The ICCB will continue to work to align new terminology with the requirements of the federal law (e.g., Workplace Literacy to Workforce Education).

- **Family literacy** is an integrated, intensive service for at-risk families that must include, but is not limited to, the four components—adult education, parenting education, parent/child activities and child education—of family literacy. Each component is defined as:

    - Parenting education includes information and support for parents on issues such as childbirth, development and nurturing of children, child-rearing, family management, support for children learning, effective advocacy strategies for the rights of all children, and parent involvement in their child's education.

    - Parent/child activities include regularly scheduled, interactive literacy– based learning activities for parents and children.

    - Literacy coordination may include coordination, tutor training, tutor scheduling and other support activities that promote student learning gains and may include volunteer literacy. Literacy services must be in conjunction with Adult Education and Literacy instructional programming provided by trained volunteers to target population students. Literacy services support classroom instruction and increasing student learning gains. Trained volunteers may work with students during classroom instruction under the supervision and coordination of a paid instructor in an AEL funded class. Instructional hours may not be claimed for services provided by volunteer tutors.

Transition services provide students with the information and assistance they need to successfully navigate the process of moving from adult education to credit or occupational programs. Services may include approved wrap around support services.

Special Rule: *Each eligible agency awarding a grant or contract under this section shall not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that such agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.*

GEPA Question 1. **Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.**

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) ensures equitable access to and participation in the proposed project through a comprehensive framework of mission-driven commitments, formal policies, and enforceable grant requirements that prioritize nondiscrimination and accessibility.

This commitment is operationalized through statewide policies that prohibit discrimination in employment, services, and program participation on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, and other protected statuses. These protections are embedded in all grant agreements and align with key federal and state laws, including the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Title VI and Title IX, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA). All funded programs are required to comply fully with these regulations, ensuring that equitable access is not optional, but a condition of participation.

ICCB further ensures equitable access through required grantee certifications and oversight. All recipients must formally address their compliance with nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions through grant competitions and renewals and Terms of the Grant in the State of Illinois Grant Agreement.

To support equitable access for adult learners, ICCB requires grantees to clearly communicate program information in accessible, understandable formats. Accessibility for individuals with disabilities is another key component of ICCB's equitable access framework. Each funded program must have a trained ADA Coordinator, maintain written procedures, and keep auditable records documenting the provision of support services. Programs are required to offer reasonable accommodations, such as assistive technology, alternative instructional formats, extended time, and reduced-distraction environments.

C. CORRECTIONS EDUCATION AND OTHER EDUCATION OF INSTITUTIONALIZED INDIVIDUALS (WIOA SECTION 102(B)(2)(D)(II)(II)(BB))

Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund eligible providers to establish or operate programs that provide any of the following correctional educational programs identified in section 225 of WIOA:

- Adult education and literacy activities;

- Special education, as determined by the eligible agency;
- Secondary school credit;
- Integrated education and training;
- Career pathways;
- Concurrent enrollment;
- Peer tutoring; and
- Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.

Each eligible agency using funds provided under Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution must give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within 5 years of participation in the program.

The Illinois Community College Board funds programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C and allocates no more than 20% of the eligible funds awarded under the WIOA statute to be allocated for eligible institutions to operate instructional programs under Section 225 of WIOA. Priority of service will be given to individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participating in the program. The ICCB will use the same grant process criteria as the other eligible providers under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and carries the same provisions for direct and equitable access. During a competitive process, eligible applicants must have demonstrated effectiveness in providing instruction in Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE) and English Language Acquisition (ELA). Other required services include Integrated Education and Training, Work-based Training, and Career Pathways instruction. Adult Education and Family Literacy Act funds will be competed based on the same application process following the 13 considerations outlined in Section 231 (3) plus one Illinois specific criterion. Applicants will be awarded on the application merit as measured on the Illinois Adult Education defined scoring rubric. During continuation years, providers must provide evidence of program quality by meeting state required performance or they will be placed on a program improvement plan with intensive technical assistance.

The same criterion used to determine an applicant's eligibility under Section 231 also applies to all applicants of demonstrated effectiveness listed under Section 225, including Correctional Education Institutions. Applicants will be evaluated using the same criteria of the AEFLA grants under Sec. 231

Eligible instructional activities and services are provided in correctional institutions throughout the state. The services provided include an assessment of an individual's educational functioning levels to determine adult education and literacy instructional programming needed in reading, writing, math and speaking to earn the Illinois High School Diploma or High school credit as well as the acquisition of the English language. Applicants applying for AEFLA Section 225 programming must use these funds to increase the number of justice-involved adults in

improving their basic skills, completing a secondary school credential, entering post-secondary education and training, or preparing to enter and retain employment.

The ICCB funds adult education in correctional institutions and is designed to provide justice involved individuals with basic skill instruction as well as career pathway preparation. Given the low skill levels of many offenders, the ICCB adult/correctional education model understands that most participants' re-entry preparation will begin with adult education. Adult education is designed to help individuals strengthen their basic skills, earn their high school credential, and transition to further education and training such as career and technical education or other post-secondary education programs. Illinois' adult education programs within a correction framework may provide the following core services that are consistent with the requirements for all statewide adult education programs. The ICCB will work with Correctional programs to establish a process for individuals to transition to re-entry initiatives and other post-release services with the goal of reducing recidivism. The ICCB will, in conjunction with the Correctional programs, develop a process of referral to adult education programs in release and to the local community college. Special Note: Secondary School Credit programming is not currently provided through correctional education with AEFL funds; however, this provision may be considered in the future.

Through partnerships, adult education programing will align its educational services with the labor market needs to determine jobs without criminal history restrictions. Using effective models of re-entry and workplace skills instruction like the Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center and Logan Correctional Center, the ICCB will work with the Illinois Department of Corrections to develop and scale effective instructional practices to prepare returning citizens for employment upon release. The ICCB will work with core and required partners under WIOA to provide extensive wrap-around services to ensure successful recruitment, retention, re-entry, transition into post-secondary education, career training and workforce preparation to incarcerated individuals to reduce recidivism.

The ICCB funds adult education in correctional institutions and is designed to provide offenders with basic skill instruction as well as career pathway preparation. Given the low skill levels of many offenders, the ICCB adult/correctional education model understands that most participants' re-entry preparation will begin with adult education. Adult education is designed to help individuals strengthen their basic skills, earn their high school credential and transition to further education and training such as career and technical education or other postsecondary education programs. Illinois' adult education programs within a correction framework may provide the following core services that are consistent with the requirements for all statewide adult education programs:

- Adult education and literacy activities. These include Adult Basic Education, Adult Secondary Education (ASE), and English Language Acquisition (ELA). These services are based on the needs of the institution.
- Special education, as determined by the eligible agency;
- Secondary school credit;
- Integrated education and training;
- Career pathways;

- Concurrent enrollment;
- Peer tutoring; (Illinois Policy – Educational services offered may be provided by peer tutors who work under the direction of an adult educator), and
- Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.

The ICCB will work with the Second Chance program through the Correctional programs to establish a process for individuals to transition to re-entry initiatives and other post-release services with the goal of reducing recidivism. The ICCB will, in conjunction with the Correctional programs, develop a process of referral to adult education programs in the area of release and to the local community college. Special Note: Secondary School Credit programming is not currently provided through correctional education with AEFLA funds, however, this provision may be considered in the future. Through partnerships, adult education programing will align its educational services with the labor market needs to determine jobs without criminal history restrictions. Using effective models of re-entry and workplace skills instruction like the Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center and Logan Correctional Center, the ICCB will work with the Illinois Department of Corrections to develop and scale effective instructional practices to prepare returning citizens for employment upon release. The ICCB will work with core and required partners under WIOA to provide extensive wrap-around services to ensure successful recruitment, retention, re-entry, transition into post-secondary education, career training and workforce preparation to incarcerated individuals to reduce recidivism.

D. INTEGRATED ENGLISH LITERACY AND CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAM (WIOA SECTION 102(B)(2)(D)(II)(II)(CC))

Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund eligible providers to establish or operate Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) programs under section 243 of WIOA. Describe how adult English language learners, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, are served in IELCE programs.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be offered in combination with integrated education and training activities found in 34 CFR section 463.36.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.

Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) includes education to immigrants and other limited English proficient populations and is designed to prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency; and integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program, in combination with Integrated Education and Training programming. English Language Learners served include professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries who also need English Language Acquisition instruction as demonstrated by an NRS approved assessment

The IELCE will be competed on a multi-year schedule in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C. To ensure equitable access, the funding opportunities will be distributed widely. The same criterion used to determine an applicant's eligibility under Section 231 also applies to all applicants of demonstrated effectiveness. Each applicant will be evaluated using a rubric and scoring process that is in accordance with the activities established under Section 243 and will also include the thirteen considerations under law as well as one consideration under state guidelines. Applicants will also be required to integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program. Local Workforce Boards will have the opportunity to review applicant proposals to ensure alignment with local workforce employment needs. The state will evaluate the applications under Section 243 based upon the ability to deliver blended English Language Acquisition (ELA)/Civics as a part of instruction. Additionally, each applicant must address the required IELCE competencies, and concurrent enrollment in an Integrated Education and Training (including Workforce Preparation Skills) instruction.

Illinois delivers the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program in combination with Integrated Education and Training activities as outlined in CFR section 463.36. All programs receiving IELCE funds must ensure English Language learners have access to an ICAP (Illinois version of IETs). ICAPs include vocational training and skill development opportunities relevant to local in-demand industries and occupations. This comprehensive approach enables learners to acquire both language skills and workplace competencies needed for sustainable employment.

To achieve the goals of the IELCE, the ICCB providers program leadership through the ICCB Division of Adult Education and Literacy. The ICCB AEFLA State Staff represents the IELCE program with core WIOA partners through system webinars and conferences and together, the partners coordinate professional development with the PDN and collaborate with the Director of Workforce Education to develop technical assistance to programs with the implementation of IELCE. This partnership ensures IELCE programs are included in all ongoing professional development on the implementation competencies in the instruction and the inclusion of work-based and workplace learning. Programs will also be required to integrate with the local workforce development system building on the IELCE Immigrant Integration Framework (https://lincs.ed.gov/sites/default/files/IELCE_Framework.pdf) and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.

Additionally, IELCE Integration with Local Workforce Development Systems Title II staff are represented on the Illinois Workforce Investment Board and engage in biweekly meetings with all Core WIOA Partners. These collaborative meetings ensure system integration which leads to

service integration at the local level. The ICCB encourages and supports ongoing engagement between employers and workforce development system partners in the design, delivery, and evaluation of IELCE programs through the support of the Adult Education Professional Development Network. Through the ongoing professional development, local programs can be responsive to regional and local labor market demands, ensuring programs have the support needed to develop and implement activities reflecting the skill needs of high-demand jobs.

Curriculum for this instructional category assists participants to effectively engage in the education, work, and civic opportunities of the United States of America. The Illinois IELCE competencies consist of seven thematic units (components) of civics development and more than 40 practical and immediately relevant activities for immigrant integration and success. The seven thematic units include: Consumer Economics (CE), Community Resources (CR), Democratic Process (DP), Employment (EM), Health Services (HE), Housing (HO) and U.S. School System (SS). Throughout a combination of classroom instruction and community connections, these competencies will enable participants to effectively engage in education, work, civics opportunities and rights and responsibilities of citizenship while continuing to build their English language and literacy skills. The competencies may be used at each level of ELA instruction; however, a program should increase the level of difficulty as the student progresses.

E. STATE LEADERSHIP (WIOA SECTION 102(B)(2)(D)(II)(III))

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT THE REQUIRED STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) will utilize State Leadership funds in alignment with the goals identified in the Unified State Plan, Perkins V, and the Workforce Education Strategic Plan to prepare learners for credential attainment and sustainable employment. The strategic deployment of services to Title II programs will ensure both innovation and continuous improvement leading to system integration with Core Partners. The ICCB will address the four required State Leadership Activities.

1. *Alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other one-stop required partners to implement the strategies of the Unified State Plan as described in section 233(a)(1)(A).*

The ICCB will assist Title II programs in the coordination and delivery of key services within the one-stop delivery system ensuring integrated service delivery and employment engagement. To achieve this, ICCB will actively engage in strategic and coordinated partner planning in the following Illinois Workforce Innovation Board: 1) The Interagency Technical Assistance Team, 2) The Continuous Improvement Committee, 3) The WIOA Performance Work Group, 3) The Service Integration Work Group, 4) The WIOA Professional Development Work Group, and 5) any future committees or workgroups deemed relevant to system and service integration. ICCB Title II staff will engage in the MOU process from disseminating guidance to the Local Workforce Innovation Boards to reviewing all submitted MOUs.

The ICCB will also provide technical assistance to all core partners in understanding the adult education system and more specifically, training in appropriate administration of educational assessments to adult learners.

2. *Establishment or operation of a high-quality professional development program as described in section 233(a)(1)(B).*

The ICCB will oversee the annual scope of work and all deliverables of the Professional Development Network (PDN) in the development and dissemination of high-quality professional development related to the goals identified in the Unified State Plan. Focus areas include 1) Developing and implementing IET programming, 2) utilizing standards-based instruction in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language acquisition, 3) civics and IELCE competencies, 4) distance education and technology integration, and 5) proper assessment strategies with NRS approved assessments.

Significant efforts will be placed professional development on the integration of career pathways with adult education instruction, the implementation of work-based training such as the Bridge and Integrated Education and Training Programs, and workplace training.

Professional development will extend beyond working with instructors and training specifically designed for Career Navigators and Transition Coordinators will assist adult education professionals in the design of effective transition programs moving students from enrollment to credential attainment.

Training is offered via online, on demand courses, virtual learning communities, on-site/ in-person professional development, and includes the sharing of promising practices from high impact programs.

3. *Provision of technical assistance to funded eligible providers as described in section 233(a)(1)(C).*

The ICCB utilizes a statewide Management Information System, Data and Information System Illinois (DAISI) to monitor the performance of all Title II-funded adult education and literacy providers and guide technical assistance. ICCB AEFLA program support staff review data collected in DAISI on a continuous schedule and analyze and use the data to evaluate the quality and improvement of adult education and literacy activities by assessing the performance of providers through their educational functioning level increases or measurable skills gains.

Technical assistance to Title II providers occurs through a combination of support from the Professional Development Network and ICCB AELFA Staff, and ICCB Workforce Education Staff. Coordinated support includes reviewing State MIS data and reviewing monthly data analytics sent to all staff. The report indicates the posttest rate of a program, the number of learners enrolled in Bridge or IET programs, and overall enrollment. Trends in data alert AEFLA staff to programs who may need additional support.

Using this data, targeted technical assistance for Title II programs is planned, often in partnership with the PDN and the Division of Workforce Education. Technical assistance is facilitated through meetings, on-site visits, monthly Q & A virtual meetings with ICCB Staff, and specialized professional development.

Finally, information about models and proven or promising practices are disseminated to providers throughout the state using electronic mailing lists, websites such as the Excellence in Adult Education (https://excellenceinadulted.org/) and also at annual Administrators' Meetings.

4. *Monitoring and evaluation of the quality and improvement of adult education activities as described in section 233(a)(1)(D).*

Monitoring and evaluation begins as early as the grant application / award process. Each provider must complete fiscal/administrative and programmatic risk assessments which determine whether a program should have increased requirements for reporting and monitoring. While technical assistance is based on program data, monitoring and evaluation also includes desktop monitoring of DAISI data.

A variety of monitoring activities will be used to ensure programs' ability to achieve outcomes as well as the use of corrective action plans for those programs who are low performing. On-site monitoring for programs identified high-risk through a standardized monitoring tool ensures comprehensive programmatic monitoring is meaningful and relevant. ICCB AEFLA staff engage with program staff through on-site or virtual visits with all Title II programs to ensure programmatic and fiscal compliance and to provide technical assistance. Detailed internal reports are maintained for each funded provider and reviewed quarterly to ensure quality and compliance. Annual review of program data could place a program on a Watch or Probation list. The watch list is designed to identify and assist struggling programs to improve performance and student outcomes Probation is designed to monitor programs who fail to meet compliance with required program activities, performance benchmarks, and/or fiscal and administrative rules.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT PERMISSIBLE STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA, IF APPLICABLE

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) will carry out the following permissible state Leadership Activities. The ICCB will…

- continue to assist local programs implement career pathway instruction through the development and dissemination of toolkits and resources such as the Career Pathway Dictionary https://pathwaysdictionary.org/
- develop and disseminate tools and resources designed to promote collaboration between local Title II providers and local employers.
- Explore the development of a Pre-apprenticeship bridge program and/or a Competency-Based Education instruction. For the Pre-apprenticeship bridge program, the ICCB will develop an ICAPS program that will enable adult learners to transition from the adult education classroom to an apprenticeship. The agency is investigating the creation of a competency-based education model that uses a combination of pre-existing adult education and IET coursework.
- The ICCB will also assist programs with incorporating technology into instruction by supporting the development and delivery of a rigorous preparation curriculum, establish a quality assurance and approval process for web based curriculum; research and develop distance education tools that may be used to enhance instruction;
- identify and implement the most recent research in reading, writing, math ELA, and transitions; and develop standards for implementation into instruction.

- work with state workforce board and one-stop system to determine appropriate training needed across partner organizations;
- host a variety of regional planning summits/forums/workshops for all partners to enhance and align partnerships in the delivery of services;
- continue to participate in studies and research projects that are designed to provide a better understanding of how to enhance Illinois adult education. A current example is the research project partnership with the American Institute for Research on the equity in services with Illinois Bridge programming;
- lead the Illinois Adult Education Advisory Council as a field directed opportunity to have voice in the policy development for Title II;
- add additional Integrated Education and Training (IET), Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE), Workforce Preparation, and bridge programs through ongoing technical assistance via the Transitions Academy. The academy is a year-long process to assist programs in the development of their career pathway programs;
- facilitate a statewide Assessment Hub to assist Title II programs assess adult learners;
- partner with businesses, state agencies, Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, post-secondary education throughout the state in the development of a Health Care, Technology, Manufacturing, Transportation, Distribution and Logistic (TDL), as well as other high demand curricula;
- identify curriculum frameworks and aligning rigorous content standards and identify the knowledge and skills needed of students. The ICCB will continue to revise and enhance the content standards developed in Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE) and ELA; and will continue to develop a crosswalk of student knowledge and skills to other post-secondary education areas and occupational programs;
- provide comprehensive training on Special Learning Needs aligned with the American with Disabilities Act;
- collaborate with Career and Technical Education, business and industry, WIOA Core Partners, and the state workforce board to develop and connect workforce activities within the state.

F. ASSESSING QUALITY (WIOA SECTION 102(B)(2)(D)(II)(V))

Describe how the eligible agency will assess the quality of providers of adult education and literacy activities under title II. Describe how the eligible agency will take actions to improve such quality, including providing the activities described in section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA. Describe how the eligible agency will use evaluations, data analysis, program monitoring, or other methods to improve the quality of adult education activities in the State.

The Illinois Community College Board provides ongoing comprehensive analysis and programmatic monitoring to evaluate 100% of Title II local program compliance and

performance with all applicable governing laws and grant deliverables as outlined in the Notice of Funding Opportunity/Grant Application. These deliverables include ensuring programs use labor market information to implement education and training programs that are aligned with local workforce innovation boards. Additionally, all performance metrics are reviewed through a combination of continuous monitoring using the Title II data system, facilitating on site or virtual meetings with program staff and reviewing required quarter performance and expenditure reports to ensure programs are on track to meet all performance indicators. Programs not achieving their expected outcomes are placed on a watch list or corrective action plan and provided ongoing and targeted technical assistance.

ICCB funded Adult Education and Literacy Programs will be monitored to determine:

- program improvement;
- the degree to which the programs comply with ICCB, state and federal policies and guidelines;
- information needed in local program planning efforts; and
- the ability to achieve state and federal requirements.

Tools available to adult education programs and ICCB Program Support Specialists to actively monitor program outcomes include the following:

- Enrollment Reports that provide information about the number of students served.
- High School Equivalency data match report by student, or program record includes all data matched HSE results for all students that provide consent.
- Post-testing reports provide a detailed breakdown of educational functioning level (EFL) gains and separate students into four distinct categories (Enough hours to post test, post tested with level gains, post tested with no level gains, and not enough hours to post-test) to illustrate areas where program performance meets targeted levels.

Through actively monitoring program data, a provider can directly reach out to the Professional Development Network to plan program specific technical assistance. The ICCB Adult Education Program Support Specialists also connect the adult education provider with the PDN when areas of concern are identified. This rapid response ensures programs have real-time support and can implement improvements rapidly.

The Senior Director for Adult Education and Literacy convenes quarterly meetings with the Professional Development Network and the ICCB Program Support Specialist to review all relevant data and determine programmatic interventions within the fiscal year. These programmatic interventions are then turned into state-wide professional development. Beginning in State Fiscal Year 2026, an Adult Education Data Dashboard will provided an overview of program year high quality indicators such as enrollment, measurable skill gains and post-enrollment outcomes such as employment and median earnings.

A probation and watch status was instituted in 2014 that will continue to be implemented to ensure a program receives significant technical assistance to improve program outcomes. Utilizing the End of Year Report Card, programs not meeting expectations will be placed on Program or Watch status.

Finally, the ICCB also assesses the quality of the professional development offerings that are designed to improve instruction, retention, data management, and assessment practices. The ICCB developed a professional development portal that will, among other functions, track instructor professional development that can be linked to classroom outcomes as an additional method of evaluating the effectiveness of the professional development. Using this information, professional development is updated annually to ensure current research and promising practices are infused in the existing training offerings. The ICCB regularly meets with the professional development and training center to assess, develop and revise the training and development offerings in order to ensure that the most effective and promising practices and methods are being utilized and highlighted.

Through the collaboration and monitoring, GEPA Questions 2, 3, and 4 are addressed.

Q2: Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

The Illinois Community College Board strives to ensure equitable access and participation of students, educators, and all system beneficiaries in all appropriate services. Barriers that may impede beneficiary access include the limitation of resources, both financial and professional staffing. This national trend includes instructor shortages and may impact student access to instructional services.

Q3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

The Illinois Community College Board convenes an Adult Education Advisory Board tasked with making recommendations on agency policy and support strategies to address the critical staffing shortage, AEFLA fiscal sustainability, equitable access for learners to adult education programs, and other key priorities to ensure equitable access for adult learners. Additionally, the ICCB team will engage in all WIOA Core Partner meetings and workgroups, collaborating on programmatic activities such as Work-based learning and Integrated Education and Training programs to support adult learners. Finally, the ICCB will provide ongoing Technical Assistance to Adult Education partners as they implement the Ability to Benefit options that support adult learners access financial aid to continue their post-secondary education.

Q4: What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) will implement a structured, year-round approach to address barriers to equitable access through assessing program quality. At the start of each program year, ICCB establishes a strong foundation for equitable access by ensuring all grantees complete required certifications aligned with nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions under WIOA, ADA, GEPA, and other applicable laws.

Building on this foundation, ICCB supports the targeted implementation of strategies designed to reduce identified barriers. This includes providing technical assistance identified through active monitoring, designed to strengthen recruitment and retention of qualified instructors, expand program capacity, and enhance equitable outreach and communication practices. Throughout the year, ICCB monitors program implementation through data collection, desk reviews, and ongoing engagement with grantees. Feedback from local programs is used to refine strategies, address emerging challenges, and ensure continuous improvement.

Through this intentional and continuous cycle of planning, implementation, monitoring, and improvement, ICCB ensures that barriers to access are not only identified but effectively addressed, resulting in expanded opportunities and more equitable outcomes for all adult learners.

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM CERTIFICATIONS

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan;	Yes
2. The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program;	Yes
3. The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan;	Yes
4. All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law;	Yes
5. A State officer, specified by title in the certification, has authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the plan;	Yes
6. The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan;	Yes
7. The agency that is submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan; and	Yes
8. The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program;	Yes

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The eligible agency will expend funds appropriated to carry out title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with fiscal requirements under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding the supplement-not-supplant	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
requirement);	
2. The eligible agency will ensure that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA;	Yes
3. The eligible agency will not use any funds made available under title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not "eligible individuals" within the meaning of section 203(4) of WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA;	Yes
4. Using funds made available under title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.	Yes
5. The eligible agency agrees that in expending funds made available under Title II of WIOA, the eligible agency will comply with sections 8301 through 8303 of the Buy American Act (41 U.S.C. 8301-8303).	Yes

AUTHORIZING OR CERTIFYING REPRESENTATIVE

CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements

The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

(2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of

Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, ''Disclosure of Lobbying Activities,'' in accordance with its instructions.

(3) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subcontracts, subgrants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly. This certification is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was made or entered into. Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required certification shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $10,000 and not more than $100,000 for each such failure.

Statement for Loan Guarantees and Loan Insurance

The undersigned states, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, ''Disclosure of Lobbying Activities,'' in accordance with its instructions. Submission of this statement is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $10,000 and not more than $100,000 for each such failure.

Please download and sign the forms below. Please scan and return the forms to wioa@ed.gov at the same time you submit your State Plan via the portal.

1. SF424B - Assurances – Non-Construction Programs (http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html)
2. Grants.gov - Certification Regarding Lobbying (http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html)
3. SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (required, only if applicable) (http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html)

APPLICANT'S ORGANIZATION	**Enter information in this column**
Applicant's Organization	Illinois Community College Board
PRINTED NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE	**Enter information in this column**
First Name	Brian
Last Name	Durham
Title	Executive Director

APPLICANT'S ORGANIZATION	Enter information in this column
Email	Brian.Durham@illinois.gov

GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISION ACT SECTION 427 ASSURANCE

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to applicants for grant awards under this program. All applicants for new grant awards must include the following information in their applications to address this provision in order to receive funding under this program. (OMB Control Number 1894-0005)

The State Plan must include	Include
I assure that the proposed project complies with the requirements in section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1228a).	Yes

Compliance can be found on the following page(s) of the application:

1. **Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.** Identified in Program-specific requirements for Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Programs: b. Local Activities (Section 203 of WIOA)
2. **Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?** Identified in Program-specific requirements for Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Programs: f. Assessing Quality (WIOA section 102 (b)(2)(D)(ii)(V))
3. **Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?** Identified in Program-specific requirements for Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Programs: f. Assessing Quality (WIOA section 102 (b)(2)(D)(ii)(V))
4. **What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?** Identified in Program-specific requirements for Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Programs: f. Assessing Quality (WIOA section 102 (b)(2)(D)(ii)(V))

ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the two years covered by the plan modification. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the two years of the plan modification.

While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	25.0	23.6	25.5	23.7
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	24.5	24.0	25.0	24.1
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$6,250.00	$6,250.00	$6,251.00	$6,350
Credential Attainment Rate	33.0	23.6	33.5	23.7
Measurable Skill Gains	44.5	44.5	44.7	44.7
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]

[1]

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL)

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA.

A. STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL.

1. ALL VR AGENCIES, EXCEPT FOR THOSE THAT HAVE AN INDEPENDENT CONSUMER-CONTROLLED COMMISSION, MUST HAVE A STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL (COUNCIL OR SRC) THAT MEETS THE CRITERIA IN SECTION 105 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPLICABLE, HAS:

Select A or B:

(A) is an independent State commission

(B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council

(B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council

2. IN ACCORDANCE WITH ASSURANCE (A)(1)(B), IF SELECTED, PLEASE PROVIDE INFORMATION ON THE CURRENT COMPOSITION OF THE COUNCIL BY REPRESENTATIVE TYPE, INCLUDING THE TERM NUMBER OF THE REPRESENTATIVE, AS APPLICABLE, AND ANY VACANCIES, AS WELL AS THE BEGINNING DATES OF EACH REPRESENTATIVE'S TERM.

Select 'Edit' to edit the narrative.

Note, please do not edit the table header or formatting. Only edit the table contents.

If you accidentally edit the table headers and structure, open this link to the blank table. You can copy and paste the table into the narrative field, and start over if needed.

Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)	1	07/2025
Parent Training and Information Center	1	12/2023
Client Assistance Program	1	03/2025
Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor (Ex Officio if Employed by the VR Agency)	1	11/2025
Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider	1	12/2025
Business, Industry, and Labor	1	06/2024
Business, Industry, and Labor	Vacant	N/A
Business, Industry, and Labor	Vacant	N/A
Business, Industry, and Labor	Vacant	N/A
Disability Advocacy Groups	1	08/2021
Current or Former Applicants for, or Recipients of, VR services	1	07/2025
Section 121 Project Directors in the State (as applicable)	None	N/A
State Educational Agency Responsible for Students with Disabilities Eligible to Receive Services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	1	08/2023

Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
State Workforce Development Board	Vacant	N/A
VR Agency Director (Ex Officio)	1	01/2019
Disability Advocacy Groups	1	05/2024
Disability Advocacy Groups	1	10/2025

3. IF THE SRC IS NOT MEETING THE COMPOSITION REQUIREMENTS IN SECTION 105(B) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT AND/OR IS NOT MEETING QUARTERLY AS REQUIRED IN SECTION 105(F) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, PROVIDE THE STEPS THAT THE VR AGENCY IS TAKING TO ENSURE IT MEETS THOSE REQUIREMENTS.

The SRC meets quarterly, as required. However, the SRC currently has vacant seats. The Committee will develop a candidate list and vet them to ensure all membership requirements are met and to assess their interest in actively serving on the SRC. Those names will be referred to the Executive Committee for its recommendation to the Governor and the Office of Executive Appointments. In addition, the SRC notified the Governor's Office of needed appointments to the vacant seats.

4. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS IN SECTION 101(A)(21)(A)(II)(III) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, INCLUDE A SUMMARY OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT (INCLUDING HOW IT WAS OBTAINED) INTO THE STATE PLAN AND ANY STATE PLAN REVISIONS, INCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COUNCIL'S ANNUAL REPORTS, THE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER SATISFACTION AND OTHER COUNCIL REPORTS.

The SRC participated in discussions regarding the planning and coordination of the upcoming Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). Council members discussed the timing of the next CSNA, the Council's role in the assessment process, and coordination of planning activities associated with the upcoming assessment.

As part of its oversight and advisory responsibilities, the SRC requested information regarding the previous CSNA, including lessons learned, survey questions used during the assessment, and information on counties that were underrepresented in survey responses. DRS provided the requested information to support planning efforts and inform the development of the upcoming assessment.

5. PROVIDE THE VR AGENCY'S RESPONSE TO THE COUNCIL'S INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS, INCLUDING AN EXPLANATION FOR THE REJECTION OF ANY INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

List each recommendation/input followed by the VR agency response

After reviewing the results of the 2023 CSNA, the SRC recommends the goals which respond to the CSNA results. DRS goals in the Unified State Plan should include the following:

- Improve methods of communication with agency stakeholders, especially customers, potential customers, and employers,

    - DRS agrees with the recommendation. A goal will be implemented addressing how to support increased communication with additional activities listed underneath this goal detailing how this recommendation is planned to be fulfilled.

- Increase collaboration and partnership among workforce partners and employment service providers,
    - DRS agrees with the recommendation. A goal will be implemented addressing how to enhance collaboration with workforce partners and employment providers with additional activities listed underneath this goal detailing how this recommendation is planned on being fulfilled.
- Expand and extend engagement with employers,
    - DRS agrees with the recommendation. A goal will be implemented addressing how to increase engagement with employers with additional activities listed underneath this goal detailing how this recommendation is planned on being fulfilled.
- Increase and simplify customer access,
    - DRS agrees with the recommendation. A goal will be implemented addressing how to increase and simplify customer access with additional activities listed underneath this goal detailing how this recommendation is planned on being fulfilled.
- Address statewide transportation deficits,
    - DRS agrees with the recommendation. A goal will be implemented addressing statewide transportation deficits with additional activities listed underneath this goal detailing how this recommendation is planned on being fulfilled.
- Develop collaborative partnerships to augment programs for transition age students and youth workers (> 25), and
    - DRS agrees with the recommendation. A goal will be implemented addressing collaborative partnerships augmenting transition age students and youth workers with additional activities listed underneath this goal detailing how this recommendation is planned on being fulfilled.
- Upgrade programs and policies to facilitate competitive integrated employment (CIE), including self-employment.
    - DRS agrees with the recommendation. A goal will be implemented by addressing upgrading programs and policies facilitating CIE with additional activities listed underneath this goal detailing how this recommendation is planned on being fulfilled.

The SRC would like DRS to report to the SRC on current strategies and the development and implementation of new approaches to address the CSNA results at the beginning of each quarter. DRS agrees with the SRC's recommendations and will develop goals in response to and

congruent with the results of the CSNA. DRS will continue to provide quarterly updates to the SRC on performance, staffing, and budget items affecting DRS funding. DRS is open to suggestions and input from the Council at any time. Over the past 2 years following the implementation of the 2024-2027 State Plan, DRS participated in quarterly meetings with the SRC.

B. COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT (CSNA).

Section 101(a)(15), (17), and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to provide an assessment of:

1. THE VR SERVICES NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING WITHIN THE STATE, INCLUDING:

A. INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES AND THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT;

DRS completed its most recent CSNA in 2023. DRS, in cooperation with the SRC, contracted a consulting firm to carry out the CSNA. This assessment covered many aspects of service needs within our state but did not specify this population for cross-analysis. However, extensive analysis of internal and disability statistics compendium was used for this section of the State Plan. Additionally, DRS acknowledges the shortcomings of the previous CSNA as noted by the RSA. By 08/2026, in cooperation with the SRC, DRS will initiate the next CSNA in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the model CSNA. Staff involved will be given the VR Needs Assessment Training over the summer and survey distribution plans will be in place by 10/2026. The following will occur:

1. The Statistical Needs Assessment and Surveys are to be completed by the Bureau of Planning and Strategic Management by end of 07/2026.
2. SRC will employ cooperative endeavors designed to provide input from stakeholders (e.g., focus groups, and key informant interviews).
3. Community hearings will be scheduled and groups assigned per area of expertise by end of 08/2026.
4. Analysis of findings and a summary will be completed by 12/2026.
5. Strategic planning sessions will be conducted with findings reviewed by 02/2027.

The 2024 Compendium does provide a partially related dataset for those 18 to 64 years of age with Self-Care and Independent Living Disabilities that also had Hearing, Vision, Ambulatory, or Cognitive disability. This separation of those with at least 3 separate disabilities provides an example of potential prevalence of 3 or more functional limitations in the Illinois population with disabilities, though internal data makes clear that is far from the norm for those with coded under most significant under the order of selection.

Per the Compendium, there were 736,000 individuals in Illinois aged 18-64 with a disability in 2022, of that: 11,000 (1.5%) had a Hearing, Self-Care, and Independent Living disability; 19,000 (2.6%) had a Vision, Self-Care, and Independent Living disability; 79,000 (10.2%) had an Ambulatory, Self-Care, and Independent Living disability; 61,000 (8.3%) had a Cognitive, Self-Care, and Independent Living disability. This culminates to a total potential population of

170,000 individuals or 23.1% of the 18-64 with disability population that has at least three separate disabilities identified.

DRS analyzed internal total served Order of Selection data from PY17 to PY22. The distribution for PY17-PY21 was 58.8% or 101,397 customers in Most-Significant category, 33.7% or 34,131 in Very-Significant category, and 7.5% or 7,609 in Significant category. PY22 distribution was 63.3% Most-Significant, 29.8% Very-Significant, and 6.9% Significant. The growth in the determination of Most-Significant is of note and will be factored into SE planning.

Internal examination of Order of Selection determinations over time by primary disability type and especially primary disability cause shows the most poignant information for the uses of appropriately addressing the needs of those likely to require SE. Of those disability types identified, those with the highest instance by count of Most-Significant determinations from PY17-PY21 were: Cognitive Impairments 33,745, Psychosocial Impairments 13,041, and Other Mental Impairments 2,525. By rate of instance in same period: Both Mobility and Manipulation Neurological Impairments 69.6%, Total Blindness 69.0%, and Psychosocial Impairments (interpersonal/behavioral) 63.6%. For PY22 three most frequent by count are same but rates differ: Both Mobility and Manipulation Neurological Impairments were 74%, Total Blindness 69.5%, and Communicative Impairments (expressive/receptive) 67.4%. This growth in PY22 continues overall trend from previous four PYs.

Further internal analysis shows that a clearer prevalence for certain groups from the Disability Cause lens. PY17-PY21 internal Order of Selection determinations showed highest prevalence by count for those with: Specific Learning Disabilities at 13,627, Autism 9,699, and Intellectual Disability 8,106. By rate of prevalence: Autism 79.7%, Intellectual Disability 79.5%, and Cerebral Palsy 75.0%. PY22 found highest rates in those with: Intellectual Disability at 84.5%, Autism 83.8%, and Cerebral Palsy 79.3%.

Of those served through the SEP by Primary Disability Type DRS found that of the 4,096 served in SEP from PY17-PY21, those with cognitive impairments were 63.9% of all SEP customers. The 2nd most frequent disability type identified were Psychosocial Impairments (interpersonal/behavioral) at 19.1% and Other Mental Impairments totaling 3.7% at the third highest instance. Of PY22's 1,475 served in SEP, 67.1% identified with Cognitive Impairments, 16.7% with Psychosocial Impairments (interpersonal/behavioral), and 3.3% with Other Mental Impairments. For Primary Cause, those served in SEP from PY17-PY21 determined caused by Intellectual Disability 30.9%, Autism 24.1%, and Specific Learning Disability 7.8%. Unknown cause from that data set accounted for 11.5% of SEP cases. For PY22 Intellectual Disability comprised 35.1%, Autism 25.9%, and Specific Learning Disabilities 5.6%. Unknown Cause accounted for 12.3% of PY22 data.

These findings show a clear increased trajectory for those with Most-Significant disabilities seeking DRS services and SEP. This is especially true for those with cognitive disabilities caused by intellectual disability and Autism. In addition to increased usage of SEP moving forward, staff will need to be appropriately aware of the unique barriers presented by these communities.

B. INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES AND INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM;

The 2023 CSNA addresses the disparities in response rate and potential services for certain underserved populations. Specifically, Hispanic or Latino participants responded to the survey

at a significantly lower rate than African American or Black participants in comparison to their overall population in Illinois. Though Hispanic or Latino individuals make up 18.9% of the Illinois population, only 10.39% of our CSNA respondents identified as Hispanic or Latino. This suggests an outreach and communication barrier to affectively serving this underserved group.

The provider survey portion of the CSNA found that 31% of our customer base speaks or communicates in a language other than English. Primarily Spanish speakers made up 14% and American Sign Language users accounted for 7%. The CSNA noted the need for more availability of translation or interpretation services. It was not primarily the customers but the providers and employers that indicated the highest need for additional interpreter and translation services. Of the providers surveyed, 20.8% of their customers were under the poverty level, 18.7% were Students, 14.6% identified as LGBTQ+, 14.2% Senior Citizen, 11.6% Homeless, 8% Veteran, 5.6% Parolee re-entering workforce, 4.2% Refugee or Displaced Individual, and 2.3% Religious Minority (Such as Amish). This information will be key to adjustments to our current training regimen and in the planning of future training and staff support to serve these populations adequately and appropriately.

Internal data assessments from customers entering DRS from PY17 to PY22 show areas in need of better support and more appropriate service. Overall, customers served during that period by race were: American Indian/Alaskan Native .1%, Asian 1.8%, Black or African American 22.4%, Hispanic or Latino 12.5%, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander .2%, White 61.5% and Two or More Races 1.5%. By the 2020 Census, the Illinois Population compilated to match internal breakdowns found Asian Americans at 5.4% of the total, Hispanic or Latino at 16.7%, and Two or More Races at 8.2%. These three groups were found to be underrepresented in those seeking DRS services and additional outreach initiatives may be considered to bridge these gaps.

As for services rendered internal data shows a disproportionate reality in post-secondary education cases (Community College, Vocational, and University). 20% of Native Hawaiians or Pacific Islanders pursued some form of post-secondary education from PY17-PY22, similarly 20% of Asian American customers pursued this path during the same period, as well as 21.2% of White customers. However, only 12.7% of customers of Two or More Races, 11.9% of African American customers, and 11.6% of Hispanic or Latino customers pursued this educational path. Considering all internal metrics point to this path leading to the highest earnings, employer sponsored benefits, and job retention, it is imperative to further understand this disparity.

C. INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM; AND

The CSNA found among individuals with disabilities when asked to provide input on actions to better support them, respondents indicated better access to other components of the workforce system at a rate of 8% or the seventh highest selected option of 12. Further, respondents indicated increased DRS presence in the Illinois workforce system at a 9% rate and the sixth highest of twelve options. This indicates a moderate need for additional workforce system interaction from our customers and should be considered in future system enhancements.

Illinois continues to work with our partners in the entire Illinois workforce development system in tracking individuals with disabilities, assisting in knowledge and information sharing to ensure individuals with disabilities are appropriately served by other aspects of the WIOA system in Illinois. This work has found a need for greater understanding on the real

unemployment rate for people with disabilities in Illinois that accounts for those not in the community and those that may have become disconnected enough with the workforce to be missed by current statistically considerations. Further, it is necessary to make concrete steps during this state plan period toward the creation of a universal referral system and greater data sharing capabilities between partners. DRS intends to address these from the lens of a unified Illinois WIOA system and as the lead state agency charged with serving people with disabilities, our expertise is essential to the appropriate service for our communities regardless of which door they walk into.

D. YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR NEED FOR PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES. INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES FOR TRANSITION CAREER SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH SUCH SERVICES ARE COORDINATED WITH TRANSITION SERVICES PROVIDED UNDER IDEA.

The CSNA separated respondents into categories that made addressing this question challenging. Only 9.4% of respondents were youth with disabilities or parents of youth with disabilities. Therefore, the most impactful findings were indicated by educators working under IDEA through the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and providers serving these students, especially those providing pre-ETS. Of the pre-ETS providers and Illinois Educators surveyed, they ranked the degree to which each service impacted the overall success of their customers. The findings were: Workplace Readiness Training 23%, Work-based Learning 20.2%, Job Exploration and Counseling 16.9%, Counseling for Post-secondary Education Options 13.3%, Instruction in Self-advocacy 13%, Work-based Learning (unpaid) 10.9%, and Other 2.6%. The importance placed on Workplace Readiness Training and Work-based Learning indicate where DRS should focus additional resources to ensure more customers are receiving these services.

Though not explicitly segregated to only youth with disabilities, respondents from the person with a disabilities and providers pools prioritized the same three supports needing improvement for overall need: 1) transportation or help getting from home to school or work, 2) benefits planning services or help to manage Social Security benefits and plan to begin working, and 3) assistive technology services and support or special equipment and electronic devices to help with reading, speaking, or using a computer. These are applicable to all customers and will need to be addressed to improve service success for youth with disabilities.

Internal data highlights the imperative of improving services to youth with disabilities. Of all customers served in PY22, 52.3% were aged 14-20 and had a rehabilitation rate of 37.6%, compared to the state at 46.9%. This success gap is only found in our youth and shows the need for increased transition services and the success of those services. Increased resource allocation, hiring, and procedure innovations would be needed to begin addressing these gaps.

Vocational program aimed at youth and students with disabilities are designed to help prepare them for transition to employment and optimal community participation. The youth services coordinator and their team serve as a liaison between DRS and the schools as the facilitator for the student's transition from school to work. Outreach and engagement are essential services that are provided to students and other youth with a disability, whether in special education, joint agreement programs, or in a regular classroom setting. Each member is an integral part of the customer's transition team and ensures that pre-ETS are provided through cooperative development of the special education individualized education plan (IEP) and based on the

IDHS-DRS individualized plan for employment (IPE). They work closely with school personnel, adult service providers, local DRS staff, customers and their families.

In collaboration with the ISBE, IDEA, and WIOA, DRS is mandated to ensure that pre-ETS are offered to youth and students. DRS must engage students in the following 5 areas:

- ***Job Exploration Counseling***. Classroom instruction is usually conducted within the school setting that could include career exploration for in-demand occupations, as well as nontraditional employment; labor market trends; career interest inventories; and identifying careers of interest to the student.
- ***Work-based learning experiences***. Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after-school opportunities, or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships), that are provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible. These will include on-campus OJE-OJT, community OJE-OJT, employer paid work experiences, work-site tours to learn about necessary job skills, job shadowing, mentoring opportunities in the community, internships, apprenticeships, short-term employment, or fellowships.
- ***Counseling on Post-Secondary Education***. Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary education programs at institutions of higher education. This would include advising students and parents or representatives on academic curriculum, providing information about college applications and admission processes, completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), or providing disability support services.
- ***Workplace Readiness Training***. Classroom or community-based instruction beyond that received in a work-related class. This typically provides training in skill areas other than vocational development that students will need to function independently within the community. Skill areas may include, but are not limited to, use of public transportation, meal preparation, money management, household management, communication and interpersonal skills, job seeking skills, understanding employer expectations and are tailored to the individual's needs.
- ***Instruction in self-advocacy***. learning about rights, responsibilities, and how to request accommodation or service as well as being able to communicate any thoughts, concerns or needs while seeking services. Conducting informational interviews, mentoring with educational staff, employers, individuals in the community, or other areas and participating in youth leadership activities, are all examples.

2. IDENTIFY THE NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP, OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE.

The most recent CSNA failed to adequately address the needs of community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) in the state. However, internal work on establishing the need has been underway by means of the current rate study being conducted by the contracts unit of DRS. This process seeks to determine the needs of CRPs, service parameters that lead to successful outcomes for customers, funds required to ensure higher rates of success, and the scope and breadth of how those services fit within the current CRP model. The CSAVR survey on provider shortages was in part built with the

assistance of Illinois input and during that process, multiple internal discussions were held to determine the scope of this issue in Illinois. It was determined that such a shortage is not significant in Illinois, but that the single greatest need for current improvement is on the aspect of payments based on services rendered. Ensuring the outcome is what triggers payment and that said payment is of sufficient amount to compel continuous improvement.

C. GOALS, PRIORITIES, AND STRATEGIES

Section 101(a)(15) and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe the goals and priorities of the State in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs. The goals and priorities are based on (1) the most recent CSNA, including any updates; (2) the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of Section 116 of WIOA; and (3) other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the SRC and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under Section 107 of the Rehabilitation Act. VR agencies must—

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE SRC AND THE VR AGENCY JOINTLY DEVELOPED AND AGREED TO THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES AND ANY REVISIONS; AND

The following goals were identified by the SRC and DRS agrees with them. After reviewing the SRC's recommendations and the results of the surveys, the subsequent strategies following each goal are the actions by which DRS aims to address the goals. DRS goals and priorities contained in this Unified Plan are based on an analysis of DRS' performance on program standards, as well as other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program. This includes reports from the SRC and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted by Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) under Section 107 of the Act. The goals and priorities are also based on the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA.

2. IDENTIFY MEASURABLE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IN CARRYING OUT THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS AND THE BASIS FOR SELECTING THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES (E.G., CSNA, PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES, SRC RECOMMENDATIONS, MONITORING, OTHER INFORMATION). AS REQUIRED IN SECTION 101(A)(15)(D), (18), AND (23), DESCRIBE UNDER EACH GOAL OR PRIORITY, THE STRATEGIES OR METHODS USED TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL OR PRIORITY, INCLUDING AS APPLICABLE, DESCRIPTION OF STRATEGIES OR METHODS THAT—

A. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES;

B. OVERCOME BARRIERS TO ACCESSING VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

C. IMPROVE AND EXPAND VR SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE COORDINATION OF SERVICES DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF SUCH STUDENTS FROM SCHOOL TO POSTSECONDARY LIFE (INCLUDING THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES); AND

D. IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS IN ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES TO ACHIEVE QUALITY EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES.

List and number each goal/priority, noting the basis, and under each goal/priority, list and number the strategies to achieve the goal/priority

The goals are as follows:

GOAL 1: Improve access to DRS and methods of communication with agency stakeholders, especially customers, potential customers, and employers.

Strategies:

- DRS will develop a system to obtain real-time, direct customer feedback throughout the VR process while supporting a range of communication modality preferences.
- DRS will develop an accessible communication and outreach plan to educate customers and potential customers on how to access DRS offices and services regardless of their personal barriers such as technology, transportation, mode of communication, disability type, race, gender, language, and justice system involvement, to promote growth in the DRS VR program.
- DRS will develop a comprehensive model to increase and simplify customer access to services such as offering community or home-based appointments, expanded office hours, and ways to connect virtually.

Measuring Outcomes By:

- Improved Access to DRS and Communication Methods with Agency Stakeholders
- Mass Texting Available to those who Opt-In to the Service
- Referral Forms Available for Completion Electronically Via DocuSign

GOAL 2: Increase collaboration and partnership among workforce partners and employment service providers.

Strategies:

- DRS will participate in WIOA core partners' work toward equity and access to ensure the needs of the disability community are represented and incorporated into plans and programs.
- DRS will develop an accessible communication plan to expand and build partnerships, through cooperative agreements, contracts, and/or pilot programs, with employment service providers including community rehabilitation providers, Centers for Independent Living (CIL), benefits planners, and other providers who support people with disabilities.
- DRS will increase co-enrollment of VR customers in other WIOA programs.

Measuring Outcomes By:

- Provided Quarterly Trainings to Public and Private Entities Regarding Best Practices & Protocols When Working with People with Disabilities Having Serious Mental Illness each PY
    - Offer the *ADA Emergency Preparedness Program* (for Administrators) - activities geared towards educating public, governmental agencies and private institutions and their staff on best practices and protocols to adhere to when serving persons with disabilities during times of crisis annually.
    - Offer the *ADA Hub Ownership Program* (for Administrators) - program operations training for administrators, governmental agencies, executive-level private and public entities to enter a relationship with IDHS-DRS by hosting an ADA hub in their institutions annually.
    - Offer the *ADA Hub Ownership Program* (for Persons with Disabilities) - training sessions for IDHS-DRS agency and staff on how to equip, prepare and certify persons with disabilities with skills, tools, and the curriculum they will need for ADA hub for entrepreneurial/employment opportunities annually.
    - Offer the *We See Them for You Pilot Program* - geared towards training IDHS-DRS staff, rehabilitation counselors and instructors on best practices and protocols to maximize protective measures for preventing sexual harassment when engaging annually.
- Achieve a 2% increase in labor market participation for individuals with disabilities each successive PY
    - Rate of people with disabilities, who obtained their positions with DRS assistance, having retained employment with the same employer.
    - Rate of Colbert/Williams' customers, who obtained their positions with DRS assistance, having retained employment with the same employer.

GOAL 3: Expand and extend engagement with employers.

Strategies:

- DRS will expand and extend engagement with employers, including:
- Develop an accessible communication plan to educate employers on vital programs offered by DRS.
- Simplify and communicate how employers can best access and engage DRS offices and services.
- Educate employers on how to increase quality work opportunities for disabled persons through innovative programs, such as "Earn while you learn" opportunities, apprenticeships, paid work-based learning opportunities, and on the job training experiences.

Measuring Outcomes By:

- Worked with Other Providers to Support to Those Who are Transitioning out of Subminimum Wage to Increase Those Competitive Employed by 5% each PY
    - Create training modules and technical assistance resources that will be developed and disseminated for providers, ISCs, and DRS staff to support individuals exploring competitive employment that includes self-employment.
    - Meet with DDD semi-annually to develop a list of PWD who have competitive employment in their individual personal plans, and support 5% of those on the expressing interest in obtaining competitive employment.
    - Create quarterly reports documenting the number of individuals exiting 14(c) work whose outcomes did and did not result in minimum wage employment.

GOAL 4: Address statewide transportation deficits.

Strategies:

- Worked with other State agencies and disability-related organizations to address transportation deficits throughout the state by:
    - Assessing the transportation needs of people with disabilities.
    - Formulating strategies to mitigate transportation barriers for customers seeking employment,
    - Engaging employers on or near transit routes or paratransit routes,
    - Offering incentives to rural transportation providers,
    - Collaborating with other providers to offer transit training, and
- Address staffing shortages within DRS certified orientation and mobility staff and Regional Coordinators of the Deaf.

Measuring Outcomes By:

- Expanded Partnerships with Public Transport by 5% Each Successive PY
    - Increase in the number of customers receiving “transportation.”
    - Increase in the amount funds spent on “transportation.”

GOAL 5: Develop collaborative partnerships to augment programs for transition age students and youth.

Strategies:

- DRS will develop collaborative partnerships between VR, State and local educational agencies, and CIL to help students with disabilities seamlessly transition to life after high school, preparing them for independent living, CIE, and community integration.
- DRS, working in partnership with ISBE and local education authorities, will ensure that the number of students with disabilities receiving pre-ETS will increase annually beginning in PY24 by 5 percent annually.

Measuring Outcomes By:

- Developed Partnerships to Enhance Programs for Transition-Age Students and Youth by Increasing the Number of Customers Served by 10% Each Successive PY
    - Increase in successful transitions of youth and transition age students (to adult cases) by 10% annually.
    - Increase in the number of students and youth participating in competitive integrated employment (CIE), including self-employment with youth and transition age students.
    - Increase in self-referrals of youth and transition age students by 10%.

GOAL 6: Facilitate CIE, including self-employment.

Strategies:

- DRS will upgrade programs and policy to increase self-employment opportunities for customers.
- DRS will transition (minimally) 100 individuals per year from 14(c) employment into CIE.
- DRS will increase the number of competitive outcomes annually.
- DRS will increase earnings at case closure and the second quarter follow-up for individuals closed as competitive employment outcomes.
- Increase co-enrollment of VR customers in other WIOA programs.

Measuring Outcomes By:

- Facilitated Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE), Including Self-Employment by 5% Each Successive FY
    - DRS reaching ≥ WIOA negotiated measures.
- Increase in the total successful closures.
- Increase in the number of customers engaged in self-employment.
- Increase in wages.
- Increase in the number of Colbert/Williams customers assisted in obtaining employment.

D. EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS

For the most recently completed program year, provide an evaluation and report of progress for the goals or priorities, including progress on the strategies under each goal or priority, applicable to that program year. Sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe—

1. PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED FOR THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS;

List the goals/priorities and discuss the progress or completion of each goal/priority and related strategies

GOAL 1: Improve access to DRS and methods of communication with agency stakeholders, especially customers, potential customers, and employers.

Result: Progress.

DRS initiated electronic communication to customers who approved of this type of contact modality. In the event of significant events (e.g., weather warnings), mass texting has been in use to notify customers of a change in office hours. Additionally, DRS took steps to establish forms used as part of the application process to be converted to DocuSign. This will simplify the process for potential customers applying for services. DRS is working with DHS in migrating the forms and ensuring they are accessible for users.

Status: Continue.

GOAL 2: Increase collaboration and partnership among workforce partners and employment service providers.

Result: Progress.

There is some evidence of progress made toward this goal. DRS continues to work with other state agencies (e.g., the Division of Developmental Disabilities, the Division of Health and Recovery) and community agency providers to support people with disabilities. Additionally, DRS has hosted a 3-part series titled, *Let's Talk Rehabilitation Services!* The free webinars were aimed at community partners: educational institutions, faith-based and community-based organizations, public and private institutions, local and state agencies, employers, business owners, and other organizations working with people with disabilities. The series provided information regarding services offered by DRS.

Status: Continue.

GOAL 3: Expand and extend engagement with employers.

Result: Progress.

DRS will continue to refine its approach to measuring progress toward this goal by incorporating objective and measurable performance criteria. These measures will be used to assess progress and support ongoing program improvement efforts.

Status: Continue.

GOAL 4: Address statewide transportation deficits.

Result: Progress.

DRS remains committed to addressing transportation barriers that affect individuals with disabilities across the state. DRS will reassess its approach to evaluating transportation-related outcomes and identify objective measures that can better assess progress and inform strategies to support individuals served by the program.

Status: Continue.

GOAL 5: Develop collaborative partnerships to augment programs for transition age students and youth.

Result: Progress.

With the establishment of the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) Career Pathways for Targeted Populations Committee Disability Working Group, progress has been made toward this goal. The group is pursuing a holistic approach incorporating service integration and collaboration, while working to enhance occupational skills, career awareness and job retention in in-demand, high-wage careers.

Status: Continue.

GOAL 6: Facilitate CIE, including self-employment.

Result: Partially Met.

DRS used an access navigator approach to identify potential customers who can benefit from VR services in terms of achieving a CIE. DRS intends to contract with a variety of community partner agencies across the state that have connections to individuals in targeted communities that may not be aware of the benefits of the VR program.

Status: Continue.

2. PERFORMANCE ON THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR, REFLECTING ACTUAL AND NEGOTIATED LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE. EXPLAIN ANY DISCREPANCIES IN THE ACTUAL AND NEGOTIATED LEVELS; AND

Performance Indicators	PY24 Negotiated Level	PY24 Actual Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	**60.0%**	**58.9%**
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	**51.0%**	**49.4%**
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	**$3,942**	**$4,600**
Credential Attainment Rate	**32.4%**	**35.1%**
Measurable Skill Gains	**67.0%**	**69.0%**
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable 1	Not Applicable 1

The data shows that DRS did not meet the negotiated rates of performance at the 2nd and the 4th quarter following exit. One factor explaining this is that customers are remaining in training programs (e.g., trade schools, colleges, and universities) longer. The average length of time students spend in the program to pursue higher education post-secondary, is increasing. This is supported by the fact that DRS has exceeded our credential attainment and measurable skill gains rates. Another factor is the unresponsiveness of our customers. After obtaining a position,

we do not always here back when things continue to go well and so we are not able to report on employment rates at 2nd and 4th quarter. Also, some of our customers need additional support in maintaining jobs that have DRS support fade too soon.

3. THE USE OF FUNDS RESERVED FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES (SECTIONS 101(A)(18) AND 101(A)(23) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT) (E.G., SRC, SILC).

In PY 2026, $94,000 for I&E funds were allocated for SPIL activities. Specifically, with a goal to increase transportation options and activities for individuals with disabilities within the State of Illinois. In PY 2026, $50,660.74 of the $94,000 was spent to increase transportation options and activities and for PY 2027, $43,339.26, the balance of PY 2026's SILCs budget was allocated to increase transportation options and activities.

Examples of activities include the following:

1. Host an annual meeting between transportation providers and/or coordinators, Rural Transit Assistance Center (RTAC), and CIL staff to exchange information and ideas to further advance transportation services for people with disabilities.
2. CILs will provide at least 2 trainings per year throughout the state to transportation providers on topics such as transportation rights under the ADA, dispatcher and driver etiquette, and problem-solving techniques.
3. CILs will advocate for increased transportation options by participating in meetings within their service area.
4. SILC will attend and facilitate at least 3 relational meetings across the state per SPIL year between CILs and transportation providers so that ideas can be exchanged, and positive relationships can be formed.
5. SILC will meet with at least 4 state legislators each SPIL year to talk about the importance of transportation for people with disabilities, the problems we currently are experiencing across the state, and possible solutions to these problems.

E. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS, AND ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES.

1. ACCEPTANCE OF TITLE VI FUNDS:

(A) VR agency requests to receive title VI funds.

2. IF THE VR AGENCY HAS ELECTED TO RECEIVE TITLE VI FUNDS, SECTION 606(B)(3) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT REQUIRES VR AGENCIES TO INCLUDE SPECIFIC GOALS AND PRIORITIES WITH RESPECT TO THE DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS RECEIVED UNDER SECTION 603 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES. DESCRIBE THE USE OF TITLE VI FUNDS AND HOW THEY WILL BE USED IN MEETING THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES OF THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM.

The agency's priority is to ensure that VR and supported employment program (SEP) services are available to individuals with the most significant disabilities seeking a SE outcome in CIE.

This priority also addresses individuals currently working in a subminimum wage setting and those in need of long-term extended support to maintain employment. There are currently an estimated 4,000 individuals earning a subminimum wage in Illinois, the majority of whom would likely benefit from SE services. DRS, in conjunction with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) and Virginia Commonwealth University, received approximately $125,000 per year of $3M grant made available for a 4-year project period (July 1, 2023-Jun 30, 2027) to develop and implement the From Subminimum Wadge to Competitive Integrated Employment for Illinoisians with Disabilities (SWTCIE Illinois) Model Demonstration Project (U.S. Department of Education Disability Innovation Fund, 84,421D). This initiative addresses the need to expand opportunities for Illinoisans with disabilities to obtain high-quality CIE that leads to economic security and assists and encourages employers in Illinois to fully include youth and adults with disabilities in their workforce. SWTCIE Illinois will increase opportunities for Illinois youth and adults with disabilities to transition from SMW employment to CIE and redirect youth and adults to CIE when they are contemplating SMW employment for the first time. The project goals of the program include the following:

GOALS

Policy-Driven SEP. DRS will align State policy to serve 100% of customers placed in SE in accordance with federal regulations.

Continuously Expand Services with Most Significant Disabilities by 10% each year. Continue to expand the scope of those who receive services to include persons who are deafblind, persons with traumatic brain injuries, persons who are mentally ill, persons with significant hearing impairments, and other persons with the most significant disabilities.

Develop New Programmatic Funding Strategies. Educate 100% of DRS counselors on extended service options, to include continued support option, and how to transition to DDD SE services.

Assess Efficient Means to Supporting Positive Employment Outcomes. Complete a case file review of 10% of successfully closed SE cases to identify effective strategies fostering successful closure.

Direct Funds to Maintain SE Services for Youth with the most significant disabilities. Ensure that no less than 50% of the Title VI Part B grant funds are used for SE services, including extended services for up to four years until a youth reached age 25 to youth with disabilities. The funds must be used for services after placement in employment.

3. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES MAY BE PROVIDED WITH TITLE 1 OR TITLE VI FUNDS FOLLOWING PLACEMENT OF INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES IN EMPLOYMENT. IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(22) AND SECTION 606(B)(3) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, DESCRIBE THE QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES; AND THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES.

DRS maintains contracts and cooperative working agreements with community provider agencies to provide both SE and extended services to individuals with most significant disabilities. The scope of services includes assessments, job skills evaluation plan, and a training

and placement plan for employment. Further phases include job development and placement, which includes follow up activities. These services may be paid with Title I VR funds prior to placement and either Title I or Title VI funds following job placement. SE services may be provided for up to 24 months following placement, or longer if determined necessary. Once stabilization has occurred, the transition to extended services occurs.

DRS has a standing committee of CRPs known as the Facility Advisory Committee which meets regularly to discuss service arrangements, including but not limited to, SE. DRS believes that this group is the best mechanism for communicating with provider agencies and maintaining a grasp of the demand for these services.

Additionally, DRS has taken the added step of monitoring the effectiveness of the services offered to individuals with the most significant disabilities seeking SE outcomes by the CRPs. DRS' Transitions and Community Rehabilitation Services (TCRS) performs random audits of case files to ensure that the services agreed to by the CRPs and DRS are being followed as identified in the plan. Upon discovery of a finding, TCRS provides DRS' Quality Assurance (QA) Manager with the review, so that QA coordinates the development of a corrective action plan (CAP). TCRS addresses any remediation needing to occur with the CRPs and QA works with the field offices to remediate the CAP internally as needed.

4. SECTIONS 101(A)(22) AND 606(B)(4) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT REQUIRE THE VR AGENCY TO DESCRIBE EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY AND ARRANGE, INCLUDING ENTERING INTO COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS, WITH OTHER STATE AGENCIES AND OTHER APPROPRIATE ENTITIES IN ORDER TO PROVIDE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES. THE DESCRIPTION MUST INCLUDE EXTENDED SERVICES, AS APPLICABLE, TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE PROVISION OF EXTENDED SERVICES TO YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH 34 C.F.R. § 363.4(A) AND 34 C.F.R. § 361.5(C)(19)(V).

There is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Between the DRS and DDD. The purpose of MOU is to outline and clarify the continued collaborative relationship between the Illinois DDD and the DRS in serving individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) to ensure the accessibility to, and provision of, high quality employment services and supports. This MOU applies exclusively to CIE for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities who are deemed eligible and able to benefit from either or both; DRS VR Program and / or the Division of Developmental Disabilities Supported Employment Program (DDD SEP).

Anyone receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is confirmed to have an existing significant disability as determined by SSA and therefore presumed eligible for receipt of DRS VR services and supports. DRS VR shall determine eligibility for individuals receiving services using the following criteria:

- Existence of physical or mental impairment;
- Physical or mental impairment constitutes or results in substantial impediment to employment;
- Individuals needing the services require DRS VR assistance with preparing for, securing, retaining or regaining employment that is consistent with the individual's identified

strengths, resources, capabilities, abilities, priorities, concerns, interests, and informed choice/s; and

- Individuals will presumptively achieve the desired employment or career outcome

DRS VR is commonly partnered with community rehabilitation providers (CRPs) to assist individuals with I/DD to achieve successful employment outcomes. After DRS VR has determined eligibility and ability to benefit, the DRS VR Counselor, in conjunction with the individual receiving services, will develop an IPE. It is at this time the DRS VR case is often referred to a CRP. However, DRS VR maintains oversight and case management responsibilities after referral to a CRP. But many of the direct services (i.e., job development, placement, coaching, and ongoing supports) are provided directly by the CRP. All parties, including the individual receiving DRS VR services, DRS VR RC or designee, and CRP personnel shall maintain open communication and meet as necessary to discuss progress towards CIE.

The Division of Developmental Disabilities shall administer a SEP within the Adults with Developmental Disabilities' Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Medicaid Waiver, and for residents of Illinois State Operated Developmental Centers, which offer eligible individuals long term supports to maintain CIE. DDD SEP provides funding for services and support necessary to assist individuals with I/DD to maintain employment at competitive wages in a variety of integrated settings. DDD SEP is designed to promote regular interaction with persons without disabilities who are not paid care givers or service providers. DDD SEP services and supports may be provided in individual placements or in group settings. Requests for DDD SEP will only be considered for individuals who meet all the following criteria:

- Enrolled in the Adults with Developmental Disabilities HCBS Medicaid Waiver or a current resident of a State Operated Developmental Center (SODC);
- Required supportive services to work in an integrated employment environment;
- Had a defined, related, and ongoing/long-term employment support needing identified in his or her Personal Plan, Career and Income section;
- Was currently employed (either individually or in group employment), at competitive wages and in an integrated setting; and
- Supported within the proper ratio

Residents of SODCs must:

- Reside in a SODC;
- Required supportive services to work in an integrated employment environment;
- Had a defined, related and ongoing/long term employment support need identified in his or her Individual Support Plan (ISP);
- Be currently employed, either individually or in group employment, at competitive wages and in an integrated setting; and
- Be supported within the proper ratio

DDD SEP employment environments must meet the requirements of the HCBS Settings rule and allow ample opportunity for the individual receiving services and support to engage in routine interactions with customers, co-workers, and other individuals who do not have disabilities.

DDD SEP Partners - Independent Service Coordination

Individuals enrolled in the Adults with Developmental Disabilities HCBS Medicaid Waiver are assigned to an Individual Service Coordination (ISC) agency who provides case management, support, monitoring and other assistive services. In collaboration with individuals served, ISCs facilitate completion of "Discovery" and "Personal Plan" for everyone enrolled in the Adults with Developmental Disabilities HCBS Medicaid Waiver.

Discovery is an information gathering process designed to capture both what is important to the person and what is important for the person. ISC agencies are responsible for facilitating the Discovery process and documenting what they gather in the Discovery Tool. Discovery is not a one-time event, but rather a series of interactions, observations, and record reviews which begins with the individual served, including guardian(s), family members, advocate(s) and others chosen by the individual, such as providers and other caregivers. The information captured during this process is used to develop the Personal Plan which summarizes key and critical areas of the person's life.

The Discovery Tool includes details about interests, aptitudes, needs, and capacities of several life areas, including employment. Desired employment interests will be listed in the Career/Income section. The Discovery Tool indicates interest and progress in both current and future career and employment outcomes.

The totality of the information from Discovery is incorporated into the Personal Plan which dictates the services and supports necessary to achieve desired outcomes. The Personal Plan outlines the person's desired outcomes including those related to career/employment and income and details the DDD Waiver Services necessary to achieve progress in fulfillment of all desired outcomes. The Personal Plan is reviewed, assessed, and modified no less than annually or more often as needed.

Under the umbrella of the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), DRS and DDD are separate and unique, yet collaborative, entities with each Division retaining its own policies and guidelines while recognizing and abiding by the Federal and or State laws governing respective operations. DDD and DRS serve as a shared constituency with a common Administrative Directive - to improve CIE outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Therefore, the focus on increasing opportunities for individuals with I/DD to obtain and sustain CIE is paramount to the success of all involved parties. Ease of access, proper utilization of services and continuous improvement of support available through DDD and DRS is a step towards cultivating Illinois' disability service system and enhancing integrated community-based services which result in greater independence of people served.

DDD and DRS commit to:

- Meeting no less than quarterly to discuss the MOU, including data related to the engagement of individuals with I/DD in each Divisions' employment programs, overall

operations, and status of the collaboration. These meetings will include discussions of need and actionable items related to the Divisions shared constituent base.

- Facilitation of joint training efforts, targeted at personnel from Independent Service Coordination agencies, Provider agencies, DRS and DDD as well as other stakeholders, no less than annually, designed to ensure mutual and comprehensive education and understanding of policies, laws and regulations relevant to the Divisions' collaborative focus and the implementation of a common Administrative Directive.
- Dissemination of all new or updated written policies and procedures to all involved personnel, partners and stakeholders including staff from DDD & DRS, ISC agency staff, and the shared provider / stakeholder network.
- Collaboration with partners to ensure continuity in the referral, application, assessment, determination, and service delivery and successful achievement of employment outcomes in individualized, CIE.
- Identification of policies, processes and practices that either promote, or present barriers to CIE for individuals with I/DD with appropriate expansion of those which promote quality employment outcomes and development of appropriate resolutions to those which pose barriers.
- Implementation of the revised Career Counseling, Information and Referral process for individuals engaged in, or at risk of engagement in, subminimum wage activities.

F. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

Sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require all VR agencies to annually conduct a full assessment of their resources and ability to serve all eligible individuals before the start of the Federal fiscal year. In accordance with 34 C.F.R. § 361.29(b), annual estimates must include the following projections:

1. ESTIMATES FOR NEXT FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR—

A. VR PROGRAM; AND

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1.

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under VR Program	Costs of Services using Title I Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under VR Program	Costs of Services using Title I Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
N/A	47,005	47,005	$150,041,109	N/A

B. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM.

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Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under Supported Employment Program	Costs of Services using Title I and Title VI Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
N/A	2,680	2,680	$6,095,000	N/A

G. ORDER OF SELECTION

1. PURSUANT TO SECTION 101(A)(5) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, THIS DESCRIPTION MUST BE AMENDED WHEN THE VR AGENCY DETERMINES, BASED ON THE ANNUAL ESTIMATES DESCRIBED IN DESCRIPTION (F), THAT VR SERVICES CANNOT BE PROVIDED TO ALL ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE STATE WHO APPLY FOR AND ARE DETERMINED ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES.

* VR agencies may maintain an order of selection policy and priority of eligible individuals without implementing or continuing to implement an order of selection.

The VR agency is not implementing an order of selection and all eligible individuals will be served.

2. FOR VR AGENCIES THAT HAVE DEFINED PRIORITY CATEGORIES DESCRIBE—

A. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER

DRS does not maintain an order of selection.

B. THE ORDER (PRIORITY CATEGORIES) TO BE FOLLOWED IN SELECTING ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS TO BE PROVIDED VR SERVICES ENSURING THAT INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST

SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES ARE SELECTED FOR SERVICES BEFORE ALL OTHER INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES; AND

DRS does not maintain an order of selection.

C. THE VR AGENCY'S GOALS FOR SERVING INDIVIDUALS IN EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, INCLUDING HOW THE AGENCY WILL ASSIST ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS ASSIGNED TO CLOSED PRIORITY CATEGORIES WITH INFORMATION AND REFERRAL, THE METHOD IN WHICH THE VR AGENCY WILL MANAGE WAITING LISTS, AND THE PROJECTED TIMELINES FOR OPENING PRIORITY CATEGORIES. NOTE: PRIORITY CATEGORIES ARE CONSIDERED OPEN WHEN ALL INDIVIDUALS IN THE PRIORITY CATEGORY MAY BE SERVED.

DRS does not maintain an order of selection.

3. HAS THE VR AGENCY ELECTED TO SERVE ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS OUTSIDE OF THE ORDER OF SELECTION WHO REQUIRE SPECIFIC SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT?

No.

H. WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS.

The State plan shall be in effect in all political subdivisions of the State, however, the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (Commissioner) may waive compliance with this requirement in accordance with Section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and the implementing regulations in 34 C.F.R. § 361.26. If the VR agency is requesting a waiver of statewideness or has a previously approved waiver of statewideness, describe the types of services and the local entities providing such services under the waiver of statewideness and how the agency has complied with the requirements in 34 C.F.R. § 361.26. If the VR agency is not requesting or does not have an approved waiver of statewideness, please indicate "not applicable."

DRS maintains a considerable number of third-party cooperative agreements with other units of government, primarily school districts. These agreements are designed to increase the availability of vocational rehabilitation services to specific populations of people with disabilities. The DRS has a contract with each entity that is consistent with Federal regulations (34CFR361.26) and includes the following provisions: (a) the vocational rehabilitation services to be provided are identified; (b) the local agency assures that non-federal funds are made available to DRS; (c) the local agency assures that DRS approval is required before services are provided; and (d) the local agency assures that all other state plan requirements, including the Order of Selection policy, are applied to persons receiving services through the agreement. Following the result of the RSA monitoring, DRS revised its contracts to align with recommendations.

The largest of the contract types is the third-party cooperative arrangement. This was previously called Secondary Transitional Experience Program (STEP), but for FY26, it was renamed the Pre-Employment Career Training (PECT) program. At the end of FY25, there were a total of 13,281 students with disabilities being served under the third-party cooperative arrangement contract. This contract type requires a non-federal funding matching component that is submitted monthly. These contracts are designed to offer students with disabilities

opportunities to participate in job exploration counseling, post-secondary education, and work-based learning opportunities.

DRS third party arrangements do not involve transfer of funds from the provider to DRS. Each provider develops an annual program budget which specifies the portion contributed by the provider as well as the portion funded by DRS. The provider submits quarterly financial reports to DRS to document the spending of non-federal funds in support of the program budget. DRS spending is tracked through the state fiscal accounting system. The DRS contract monitors can verify both federal and non-federal spending throughout the course of the fiscal year. As a result of feedback from the RSA during their Monitoring visit in 2024, DRS has revised their contracts to align with recommendations.

DRS maintains responsibility for establishing program eligibility. DRS determines in each case if the student with a disability will be served as potentially eligible or if they will move through into eligibility. Once program eligibility has been established, DRS determines what services are needed for either potentially eligible or eligible student with a disability. DRS ensures that each student has services available to them through a contract provider, the school district itself, or with DRS in-house services. No services can be provided until there are signatures from both the student/guardian and DRS on either the Agreement form for potentially eligible, or an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), for eligible students with a disability.

In FY25, there were a total of 185 contracts available to provide pre-ETS to students with a disability. Of those contracts, 136 were the third-party cooperative arrangement contracts. All contracts require monthly reporting of services provided.

I. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT.

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act, the VR agency must develop and maintain annually a description (consistent with the purposes of the Rehabilitation Act) of the VR agency's comprehensive system of personnel development, which shall include a description of the procedures and activities the State VR agency will undertake to ensure it has an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessionals that provides the following:

1. ANALYSIS OF CURRENT PERSONNEL AND PROJECTED PERSONNEL NEEDS INCLUDING—

A. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL CURRENTLY NEEDED BY THE VR AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY; AND

B. THE NUMBER AND TYPE OF PERSONNEL THAT ARE EMPLOYED BY THE VR AGENCY IN THE PROVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES, INCLUDING RATIOS OF QUALIFIED VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELORS TO CLIENTS;

C. PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY, WHO WILL BE NEEDED BY THE VR AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES IN 5 YEARS BASED ON PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED, INCLUDING INDIVIDUALS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL EXPECTED TO RETIRE OR LEAVE THE FIELD, AND OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS.

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Personnel Category	No. of Personnel Employed	No. of Personnel Currently Needed	Projected No. of Personnel Needed in 5 Years
VR Counselors	176	192	202
Rehabilitation and Mobility Instructors	17	20	22
Assistant Bureau Chiefs	6	7	8
Case Rehabilitation Coordinator	115	130	135
Administrative Assistants	22	24	25
Field Office Supervisors	37	45	50
Bureau Chief- Blind Services	1	1	1
Business Enterprise Program	15	17	20
Central Office/Directors/Managerial and Administrative Support	81	97	103
Total	470	533	566

D. RATIO OF QUALIFIED VR COUNSELORS TO CLIENTS:

1. Ratio of qualified VR counselors to clients: 1:170

E. PROJECTED NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED IN 5 YEARS:

55,012

2. DATA AND INFORMATION ON PERSONNEL PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT, RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION, AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:

A. A LIST OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE THAT ARE PREPARING VR PROFESSIONALS, BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED AT EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS, BROKEN DOWN BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; AND THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED DURING THE PRIOR YEAR FROM EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS WITH CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, OR WITH THE CREDENTIALS FOR CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, BROKEN DOWN BY THE PERSONNEL CATEGORY FOR

WHICH THEY HAVE RECEIVED, OR HAVE THE CREDENTIALS TO RECEIVE, CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE.

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Institute of Higher Education	Type of Program	No. of Students Enrolled	No. of Prior Year Graduates
Adler University, Chicago	Master of Arts in Counseling	21	10
Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago	Master's degree in Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling	23	12
Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago	Master of Science degree in Rehabilitation Counseling	16	8
Northern Illinois University, DeKalb	Master of Science degree in Rehabilitation Counseling	15	5
Southern Illinois University, Carbondale	Master of Science degree in Rehabilitation Counseling	30	10

B. THE VR AGENCY'S PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL, WHICH ADDRESSES THE CURRENT AND PROJECTED NEEDS FOR QUALIFIED PERSONNEL; AND THE COORDINATION AND FACILITATION OF EFFORTS BETWEEN THE VR AGENCY AND INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS TO RECRUIT, PREPARE, AND RETAIN PERSONNEL WHO ARE QUALIFIED, INCLUDING PERSONNEL FROM MINORITY BACKGROUNDS AND PERSONNEL WHO ARE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

DRS uses several strategies to recruit, hire, and retain rehabilitation personnel. Key elements are promotion and publicizing the VR program; locating job candidates; monitoring the State hiring process; and identifying methods to encourage retention of staff. DRS works with the IDHS personnel unit to conduct outreach activities to individuals who may be interested in State employment. IDHS maintains a regular schedule of job fairs, community events.

DRS offers internship and practicum opportunities in its field offices to graduate students from the rehabilitation education programs. These are arranged with the university faculty and DRS

administrators as needed. DRS also makes presentations to undergraduate students to expose them to the field of VR and provide them with information on graduate rehabilitation education programs. DRS has an ongoing team composed of staff and administrators that focuses on issues related to the hiring and retention of qualified staff. This group attempts to identify strategies that motivate staff to continue their employment, including rewards and recognition for high-level performance. DRS engaged UIUC to provide supportive training activities annually to employees. In addition to addressing clinical issues, over the few years of our partnership, UIUC encourage staff to embrace self-care to be effective in our professional practice.

DRS has taken the following step to facilitate the training and professional development of staff from various populations, to promote understanding of the need for a diverse workforce, and to encourage the participation of staff in a variety of cooperative efforts aimed at making contributions to the organization. As such recruitment is made from the following program:

Internships. DRS has informal agreements with RC training programs in the State to provide internship and practicum placement options for graduate students. Internships are encouraged whenever possible, both to support the universities and students as well as to provide a job preview to students interested in working for DRS, when they complete their training.

C. DESCRIPTION OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND ACTIVITIES THAT ENSURE ALL PERSONNEL EMPLOYED BY THE VR AGENCY RECEIVE APPROPRIATE AND ADEQUATE TRAINING AND CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS:

I. PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO ASSESSMENT, VOCATIONAL COUNSELING, JOB PLACEMENT, AND REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING TRAINING IMPLEMENTED IN COORDINATION WITH ENTITIES CARRYING OUT STATE PROGRAMS UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998; AND

II. PROCEDURES FOR THE ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION OF SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE FROM RESEARCH AND OTHER SOURCES TO VR AGENCY PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS AND FOR PROVIDING TRAINING REGARDING THE AMENDMENTS TO THE REHABILITATION ACT MADE BY THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT.

1. Particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and

2. Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to VR agency professionals and paraprofessionals and for providing training regarding the amendments to the Rehabilitation Act made by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.The DRS Staff Development and Training Unit oversees the application of the comprehensive needs assessment in coordination with our Policy Unit. In addition, this team oversees development, implementation, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of all training programs offered within DRS. The Training Unit currently has four full-time trainers and a program manager in addition to two support staff. Training Unit is responsible for providing training to DRS VR staff as well as coordinating training from other sources and maintaining the training

database which tracks the number of training hours for each staff person. The following section lists training courses provided by the Staff Development Section in the last year, as well as statewide conferences attended by DRS staff with financial support from DRS. ***Surveys***. DRS conducts periodic surveys of field office staff, including supervisors, counselors, and case coordinators. These periodic forums for feedback provide instruction to our Training Unit on the efficacy and utility of the information shared, and in what areas staff request additional trainings. The top training requests for field office staff were burnout and stress management, conflict resolution, time management, customer service, and telephone etiquette. The top VR- related training requests were college cases, IPE development, transition, STEP cases, certification, and authorizations. DRS developed a survey to identify employees' training needs and training request, develop training events when possible.***New Employee Orientation and Refresher Trainings***. All staff are required to take a four-day New Employee Orientation training course that focuses on the role of the counselor in the counseling relationship. A major emphasis is placed on role-playing various situations where counseling and guidance skills are used. Another major emphasis is on the assessment of the individual's rehabilitation needs, beginning with the initial interview. Placement skills are emphasized in training activities including regional meetings held annually, as well as onsite training in field offices. Training focuses on job development skills, communication with employers, and preparing customers for job interviews.***Technology and Assistive Platforms***. DRS makes training available in rehabilitation technology to all staff. DRS employs rehabilitation technology specialists who provide onsite consultation to RCs and assists them in developing plans for the provision of rehabilitation technology to VR customers. DRS also has contractual staff who focus on rehabilitation technology issues and provide onsite training and consultation. DRS works in conjunction with the Illinois Assistive Technology Project; the State's AT grant recipient, to promote understanding of rehabilitation technology needs and identification of technology resources. DRS makes use of the rehabilitation technology program at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) as both a training resource and a service provider for VR customers.In order to ensure DRS staff received adequate ongoing training, the following is performed:***Library research materials are disseminated to staff.*** The staff development section operates a small library with books and video materials available on numerous topics related to disability and rehabilitation counseling. These materials are distributed to field staff upon request. The library adds new materials relevant to assisting DRS staff in understand the scope of their job as they work with diverse customers. The titles of materials obtained by the library include the following: the Disability Handbook; Ex-Offenders Reentry guide; Customer Service Counts; and Conflicts in the Workplace: Sources and Solutions.***Employees receive access to intranet.*** DRS makes use of its intranet system to provide linkages to research sources and other new information relating to the field of rehabilitation. DRS supports staff participation in disability-related conferences within the State so that staff can learn about new developments in the rehabilitation field including presentations on research from university professionals as well as rehabilitation practitioners. In addition, key categories of staff such as RCs for the deaf and mental health specialist counselors, participate in regional and Statewide groups that share current research relevant to their fields of study. The DRS initiative on

Individual Placement and Support (IPS) services for persons with mental illness involves sharing research findings in a structured way with staff.As noted above, a major emphasis in DRS has been the effort to obtain up-to-date interactive technology to facilitate training events and limit the time and expense associated with traveling to training events. DRS has also worked with contractors to develop online training modules in key areas of VR casework. Counselors are able to take training on key topics and improve their knowledge of important concepts directly from their office computers.***Webinars and video trainings are provided.*** DRS has also implemented standard webinar training events with visual presentation of materials along with spoken narration. Real-time captioning is available as needed as an accommodation for webinar users. The staff is trained can interact with the presenter by responding to questions ("polling") and by texting questions. All webinar training events are followed up with an online participant survey that provides feedback on the training. Staff response to webinar technology for training has been very positive. DRS also started using YouTube videos to provide instructions on VR rules and policies.

3. DESCRIPTION OF VR AGENCY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF PERSONNEL STANDARDS CONSISTENT WITH SECTION 101(A)(7)(B) TO ENSURE THAT VR AGENCY PROFESSIONAL AND PARAPROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL ARE ADEQUATELY TRAINED AND PREPARED, INCLUDING—

A. STANDARDS THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH ANY NATIONAL OR STATE-APPROVED OR -RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATION, LICENSING, REGISTRATION, OR OTHER COMPARABLE REQUIREMENTS THAT APPLY TO THE PROFESSION OR DISCIPLINE IN WHICH SUCH PERSONNEL ARE PROVIDING VR SERVICES; AND

B. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(7)(B)(II) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, TO ENSURE THAT THE PERSONNEL HAVE A 21ST CENTURY UNDERSTANDING OF THE EVOLVING LABOR FORCE AND THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) has the requirement for all new counselors of a master’s degree in rehabilitation counseling or a closely related field. The master’s degree requirement for DRS RCs is supported by state licensing categories as well. The applicable licensing requirement in the state is for a "Licensed Professional Counselor" license, which is issued by the Illinois Department of Professional Regulation. This license is a generic counseling license and is not specifically for RCs.

DRS administration reviews the training objectives quarterly and addresses internal labor market data with internal leadership monthly, and our SRC quarterly. DRS cooperates with the state Title I agency to encourage staff participation in webinar presentations by other core and required partner agencies, to ensure a greater understanding of other workforce programs and how they may be of benefit to people with disabilities. This cooperation has led to the sharing of data related to all aspects of the national and Illinois labor market. This coordination is key to our staff maintaining awareness of emergent trends and opportunities for our customers.

DRS utilizes labor market information from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) to inform program planning, service delivery, and workforce development activities. BLS data helps DRS identify employment trends, high-demand occupations, projected job growth, wage information,

and emerging workforce needs. This information is used to better understand the labor market, assess the marketability of occupations, and support informed decision-making regarding training, career pathways, and employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. As a result, DRS is better positioned to align services with current and future workforce demands and promote competitive integrated employment outcomes.

The DRS Business Engagement Team is also tasked with working with our local RCs to ensure their understanding of local trends is complete and they can utilize labor market data and internal data on prior engagements, to ensure informed choice is supplemented by the most prescient information. DRS has a fully staffed team of business services consultants. The purpose of this position is to engage with businesses throughout the state and participate in the state's integrated business services framework. The business service consultants will work exclusively with business customers to identify business needs and develop effective responses. Whereas RCs use the trends to support DRS customers in select vocational opportunities, training courses, and certification programs that increase the marketability offering them a living wage.

4. METHOD(S) THE VR AGENCY USES TO ENSURE THAT PERSONNEL ARE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE IN APPROPRIATE MODES OF COMMUNICATION WITH OR IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGE OF APPLICANTS OR ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE LIMITED ENGLISH SPEAKING ABILITY.

To appropriately meet the communication needs of individuals served, DRS has done the following to communicate with diverse populations:

Communication with Diverse Populations. DRS has added the capability to communicate via virtual remote platforms and maintains rehabilitation counseling staff with expertise in communicating with diverse populations. DRS has 25 RCs for the Deaf (RCDs) positions are available for customers throughout the State. These individuals are fluent in sign language and conversant with deaf culture and provide the full range of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals who are deaf.

The Bureau of Blind Services employs RCs and 17 Rehabilitation Instructors who are professionally qualified to provide rehabilitation services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired. DRS strongly encourages the use of Braille as part of training for individuals who are blind.

In addition, RCs and rehabilitation case coordinators (RCCs) are employed who are qualified to communicate with individuals whose primary language is Spanish. Employees are tested to qualify for bilingual positions. DRS also works with individuals whose primary language is one other than English, Spanish, or American sign language. While the number of such individuals is relatively small, it is equally essential to be able to communicate effectively with them about their rehabilitation needs. IDHS maintains a computerized resource directory, which includes information on translation services for a variety of languages, including Polish, Vietnamese, and Arabic among others. DRS counselors can link with these resources to provide translation services.

The DRS also uses professional translators. When professional translators are not available, DRS works with family members or volunteer translators from the community or religious organizations who can assist the individual.

5. AS APPROPRIATE, DESCRIBE THE PROCEDURES AND ACTIVITIES TO COORDINATE THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT WITH PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT.

DRS maintains an administrative liaison position with the State Board to facilitate communication about transition issues, including available training options. Also, DRS has staff who serve on the Education of Students with Disabilities Advisory Committee.

As these relate to IDEA, DRS staff provide VR services annually to youth and students with disabilities, most of whom receive services under IDEA. Approximately, 12,700 Students participated in the STEP in PY22, which provides work experience during the high school years. DRS staff who work with high school students participate in training offered by the ISBE and its Transition Annual conference. Approximately, 325 transition age students participate in the STEP program in PY22. At the end of the FY25, there were a total of 13,281 students with disabilities being served under the third-party cooperative arrangement (renamed PECT starting in FY26). These youth transition directly to adult cases with DRS. DRS staff are closely involved in the statewide network of Transition Planning Councils (TPCs), which consist of rehabilitation and education professionals, as well as employers and school administrators. The purpose of the TPCs is to facilitate the transition from school to work and to identify local issues that affect transition. DRS staff are involved with the schools in their communities and frequently attend training events sponsored by schools.

J. COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS.

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(11)(D) of the Rehabilitation Act—

1. DESCRIBE PLANS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATION BETWEEN THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATION OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PUBLIC EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, THAT ARE DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF THE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM THE RECEIPT OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES IN SCHOOL TO THE RECEIPT OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES.

A student with a disability in secondary, postsecondary, or other recognized education program:

- Who is not younger than the earliest age for the provision of transition services under section 614(d)(1)(A)(i)(VIII) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(VIII)
- If the State involved elects to use a lower minimum age for receipt of pre-employment Transition services under this Act, is not younger than that minimum age.
- Is not older than 21 years of age or if the State law provides for a higher maximum age for receipt of services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, is not older than that maximum age.
- Is eligible for, and receiving special education or related services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Act or:

- Is a student who is an individual with a disability, for purposes of section 504 of the Federal Register.
- Public Act 102-0172 (HB 40) extends eligibility to the end of the regular school year for students whose 22nd birthday falls within a regular school term.

All students participating in the contracts listed below will have been found Eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Services by IDHS-DRS and will be put into Plan Status. They may then participate in the following programs:

- ***Fast Track Transition (FTT).*** FTT is a program that serves students with disabilities who qualify under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) as potentially eligible individuals. These individuals must: be at least 14 and not older than 21 years of age (Public Act 102-0172 extends eligibility to the end of the regular school year for students whose 22nd birthday falls within a regular school term); be enrolled in an education program; have documentation of a disability with an IEP, 504 Plan, medical records or documentation from a physician, and not already a participant in the DRS vocational rehabilitation program. Customers can participate in this program for multiple years if they continue to be potentially eligible. Payment is based on the pre-ETS provided to potentially eligible students.
- ***Pre-Employment Transition Services (PTS-VR).*** PTS-VR is a program that provides Pre-Employment Transition Services to students at Chicago Public Schools (CPS). There is no performance outcome under this contract. Payment is based on the PTS provided to eligible customers at Chicago Public Schools.
- ***PTS-VR-CRP*** is a program where CRPs assist students at Chicago Public Schools to provide Work-Based Learning Experiences in competitive, integrated employment. The providers work in tandem with CPS and the local DRS offices to provide services to these students. Customers will have an IPE written to include these services with the CRP and be a student with CPS to receive services under this contract.
- ***Project SEARCH*** is a school to work program that takes place entirely at the workplace. It allows for work-based learning experiences, workplace readiness, job exploration and skills training through internships. Customers must be between the ages of 18-22, with an Intellectual Disability in their last year of high school. All graduation requirements will have been met for the participants. It is a collaboration between the host business, customer/family, school district, the Community Rehabilitation Program, Workforce Investment Board, Developmental Disabilities, and the Division of Rehabilitation Services. The CRP holds the contract and is responsible for billing and monitoring the services provided. A job coach is provided by the CRP for monitoring and support of the interns during their internships. The school district/coop provides the students for the program and a teacher for classroom instruction. The host business provides different internship sites to allow the customers to learn skills in several areas. Payments are based on internships completed and a competitive, integrated paid employment.

PURCHASE OF SERVICE (POS) YOUTH

- The purpose of this contract is to serve customers that qualify under WIOA as a youth with a disability in gaining independent living skills. These individuals must be at least

14 and not older than 24. For the purposes of this contract, only youth ages 16-24 will be served. Under WIOA, independent living services are seen as a valuable service that is provided to this group in order to prepare for employment.

- Services under this contract consist of a residential program designed to promote independence, and increased ability to live and work independently. Customers participating will learn independent living skills and self-advocacy skills which are consistent with WIOA regulations. Customers can also participate in the Job Seeking Skills Training (JSST) service if they are not moving into a job placement contract with this Provider. JSST provides opportunities to learn about workplace readiness skills and have work-based learning experiences.

SECONDARY TRANSITIONAL EXPERIENCE PROGRAM

There are three (3) types of STEP contracts available. These contract types are only offered to school districts or cooperatives.

- STEP/PECT Menu is a contract that is offered to schools that often fall into a specific category where they cannot complete the requirement of the STEP/PECT Performance contract. This contract allows for provision of three services under PTS (job coaching is not permitted under services in this contract). Services can be billed only once per school year.

- STEP/PECT Specialized is a contract that is offered to schools that often fall into a specific category where they are not able to complete the requirement of the STEP/PECT Performance contract. This contract allows for provision of four services. Services can be billed only once per school year.

Annually, DRS establishes the amount of funds to be set aside for Transition Services contracts based on the available state and federal dollars. Agreement proposals originate with the provider and are endorsed by the Transition Advisor based on need and past performance. They must identify local matching funds as part of the application and total agreement amount. This is not required of non-third party/private programs. Following the Secretary's approval, agreements are issued and distributed by the IDHS Office of Contract Administration.

Transition activities for students or youth with disabilities are coordinated. A youth with a disability is no younger than 14 years of age and no older than 24 years of age. There is no requirement that a "youth with a disability" participate in an education program. However, a student with a disability is an individual with a disability in secondary, postsecondary, or other recognized education program: who is not younger than the earliest age for the provision of transition services of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Students can be served by both the school and a CRP during their final year per counselor's approval. Students must be removed from school STEP/PECT Work Verification Sheet before they can be reported on the CRP Group Billing but should remain on STEP/PECT Flow Chart. Students can be referred for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services through IDHS-DRS prior to being referred to a CRP per DRS counselor approval.

An IPE is required prior to CRP services being initiated. In order for a CRP to claim a successful placement closure on a student graduate, the closure must be post-graduation and meet all

criteria for that contract type. For Customized Employment or SEP, that means completion of all Phases, including the Continued Support Option as needed, and then waiting for at least 90 days after all VR spending to ensure that the customer has all the natural supports needed to be successful.

As part of the team, both DRS and providers will participate in activities to support the student. To promote this emphasis, DRS have established the following guiding principles and goals for all providers:

- Consultation with team members in vocational planning.
- Analysis of vocational and educational interests and abilities to facilitate appropriate employability.
- Input into the coordination of planning and service delivery.
- Input into job placement and follow-up of each student.
- Technical assistance to employers.
- Vocational skills development in integrated, employer paid, community-based training experiences utilizing on-the-job evaluation and on-the-job training which may extend beyond hours of a school day.
- Work-based learning experiences for students in a community-based integrated training or work sites.
- Customized services that are responsive to the individual support needs and learning styles of students and include linkages to education, other agencies and adult services.
- Compliance with Department of Education 34 CFR based on Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended by WIOA.
- Compliance with all State and Federal Department of Labor (DOL) regulations.

The following skills and services are provided in Transition services

- ***Job Exploration Counseling***. Classroom instruction usually conducted within the school setting that could include career exploration for in-demand occupations, as well as nontraditional employment; labor market trends; career interest inventories; and identifying careers of interest to the student.
- ***Work-based learning experiences***. Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after-school opportunities, or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships), that is provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible. These will include On-Campus OJE-OJT, Community OJE-OJT, Employer Paid Work experiences, Work-Site tours to learn about necessary job skills, job shadowing, mentoring opportunities in the community, internships, apprenticeships, short-term employment, or fellowships.
- ***Counseling on Post-Secondary Education***. Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary education programs at institutions of higher education. This would include advising students and parents or representatives

on academic curriculum, providing information about college applications and admission processes, completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), or providing disability support services.

- ***Workplace Readiness Training***. Classroom or community-based instruction beyond that received in a work-related class. This typically provides training in skill areas other than vocational development that students will need to function independently within the community. Skill areas may include, but are not limited to, use of public transportation, meal preparation, money management, household management, communication and interpersonal skills, job seeking skills, understanding employer expectations and are tailored to the individual's needs.

- ***Instruction in Self-Advocacy***. Learning about rights, responsibilities, and how to request accommodations or services as well as being able to communicate any thoughts, concerns or needs while seeking services. Conducting informational interviews, mentoring with educational staff, employers, individuals in the community, or other areas and participating in youth leadership activities are all examples.

2. DESCRIBE THE CURRENT STATUS AND SCOPE OF THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE VR AGENCY AND THE STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY. CONSISTENT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT PURSUANT TO 34 C.F.R. § 361.22(B), PROVIDE, AT A MINIMUM, THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ABOUT THE AGREEMENT:

A. CONSULTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, WHICH MAY BE PROVIDED USING ALTERNATIVE MEANS FOR MEETING PARTICIPATION (SUCH AS VIDEO CONFERENCES AND CONFERENCE CALLS), TO ASSIST EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES IN PLANNING FOR THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO POST-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES AND OTHER VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES;

B. TRANSITION PLANNING BY PERSONNEL OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCY PERSONNEL FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES THAT FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS (IEPS) UNDER SECTION 614(D) OF THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT;

C. THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, OF EACH AGENCY, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR DETERMINING STATE LEAD AGENCIES AND QUALIFIED PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSITION SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES;

D. PROCEDURES FOR OUTREACH TO AND IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO NEED TRANSITION SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES. OUTREACH TO THESE STUDENTS SHOULD OCCUR AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE DURING THE TRANSITION PLANNING PROCESS AND MUST INCLUDE, AT A MINIMUM, A DESCRIPTION OF THE PURPOSE OF THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM, ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS, APPLICATION PROCEDURES, AND SCOPE OF SERVICES THAT MAY BE PROVIDED TO ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS;

E. COORDINATION NECESSARY TO SATISFY DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS SET FORTH IN 34 C.F.R. PART 397 REGARDING STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE SEEKING SUBMINIMUM WAGE EMPLOYMENT; AND

F. ASSURANCE THAT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH 34 C.F.R. § 397.31, NEITHER THE SEA NOR THE LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY WILL ENTER INTO A CONTRACT OR OTHER ARRANGEMENT WITH AN ENTITY, AS DEFINED IN 34 C.F.R. § 397.5(D), FOR THE PURPOSE OF OPERATING A PROGRAM UNDER WHICH YOUTH WITH A DISABILITY IS ENGAGED IN WORK COMPENSATED AT A SUBMINIMUM WAGE.

The agreement provides that DRS shall provide consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for pre-ETS and the transition of students from school to post-school activities and ensure that local DHS-DRS staff participate in IEP meetings where transition planning occurs. In addition, DHS-DRS shall establish and collaborate with local Transition Planning Committees (TCPs) to outreach and identify students with disabilities in need of pre-ETS and individualized transition services as early as possible in the transition planning process. DRS and the local TPCs will also plan for the availability of community services for students with disabilities before and after exiting secondary education.

Since 2018, DRS has partnered with the state education authority ISBE and the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT), now the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative (NTACT:C), to address issues surrounding services to students with disabilities across the state. This team has been the primary mechanism for communication and problem solving around pre-ETS. Meetings have been held quarterly, both in person and by video conference. The team has worked effectively on completing a revised formal agreement between DRS and ISBE that went into effect on 3/18/2024, as well as on materials relating to subminimum wage employment. The NTACT:C consultants meet with the joint team as well as with DRS and ISBE separately as needed. The team assists in managing communication across two networks. ISBE is the primary focus for the special education system of teachers and other professionals. DRS communicates with VR counselors and contract agencies, including schools participating in the /PECT program. The intersection of those two networks is a key focus of the team's activities and the 2 agencies work closely together. In 11/2024, DRS and ISBE presented together at the Transition Conference.

The agreement provides that DRS and ISBE will cooperatively participate in planning, training, policy development, data collection, and resource identification and dissemination to improve transition planning for students with disabilities. Also, both parties agree to provide technical assistance to local education agency personnel regarding transition planning services for students with IEPs. Transition planning will facilitate the development and completion of IEPs and transition plans in coordination with the IPE for VR services.

The agreement describes the role of ISBE to ensure that local education agencies engage students with disabilities and their families in transition planning when it is a mandated part of the IEP process. In addition, ISBE will encourage school districts to annually submit summary transition goals and services to the local Transition Planning Committee (TPC). The agreement describes the role of DRS to include providing consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for pre-ETS and individualized transition services facilitating the transition of students from school to post-school activities and ensure that local DRS staff

participate in IEP meetings where transition planning occurs. The agreement also addresses the financial responsibilities of each party.

The ISBE-DRS agreement specifies the following roles for each party:

A) ***ISBE Role***. ISBE shall ensure that local education agencies (LEA) (i.e., school districts) engage students with disabilities and their families in transition planning when it is a mandated part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process.

B) ***DHS-DRS Role***. The Division of Rehabilitation Services within DHS (DHS-DRS) shall provide consultation and technical assistance, which may be provided using alternative means (e.g., video conferences and conference calls) to assist LEAs in planning for the transition of students from school to post-school activities, including pre-ETS and other vocational rehabilitation services. DHS-DRS staff will participate in transition planning with LEA personnel to facilitate the development and implementation of the IEPs for students with disabilities in accordance with VR program regulations in 34 CFR 361.22(b)(2). In addition, DHS-DRS shall establish and collaborate with local TPCs to outreach to and identify students with disabilities in need of pre-ETS and transition services as early as possible in the transition planning process. DRS and the local TPCs will also plan for the availability of community services for students with disabilities before and after exiting secondary education.

The financial responsibilities or each party are defined in the agreement as follows:

1. ISBE shall have responsibility for the management and oversight of federal education funding within the State. ISBE shall not provide compensation to DHS-DRS under this Agreement.

2. DHS-DRS shall have responsibility for the management and oversight of State and Federal vocational rehabilitation funds under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and SE funds under Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.

Service responsibilities of the parties are outlined in the agreement as follows:

1. ISBE shall have responsibility for providing outreach, guidance and coordination to LEAs regarding the provision of transition services, including pre-ETS, special education and related services under IDEA.

2. DHS-DRS shall have the responsibility for the provision of pre-ETS, transition services and vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to facilitate the transition students with disabilities from the receipt of education services, including pre-ETS, in school, to the receipt of VR services under the VR program (Section 101(a)(11)(D) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.22(a)(1)), both directly and through cooperative agreements with local educational agencies.

Personnel responsibilities of the parties are specified as follows:

1. School Personnel. ISBE shall be responsible for determining the qualifications for teachers and other education personnel who provide special education services and other transition services to students with disabilities.

2. Rehabilitation Personnel. DHS-DRS shall be responsible for determining the qualifications of RCs, including school personnel and those providing pre-ETS to students, and transition services to students and youth with disabilities.

The agreement provides that DRS will collaborate with local TCPs to provide outreach and identify students with disabilities in need of pre-ETS and individualized transition services as early as possible in the transition planning process. DRS and the local TPCs will also plan for the availability of community services for students with disabilities before and after exiting secondary education.

The STEP/PECT is the primary means through which DRS provides pre-ETS. Students with disabilities are identified for participation in STEP/PECT through the schools they attend. Referrals are made by the school through the DRS case management system (WebCM). Students participating in STEP/PECT have either an IPE or a 504 plan in place. Since students are referred to DRS by their schools, promoting the STEP/PECT program involves continuous efforts to inform school personnel about the program's benefits, rather than traditional community-level outreach. The schools that participate in the STEP/PECT program are provided with parent consent forms and release of information forms for all prospective participants. Parents are also provided with printed materials describing the STEP/PECT program, including eligibility requirements and the scope of services.

The TPCs are composed primarily of school personnel, including administrators and teachers. DRS works with TPC members to promote understanding of STEP/PECT and pre-ETS. To the extent that TPCs engage in outreach activities, those are designed and implemented at the local level. DRS is also engaged in outreach through the Next Steps program, which is a parent education program across the state. While much of the emphasis of Next Steps is on the rights of students and parents within the special education system, training efforts also focus on the benefits of the VR program and the transition process.

The Fast Track Transition program is the newer and much smaller effort by DRS to provide pre-ETS. Most Fast Track vendors are CIL, which have ongoing connections to the communities they serve. While STEP/PECT serves students that have been determined eligible for VR services, the Fast Track program serves potentially eligible students with disabilities. DRS provides each vendor with parent consent and release of information forms, along with a program description. Outreach efforts by Fast Track vendors are designed at the local level and typically involve connecting with parent groups in local communities. DRS has worked to facilitate communication between Fast Track vendors and local school systems.

DRS and ISBE have worked together to develop a process to address subminimum wage employment for youth with disabilities as required under 34 C.F.R. Part 397. DRS and ISBE have developed a form that to incorporate all required signatures from the VR system and the education system. The process typically begins when a subminimum wage employer interacts with an individual age 24 or younger. That employer refers the individual to DRS and a meeting with a VR counselor is arranged. At that meeting the individual is provided with counseling regarding the opportunity to receive services leading to CIE. If the individual declines the opportunity, the counselor documents the meeting and informs the individual that he or she must obtain documentation from a school that transition or pre-ETS were received. The individual takes the form to the school system to obtain sign-off documenting such services.

After the form has been signed by the VR system and the education system the individual can present the form to the subminimum wage employer.

K. COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(11)(E) of the Rehabilitation Act, describe how the VR agency will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of VR services; and transition services for youth and students with disabilities, including pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities.

DRS works with customers, employers, and staff to identify CIE and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision services.

The Workforce Development Unit. In 2019, DRS established a workforce development unit to focus on provision of services to businesses in Illinois. This unit employs staff dedicated to business services, including the newly created title of business services consultant as well as staff in the titles benefit specialist and program specialist. Staff have participated in training activities utilizing national and local experts, as well as through structured online training. Members of the team will work in partnership with business services teams organized in each of 22 Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIA). The workforce development unit provides information to employers on key issues relating to hiring people with disabilities, reasonable accommodations, hiring incentives and the benefits of VR services. Workforce development staff also communicate with RCs about employment opportunities they identify through contacts with employers and business groups.

The Local Workforce Board. The DRS has an Office Supervisor or a Manager as 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.

Business Engagement Database. The DRS continues to maintain a business engagement database that was developed in 2017 as part of the Job Driven Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center project. While this has involved a small number of staff to date, the system has documented continued growth in employer contacts, ranging from providing basic information to facilitating job interviews for candidates. Since the initiation of the system, DRS has documented successful employment outcomes at targeted businesses. The database is now being used by the workforce development unit staff, and it is expected that both hires, and successful closures will continue to increase.

WIOA Summit Conferences. The DRS staff have been active in planning and implementing a series of Statewide WIOA Summit conferences, as part of a coordination team representing core WIOA partner agencies. The purpose of the summit is to bring together workforce partners and

employers; present information on workforce policies; highlight innovative practices; and demonstrate cooperative efforts around the State. The first Statewide conference in the nation (according to WINTAC) focused on service integration. Sessions include presentations on collaboration with business partners, economic development and sector partnerships, as well as maximizing local collaboration.

The National Employment Team (NET). DRS continues to be an active participant in the National Employment team (The NET), established by the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). The purpose of the NET is to provide a coordinated approach by State VR agencies when dealing with employers that have a national or multi-State presence. Each State VR agency has a designated point of contact for communicating with NET employers. This helps ensure consistent communication about VR services involving the employer, as well as improving communication among State VR agencies where several States are working with the same employer. From the DRS' point of view, the NET has been a very positive experience when working with large employers, which typically offer full-time employment at higher-than-average wages.

Prior to COVID-19, many businesses within the State of Illinois were struggling to find qualified candidates to fill their open job positions and the Business Services Consultants and Employee Resource Specialists are bridging that gap between the customer and the business to obtain successful CIE opportunities. Each member of the team has been assigned as a contact between community colleges and four-year public universities based on the geographical boundaries they serve. Each team is also responsible for reaching out to community organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Clubs, CIL, Veteran's Group and similar groups to share information about our agency and how we can assist businesses within the community with their hiring needs. Team members also work with the Department of Economic Development representatives throughout the State of Illinois. Team members recently participated in training conducted by the Illinois Department of Economic Security to learn more about accessing businesses and how to refer DRS candidates to openings within these businesses.

As the team develops, new connections and explorations are being developed. For example, the unit took part in a Statewide initiative with the Department of Corrections (DOC) to start working with returning citizens sooner. Unit members participated in the Summits offered throughout the State to share the services of our agency. Returning citizens with disabilities will also have an opportunity to open up cases with DRS offices to help them readjust to civilian life and employment. Another opportunity is for unit members to take the lead on reverse job fairs, a method that has gained increasing attention in recent years. Representatives of our agency attended the Rural Affairs Conference to learn more about meeting the unique needs of businesses in rural areas and downstate Illinois. Resources to assist these businesses were also shared and passed along to business customers served by the unit.

As noted in previous plan sections, most work and resource allocations surround the provision of pre-ETS to students with disabilities by way of third-party contracts with local school districts through STEP/PECT. These contracts are performance based and include both paid and unpaid community work experience for students. The arrangements with employers are developed by school personnel rather than by DRS directly. Employers are actively involved in working with students and typically coordinate support with the STEP/PECT contractor. DRS monitors student work experience through monthly reporting by the contractors, which include

hours worked and earnings, if any. STEP/PECT contractors also work with employers to provide opportunities for job exploration.

In 2017, DRS established the FTT program to provide pre-ETS to potentially eligible students with disabilities by contract with third-party agencies, typically CILs. Emphasis is towards those ages (14-15) that have not typically been involved with STEP/PECT. These contractors utilize local employers to provide opportunities for job exploration and workplace readiness training. In PY25, there were 2065 students enrolled in Fast Track services.

In Illinois the agencies under contract to DRS, whether in STEP/PECT or FTT, are responsible for identifying employers that will host work-based learning experiences. In STEP/PECT, there is a tracking system for monitoring the hours each student works, along with contact information for the student's supervisor on the job. Both DRS and the contract provider are responsible for tracking and monitoring the hours each student works. The process is maintained by DRS, as a part of the billing system. This provides opportunity to monitor the ongoing progress of each student's work experience. Students are able to change jobs if the initial effort is not a good fit for the student. Most employer-paid jobs are in settings typical of teenage workers in their first paid job, such as retail and food service. The leading job titles for STEP/PECT students include food preparation workers, stock clerks, cashiers, sales and related workers and retail salespersons.

L. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(11)(C) and (K), describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce development system to develop opportunities for community-based employment in integrated settings, to the greatest extent practicable for the following:

1. STATE PROGRAMS (DESIGNATE LEAD AGENCY(IES) AND IMPLEMENTING ENTITY(IES)) CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

DRS has a longstanding partnership with the Illinois Assistive Technology Project (IATP), the State's AT grant recipient. IATP provides a variety of services to Illinois citizens with disabilities, including many who are participants in the DRS VR program. Cooperative activities include joint staff training as well as the use of IATP staff for technology consultation on specific VR cases. DRS also works with IATP staff on general issues involving the accessibility of computer systems throughout the State of Illinois (SOI) government. IATP also provides consultation on specific items of assistive technology (AT) and their applicability for VR program purposes.

DRS has also worked with IATP on innovative approaches to purchasing AT equipment for benefit of VR program customers. DRS continues to develop its Fast Track Technology Evaluation (FTTE) program. The program is the successor to the Assistive Technology Open Ended Loan (OEL) program that was funded through ARRA. Similar to the OEL program, FTTE provides assistive technology to customer in a fast and efficient way, which increases the possibilities of a successful outcome.

Any eligible VR customer can participate in the FTTE program. The counselor makes a referral to IATP and a technology specialist schedules an evaluation as soon as possible. Under the program, VR Counselors do not have to obtain bids and issue authorizations for assistive

technology purchases. Those activities are managed by the Assistive and Information Technology Support (AITS) unit.

Customers can keep technology provided through FTTE as long as they are working toward their VR goal or have obtained employment. Examples of assistive technology available through FTTE include, but not limited to, the following: JAWS, ZoomText, Dragon Naturally Speaking, Kurzweil, OpenBook, Read and Write Gold, ergonomic chair, ergonomic desk, talking graphing/scientific calculator, portable video magnifier, large monitor, laptop, headphones, digital recorder, large key keyboard, and ergonomic mice.

2. PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT BY THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;

DRS does not have formal interagency agreements with Rural Development Programs operated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. From PY20 to PY22, DRS participated in the Governors Rural Affairs Committee on Telehealth to coordinate improvements to telehealth opportunities in rural Illinois where there are no suitable heath facilities within 60 miles of a given area. DRS provided geospatial analysis for this project and vital expertise on how this could impact and should benefit individuals with disabilities in Rural Illinois.

In PY 2020, it was DRS intention to reach out to representatives of the Department of Agriculture to initiate a discussion of developing such an agreement. In February 2020, four DRS employment services staff, along with other workforce partners, attended the Rural Affairs Conference to learn more about meeting the unique needs of businesses in rural areas and downstate Illinois. On February 23, 2022, one member of our unit attended the Rural Community and Economic Development Conference. However, on September 13, 2023, DRS participated in a program with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign that provided information regarding apprenticeships programs that offered employment as an option to those residing in rural locations. Apprenticeships help address employment barriers resulting from a lack of public transportation and locations that are sparse by industries and people.

To prepare Americans for high-paying skilled trade jobs of the future, the President wrote an Executive Order to expand registered apprenticeships. The order plans to reach and surpass 1 million new active apprentices. Opportunities, including those offered through the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education (Perkins V) Act and Federal student aid, are to enhance connections between the education system and registered apprenticeships.

3. NON-EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH;

DRS does not have specific agreements with non-education agencies serving out-of-school youth with disabilities. Out-of-school youth are served through contracts that DRS has developed with CRP agencies, although the contracts are not targeted at that specific age group. Data for PY26 shows that 51.2% of individuals served were under the age of 21.

4. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS;

DRS does not presently have formal interagency agreements with State Use programs operated within Illinois. The State Use program in Illinois is coordinated by the Department of Central Management Services (CMS), which awards contracts to State Use providers and coordinates

purchases on behalf of State agencies. Executive Order (EO) 2021-26 prevents State agencies from entering contracts with vendors in the State Use program who pay people with disabilities a subminimum wage.

All current and future contracts entered into by the SOI with a not-for-profit agency that is qualified to participate in the State Use program in accordance with 30 ILCS 500/45-35 shall provide for payment of no less than the applicable local, if higher, or Illinois minimum wage for all employees performing work on the contract, notwithstanding any provision that would permit payment of a lower wage rate. This requirement shall apply to and include employees of any subcontractors performing work on the contract. DRS is working with the Employment and Economic Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities Task Force (EEOPD) in their efforts to reduce reliance on subminimum wages for State Use positions. In 2021, the Governor enacted an Executive order for State Use contracts to pay minimum wage.

5. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR ADMINISTERING THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN UNDER TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT (42 U.S.C. 1396 ET SEQ.);

In 2018, the IDHS-DRS, completed a written agreement with the Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS), the State Medicaid agency. The agreement ensures that IDHS and HFS will work cooperatively to promote the employment of people with disabilities and operate various Medicaid waiver programs efficiently. HFS and DRS representatives serve on the EEOPD.

The EEOPD was established in 2009 via Legislation (PA 96-368). It includes 10 Designated State Agencies: Governor's Office, Education (ISBE, CCO, IBHE), DCEO, Health and Human Services, Divisions of: Vocational Rehabilitation, Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health, DD Council, IDES, Veterans Affairs. EEOPD has several priorities including: Reform of existing employment systems via implementation of Employment First, addressing subminimum wage, housing, and transportation. EEOPD is the key entity for studying and making policy recommendations that will promote Employment First, a national systems-change framework centered on the employment of persons with disabilities.

6. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES;

DDD and DRS. The DDD and DRS continue a collaborative relationship in serving Individuals with I/DD to ensure the accessibility to, and provision of, high quality employment services and supports through an intra-agency agreement, or MOU. Individuals with I/DD experience unemployment or under employment at a rate much higher than that of the non-disabled population. Through the mutual, yet distinctive, efforts of DDD, DRS and all involved stakeholders, support of CIE as the first and preferred outcome of publicly funded services will be increased. This collaboration, established in 2019, includes recognition of each Divisions unique programs, polices, rules, laws, and other guidance.

As outlined in the agreement, DDD and DRS commit to meeting no less than semi-annually to discuss the MOU including operations, progress, and status of the collaboration. These meetings will include discussions of need and actionable items related to the Divisions' shared constituent base. DDD and DRS commit to the facilitation of semi-annual joint training efforts, designed to ensure mutual, comprehensive, education and understanding of policies, laws, and

regulations relevant to the Divisions' collaborative focus and the implementation of a common Administrative Directive.

7. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES; AND

The State agency for mental health services is the Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR), formerly the Division of Mental Health (DMH). It is also a Division of IDHS similar to DRS and DDD. In late 2018, DBHR and DRS updated a written agreement to coordinate services relating to the vocational needs of individuals with a serious mental illness. The two agencies have enjoyed an effective partnership for several years. This partnership is centered on provision of VR through the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) service model. DRS and DBHR have worked with the IPS Employment Center (formerly the Psychiatric Research Center) to implement a fidelity-based service model that has proven to be very effective in assisting individuals with serious mental illness in becoming employed.

DRS and DBHR have a cooperative funding model in which DBHR utilizes Medicaid funding to the greatest extent possible and DRS provides VR funds to support the vocational aspects of the IPS model. DRS has worked with DBHR to expand IPS services to the youth population and intends to continue expansion to this group through additional pilot projects as funding becomes available. In addition, both agencies intend to participate in evaluation projects that document the effectiveness of IPS as an evidence-based practice. Research suggests that implementation of IPS principles in VR service provision can be of benefit to a wider range of individuals.

8. OTHER FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS OUTSIDE THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM.

DRS entered into a cooperative initiative with our sister Division the Illinois Division of Family and Community Services (FCS) to fully utilize the overlap between our customers, physical locations, and shared social service focus. Individuals with disabilities that are transitioning out of Long-Term Care facilities must have their Medicaid case transitioned from Long Term Care to Disabled Adult. During this process, it was recognized that this point is key in ensuring those customers are made aware of the support and service provided by DRS. Through the initiative, both Division's staff development specialists have worked in tandem on educating FCS staff on disabilities, DRS services, and how our systems interact. DRS staff have received better information on the FCS case management system we require access to, how FCS services can bridge gaps in overall care in addressing additional barriers like poverty, and how each FCS local office is directly tied to the local community network of social services beyond those provided by designated State units.

9. OTHER PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.

DRS has contractual agreements with non-profit rehabilitation providers to provide services that include job coaching, job development, job stabilization, to VR customers.

The following CRPs assist with SE services: Association for Individual Development, Bridgeway, Inc., and Clearbrook. These agencies provide CIE. The services provided include customized employment or employment in an integrated work setting (in which an individual with a most significant disability, including a youth with a most significant disability), is working on a short - term basis toward CIE. The contract offers employment that is individualized and customized,

consistent with the individual's unique strengths, abilities, interests, and informed choice. Providing any needed ongoing support services for individuals with the most significant disabilities. One of the benefits of this contract is that SE is available for up to 24 months under certain conditions.

The following agencies offer Milestone services: Futures Unlimited, and EPIC. They provide services that include job coaching, job development, job stabilization, job training, and care development. The Milestone contracts are monitored and paid out at three Milestones: 15-days, 45-days, and 90-days. One feature of this contract is that it is tied to the customer receiving competitive, integrated stable employment.

The following agencies offer customized employment: Jewish Child and Family Services; and Little Cities Foundation. They provide job exploration with the customer and by working with the employer, a customized job description is developed, with work hours and other necessary arrangements included. Customers receiving these services would have already had an established need for more intensive services. The contracts will supported people well because it has phases imbedded into this contract and prior to the customer's case being closed, they will have achieved all 9 before closure.

ASSURANCES

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner, that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances:

The VR agency must select the "Edit" button to review and agree to the VR State plan Assurances.

The State Plan must include
1. Public Comment on Policies and Procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.
2. Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement: The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a Unified State plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.
3. Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan: The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:

The State Plan must include
3.a. the establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.b. either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.c. consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.d. the financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3).
3.e. as applicable, the local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.f. as applicable, the shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.g. statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.h. the requirements for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.i. all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.j. the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.k. the compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.l. the reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities as set forth in section 101(a)(18)(A).
3.m. the submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services: The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:
4.a. comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(E) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.b. impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is

The State Plan must include
present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.c. provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services or, if implementing an order of selection, in accordance with criteria established by the State for the order of selection as set out in section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.d. determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.e. comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.f. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act
4.g. provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.h. comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by sections 101(a)(14) and 511 of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.i. meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs.
4.j. With respect to students with disabilities, the State,
4.j.i. has developed and will implement,
4.j.i.A. strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and
4.j.i.B. strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and
4.j.ii. has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15), 101(a)(25) and 113).
4.j.iii. shall reserve not less than 15 percent of the allocated funds for the provision of pre-employment transition services; such funds shall not be used to pay for the administrative costs of providing pre-employment transition services.
5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement to the State plan:
5.a. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the

The State Plan must include
Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act.
5.b. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.
6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program (Title VI):
6.a. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(H) and (I) of the Rehabilitation Act.
6.b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act.
7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:
7.a. The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act.
7.b. The designated State agency assures that the comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act an individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(7)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act.

Do you attest that these assurances will be met?
Yes

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL) CERTIFICATIONS

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

1. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE,) IS AUTHORIZED TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 (REHABILITATION ACT), AS AMENDED BY TITLE IV OF WIOA[1], AND ITS STATE PLAN SUPPLEMENT UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT;

[1] Public Law 113-128.

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE

Rehabilitation Services, a Division of the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS-DRS)

2. IN THE EVENT THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY IS NOT PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH VOCATIONAL AND OTHER REHABILITATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY MUST INCLUDE A DESIGNATED STATE UNIT FOR THE VR PROGRAM (SECTION 101(A)(2)(B)(II) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT). AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES, THE (DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WHEN THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY HAS A DESIGNATED STATE UNIT)[2]AGREES TO OPERATE AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[3], THE REHABILITATION ACT, 34 CFR 361.13(B) AND (C), AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[4], POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE TO STATES UNDER SECTION 111(A) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

[2] All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

[3] No funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[4] Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76, 77, 79, 81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3474; and the State VR Services program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 361.

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY

Illinois Department of Human Services - Division of Rehabilitation Services

3. AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY, OR THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WHEN THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY HAS A DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AGREES TO OPERATE AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[5], THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE

REGULATIONS[6], POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER TITLE VI ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

[5] No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supported employment supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[6] Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 4, as well as Supported Employment program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 363.

4. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT OR, IF NOT APPLICABLE, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO PERFORM THE FUNCTIONS OF THE STATE REGARDING THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH 34 CFR 361.13(B) AND (C);

5. THE STATE LEGALLY MAY CARRY OUT EACH PROVISION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

6. ALL PROVISIONS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT ARE CONSISTENT WITH STATE LAW.

7. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO RECEIVE, HOLD, AND DISBURSE FEDERAL FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT;

ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Rahnee Patrick, IDHS-DRS Division Director

8. THE (ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND THE SUPPLEMENT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Division Director, IDHS-DRS

9. THE AGENCY THAT SUBMITS THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT HAS ADOPTED OR OTHERWISE FORMALLY APPROVED THE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Public Law 113-128.

[2] All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

[3] No funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[4] Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76, 77, 79, 81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3474; and the State VR Services program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 361.

[5] No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supported employment supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[6] Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 4, as well as Supported Employment program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 363.

CERTIFICATION SIGNATURE

To review and complete the Certification section of the VR portion of the State plan, please select the "Edit" button.

Note, please do not edit the table header or formatting. Only edit the table contents.

If you accidentally edit the table headers and structure, open this link to the blank table. You can copy and paste the table into the narrative field, and start over if needed.

Signatory information	Enter Signatory information in this column
Name of Signatory	Rahnee K. Patrick
Title of Signatory	Director
Date Signed	3/30/2026

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Each State VR program must submit expected levels of performance in its Unified or Combined State Plan and in the two-year modification of that plan. Expected levels of performance for the first two years of a state plan must be submitted in the initial submission of the Unified or Combined State Plan and in the initial submission of the two-year modification of that Plan, for years three and four, as described in 34 CFR § 361.170(a). Expected levels of performance must be stated to the nearest tenth of a percent (XX.X %) or to the nearest whole dollar for median earnings. State VR programs are reminded that the expected levels of performance must be published for public comment prior to plan submission in accordance with state law, regulation, and policy.

The submission of expected levels is the first step in the negotiations process. Once the expected levels of performance have been submitted, State VR programs may begin negotiations with RSA's State Monitoring and Program Improvement Division. Each State VR program must reach agreement with RSA on the negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the Unified or Combined State Plan (or for the third and fourth years of the Unified or Combined State Plan during the required two-year modification process) in accordance with 116(b)(3)(A)(iv).

RSA will use its statistical adjustment model to derive pre-program year estimated levels of performance for each indicator. Each State VR program and RSA will consider the negotiation factors outlined in WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(v) during the negotiation process. Once negotiated levels of performance are agreed upon, each State VR program must incorporate the negotiated levels of performance into the Unified or Combined State Plan and the two-year modification of that plan prior to the plan's approval (section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv) of WIOA).

Effectiveness in Serving Employers (ESE)

The ESE indicator has been defined in the ESE final rule and PY 2024 was the first year of data for the newly defined performance indicator. However, a minimum of at least two baseline years of data must be collected to support a statistical adjustment model that could produce sufficiently reliable estimates for the purposes of performance negotiations and state performance assessments. The Departments, in accordance with 20 CFR § 677.190(c)(4) and 34 CFR §§ 361.190(c)(4) and 463.190(c)(4), will collect and monitor state ESE performance results for at least PY 2024 and PY 2025 to establish a credible baseline and provide technical assistance. After PY 2025 data are collected the Departments will develop a statistical adjustment model for ESE in accordance with section 116(b)(3)(A)(viii) of WIOA. Since the ESE indicator is a statewide measure that reflects a combined result across WIOA titles I, II, III, and IV programs, the Departments will jointly engage in negotiations with state representatives from all core programs when feasible. While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	56.3%	57.3%	56.1%	57.8%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	50.5%	50.5%	51.0%	51.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$4,550	$4,550	$4,600	$4,600
Credential Attainment Rate	34.8%	34.8%	35.1%	35.4%
Measurable Skill Gains	68.0%	64.7%	69.0%	65.2%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]

[1]

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.

GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISION ACT SECTION 427 ASSURANCE - VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to applicants for grant awards under this program. All applicants for new grant awards must include the following information in their applications to address this provision in order to receive funding under this program. (OMB Control Number 1894-0005)

The State Plan must include	Include
I assure that the proposed project complies with the requirements in section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1228a).	Yes

Compliance can be found on the following page(s) of the application:

Information related to this topic can be found in Description B. Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, Description C, Goals, Priorities, and Strategies, Waiver of Statewideness, and Coordination with Education Officials.

GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISION ACT SECTION 427 ASSURANCE - SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to applicants for grant awards under this program. All applicants for new grant awards must include the following information in their applications to address this provision in order to receive funding under this program. (OMB Control Number 1894-0005)

The State Plan must include	Include
I assure that the proposed project complies with the requirements in section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1228a).	Yes

Compliance can be found on the following page(s) of the application:

Information related to this topic can be found in Description B, Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, and Description C, Goals, Priorities, and Strategies.

VII. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS

States choosing to submit a Combined State Plan must provide information concerning the six core programs—the Adult program, Dislocated Worker program, Youth program, Wagner-Peyser Act program, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program, and the Vocational Rehabilitation program— and also submit relevant information for any of the eleven partner programs it elects to include in its Combined State Plan. When a State includes a Combined State Plan partner program in its Combined State Plan, it need not submit a separate plan or application for that particular program. 24 If included, Combined State Plan partner programs are subject to the "common planning elements" in Sections II-IV of this document, where specified, as well as the program-specific requirements for that program.

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

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR APPENDIX

ALL WIOA CORE PROGRAMS

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES - ADULT PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the two years covered by the plan modification. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the two years of the plan modification.

While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment	75.0%	77.5%	75.0%	78.5%

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
(Second Quarter After Exit)				
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	75.5%	77.5%	75.5%	78.5%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$8,500	$9,500	$8,500	$9,500
Credential Attainment Rate	72.0%	72.0%	72.0%	72.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	65.0%	65.0%	65.0%	65.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]

1

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.

ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES - DISLOCATED PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the two years covered by the plan modification. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the two years of the plan modification.

While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

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%	78.5%	78.5%	78.5%
Employment (Fourth Quarter	79.5%	79.5%	79.5%	79.5%

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
After Exit)				
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$10,500	$11,400	$10,500	$11,400
Credential Attainment Rate	72.5%	72.5%	72.5%	72.5%
Measurable Skill Gains	64.0%	66.0%	64.0%	68.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]

1

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.

ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES - YOUTH PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the two years covered by the plan modification. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the two years of the plan modification.

While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

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%	75.0%	75.0%	75.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	75.0%	75.0%	75.0%	75.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter	$4,500	$5,400	$4,500	$5,400

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
After Exit)				
Credential Attainment Rate	70.0%	70.0%	70.0%	70.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	63.0%	63.0%	63.0%	63.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]

1

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.

WAGNER-PEYSER ACT - WAGNER PEYSER PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the two years covered by the plan modification. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the two years of the plan modification.

While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

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%	65.0%	65.0%	65.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	66.0%	66.0%	66.0%	66.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$8,100	$8,500	$8,100	$8,500
Credential Attainment Rate	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Measurable Skill Gains	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]

1

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM - ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the two years covered by the plan modification. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the two years of the plan modification.

While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	25.0	23.6	25.5	23.7
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	24.5	24.0	25.0	24.1
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$6,250.00	$6,250.00	$6,251.00	$6,350
Credential Attainment Rate	33.0	23.6	33.5	23.7
Measurable Skill Gains	44.5	44.5	44.7	44.7
Effectiveness in	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Serving Employers				

1

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM (COMBINED OR GENERAL) - VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Each State VR program must submit expected levels of performance in its Unified or Combined State Plan and in the two-year modification of that plan. Expected levels of performance for the first two years of a state plan must be submitted in the initial submission of the Unified or Combined State Plan and in the initial submission of the two-year modification of that Plan, for years three and four, as described in 34 CFR § 361.170(a). Expected levels of performance must be stated to the nearest tenth of a percent (XX.X %) or to the nearest whole dollar for median earnings. State VR programs are reminded that the expected levels of performance must be published for public comment prior to plan submission in accordance with state law, regulation, and policy.

The submission of expected levels is the first step in the negotiations process. Once the expected levels of performance have been submitted, State VR programs may begin negotiations with RSA's State Monitoring and Program Improvement Division. Each State VR program must reach agreement with RSA on the negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the Unified or Combined State Plan (or for the third and fourth years of the Unified or Combined State Plan during the required two-year modification process) in accordance with 116(b)(3)(A)(iv).

RSA will use its statistical adjustment model to derive pre-program year estimated levels of performance for each indicator. Each State VR program and RSA will consider the negotiation factors outlined in WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(v) during the negotiation process. Once negotiated levels of performance are agreed upon, each State VR program must incorporate the negotiated levels of performance into the Unified or Combined State Plan and the two-year modification of that plan prior to the plan's approval (section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv) of WIOA).

Effectiveness in Serving Employers (ESE)

The ESE indicator has been defined in the ESE final rule and PY 2024 was the first year of data for the newly defined performance indicator. However, a minimum of at least two baseline years of data must be collected to support a statistical adjustment model that could produce sufficiently reliable estimates for the purposes of performance negotiations and state performance assessments. The Departments, in accordance with 20 CFR § 677.190(c)(4) and 34 CFR §§ 361.190(c)(4) and 463.190(c)(4), will collect and monitor state ESE performance results for at least PY 2024 and PY 2025 to establish a credible baseline and provide technical assistance. After PY 2025 data are collected the Departments will develop a statistical adjustment model for ESE in accordance with section 116(b)(3)(A)(viii) of WIOA. Since the ESE

indicator is a statewide measure that reflects a combined result across WIOA titles I, II, III, and IV programs, the Departments will jointly engage in negotiations with state representatives from all core programs when feasible. While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	56.3%	57.3%	56.1%	57.8%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	50.5%	50.5%	51.0%	51.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$4,550	$4,550	$4,600	$4,600
Credential Attainment Rate	34.8%	34.8%	35.1%	35.4%
Measurable Skill Gains	68.0%	64.7%	69.0%	65.2%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]

1

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM (BLIND) - VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Each State VR program must submit expected levels of performance in its Unified or Combined State Plan and in the two-year modification of that plan. Expected levels of performance for the first two years of a state plan must be submitted in the initial submission of the Unified or Combined State Plan and in the initial submission of the two-year modification of that Plan, for years three and four, as described in 34 CFR § 361.170(a). Expected levels of performance must be stated to the nearest tenth of a percent (XX.X %) or to the nearest whole dollar for median earnings. State VR programs are reminded that the expected levels of performance must be published for public comment prior to plan submission in accordance with state law, regulation, and policy.

The submission of expected levels is the first step in the negotiations process. Once the expected levels of performance have been submitted, State VR programs may begin negotiations with RSA's State Monitoring and Program Improvement Division. Each State VR program must reach agreement with RSA on the negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the Unified or Combined State Plan (or for the third and fourth years of the Unified or Combined State Plan during the required two-year modification process) in accordance with 116(b)(3)(A)(iv).

RSA will use its statistical adjustment model to derive pre-program year estimated levels of performance for each indicator. Each State VR program and RSA will consider the negotiation factors outlined in WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(v) during the negotiation process. Once negotiated levels of performance are agreed upon, each State VR program must incorporate the negotiated levels of performance into the Unified or Combined State Plan and the two-year modification of that plan prior to the plan's approval (section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv) of WIOA).

Effectiveness in Serving Employers (ESE)

The ESE indicator has been defined in the ESE final rule and PY 2024 was the first year of data for the newly defined performance indicator. However, a minimum of at least two baseline years of data must be collected to support a statistical adjustment model that could produce sufficiently reliable estimates for the purposes of performance negotiations and state performance assessments. The Departments, in accordance with 20 CFR § 677.190(c)(4) and 34 CFR §§ 361.190(c)(4) and 463.190(c)(4), will collect and monitor state ESE performance results for at least PY 2024 and PY 2025 to establish a credible baseline and provide technical assistance. After PY 2025 data are collected the Departments will develop a statistical adjustment model for ESE in accordance with section 116(b)(3)(A)(viii) of WIOA. Since the ESE indicator is a statewide measure that reflects a combined result across WIOA titles I, II, III, and IV programs, the Departments will jointly engage in negotiations with state representatives from all core programs when feasible. While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)				
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)				
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)				

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Credential Attainment Rate				
Measurable Skill Gains				
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]

1

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.

ADDITIONAL INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

OTHER APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Stakeholder Engagement Report

The following report summarizes key findings from Stakeholder Listening and Engagement Sessions that will be used to refine a four-year strategic plan for the State's Workforce Development System under the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

The sessions covered a variety of discussion topics, but focused on gathering feedback on a new, forward-looking economic analysis; identifying current strengths/weaknesses in Illinois' Workforce Development System; and examining how to address current WIOA challenges and opportunities in Illinois.

All stakeholder feedback and comments collected during recent listening sessions has been reviewed and analyzed in preparation of this report. A selection of verbatim comments made by stakeholders has been included to help readers understand feedback from the voice of individual stakeholders. In some instances, stakeholder comments were edited to protect the identity of contributing stakeholders and to condense the amount of text featured in the report.

The Workforce Development System wishes to extend its appreciation to all the stakeholders who generously shared their perspectives, insights, and time to participate in the listening and engagement sessions.

Methodology

A total of nineteen (19) WIOA Stakeholder Listening and Engagement Sessions were held throughout the State of Illinois in Fall 2023. The sessions were held both in-person and online. In total, over 500 stakeholders participated in the listening and engagement sessions.

Sixteen (16) of the stakeholder sessions were held in-person and spread across ten Economic Development Regions. The in-person sessions were attended by stakeholders who represent Illinois Workforce Service Providers, Community Action Agencies, Community Colleges, Employers, and Federal, State and Local Government. Most of the sessions were conducted in English, however, three sessions in EDR 4 were conducted in Spanish by a bi-lingual facilitator.

Three additional sessions were held online, each with a different intended audience – service providers, employers and individuals. A handful of one-on-one follow-up interviews were also conducted with stakeholders who specifically provide workforce support for immigrants and workers enrolled in English Language Acquisition (ELA) courses.

All stakeholder listening sessions were held between September and November 2023. The in-person listening sessions were approximately 1½ to 2 hours in length and held in community college meeting rooms, public libraries, and community centers. Stakeholder attendance at in-person sessions varied, but generally averaged around 10-12 stakeholders per session. The online webinar sessions reached a much larger pool of employers and jobseekers with more than one hundred stakeholders on each call.

Respondent Profile

Approximately 588 WIOA stakeholders participated in Illinois WIOA Listening and Engagement Sessions. Feedback was obtained from stakeholders in ten (10) economic development regions, ensuring broad participation across the State of Illinois.

Participating stakeholders represented different entities within Illinois, including employers, workforce development service providers, community colleges, community action agencies, jobseekers, and federal/state/local government representatives. Given the diversity of businesses represented in the listening sessions, there are both similar and divergent perspectives, at times, that can help shape the state's workforce development planning process.

About half of stakeholders who participated in listening sessions fulfill a role within their organization where they provide hands-on workforce development support for jobseekers or work to educate future workers. Over one-quarter of stakeholders are senior executives within their organizations, and about one-third serve the public more generally, through federal, state or local governments. Additionally, some stakeholders were jobseekers, consultants, or retired individuals with a specific interest in workforce development.

Nearly all stakeholders attended listening sessions conducted in English, however, a few participated in Spanish sessions led by a bi-lingual moderator. Similarly, most stakeholders participated in sessions conducted online, however, just under one-quarter attended in-person. There is a notable gender skew among stakeholders; about two-thirds are female and one-third are male. Other demographic data on stakeholders, such as age or income metrics, were not gathered.

Tables and charts available in the appendix starting on page 35 provide more detailed information on stakeholders who participated in the listening and engagement sessions.

To increase consistency across the sessions the same presentation and facilitator guide was used for the listening and engagement sessions. Facilitators completed moderator training to ensure these materials would be used effectively, and facilitators were prepared to elicit desired responses and feedback from participating stakeholders.

Summary

Stakeholders who participated appear to have genuine interest in the State's new WIOA four-year plan. Regardless of their role in the system, they appear to be committed to working with the State to strengthen the Workforce Development System and hope for more opportunities in the future to engage in discussion.

Stakeholders describe Illinois' Workforce Development System as having both strengths and weaknesses. Strengths are frequently identified as adaptability, staff commitment, programs, partnership between different service providers, and facilities. Weaknesses are identified as things which generally impede the efficiency and effectiveness the system, such as outdated information systems, inability of program staff to access and share data across partners, resistance to collaboration between programs, and a process which at times seems to impede rather than streamline their workforce development efforts. Key threats to the system are reportedly the burden that the current process places on individuals, employers and staff, such as program drop-outs and staff turnover; backlogged demand; and a rising population of immigrants with urgent, unmet needs. Despite these challenges, stakeholders remain optimistic about the future and hope the State's new strategic plan for WIOA will provide a detailed roadmap for the future.

When exposed to an overview of new draft plan, stakeholders are receptive to the three overall goals outlined in the draft plan. In fact, many stakeholders feel the over-arching goals are aligned to their current work and feel the goals will allow them to work toward achieving WIOA's mission. When exposed to strategies for each goal, however, stakeholders are receptive, but to varying degrees.

Goal 1 strategies are considered important though many stakeholders say that the word "customers" should be defined when used in "customer-focused" and in other areas of the plan. They often prefer more specific descriptors, such as jobseekers, employers, etc.. To enable collaboration, they explain that information systems must first allow for information sharing. And, to build awareness, they report that a state-wide marketing plan and invest in building capacity for marketing and awareness-building activities at the ground level. The final Goal 1 related to "frontline workers" is generally considered confusing; some stakeholders reveal that they do not understand the meaning of "frontline workers" and suggest removing this item.

Goal 2 strategies, which focus on supporting employers, are met with the greatest degree of resistance. While they generally understand the Goal 3 strategies, some workforce service providers indicate that they have limited time to support employers. As such, while they attempt to support employers upon request, they are currently unable to provide the level of employer support depicted in Goal 2, since they are currently required to spend a high proportion of their time supporting jobseekers. The remainder of time is spent on process-related hurdles, such as paperwork and accessing data. Without a reduction in process-related burden or improved efficiency, Goal 2 strategies are, at times, considered aspirational or unrealistic.

Stakeholders appear to support Goal 3 strategies, which focus on the use of customer-centered and data-informed practices. However, some stakeholders indicate that they are confused with this terminology. For example, many stakeholders say they do not know what "a data-informed approach" is, and others are confused by text that suggests that they will "interact with jobseekers where they live and visit." The latter phrase is considered generally impractical, given the State's rural settings and distance between job centers. Lastly, stakeholders mention concern about use of the phrase, "historically marginalized," indicating that WIOA is focused on serving all people eligible for services, not people defined as "historically marginalized." Some suggest it may be more appropriate to describe them as "underserved individuals eligible for WIOA services."

Stakeholders generally feel that the Economic Analysis contained in the draft plan is accurate and well-aligned to the State overall. Despite this, some indicate that it would be helpful if the plan provided both state and regional assessments of industry job growth given wide industry variations across Illinois. While stakeholders are receptive to the Economic Analysis, they reveal that some Illinois industries seem mischaracterized, which may be a function of basing the analysis predominantly on NAICS without customization or adaptation for the State of Illinois.

For example, some stakeholders question the current categorization of Education Services in Illinois as a maturing industry, given current teacher shortages, growing demand for educators to support a rising immigrant population, and state-wide initiatives such as "Pre-school for All." Similarly, some feel that Health Care should be a growing industry in Illinois, given that Illinois healthcare is often ranked best in the nation, there is diversity of health care companies—providers, pharma, device manufacturers in Illinois--and the state's demand for healthcare workers is currently unmet.

Stakeholders also report that the plan should recognize the State's considerable investments in building new industries. For example, while Clean Energy is not a NAICS per se, some feel it should be listed as an emerging industry in the analysis given the State's commitment to the clean industry, as evidenced by Illinois' Clean Energy Jobs Act (CEJA). They indicate the State's effort to bring such industries as solar, wind, and electrical vehicle manufacturing to Illinois should indicate that the industry will be growing in the State during the next 8 years. Additionally, they suggest that job reporting for Agriculture should be split into cannabis and non-cannabis production, given that WIOA does not support job placement in the marijuana industry hence data could be misleading.

Stakeholders frequently mention that the Economic Analysis appears to be missing an important assessment of job value. Stakeholders explain that the analysis should provide a prediction on the proportion of jobs created for each industry that will result in full-time vs. part-time positions. Similarly, they also seek to understand what the estimated average wage will be for new jobs generated by each industry. More specifically, they seek to understand whether the industries are expected to provide "living wages" for workers in their area. At present, stakeholders indicate that cost of food and housing, particularly in EDR 4, is often a barrier for the jobseekers they support.

Appendix 2

Public Comments

Overview of Public Comments Submitted
Four comments were received during the public comment period of the draft 2024 – 2027 WIOA State Plan. The majority of the comments stated that the plan addressed major areas of consideration and instead of seeking changes to the plan, focused on specific actions to take during the implementation of the plan.
Suggestions for implementation generally can be addressed in four ways:

1. operational guidance
2. the setting of state policy
3. actions taken by the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board
4. appropriations or legislation created by the Illinois General Assembly and signed by the Governor.

It should be noted that some of the comments around implementation are already happening.

Comments Concerning Considerations on the Implementation of the WIOA State Plan
Support the establishment and implementation of a sector partnership focused on "blue jobs" – jobs and career pathways related to the management of water and water-dependent industries.

Customer-Centered Approach to Service Delivery

- Develop a shared intake platform and common referral process among partners. Implement a feedback loop to continuously improve the process based on user experiences and feedback from service providers should also be considered.
- Assessment of AJCs: In addition to assessing accessibility for individuals with disabilities, prioritize accessibility for all demographics. Collaborate with disability advocacy groups for insights and recommendations.
- Empower AJCs to shift from a one-size-fits-all mentality to an individualized, experiential, contextualized, and transformative experience for users that allows for hands-on learning and experimentation.
- Adopt a membership-like model at AJCs that promotes a sense of belonging and supports workers throughout their careers.

Other suggestions

- Invest in user-friendly tools and strengthen partnerships with research institutions to improve the accuracy and timeliness of labor market data.
- Establish a centralized platform for best practice sharing and ensure the assessment process is comprehensive and individualized.
- Provide digital literacy training for system staff to promote best and offer users digital literacy training and technology access to keep pace with changing industry needs.
- Create a feedback loop for employers to provide input on workforce needs and align sector initiatives consistently.

- Promote apprenticeships effectively, standardize procedures, and simplify documentation to encourage more businesses to participate.
- Regularly update the inventory of services and ensure that it is easily accessible to service providers and individuals seeking assistance.
- Promote transparency and inclusivity in the MOU and budget negotiation process to build trust among partners.
- Continue to adapt the one-stop center certification process to align with evolving workforce development trends and technologies.
- Prioritize data-driven decision-making strategies in region and local workforce area planning process that encourage regional teams to utilize data to inform their strategies.
- Increase state funding for the workforce development system.
- Create a Chief Workforce Officer through legislation and fill that position as soon as possible. That position should oversee implementation of the plan.

Public Comment Process for the 2026 State Plan Modification

Illinois provided multiple opportunities for public comment on the 2026 Unified State Plan Modification to ensure transparency and stakeholder engagement.

The initial draft of the modification was published for public comment from February 6, 2026 through February 20, 2026. Public awareness was supported through multiple outreach strategies, including a public webinar held in January 2026 that provided an overview of the modification and instructions for submitting comments, distribution through an email communication to workforce system stakeholders, posting on the Illinois workNet State Plan webpage, and dissemination through core partner networks.

Following additional revisions to strengthen alignment with Perkins V Career and Technical Education (CTE) strategies, the modification was republished for a second public comment period from March 19, 2026 through March 26, 2026. This additional opportunity for comment was communicated through updates to the Illinois workNet website and an announcement during the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) quarterly meeting.

During both public comment periods, stakeholders were invited to submit feedback through the designated WIOA public comment inbox. A total of two comments were received.