ILLINOIS PYS 2022-2023 (MOD)

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I. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE

This is a unified plan

B. PLAN INTRODUCTION OR EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Governor J.B. Pritzker in 2019 directed the State to prioritize revitalizing economic growth and creating economic opportunity in communities across the state using a data-informed, demand-driven framework. Building upon that direction, the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) guided the development of the 2020 WIOA State Unified Plan. The 2020 plan outlined the vision, principles and goals for the integration of workforce, education and economic development programs for the State of Illinois. It provided guidance to Illinois' workforce development partners as they sought to implement the Governor's vision to improve the State's economy and the lives of its workers.

The vision and principles established in 2019 demonstrated that Illinois' data-driven, demand-oriented strategies respond to the needs of businesses and job-seekers even as the system was challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic and other socioeconomic factors. Throughout this 2022 modification to the WIOA Unified State Plan are insights, lessons learned and known challenges that evolved since 2020. This modification names those challenges and commits to spending the next two years engaging stakeholders to develop innovative solutions and strategies for a more adaptable, inclusive, and integrated workforce system. In short, this 2022 modification serves as a bridge to a completely new State Plan and vision in 2024.

Adaptations Leading Up to 2024

In response to the COVID-19 public health emergency, American Job Center offices were forced to close suddenly in March 2020. The state provided intensive technical assistance to help local workforce boards and one-stop partners adopt new service delivery strategies and access personal protective equipment. Coinciding with the temporary closure of the American Job Centers was an unprecedented increase in unemployment. In Illinois the number of unemployed went from less than 1 per 1,000 residents in 2019 to more than 16 per 1,000 residents in April 2020. Pandemic-related workload across all programs translated to roughly 8.5 initial claims per minute during the first year of the pandemic. As of June 30, 2021, over 700,000 continued claimants were seeking unemployment insurance benefits across all workforce programs administered by the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) programs.

To manage the unprecedented volume of claims, implement new federal programs, and integrate ongoing federal policy and program changes, IDES used multiple strategies, including:

- vendor support for new program platforms;
- expansion of call center capacity;
- temporary assignments of existing staff to unemployment insurance claims work; and
- a multilingual virtual agent accessible on the IDES website.

IDES also rolled out multiple new resources to assist claimants and employers navigate programs including:

- email and text notices;
- infographics, explanatory sheets and glossaries;

- services for claimants with limited English proficiency;
- a language translation widget; and
- expanded stakeholder outreach.

In addition to focusing on the work related to benefits, IDES continued to profile claimants for the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment Grants program. The quick shift from in-person to remote delivery of employment services revamped an individualized career services model.

In May 2020, Governor Pritzker, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) and IDES launched Get Hired Illinois, a web portal designed to connect workers with available job and career training opportunities across the state of Illinois. Governor Pritzker also announced that beginning in June 2020, Illinois residents would have free access to online workforce development courses via a partnership with Coursera. Coursera is an online global learning platform that partners with more than 200 universities and organizations around the world to offer anyone access to courses, projects, job-ready certificates and degrees. With Illinois facing record unemployment, the Coursera partnership and Get Hired portal served as important measures in the state's overall efforts to get people back to work. The portal blended DCEO and IDES resources to provide a one-stop-shop for both job seekers and employers, providing information on job opportunities as well as unemployment resources. The web page was designed to be user-friendly for job seekers of all levels and backgrounds and allow employers to upload jobs, virtual career fairs and training opportunities.

Virtual Job Fairs (VJF) were launched as part of the Get Hired initiative. Through the VJF platform, job seekers had the opportunity to explore employer information and find job opportunities while employers may host informational VJF sessions and recruit potential candidates for their job openings. More than 700 employer virtual job fair booths were added totaling more than 40,000 job openings across all employer booths since May 2020. There have been 189 live VJF events included more than 310 employers and more than 14,000 participants since the initiative was launched. African Americans represented more than half of the attendees. Additionally, more than half of the participants identified as female.

As the COVID-19 mitigation strategies unfolded, the State's WIOA Interagency Teams of state-level executives, administrators and legal teams developed and refined a checklist to identify necessary requirements and offer additional guidance to support Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIBs) in making decisions about when to reopen American Job Centers with the appropriate safety measures in place. The checklist has continued to evolve as additional information becomes known, and LWIBs share their insights about best practices.

Balancing ongoing public health concerns with the need to place job-seekers in jobs, IDES assisted local areas to promote Title I services to job seekers and claimants; facilitated job postings by employers at IllinoisJobLink.com (IJL); and provided direct communication with employers to connect them to Get Hired Illinois and hiring incentive programs.

As Illinois faced unprecedented challenges between 2020 and 2022 for the planning and delivery of Rapid Response services, Illinois met and expanded services outside the traditional response services.

Customized company layoff webpages were created automatically in the newly launched Illinois Employment Business System (IEBS) and displayed publicly on the Illinois workNet website for layoff events, enabling affected individuals to view information on specific local events, services, resources, and complete an online questionnaire to connect to a local workforce partner. Rapid Response workshops were recorded and posted to company-specific web pages so that employees unable to attend the live presentation could view the information on demand. All

workforce partners had the ability to upload resources and information directly to the company pages to provide the most current assistance.

To continue to support WIOA required program partners who faced the financial impacts from the COVID-19 response, DCEO identified additional Statewide Rapid Response funds to support the provision of career services in the one-stop delivery system and carry out activities to facilitate remote access to training services provided through the one-stop delivery system. Additional Statewide Rapid Response funds were made available to facilitate remote access to training services provided through the one-stop delivery system, and support enhanced efforts to connect jobseekers to employment, career counseling, and job search assistance. Strategies included increased outreach activities, expansion of supportive services, support for workers in targeted industries (i.e., supply chain training), and employer support through layoff aversion activities.

A WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team continuously obtained feedback from partners around the state about the status of service delivery through American Job Centers, as well as questions related to health and safety protocol, staff training, and shared costs reflected in the local MOUs. The Checklist for Reopening American Job Centers that coordinated with the Governor's "Restore Illinois" plan was also updated throughout 2020 and 2021, particularly as safety concerns and inherent challenges of a high volume of UI claimants affected service delivery. State agency directors, executives, legal teams and program administrators in Spring 2021 collaboratively established standard criteria regarding public health and safety protocols when AJCs reopened to the public in any capacity. Ultimately, this collaborative process culminated with the issuance of a statewide policy (WIOA Notice No. 20-NOT-09). This WIOA Notice included a required form to ensure local workforce boards, chief elected officials, leaseholders, one-stop operators, required partners at the state and local levels were aware and agreed to the safety and service delivery protocol when employees returned onsite and when a center was planned to reopen to the public.

As economic recovery efforts continue beyond 2022, a common consideration is how to reach employers and job seekers as the concepts and mechanisms of remote service delivery evolve. Enhanced business services and strong partnerships helped to leverage Illinois WIOA resources and increase opportunities for job seekers and businesses.

Additional lessons have been learned through DCEO's Office of Employment and Training (OET) and Regional Economic Development field staff (Team RED), which worked to help companies remain competitive by leveraging connections and interactions with businesses to identify opportunities for early intervention. The mutual goal remained to help businesses access WIOA services to avoid layoffs and provide WIOA participants the opportunity to obtain self-sufficiency after a layoff.

The 2020 Unified State Plan proved to be a strong foundation throughout the instability and uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and evolving economic factors. Guided by this 2022 modification over the next two years, Illinois will continue on a path to recovery. Proactive approaches will include targeted efforts for business and industry, current employees, and new job-seekers that are the lifeblood of the Illinois economy. Most importantly, Illinois will remain a leader in implementing innovative solutions that develop a workforce ready to meet Illinois employers' needs, enabling Illinois to continue competing in the global economy.

Towards a more Equitable Workforce System

The workforce investment system has a key role to play in improving equity in educational and economic opportunity in America. Illinois is committed to applying an equity lens to our workforce investment strategies to help ensure that our most vulnerable populations gain skills and access good, family-supporting jobs. Key to that work will be identifying inequitable outputs and outcomes in the workforce system, exploring the cause of those inequities, and

implementing solutions to advance equity within the system. The IWIB's Equity Task Force is developing a framework of recommendations within Illinois' workforce and education system to establish goals and remove inequities for the populations the system is meant to serve.

In addition to the Equity Task Force's work, Governor Pritzker formed the Commission on Workforce Equity & Access in 2021. The Commission was charged with creating a vision for an equitable, accessible, and effective state workforce system grounded in an understanding of user and stakeholder experience, including how racial, social, and geographic inequities inform experience and outcomes across Illinois' federally and state-funded workforce programs. Among its top priorities is finding ways to strengthen and diversify existing workforce training programs to address shortages, expand access to talent and to promote equity and inclusion across all industries. The Commission is scheduled to release its findings later in 2022. Its work will be explored over the next two years and be used to help inform the 2024 state workforce plan.

Illinois' Vision Statement: Foster a statewide workforce development system that supports the needs of individuals and businesses to ensure Illinois has a skilled workforce to effectively compete in the global economy.

Our Guiding Principles:

- Demand-Driven Orientation – Through a sector strategy framework, the state will support the system assessment of business needs for talent across local, regional and state levels.
- Strong Partnerships with Business at All Levels – Strong partnerships with business will assist employers to define in-demand skills and articulate those needs to education and training providers.
- Pathways to Careers of Today and Tomorrow – The development of career pathways that meet employers' skill needs today, while offering individuals clear opportunities to build and upgrade their skills, earn industry-recognized credentials, and advance their career over time.
- Cross-agency Collaboration and Connections – There will be a focus on improving strategic connections across all components and levels of the education and workforce systems.
- Integrated Service Delivery – Illinois will more effectively serve business and individual customers by implementing service integration strategies.
- Equitable Access and Opportunity for All Populations – Connecting individuals with relevant supports, such as transportation, childcare and transition services will help targeted populations prepare for and advance along a career pathway.
- Clear Metrics for Progress and Success – Illinois will develop or adopt metrics that will monitor for progress and success informing continuous improvement and innovation efforts.
- Focus on Continuous Improvement and Innovation – Illinois will advance systemic and sustainable change that drives us to be prompt, agile and responsive to changing economic conditions.

State Goals: In January 2019, two days after his inauguration, Governor Pritzker issued Executive Order #3 (EO 3) and directed the State to prioritize revitalizing economic growth and creating economic opportunity in communities across the state using a data-informed, demand-driven framework for improving the quality of the State's workforce. Since then Illinois has continued to learn from the past to chart a new course for the economy. We must scale up

practices that have proven effective, re-engineer those that have not delivered on promised success, and abandon those with little to no return. Six lessons learned will help guide our path forward and form the basis for the statewide goals that follow:

- Workforce development efforts must support the industries and occupations targeted at the state and regional levels while responding to the needs of local employers.
- The skills gap is arguably Illinois' most serious barrier to economic prosperity. Building a pool of job seekers and workers with the right skills at the right time is essential.
- Our job creation efforts must be statewide and extend to employers of all sizes. Effective economic development strategies are needed in urban and rural areas alike. Also, two-thirds of the nation's private-sector workforce is employed by small business. Strategies to stabilize, retain, and grow this bedrock of our economy are urgently needed throughout Illinois.
- All investments must generate an acceptable return on investment. These returns must be measured in terms of the outcomes most meaningful to Illinois residents—such as jobs, earnings, and long-term career prospects.
- Programs to prepare individuals for the workplace too often ignore the harsh economic realities of low-income populations. Education and training models that offer an "earn as you learn" component enable economically at-risk populations to acquire new skills while supporting themselves and their families. For others, support for childcare and transportation can mean the difference between advancing on a career pathway and remaining in poverty.
- The system-level change we envision will require that all State agencies with a stake in education, job creation, or workforce development support each other.

Goals for Achieving the State's Strategic Vision

1. *Unite workforce development partners around regional cluster strategies*: Regional cluster strategies will focus resources on the industries with the highest potential to add jobs and increase prosperity in regions across Illinois. These strategies bring together the public and private sectors in each region to build on their unique strengths.
2. *Prepare Illinois' workers for a career, not just their next job*: Regardless of background, life circumstances, or education level, Illinois workers can be prepared for high-demand careers by developing core academic, technical, and essential employability skills throughout their lifetimes.
3. C*onnect job seekers with employers*: Assist Illinois businesses to find the productive workers they need, through more efficient training and better services for job seekers and employers.

State Strategies to Achieve These Goals: Seven essential state strategies underpin Illinois' commitment to engage and support all parts of our education, workforce, and economic development systems.

Strategy 1: Coordinate Demand-Driven Strategic Planning at the State and Regional Levels

The IWIB has a demand-driven strategic planning process grounded in strong partnerships across education (secondary and postsecondary), workforce and economic development at the State, regional and local levels.

Strategy 2: Support Employer-Driven Regional Sector Initiatives

The IWIB continues to guide this important work to ensure investment in resources and promotion of skills and careers in targeted industry and high demand occupations.

Strategy 3: Provide Economic Advancement for All Populations through Career Pathways

State and regional sector initiatives will provide the foundation for sector-based career pathway initiatives that expand career and educational opportunities for students and workers, including those facing multiple barriers to employment to achieve economic advancement.

Strategy 4: Expand Service Integration

Defined as "a combination of strategies to align and simplify access to one-stop center services and supports for employers, job seekers, and workforce professionals within the system," the goal of service integration in Illinois is to provide the best experience possible for all WIOA customers.

Strategy 5: Promote Improved Data-Driven Decision Making

Partner agencies will design, develop and use the statewide public-private data infrastructure (see Strategy 6, below) to provide both employers and job seekers with information and tools to promote and access job openings, review changing labor market trends and opportunities, identify funding opportunities and fund education, training and support services.

Strategy 6: Advance Public-Private Data Infrastructure

Focusing on the IWIB Vision, the board will ensure measures are implemented that will guide Illinois through sustainable, systemic change. It will expand and improve the Illinois public-private data infrastructure to support the five strategies described above. This requires the integration of labor market information with State education and workforce longitudinal data systems, as well as program and case management systems.

To assure that the IWIB can lead the efforts of Illinois in these seven strategic areas, it has identified a need to strengthen the effectiveness and impact of its members and the membership of local workforce boards. Strategies will be developed to identify appropriate methods of outreach between the IWIB and local boards, as well as the technical assistance and resource needs that will allow board members to better understand their functions and responsibilities and ensure accountability in effectively conducting their business.

Strategy 7: Increase Barrier Reduction Services

Invest in a more systemic and accelerated framework to improve equity and access to the state's workforce and education systems, including supportive services, to reduce barriers to training and employment.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Comment: The IWIB is responsible for overseeing the development, implementation and modification of the Unified 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 the modified Unified State Plan. Illinois' Unified State Plan was released for public comment on February 2, 2022, to allow interested stakeholders to participate in the development of the plan. During the public comment period, two public webinars were conducted to provide ample opportunity for public feedback and input on the 2022 Unified State Plan modification.

The modification process leading up to the 2022 submittal was similar. Under the guidance of the IWIB, the State agencies and other partners responsible for administering core and required programs reviewed and commented on appropriate strategic and operational planning portions of the Unified State Plan modification. The updated content was informed by an inventory of studies, surveys and reports regarding the workforce released since 2020. Additionally, new

surveys tailored for employers, job-seekers, advocates and agency staff and contractors were used to solicit feedback about known challenges and needs going forward. Several public webinars were held to explain the modification process as well as to dialogue with the public and stakeholders (see the "Other Appendices" section for more on the public comments received and other stakeholder feedback for both the original plan and the modification).

II. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

A. ECONOMIC, WORKFORCE, AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

1. ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

A. Economic Analysis

Alignment of Economic Analysis Across Multiple Strategic Plans

There are three major Strategic Planning efforts underway with linkages to economic and workforce development in Illinois. They are:

1. The Governor's Economic Development Plan developed by the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) Office of Program and Policy Development in consultation with the Governor's Office. The plan was released October 9, 2019.
2. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified State Plan (this document) jointly developed by the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board, (IWIB), State agencies that administer the WIOA Core Partner programs in Illinois (DCEO - Workforce Training; Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) - Adult Education; the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) - Labor Exchange, Business and Veteran Services; and the Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DHS-VR - Vocational Rehabilitation) in conjunction with the Governor's Office and with input from other federal workforce programs, business and industry, economic development, constituent population advocates and other interested stakeholders.
3. The Perkins V State Plan for Career and Technical Education, created by the Illinois Community College Board and the Illinois State Board of Education, was submitted in April 2020.

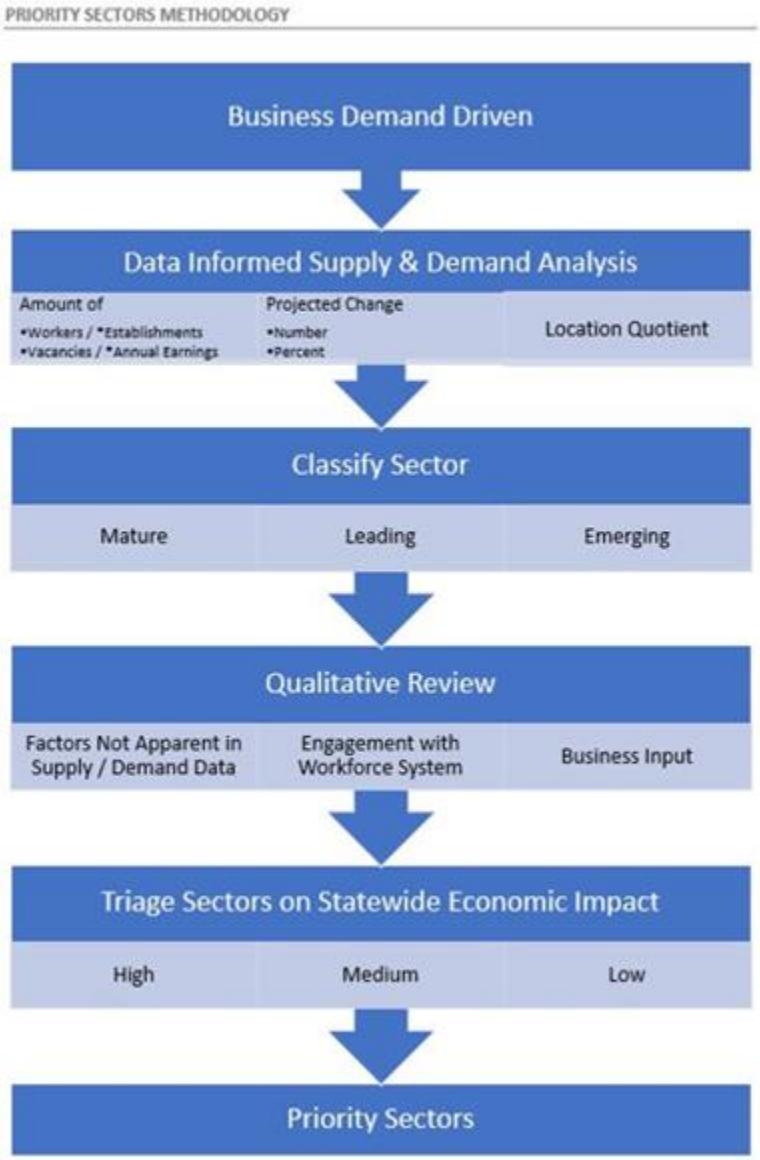
These plans all share the goal of improving the State's competitive position in the global economy and promoting community prosperity. However, there are differences in the specific focus, context and requirements associated with each plan.

The Economic Development Plan includes the Governor's vision for economic prosperity, with many elements directly related to workforce and education and also some elements less directly tied to these areas. The three priorities from the Economic Development Plan listed below demonstrate where overlaps with workforce and education exist; and in these cases, the federal program plans will align with the Governor's vision.

1. Lay the foundation for long-term growth by investing in and fostering research and development, entrepreneurship, and innovation;
2. Reduce the equity gap by investing in, providing support to, and taking down barriers for economically disadvantaged populations; and
3. Attract more workers and businesses to Illinois by aggressively marketing the state and providing a solid foundation for business growth and attraction.

Data and Information Collection

IDES employs the state's labor market economists that provide data and information to support state, regional, and local workforce and economic development initiatives. The economic and workforce analysis data are publicly available and support an analytic process that is easily replicable using those readily available data sources. The state also engages businesses, and both regional and local partners to regularly and systematically analyze and validate complementary data. The long-term goal is to collect and develop the most robust data sources possible.



The Interagency Data Team selected the data that are utilized in this economic and workforce analysis. Finally, the agencies and data analysts involved in developing Illinois' statutorily mandated Five-Year Economic Development Plan also met to ensure that the process they used to identify economic development targets was consistent with that used to support other statewide economic and workforce analyses.

1. The Interagency Data Team was tasked with developing a comprehensive methodology to identify priority sectors and occupations in Illinois. The Priority Sectors and Occupations Methodology Framework includes two foundational elements: 1) a business-demand basis for defining the sectors, industries and occupations that are most important in the Illinois economy; and2) a robust analysis of relevant labor-market data. Initial stages of the framework (detailed in this plan) determine whether the sector

is categorized as "mature," "leading" or "emerging." Subsequent stages will include a qualitative review that will incorporate key information that may not be readily apparent in raw data (such as emerging industry trends known due to ongoing business engagement activities). After all the data are analyzed and tested against "local knowledge" the team will triage sectors into categories of High, Medium and Lower importance to the economy.

The key data elements reviewed include:

- Number of workers
- Number of establishments
- Projected changes in workers and establishments
- Current location quotients
- Vacancies
- Average wages

This section of Illinois' Unified State Plan is focused on analyzing existing demand within industry and occupational categories. The Data Team reviewed data from various perspectives: sectors and industries at the high level using the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) and occupational data using federal Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes.

NAICS is the standard used by Federal statistical agencies in classifying business establishments for the purpose of collecting, analyzing, and publishing statistical data related to the U.S. business economy. Like all data, NAICS does have some limitations and caveats. For example, NAICS classifies businesses based on their primary activities, but a specific business may have significant activity in other sectors. For example, Walmart Inc.s primary activity is a retailer, but it employs thousands of workers focused on Transportation / Distribution / Logistics at its distribution centers and in-house trucking division.

Readers are cautioned to not make assumptions on the types of businesses or occupations implied by high-level groupings.

For example, the NAICS "Information" sector includes industries primarily focused on publishing, motion pictures, broadcasting, internet publishing and broadcasting, telecommunications, data processing, etc. Occupations requiring "information technology" skills are embedded in companies from all sectors. We must look beyond the Information sector to discern the full extent of the supply and demand for jobs and workers needing IT skills. There are significant numbers of tech workers spread across manufacturing, finance, government and many other sectors. Likewise, "Energy" is not a sector in the NAICS model, but energy-related industries and occupations are found in sectors such as: Construction; Manufacturing; and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services, among others.

Cases like these require using SOC codes to look at occupational data for jobs that are widely scattered across various sectors and industries. The review of occupational information is included in the Workforce Analysis section. A partial listing of how industries are grouped into sectors and used by federal data sources is provided in Attachment A (formerly Attachment F in the 2020 Unified State Plan), "BLS QCEW - Industries by Supersector and NAICS Code".

In the interest of promoting synergies with other planning efforts across Illinois for economic development, workforce development, and education, the industries in the Economic Development Plan were defined broadly. For example, the Agribusiness and Ag Tech sector includes traditional agricultural sectors such as crop production and animal production, food manufacturing sectors, and support activities and suppliers for farm activities. As another

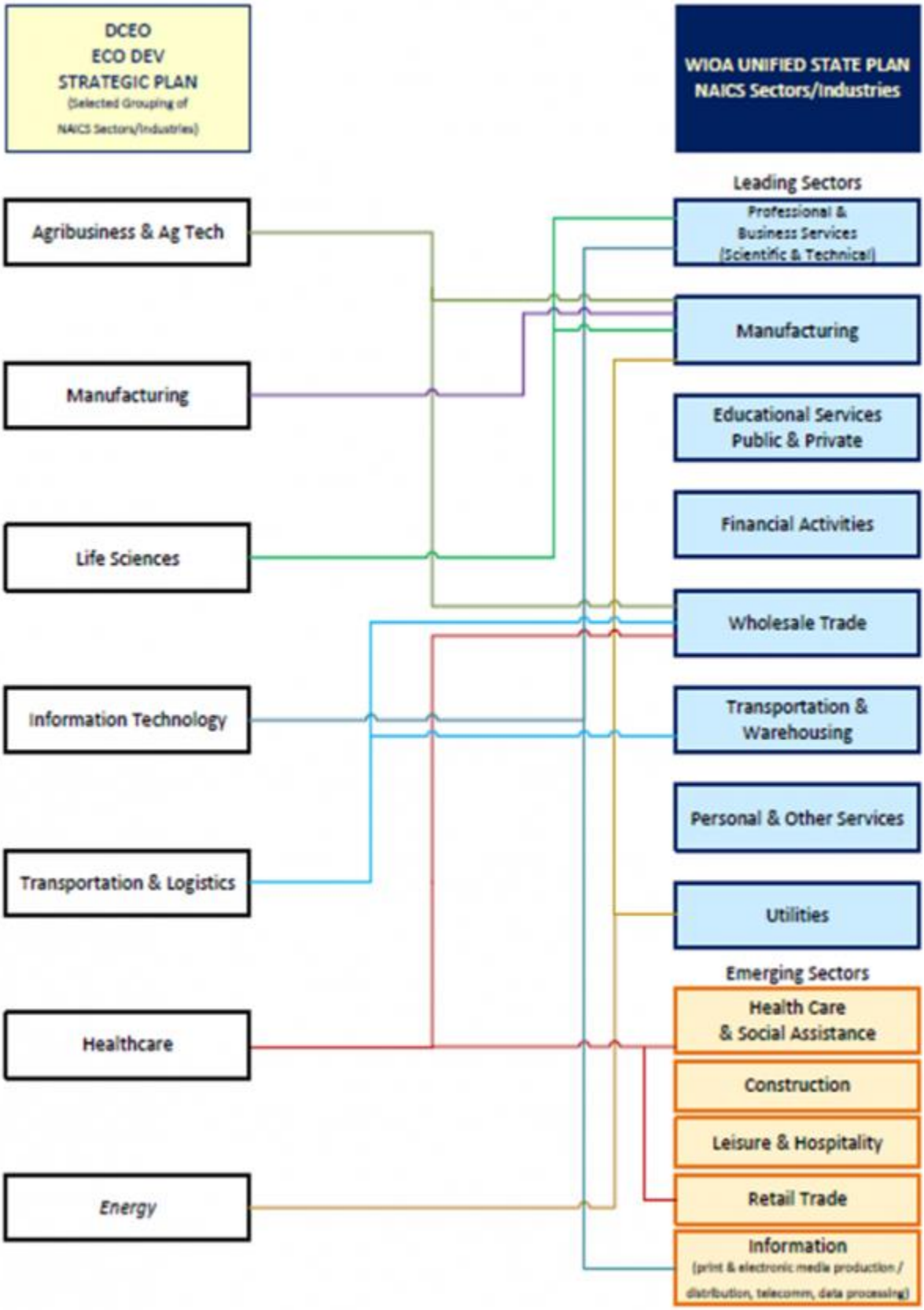
example, the Transportation and Logistics industry includes warehousing, wholesale trade and distribution, and companies involved in import-export activities. Each industry in the Economic Development Plan includes multiple sub-sectors, so that each region might have businesses and employees specialized in a different aspect of the supply chain.

The Five-Year Economic Development Plan prepared by the DCEO focuses on six categories of businesses grouped by primary areas of focus for the Governor and the State's economic development efforts:

- Agribusiness and Agricultural Technology (Ag Tech)
- Energy
- Information Technology
- Life Sciences and Healthcare
- Manufacturing
- Transportation and Logistics

The following diagram indicates how the industry groupings in the Economic Development Plan align with the groupings used in the WIOA Unified State Plan.

DCEO Economic Development Plan / WIOA Unified State Plan Areas of Interest Crosswalk



Industries shown in the Unified State Plan will typically be described in terms different from those in the Economic Development Plan because implementation will require a more precise emphasis to meet the needs and conditions of each region. In many cases, the target industries by region will have self-evident linkages to those in the Economic Development Plan. For example, aerospace manufacturing in the Northern Stateline Region fits unambiguously in the Manufacturing sector. In other cases, a regional industry might have linkages to the Economic Development Plan that are not readily apparent, and those linkages will be clarified in the text of the Unified State Plan. For example, some professional services industries are classifiable under Information Technology.

To ensure that the first action area highlighted in Gov. Pritzker's Executive Order 3 – "Unite workforce development partners around regional cluster strategies" – is addressed across the entire education system, ISBE was included in the Interagency Data Team.

This collaborative approach aligns multiple planning processes and data sources around a common methodology for selecting high-impact regional clusters and associated in-demand occupations.

Additionally, the IWIB Continuous Improvement Committee (CIC) and the Business Engagement Committee (BEC) work to address the need to utilize current information from business owners, employer associations, partner agencies and other sources to complement Bureau of Labor Statistics data from IDES to reflect real-time employment conditions and business needs. The CIC's workgroups are in the process of finalizing mechanisms for gathering and reporting on appropriate data and information.

Updated Economic Analysis

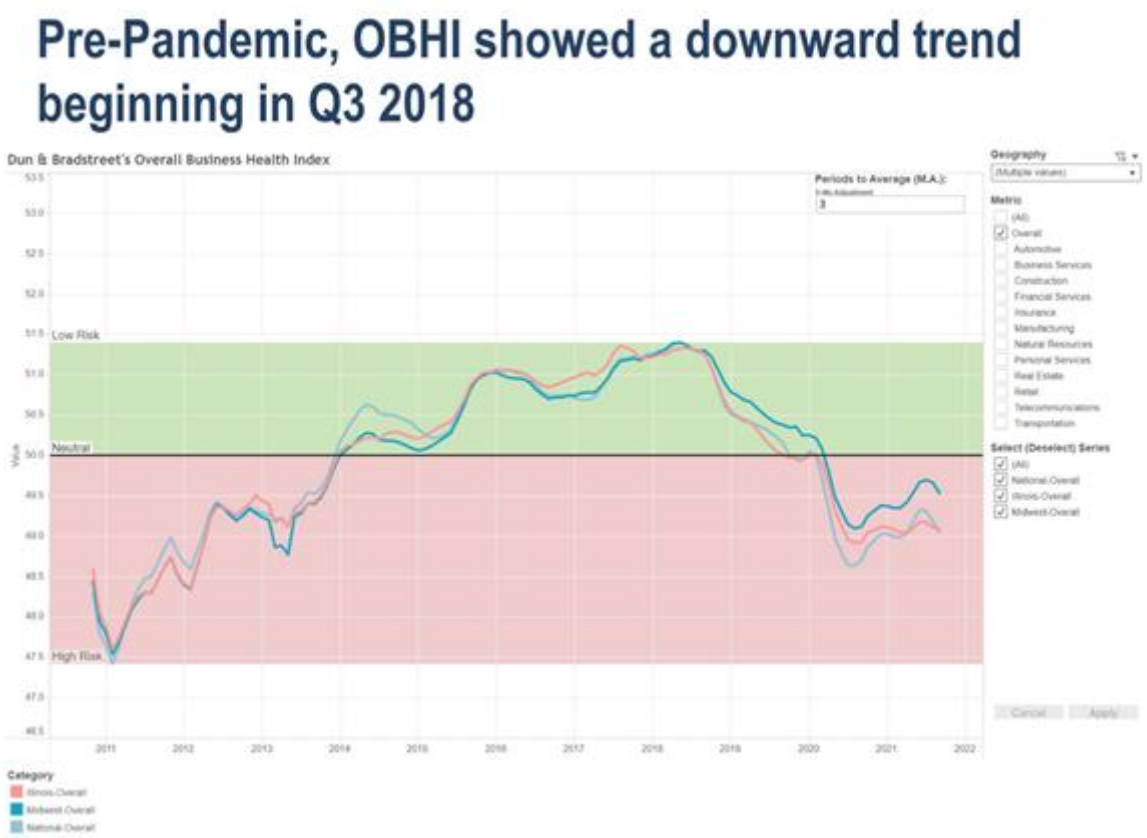
The economy of today is significantly different compared to the economy when the 2020 Unified State Plan was drafted. The economic fluctuations resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and other economic inequities related to the pandemic prompted a more wide-ranging look at a variety of economic factors that rose to prominence in 2020 and will continue to evolve in the foreseeable future. At the time of completing the 2022 Unified State Plan modification, hard data is just now becoming available to support a quantifiable analysis of economic activity and labor market trends that have been observed anecdotally since early 2020. This section focuses on the economic factors and the section on Labor Market Trends covers how economic trends are playing out in the workforce.

The commonly held view was that the early 2020 Illinois economy was solid based on historically low unemployment and inflation rates and a bullish outlook for the stock market. However, some data indicates the Illinois economy, along with other Midwest states and the nation, was showing signs of trouble well before the spring of 2020.

The business data firm Dun & Bradstreet (D & B) uses a proprietary method to assess and track the health of companies on which it collects information called the "Business Health Index" (BHI). This index is derived from three key data points tracked by D & B:

1) the likelihood a company will remain viable and in business
2) the likelihood of a severe delinquency in making payments within 90 days
3) the likelihood of a first payment default.

Chart 1: Bradstreet Health Index National Trend



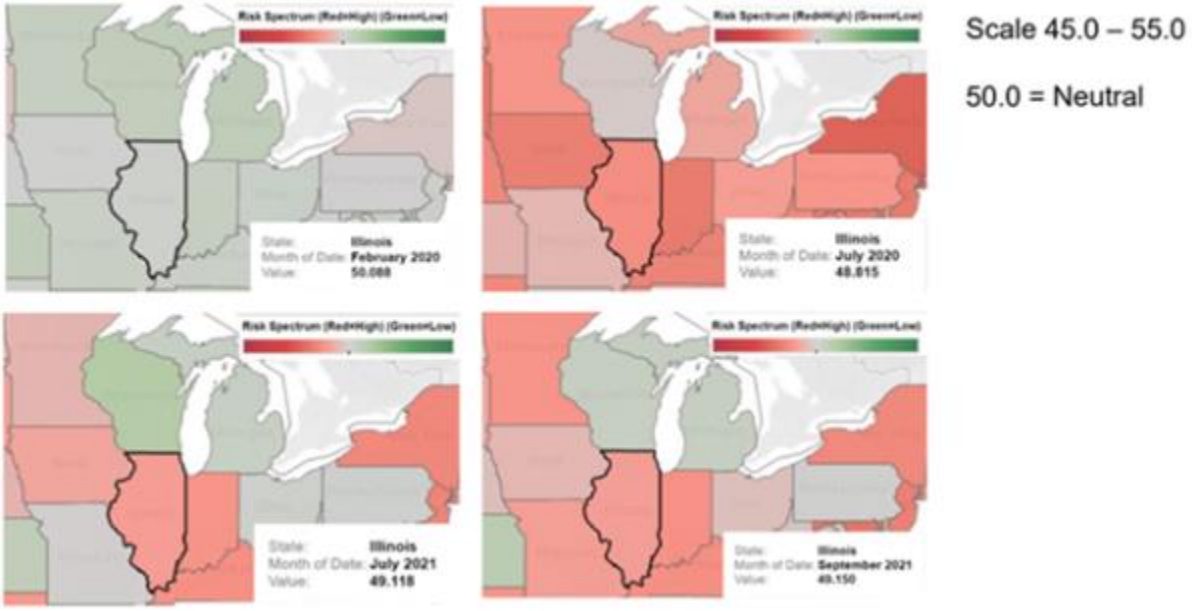
As shown in the graphic above, a BHI rating of 50 is considered "Neutral", the green area greater than 50 is considered "Low Risk" and the pink area is considered "High Risk".

The D & B BHI for all sectors indicates a clear downturn that began in 2018 for Illinois, the Midwest and the nation. This downward trend continued through most of 2019 until leveling off. Indeed, the Illinois BHI rating started a modest uptick at the end of 2019. However, this was short-lived as the BHI rating here and across the nation began a more severe downturn as reaction to the pandemic started.

The graphic below shows how the BHI in Illinois and surrounding states evolved from February 2020 through September 2021. The BHI ratings bottomed out in mid-2020 and have generally trended up since then.

While the health of businesses seems to be improving overall, the rating remains in the High-Risk section of the chart. This means increased risk of business failure, late payments and defaulting on a payment. These factors have serious implications for companies whose competitive position and profitability are affected by workforce issues.

Figure 1: Dun & Bradstreet Index of Business Health

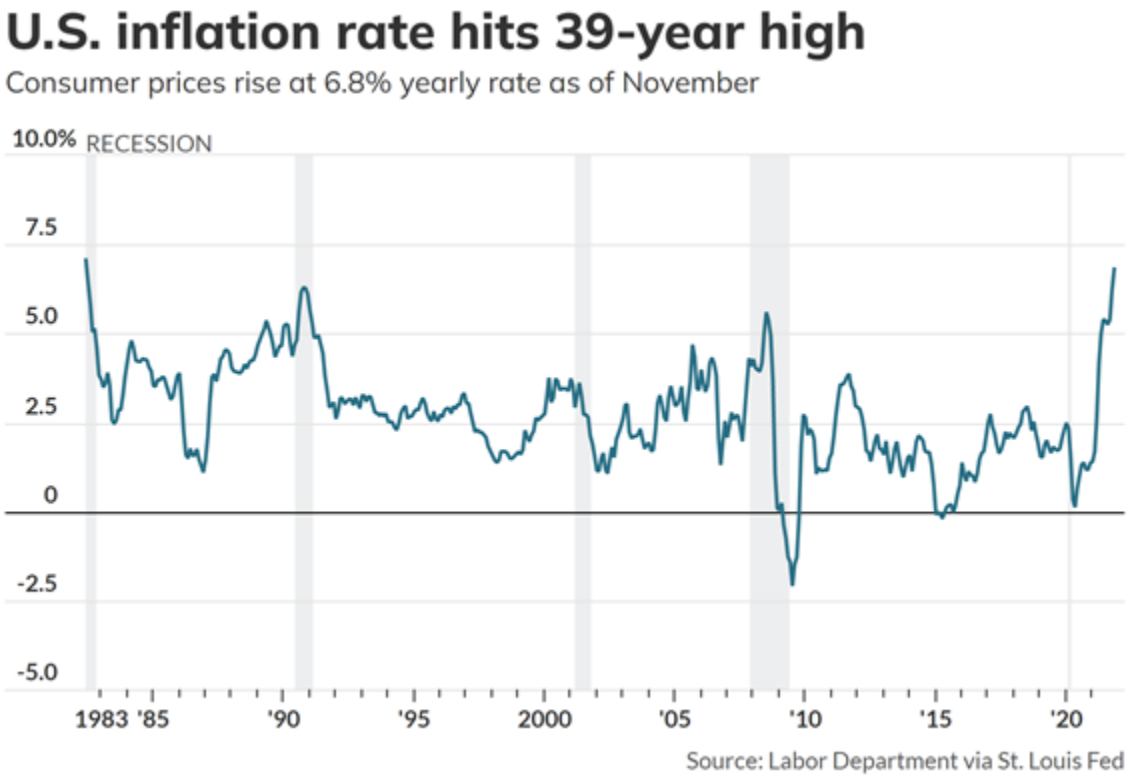


D & B also tracks a Financial Stress Score that predicts the likelihood a business will experience financial distress soon. The September 2021 D & B Financial Stress Score for companies it tracks in Illinois indicated only 2 percent fall into the High-Risk category. Within Illinois' Economic Development / WIOA Planning Regions, the West Central region has both the highest percent of businesses rated Low Risk and lowest percent of businesses rated High Risk. The North Central region has the lowest percent of businesses rated Low Risk and the Northeast region has the highest percentage of businesses rated High Risk.

While the Business Health Index indicates that overall health of companies tracked by D & B is in High-Risk territory, the number of Illinois companies at High Risk to experience financial distress in the near future is quite small. These ratings could be significantly affected by an economic factor that until very recently has been quite favorable, inflation.

For the past decade, the inflation rate has largely been under 2.5 percent, often well under. In Spring 2021, the national inflation rate began to increase at a pace not seen in decades. The cost of living climbed again in November 2021 and drove the rate of U.S. inflation to a nearly 40-year high of 6.8 percent, putting more pressure on businesses and households as they confront rising prices. The consumer price index increased 0.8 percent in November.

Economists polled by The Wall Street Journal had forecast a 0.7 percent advance. The pace of inflation over the past year escalated to 6.8 percent from 6.2 percent in the prior month. That is more than triple the Federal Reserve's 2 percent target and is the highest rate since July 1982.



The inflation surge is widely attributed to a few key factors:

1. Prices dropped suddenly for many items in early 2020 as economic activity curtailed due to the pandemic, lowering the base for annual inflation rate calculations.
2. An ongoing, large-scale supply chain disruption due to lower production of goods since 2020 as many workers were laid off or left work voluntarily and transportation bottlenecks, is creating unanticipated shortages.
3. Consumer demand has increased as companies and workers adapted to life in a pandemic and uncertainty for their economic well-being began to fade; in addition, worker wages have increased as businesses facing labor shortages try to attract workers.

Wage gains are quickly being eroded by this inflation surge, and consumers are already considering measures to prioritize spending. As of this writing, the U.S. Federal Reserve Board is signaling an increase in prime lending rates to combat inflation. This will bring additional financial pressure to companies and workers as the cost of borrowing will also go up along with consumer prices.

Economic uncertainty is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. The supply chain disruption is expected to take over a year to correct itself and perhaps up to two years in some industries. Supply chain issues, coupled with rising inflation and interest rates are likely to disrupt hiring plans across many sectors and industries.

i. Existing Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations

Three important economic benchmarks are utilized to assess Illinois' current economic position and to evaluate the effectiveness of our efforts to improve that position. These indicators are the overall economic production (Gross State Product, or GSP), employment and earnings. Examining these three indicators across the past ten years provides a stark description of Illinois' experience since the 'Great Recession' ended in 2009, through the end of the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021.

The longest U.S. economic expansion on record abruptly ended in February 2020 at the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic. In mid-March 2020, as the virus spread throughout the country, a national emergency was declared. Many state and local governments ordered the closure of schools and non-essential businesses, such as theaters, sporting and concert venues and limited restaurants to take-out and delivery. By early April 2020, 90 percent of the U.S. population was under some form of "stay-at-home" order that limited daily movement to essential activities. Public health and safety provisions to limit the spread of COVID-19 sharply impacted economic activity, leaving more than 800,000 Illinoisians without a job at the height of the pandemic and wiping out a decade of jobs gains.

The unprecedented magnitude of the decline in employment and production, and its broad reach across the economy, warranted the declaration of a recession. (Though it ranks as one of the shortest recessions in U.S. economic history spanning two months, it also ranks as one of the deepest in terms of economic impact.) By the end of the 2020, the national economy declined by 3.5 percent, which was the worst year since demobilizing from World War II and a full percentage point lower than the worst year during the Great Recession (-2.5 percent in 2009). On the employment front, by December 2020, the U.S. economy had recovered 12.4 million of the 22.2 million jobs lost during the pandemic.

National economic conditions are the most influential factor in state economic outcomes. It is no surprise, then, that the Midwest regional economic performance during the pandemic has largely tracked with the rest of the nation, although every state has handled its response to COVID-19 differently. On balance, the Great Lakes region—comprising Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin—experienced a greater economic blow than other regions of the U.S. during the pandemic's first year.

Table 1 shows that growth in the Great Lakes region has significantly lagged behind other areas of the U.S. on all three economic indicators—a trend that predates the current recession. Between 2010 and 2020, the gross domestic product (GDP) in the Great Lakes Region increased 9.3 percent compared to the U.S. GDP growth of 17.5 percent. The GDP in Illinois grew only 5.7 percent for the same period.

Table 1: Illinois vs. Benchmark States vs. US: Change in GDP, Employment & Earnings over 10 years

	Gross Domestic Product			Employment			Earnings		
	2010	2015	2020	2010	2015	2020	2010	2015	2020
ILLINOIS	698,180	751,755	737,644	5,918,202	6,119,934	5,657,532	290,793,800	350,186,800	394,160,800
Great Lakes Region*	2,190,695	2,377,290	2,394,639	21,034,914	22,106,438	21,261,335	908,796,700	1,103,580,900	1,260,576,400
United States	15,648,991	17,390,295	18,384,687	139,063,917	148,833,417	147,794,750	6,363,368,000	7,851,802,000	9,425,703,000

	Gross Domestic Product			Employment			Earnings		
	2010-2015	2015-2020	2010-2020	2010-2015	2015-2020	2010-2020	2010-2015	2015-2020	2010-2020
ILLINOIS	7.7%	-1.9%	5.7%	3.4%	-7.6%	-4.4%	20.4%	12.6%	35.5%
Great Lakes Region*	8.5%	0.7%	9.3%	5.1%	-3.8%	1.1%	21.4%	14.2%	38.7%
United States	11.1%	5.7%	17.5%	7.0%	-0.7%	6.3%	23.4%	20.0%	48.1%

*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 $2012 dollars

Employment: BLS/Haver Analytics; Household Employment, Not Seasonally Adjusted

Earnings: BEA/Haver Analytics; Data from Annual Personal Income, Components of Earnings by Place of Work, Wages and Salaries

The recovery of employment in the Great Lakes region has also lagged behind the nation. Illinois' employment declined 4.4 percent in the last ten years, compared to an increase of 1.1

percent in the region and a 6.3 percent increase in employment for the nation. Earnings in Illinois over the last ten years (35.5 percent) have increased almost as much as the region (38.7 percent). Earnings in the nation have surpassed both Illinois and the region, growing by 48.1 percent.

The situation described by these numbers provides the setting for continuing implementation of WIOA; the challenge is to utilize WIOA and all of the partner programs to assist the state's businesses to increase productivity, employment and earnings throughout the state.

Table 2 shows projected employment demand through 2028 for major industry sectors across Illinois. It is expected that the largest number of job openings will be created within the health care/social assistance services, business services, and leisure and hospitality sectors. Large percentage increases in employment are expected in these three sectors, as well as in transportation and warehousing, financial activities and agriculture.

Table 2: Illinois Employment by Major Industry Sectors

North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Title	Base Year Employment 2018	Share of Statewide Base Year Employment 2018	Projected Year Employment 2028	Net Change 2018-2028	Ten-Year Percent Change 2018-2028	Location Quotient 2018
TOTAL, ALL INDUSTRIES	6,460,465	100.00%	6,527,343	66,878	1.04%	1.00
Agricultural Production*	74,212	1.15%	76,128	1,916	2.58%	0.36
Natural Resources and Mining	7,836	0.12%	8,303	467	5.96%	0.33
Utilities	24,626	0.38%	25,153	527	2.14%	1.08
Construction	225,880	3.50%	229,750	3,870	1.71%	0.75
Manufacturing	586,158	9.07%	578,489	-7,669	-1.31%	1.14
Wholesale Trade	294,836	4.56%	291,529	-3,307	-1.12%	1.23
Retail Trade	600,572	9.30%	590,166	-10,406	-1.73%	0.93
Transportation and Warehousing	343,845	5.32%	354,347	10,502	3.05%	1.27
Information	94,322	1.46%	88,991	-5,331	-5.65%	0.82
Financial Activities	400,596	6.20%	412,349	11,753	2.93%	1.12
Professional and Business Services	949,369	14.70%	971,771	22,402	2.36%	1.11
Educational Services, Private and Public	562,933	8.71%	556,212	-6,721	-1.19%	1.22
Health Care and Social Assistance	807,355	12.50%	846,066	38,711	4.79%	0.96
Leisure and Hospitality	617,307	9.56%	638,252	20,945	3.39%	0.93
Personal and Other Services	270,330	4.18%	263,784	-6,546	-2.42%	1.14
Government**	347,411	5.38%	345,163	-2,248	-0.65%	0.85
Self Employed, Unpaid Family Workers and Others n.e.c.***	277,503	4.30%	276,043	-1,460	-0.53%	1.00

* LQ Source: BLS, QCEW, 2018 Annual Averages, State of Illinois and U.S., NAICS 11, Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting
** LQ Source: BLS, QCEW, 2018 Annual Averages, State of Illinois and U.S., NAICS 1028, Public Administration
*** No LQ Source Available

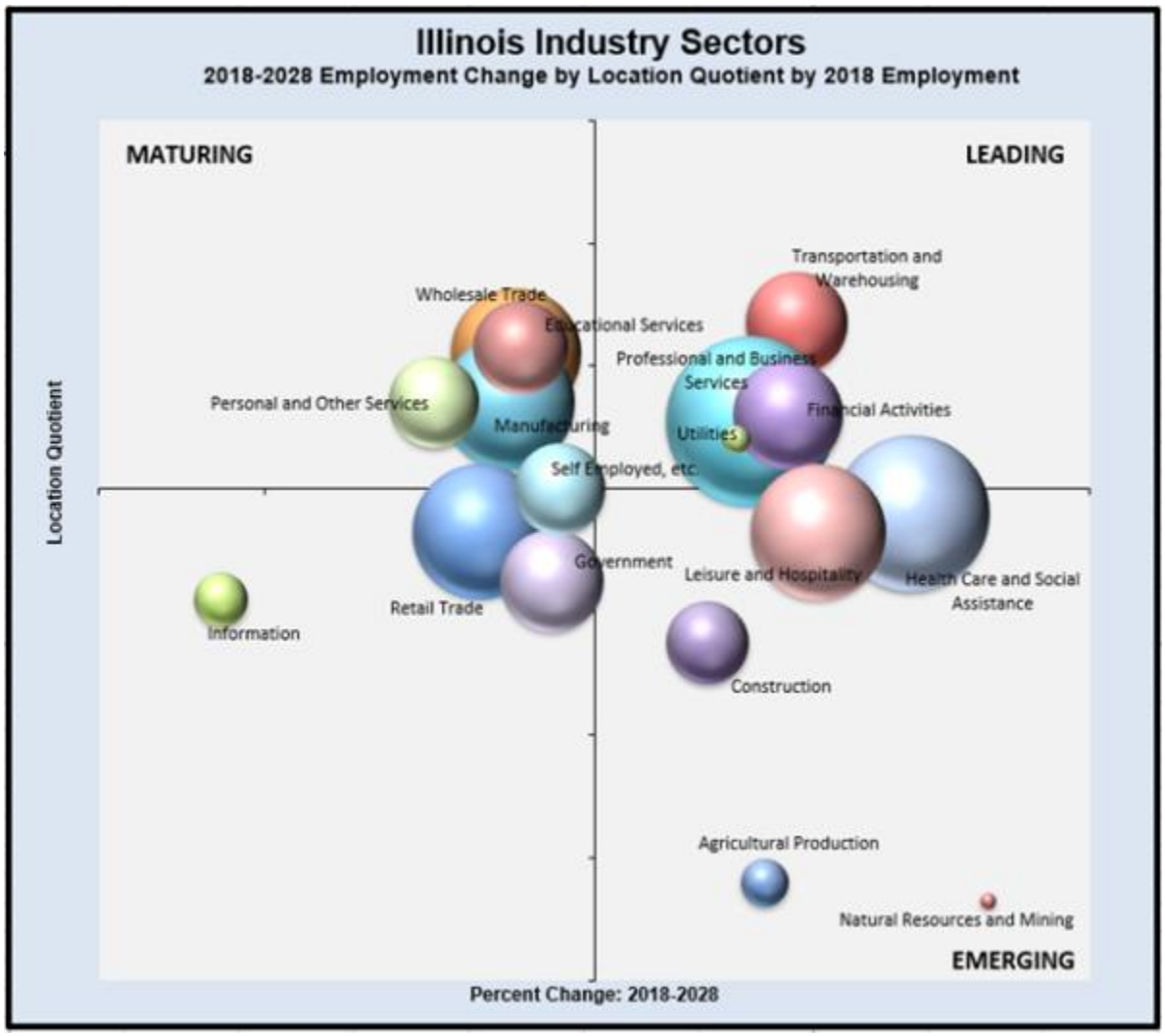
Projections Source: IL Department of Employment Security Statewide Long-Term Employment Projections

LQ Source: https://data.bls.gov/cew/apps/table_maker/v4/table_maker.htm#type=11&year=2016&qtr=4&own=5&area=17000&supp=0

Figure 2a utilizes percentage growth and a measure of industry importance in the state (Location Quotient, or LQ), with "bubble" size indicating the relative size of the industry based on the number of employees. The location quotient is represented on the vertical axis of the chart and is a measure that compares employment in each sector with total employment in that sector in the nation. A value of 1.0 indicates the industry is at equilibrium with national

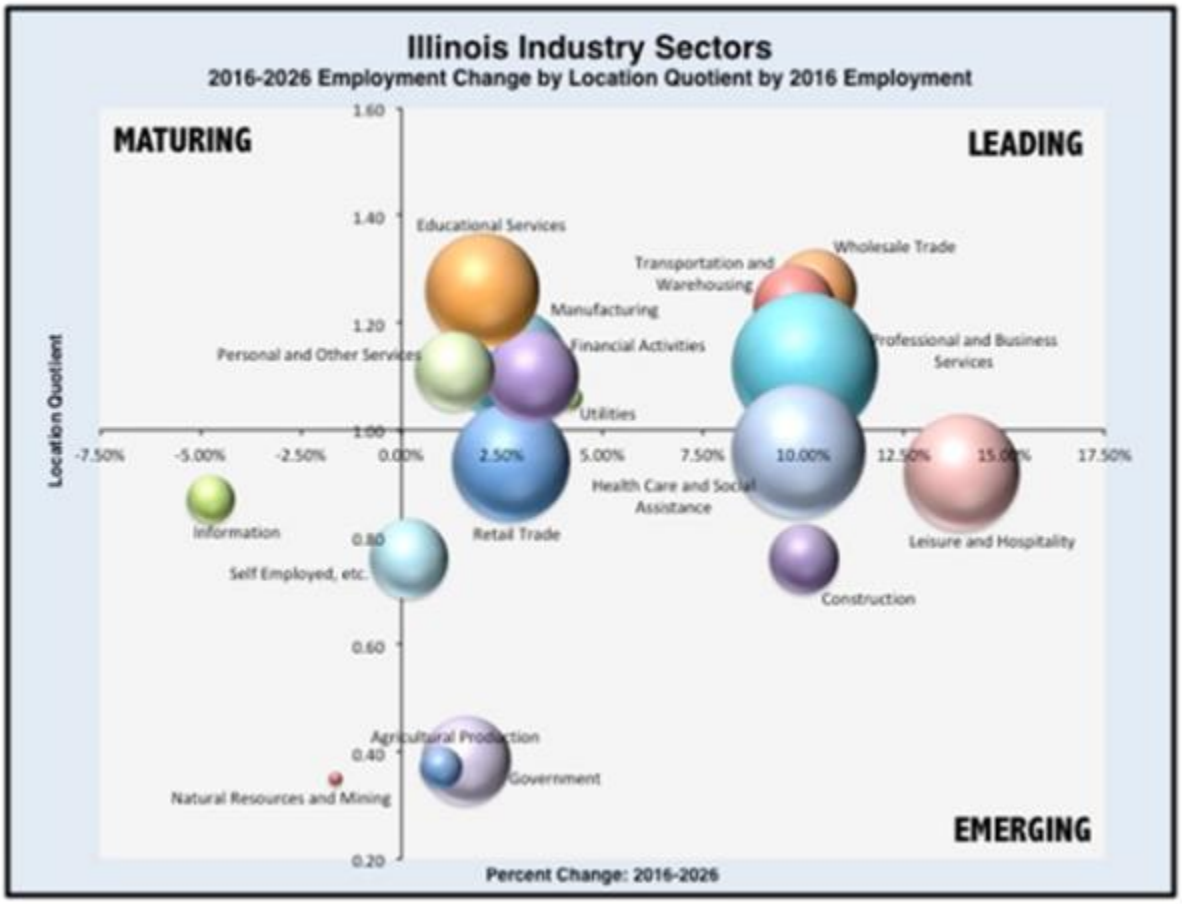
employment, values greater than 1.0 indicate the industry has a comparative advantage versus the rest of the nation, and values less than 1.0 indicate the industry has a comparative disadvantage the rest of the nation. The degree of comparative advantage or disadvantage increases as the value deviates from 1.0[1].

Figure 2a: 2018-2028 Employment Change by Location Quotient by 2018 Employment



Comparing the most current LQ chart, Figure 2a, to the same LQ chart from the 2020 Unified State Plan, Figure 2b, it is clear that several sectors moved from Leading to Maturing, including: educational services, manufacturing, retail trade and wholesale trade, among others.

Figure 2b: 2016-2026 Employment Change by Location Quotient by 2016 Employment



While Figure 2a illustrates which sectors are projected to grow in employment and importance in the state's economy, the bubble chart does not reflect how Illinois compares to other Midwest states nor does it indicate how Illinois' Economic Development Regions differ throughout the state.

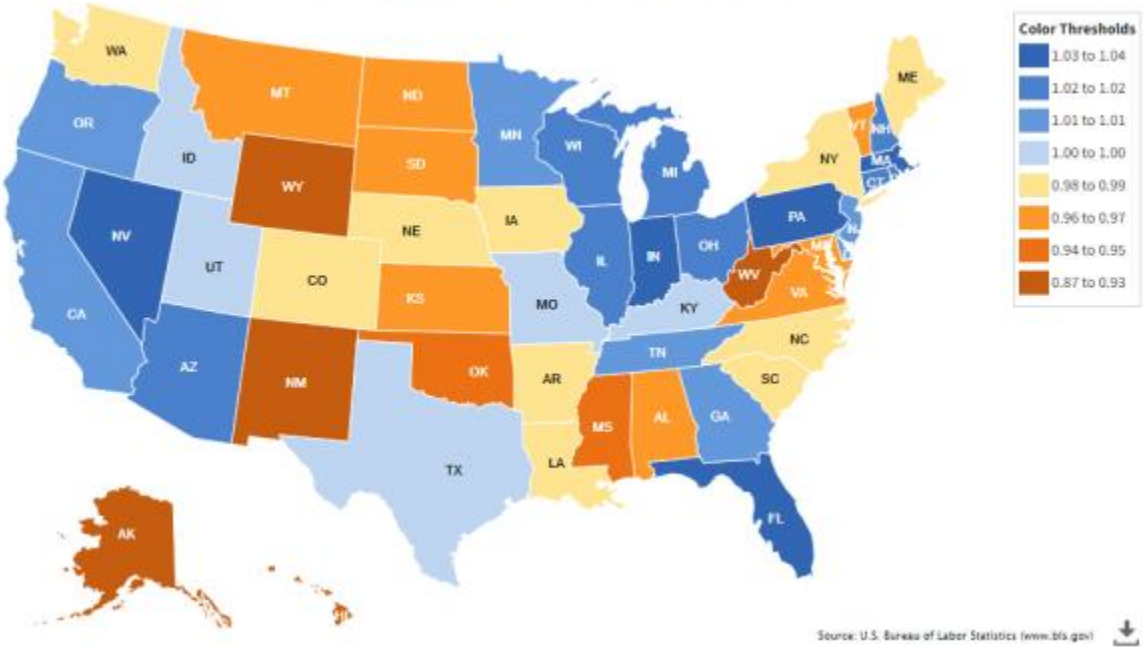
To differentiate between regions, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' spatial analysis tools compares the competitive advantage of each sector with the other states and within Illinois' regions and counties. (See beta.bls.gov/maps/cew/us)

The location quotient for selected major industries in each State in the nation, and for each Illinois county, 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. Again, 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. In addition to Location Quotient, Illinois' analysis includes the Percent Change in Employment as an indicator of recent changes in worker demand for these sectors.

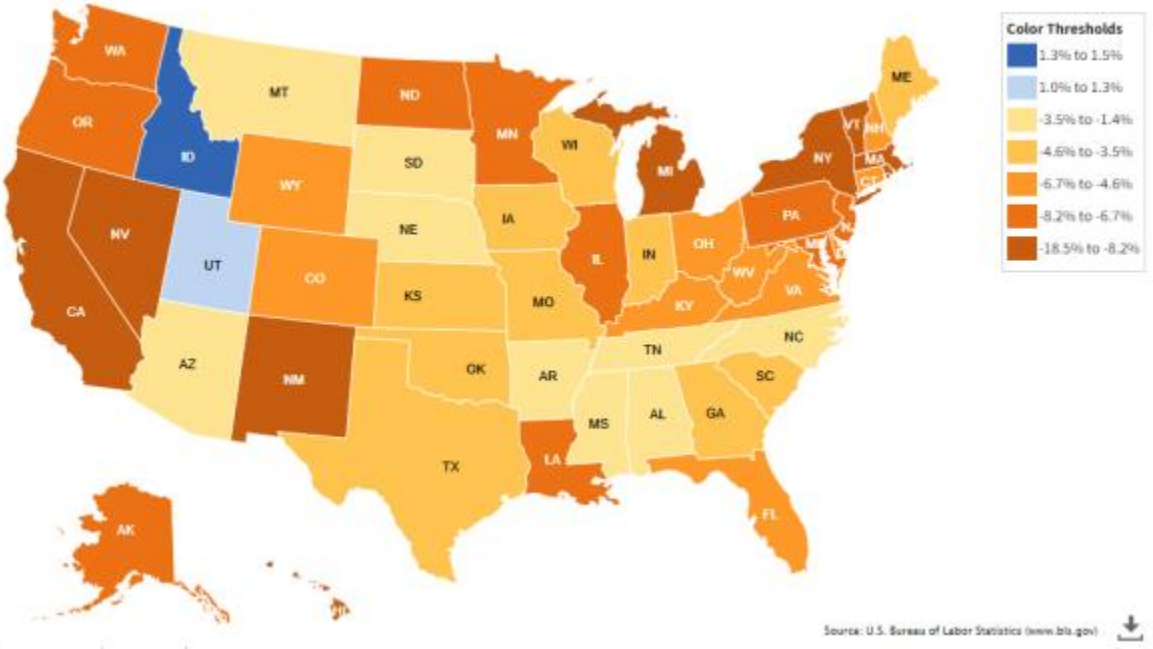
Illinois' regions with a comparative advantage in a particular sector will be encouraged and supported in efforts to leverage their positions. Regions without a comparative advantage in a sector will be encouraged and supported to identify the root causes of their positions, focusing efforts on targeting resources for sectors projected to have the most promising outcomes (areas represented in blue in the following maps).

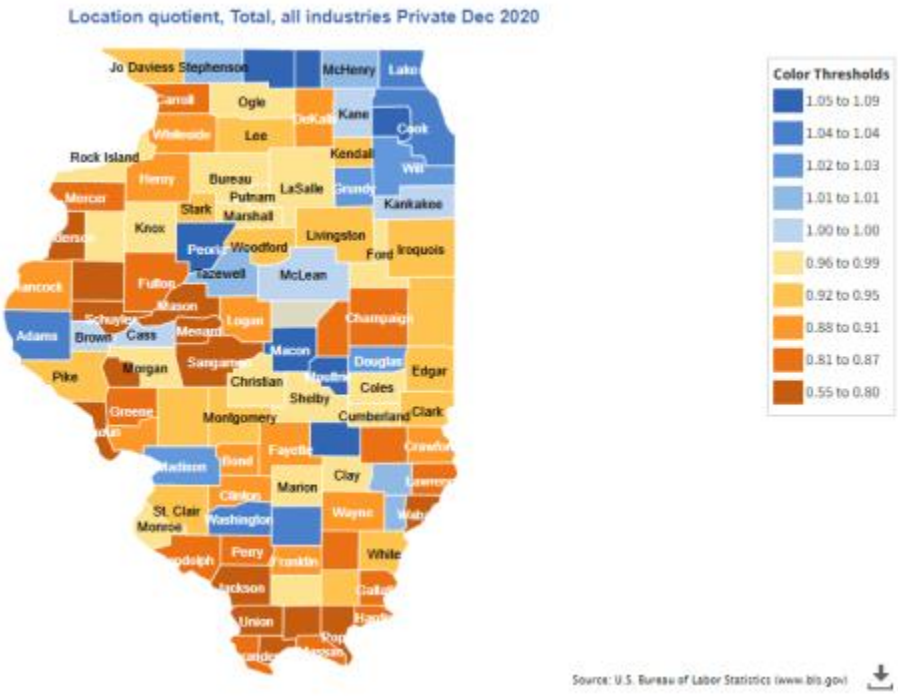
Map 1-3: **All Industries**: LQ = 1.02 & Change in Employment = -8.0%

Location quotient, Total, all industries Private Dec 2020

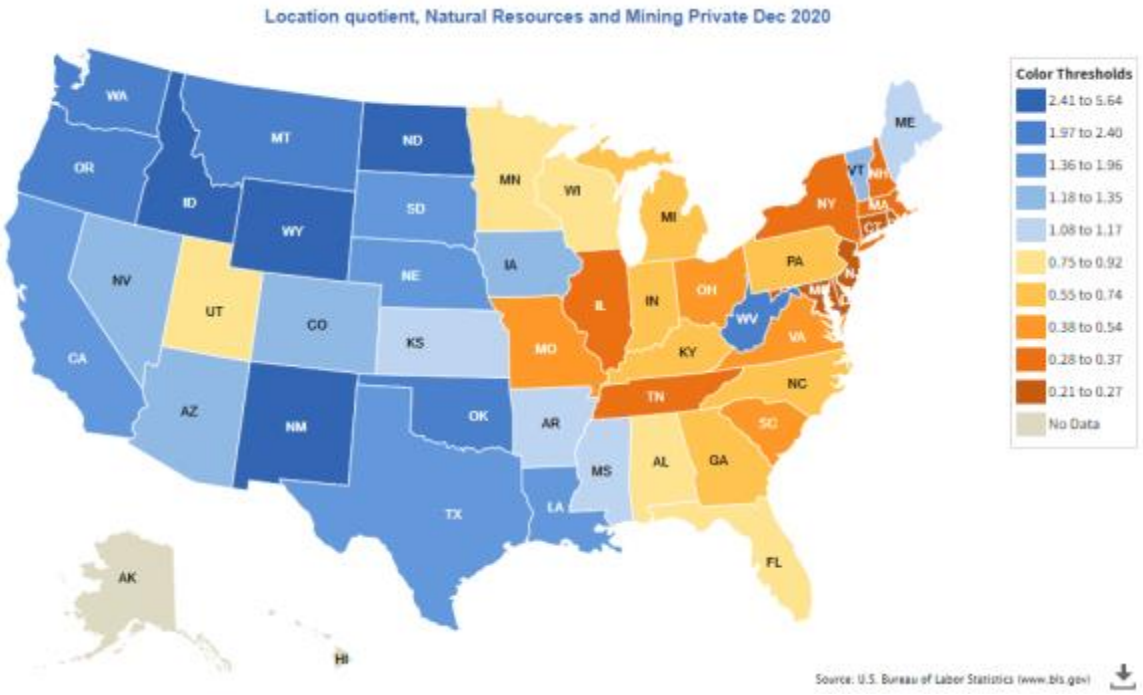


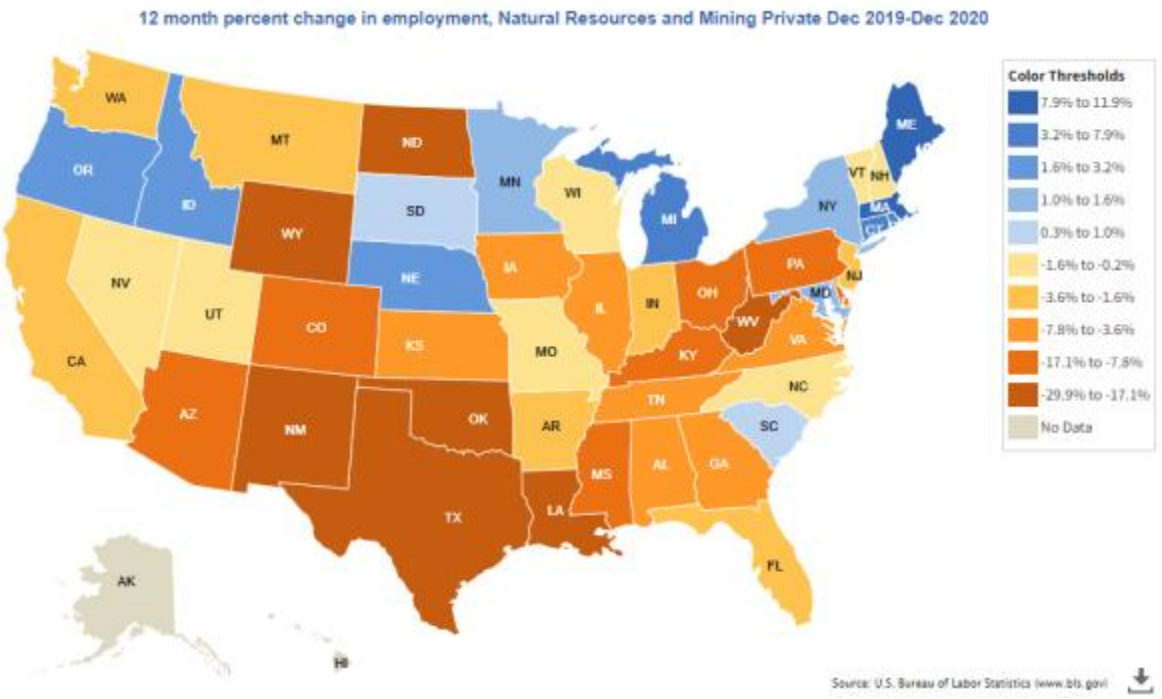
12 month percent change in employment, Total, all industries Private Dec 2019-Dec 2020

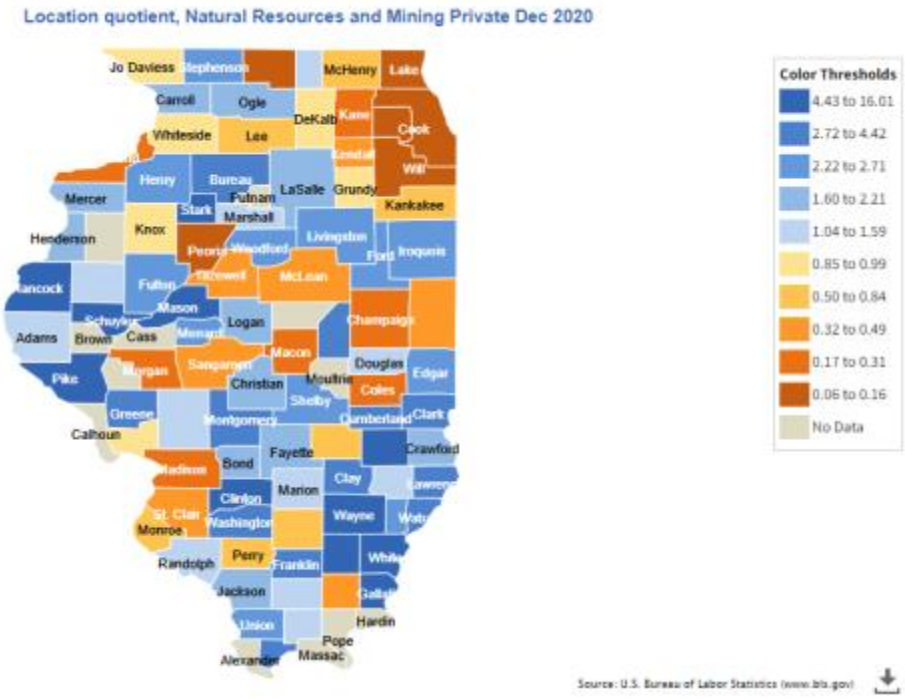




Maps 4-6: **Natural Resources and Mining**: LQ = 0.36 & Change in Employment = -7.6%

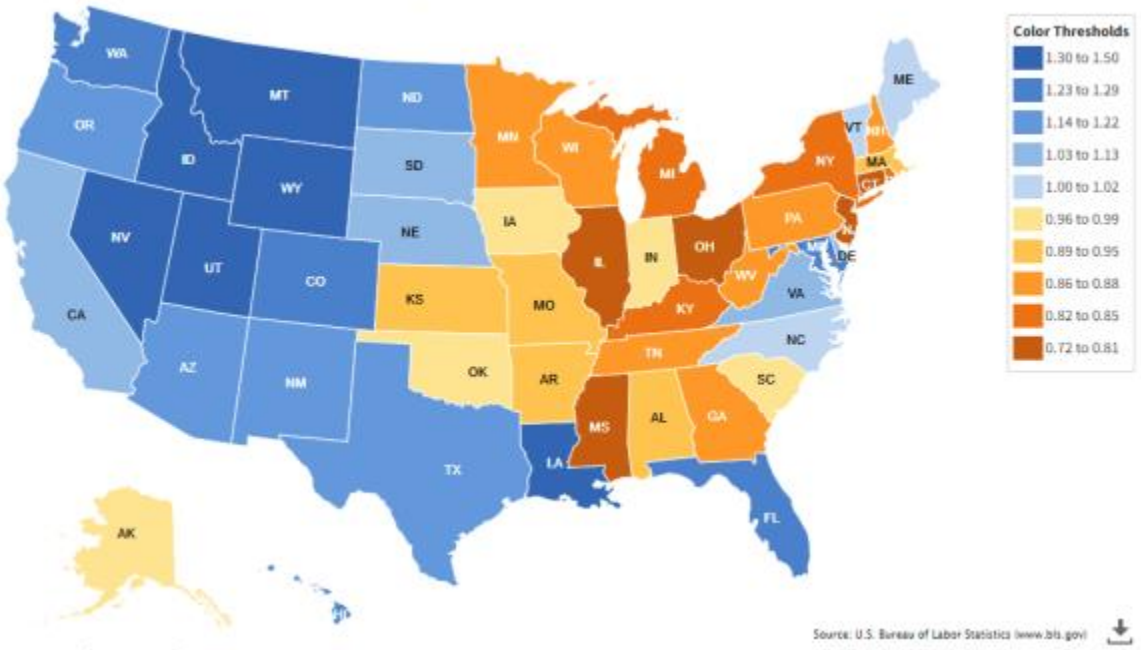




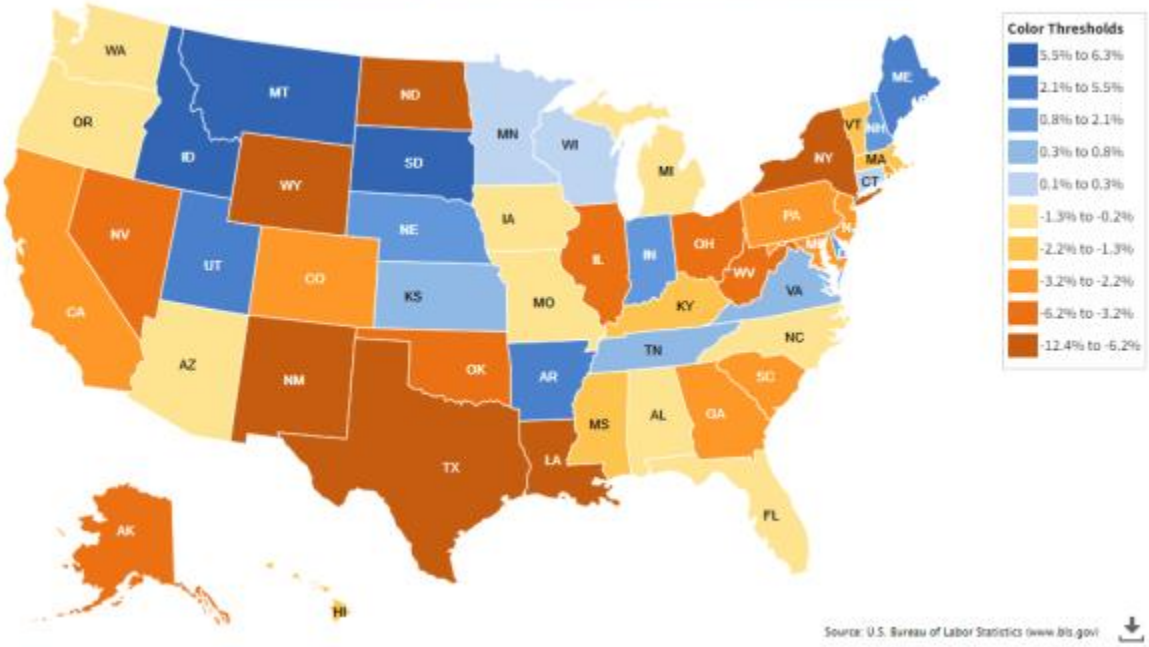


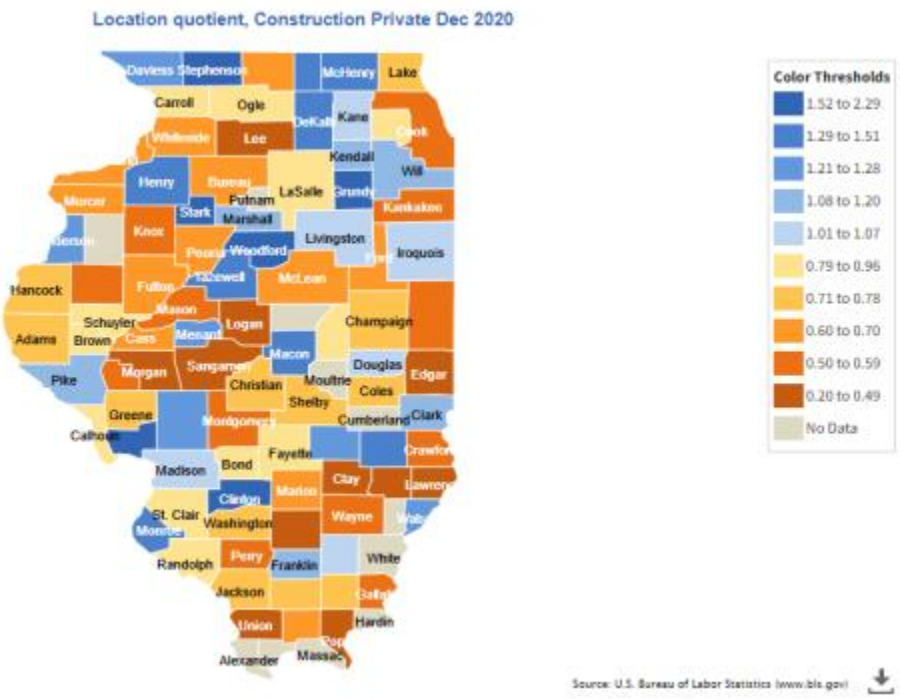
Maps 7-9: **Construction**: LQ = 0.75 & Change in Employment = -3.9%

Location quotient, Construction Private Dec 2020

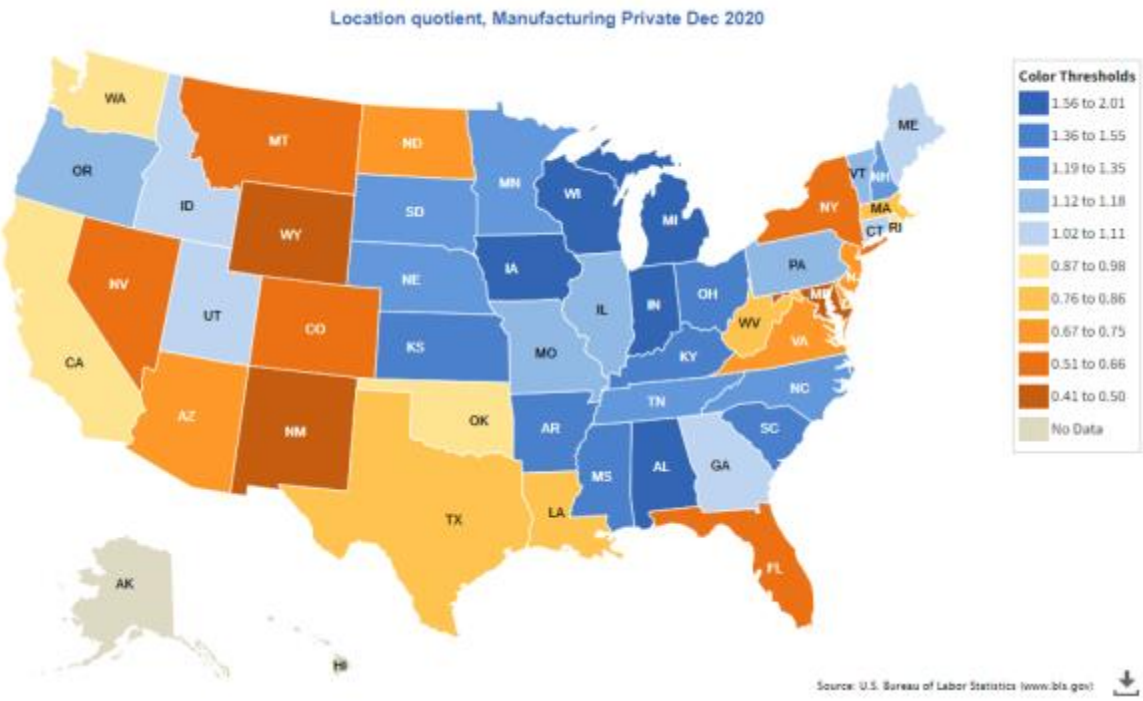


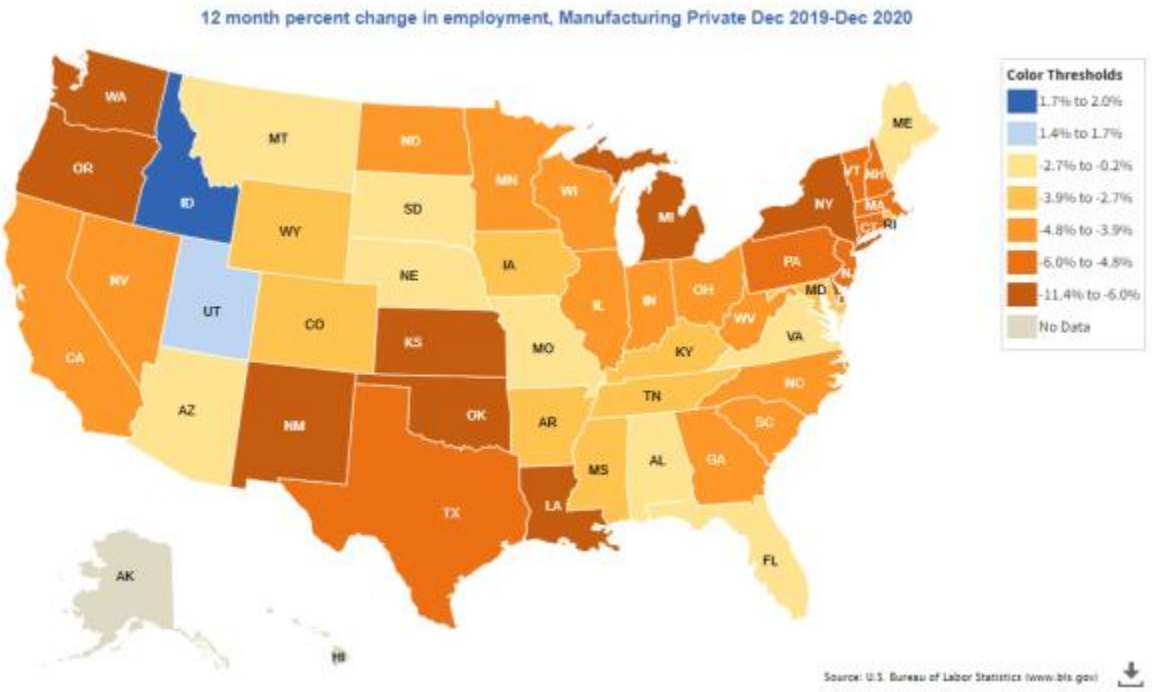
12 month percent change in employment, Construction Private Dec 2019-Dec 2020

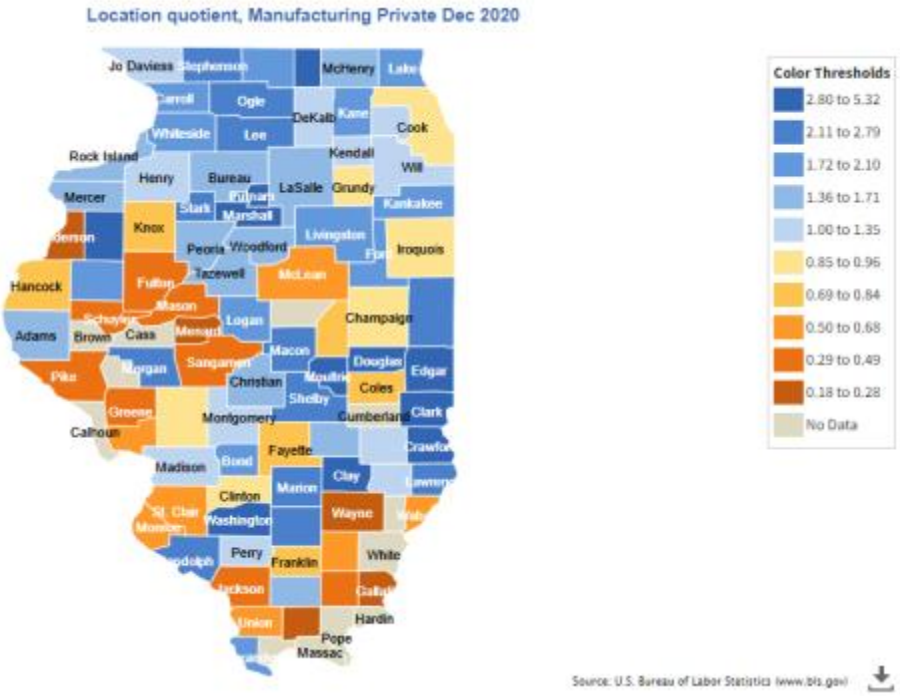




Maps 10-12: **Manufacturing**: LQ = 1.15 & Change in Employment = -4.6%

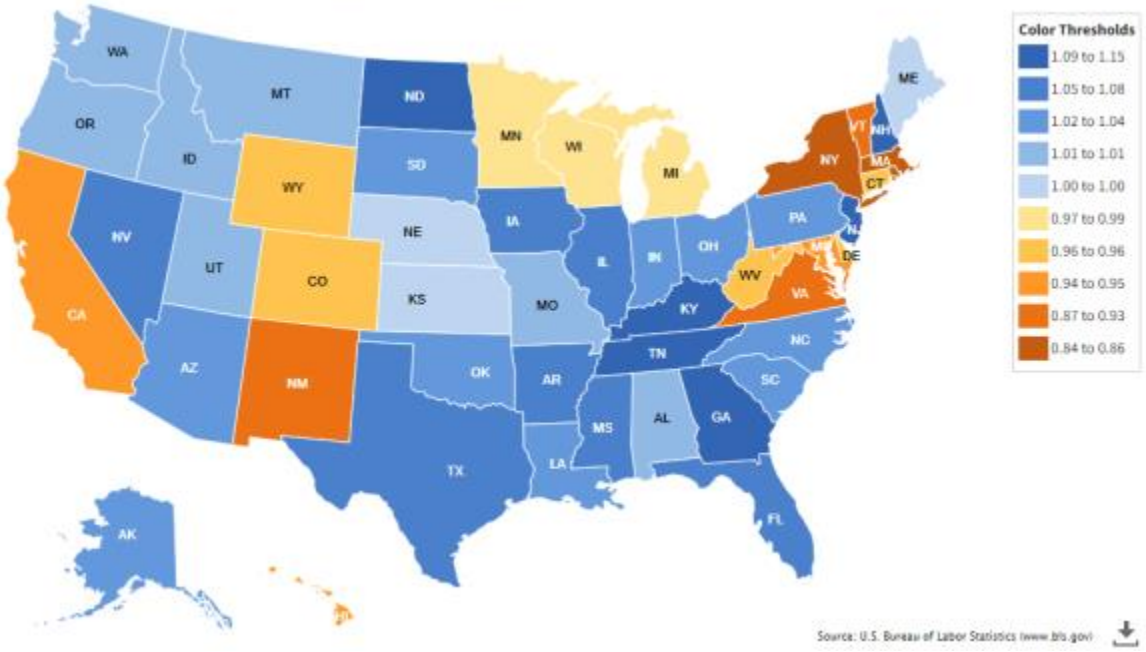




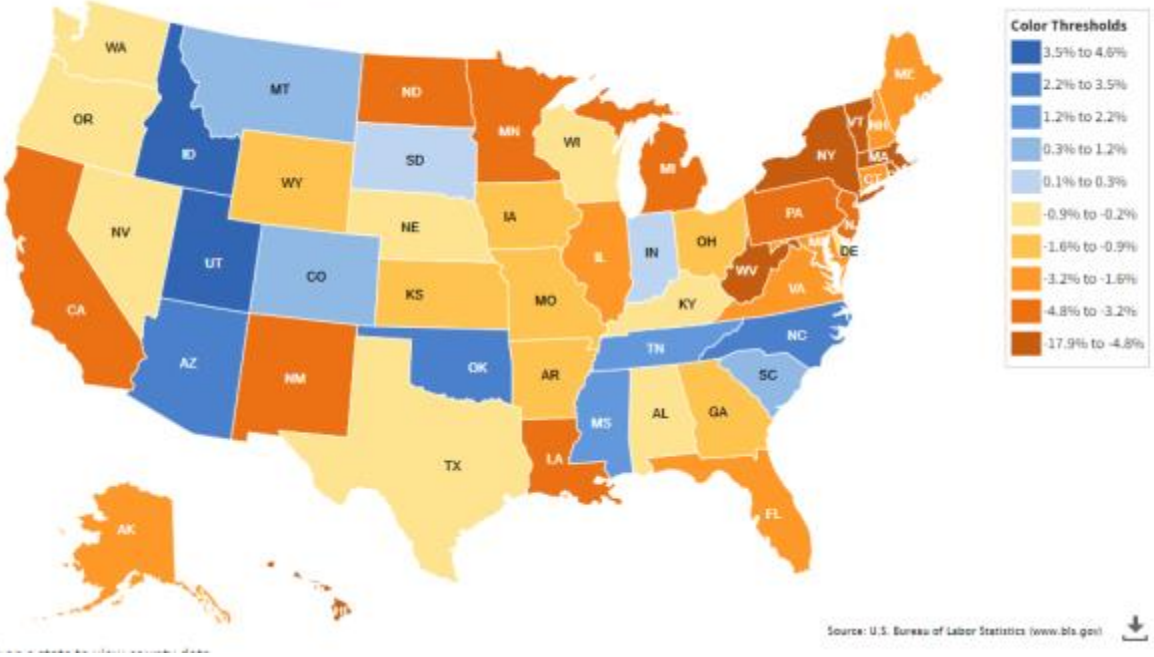


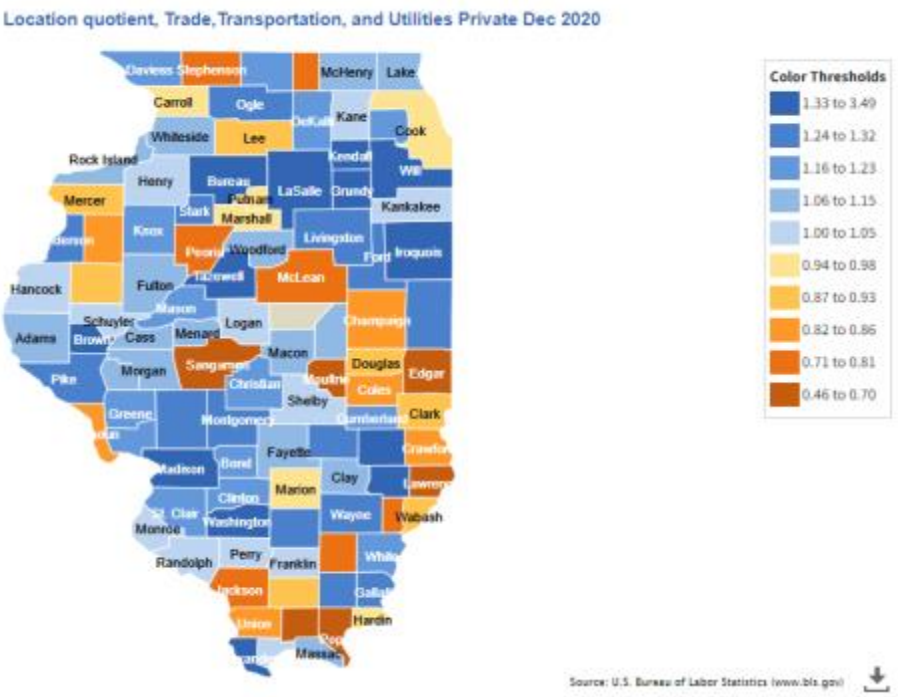
Maps 13-15: **Trade, Transportation, and Utilities**: LQ = 1.08 & Change in Employment = -2.7%

Location quotient, Trade, Transportation, and Utilities Private Dec 2020

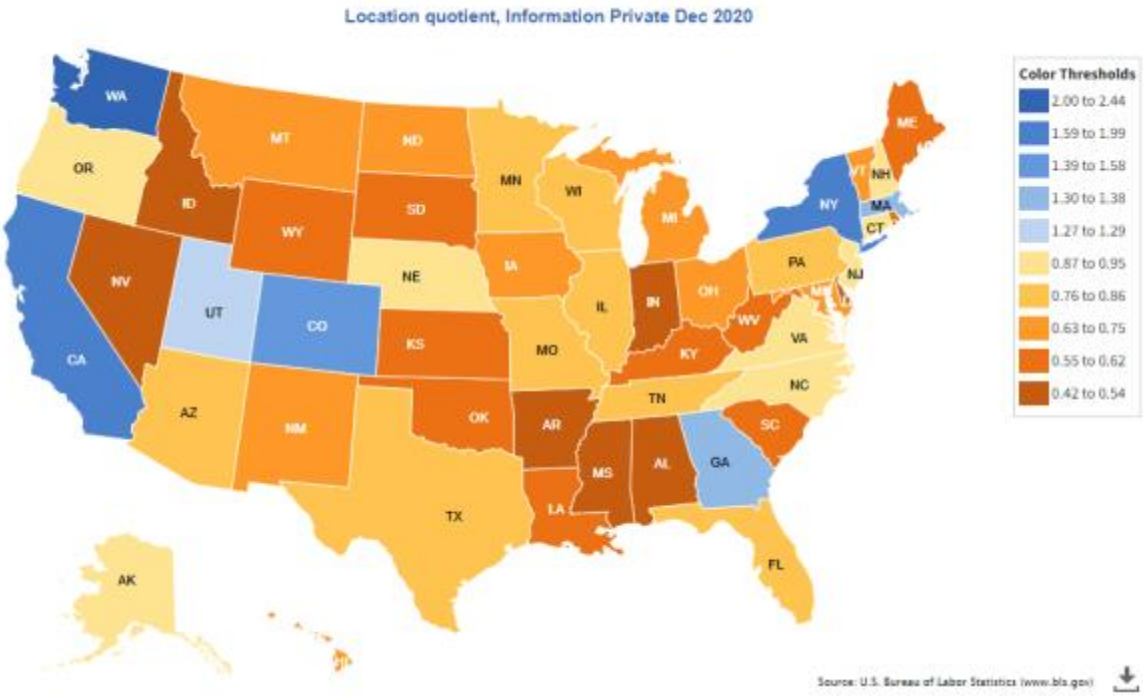


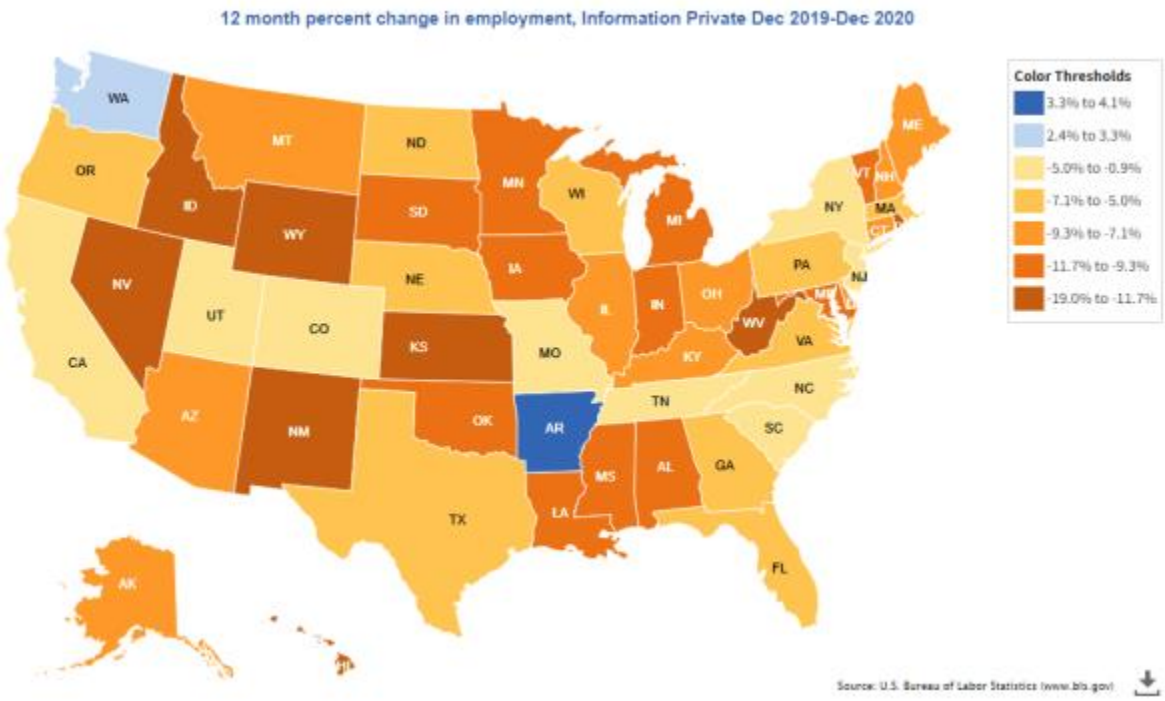
12 month percent change in employment, Trade, Transportation, and Utilities Private Dec 2019-Dec 2020

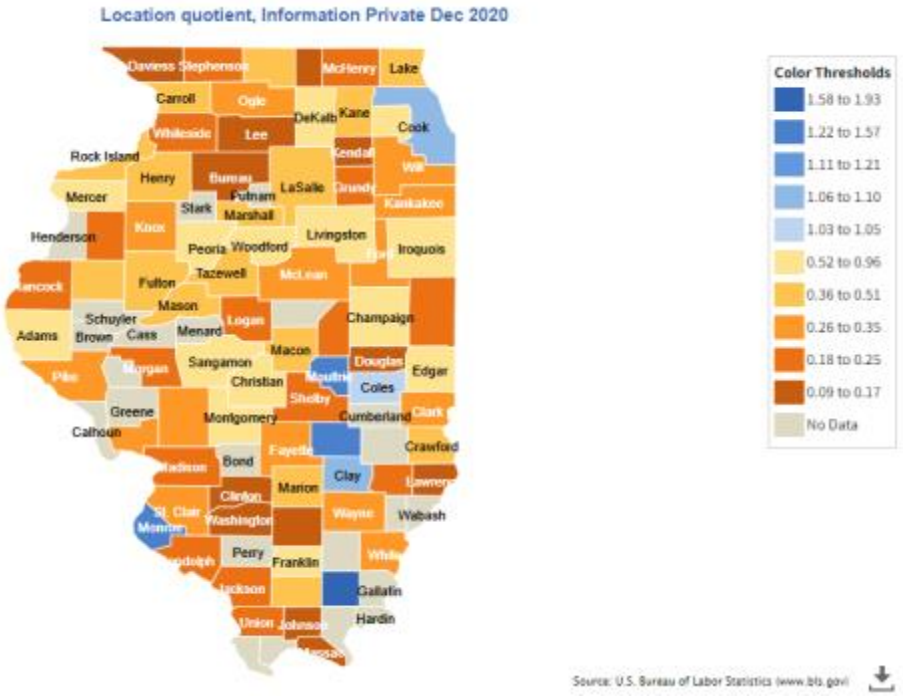




Maps 16-18: **Information**: LQ = 0.8 & Change in Employment = -9.1%

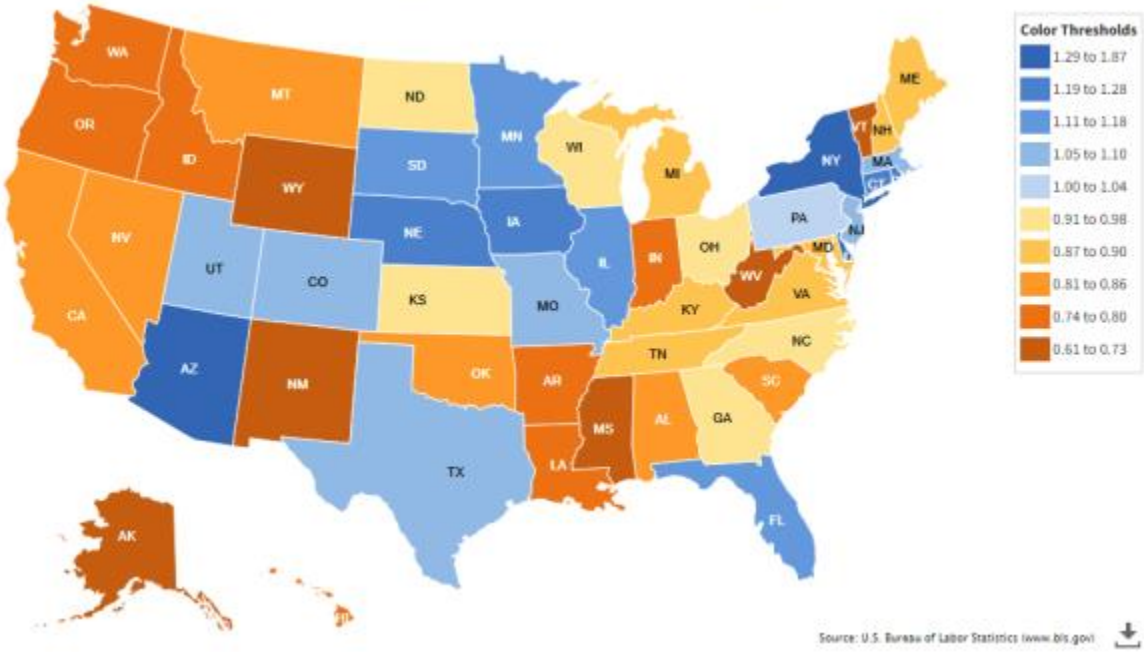




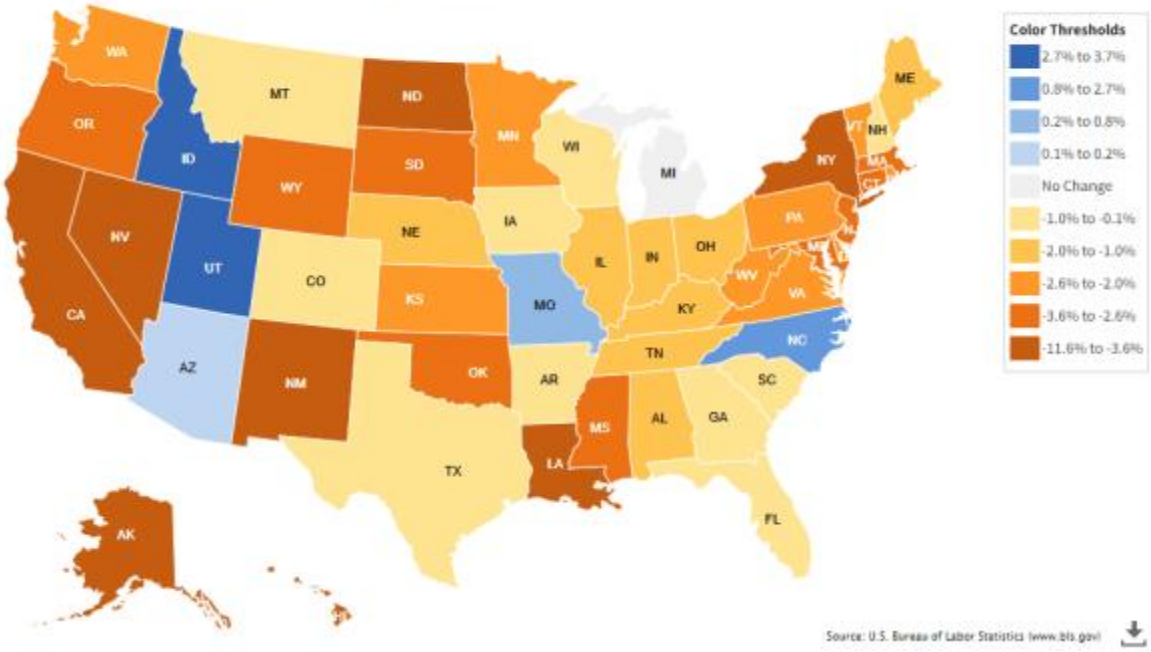


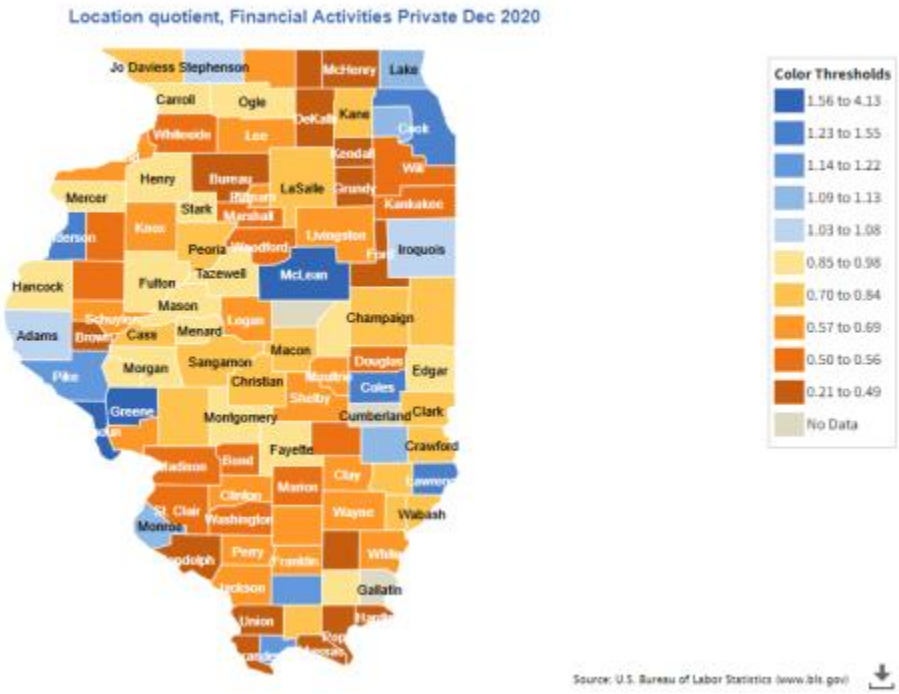
Maps 19-21: **Financial Activities**: LQ = 1.15 & Change in Employment = -1.8%

Location quotient, Financial Activities Private Dec 2020

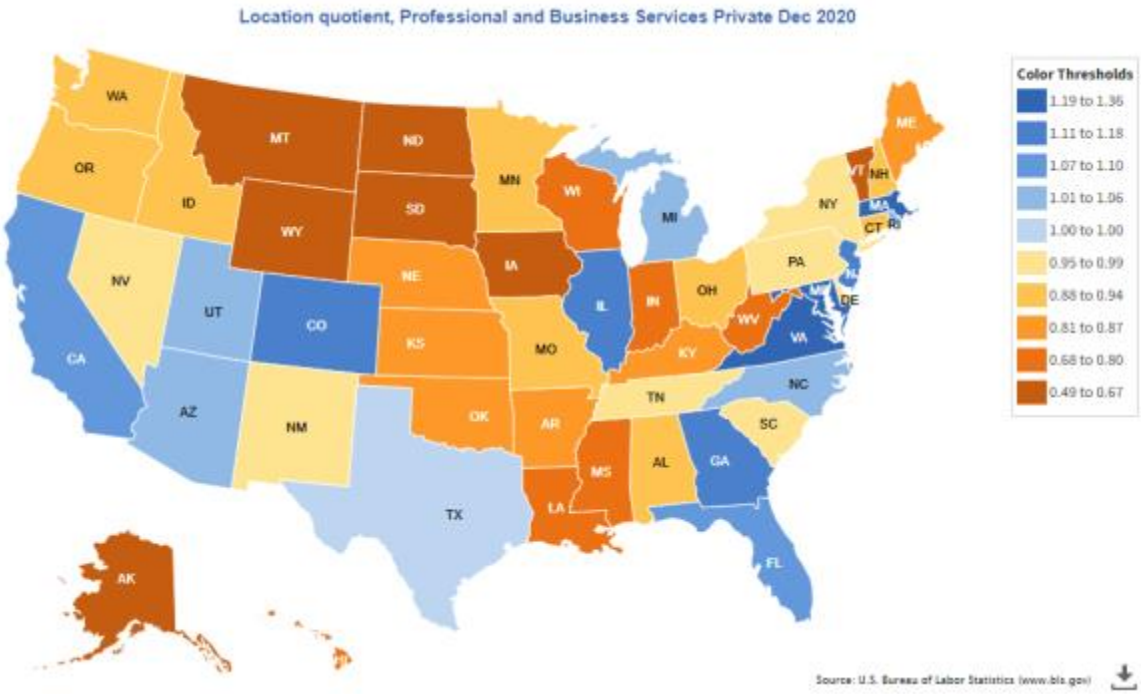


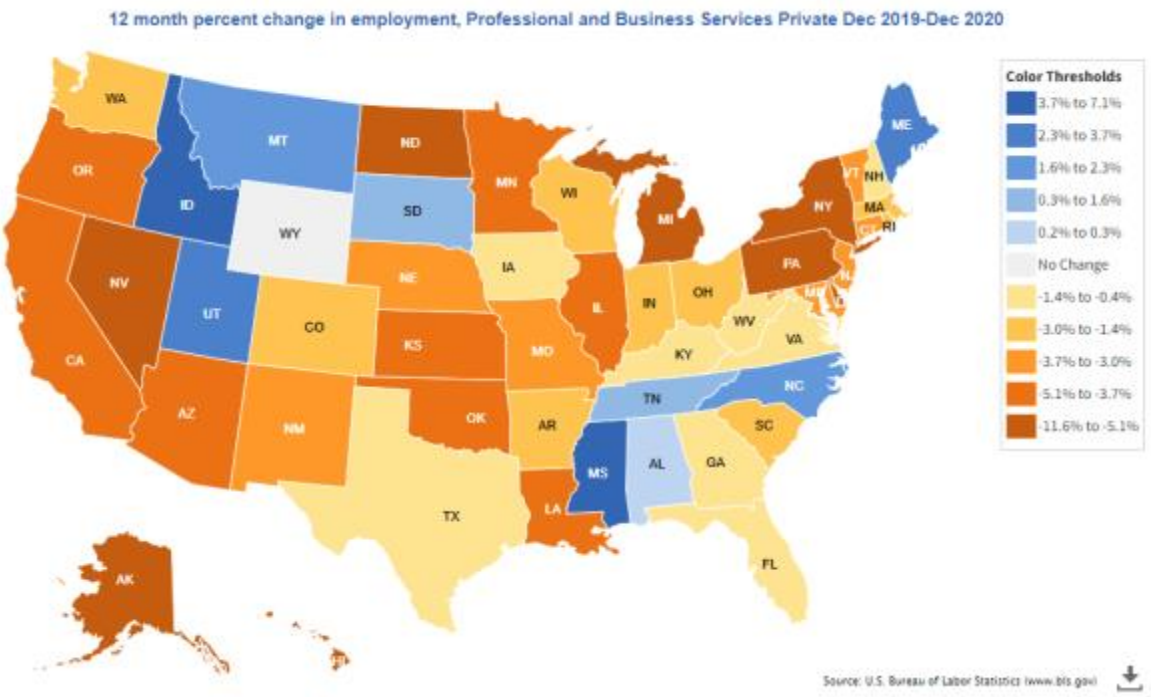
12 month percent change in employment, Financial Activities Private Dec 2019-Dec 2020

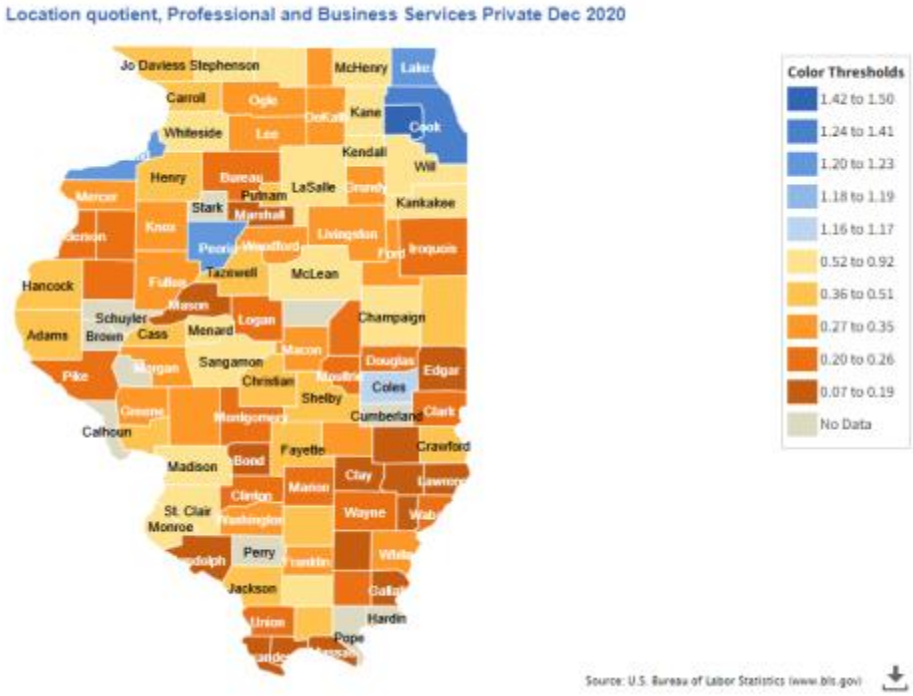




Maps 22-24: **Professional and Business Services**: LQ = 1.11 & Change in Employment = -4.2%

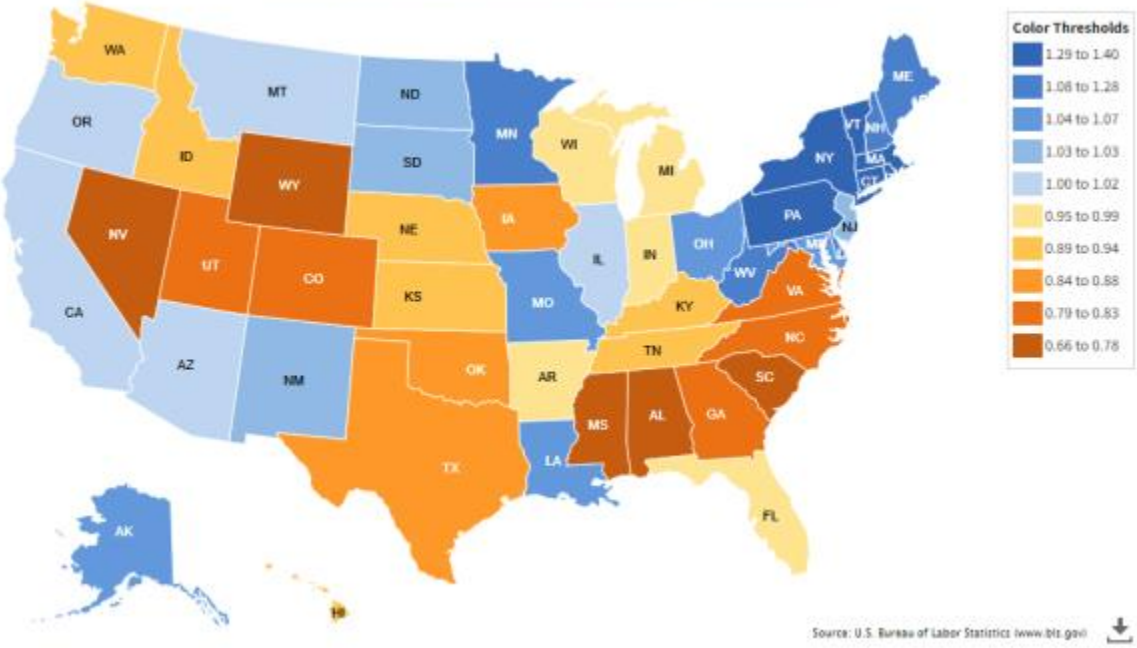




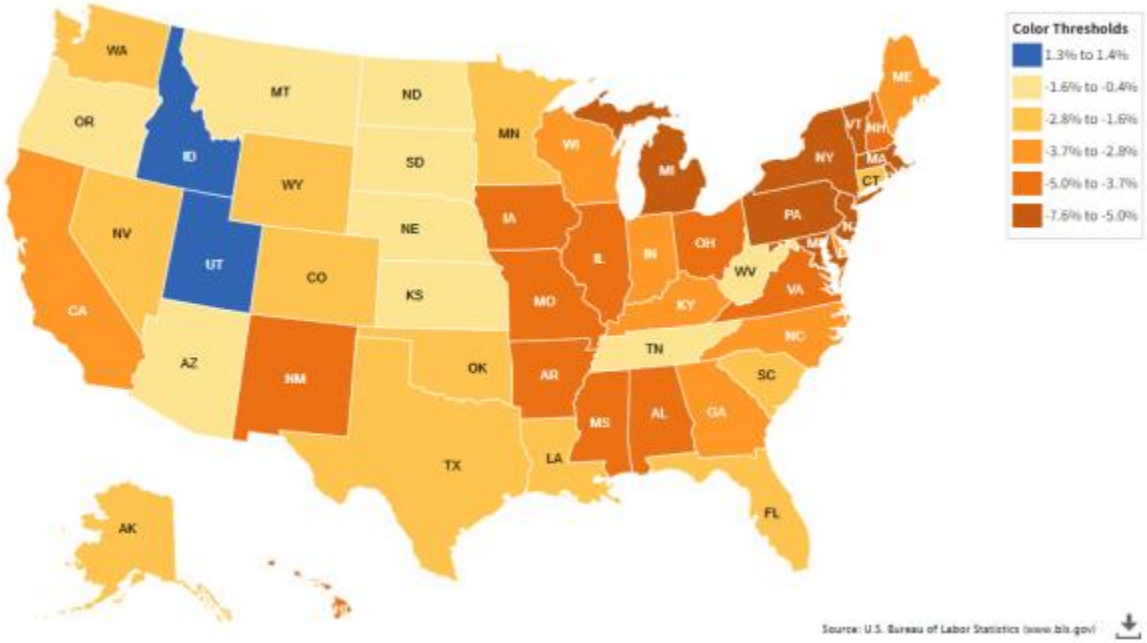


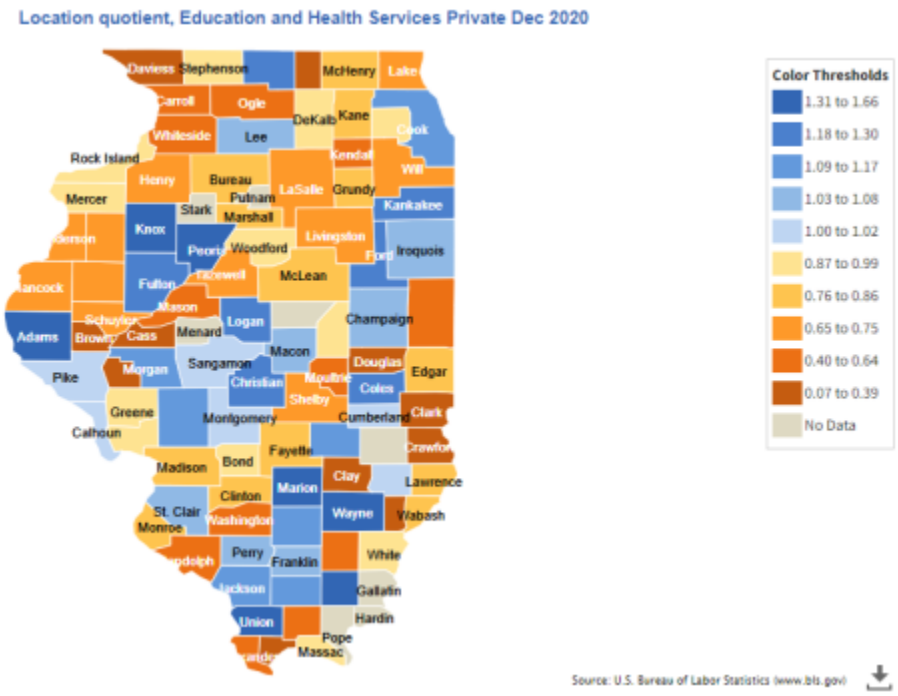
Maps 25-27: **Education and Health Services**: LQ = 1.0 & Change in Employment = -5.0%

Location quotient, Education and Health Services Private Dec 2020

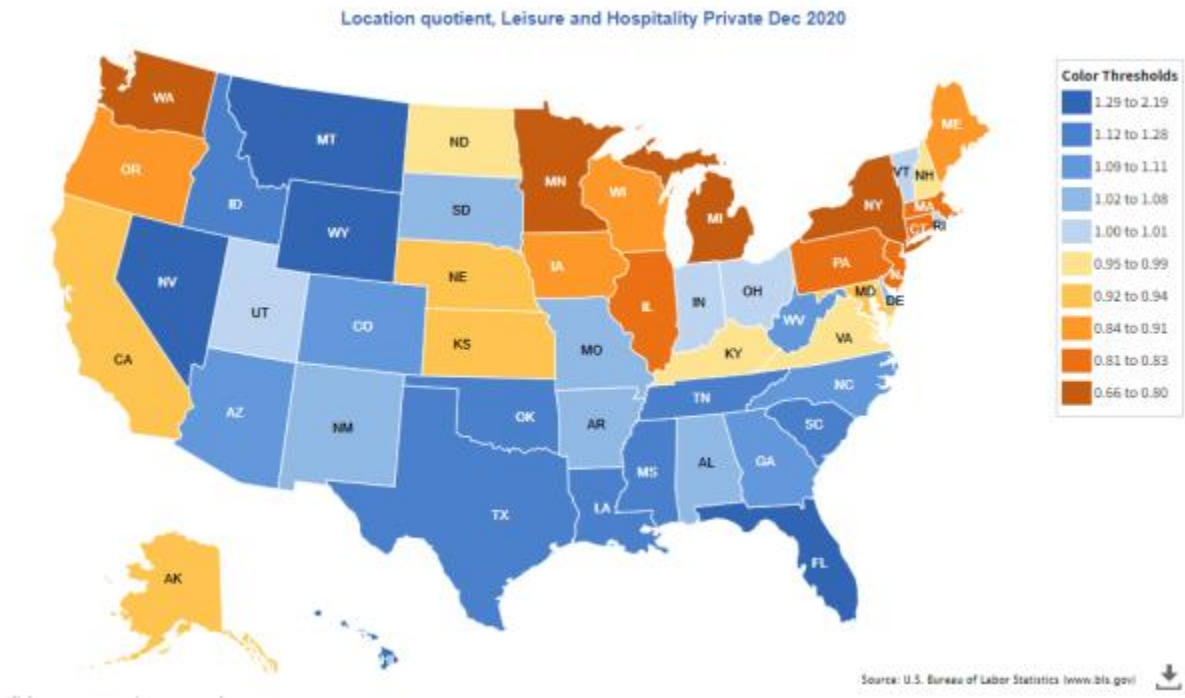


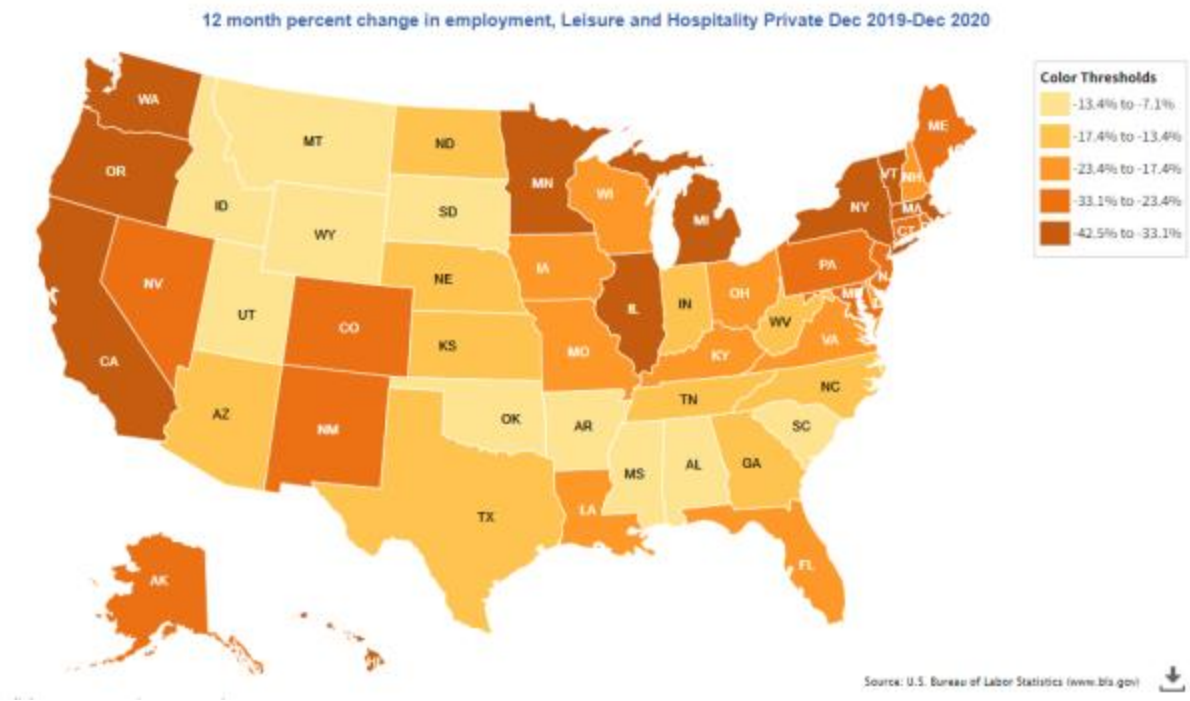
12 month percent change in employment, Education and Health Services Private Dec 2019-Dec 2020





Maps 28-30: **Leisure and Hospitality**: LQ = 0.82 & Change in Employment = -35.2%





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

Table 3: Ranking of Sectors by Location Quotient

Sector	LQ	Percent Change in Employment Dec '19 - Dec '20
All Industries	1.02	-8.0%
Sorted by LQ Rank		
Manufacturing	1.15	-4.6%
Financial Activities	1.15	-1.8%
Professional & Business Services	1.11	-4.2%
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	1.08	-2.7%
Education & Health	1	-5.0%
Leisure & Hospitality	0.82	-35.2%
Information	0.8	-9.1%
Construction	0.75	-3.9%
Natural Resources & Mining	0.36	-7.6%

Sector	LQ	Percent Change in Employment Dec '19 - Dec '20
All Industries	1.02	-8.0%
Sorted by Percent Change Rank		
Financial Activities	1.15	-1.8%
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	1.08	-2.7%
Construction	0.75	-3.9%
Professional & Business Services	1.11	-4.2%
Manufacturing	1.15	-4.6%
Education & Health	1	-5.0%
Natural Resources & Mining	0.36	-7.6%
Information	0.8	-9.1%
Leisure & Hospitality	0.82	-35.2%

Source: BLS QCEW

Five sectors—Manufacturing, Financial Activities, Professional & Business Services, Trade, Transportation & Utilities, and Education/Health—have an LQ indicating a comparative advantage for Illinois. Leisure & Hospitality, Information, and Construction are the next level at 0.82, 0.80 and 0.75, respectively. The one true outlier is Natural Resources and Mining, with an LQ of 0.36,indicating this sector does not have a competitive advantage in Illinois compared to all other states.

Note that Leisure & Hospitality had a -35.2 percent decrease in employment, a rate more than three times that of the next highest sector. However, when looking at the national level, the percent change in Leisure & Hospitality Employment over this period ranged from -7.1 percent

in Idaho to -42.5 percent in Minnesota, with the national average being -24.6 percent. Illinois' LQ for Leisure & Hospitality edged downward throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

The analysis of Location Quotients and Change in Employment is merely the first step in identifying priority sectors. The next section of Illinois' Unified State Plan modification 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 2028 for major occupational sectors throughout Illinois. The largest numbers of new jobs are expected to be created within occupational categories of food preparation and service, transportation and material moving, health care practitioners and technicians, and management occupations. Large numbers of job openings (including replacement jobs) are expected in those occupations, as well as business and financial operations occupations. Regardless of overall employment change, significant numbers of job openings are still expected annually, due to replacements of existing workers that will transfer or exit from the labor force.

Table 4: Illinois Employment by Major Occupational Sectors

Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Title	Base Year Employment	Share of Statewide Base Year Employment	Projection Year Employment	Net Employment Change 2018 - 2028		Average Annual Job Openings due to			
	2018	2018	2028	Number	Percent	Exits	Transfer	Growth	Total
Total, All	6,460,465	100.00%	6,527,343	66,878	1.04	278,428	452,643	6,688	737,759
Management Occupations	584,423	9.05%	603,841	19,418	3.32	16,259	33,962	1,942	52,163
Business & Financial Operations Occupations	358,953	5.56%	372,931	13,978	3.89	9,999	24,562	1,398	35,959
Computer & Mathematical Occupations	182,800	2.83%	191,311	8,511	4.66	3,102	10,571	851	14,524
Architecture & Engineering Occupations	89,785	1.39%	91,985	2,200	2.45	2,152	4,940	220	7,312
Life, Physical & Social Science Occupations	39,865	0.62%	40,597	732	1.84	825	3,092	73	3,990
Community & Social Services Occupations	114,065	1.77%	117,319	3,254	2.85	4,172	8,129	325	12,626
Legal Occupations	56,534	0.88%	58,453	1,919	3.39	1,436	2,268	192	3,896
Education, Training & Library Occupations	379,477	5.87%	382,281	2,804	0.74	15,664	18,503	280	34,447
Arts/Design/Entertainment, Sports/Media Occs	104,339	1.62%	102,840	-1,499	-1.44	4,113	7,398	-150	11,361
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical Occs	372,089	5.76%	395,555	23,466	6.31	9,981	11,583	2,347	23,911
Healthcare Support Occupations	171,393	2.65%	179,548	8,155	4.76	8,824	11,048	816	20,688
Protective Service Occupations	155,603	2.41%	156,852	1,249	0.8	7,178	9,754	125	17,057
Food Preparation & Serving Occupations	510,307	7.90%	531,848	21,541	4.22	36,494	53,259	2,154	91,907
Building & Grounds Cleaning & Maint. Occs	190,096	2.94%	194,419	4,323	2.27	10,949	14,160	432	25,541
Personal Care & Service Occupations	211,493	3.27%	222,514	11,021	5.21	14,997	17,576	1,102	33,675
Sales & Related Occupations	629,816	9.75%	625,106	-4,710	-0.75	33,132	52,981	-471	85,642
Office & Administrative Support Occupations	907,408	14.05%	850,111	-57,297	-6.31	43,333	60,908	-5,730	98,511
Farming, Fishing & Forestry Occupations	14,843	0.23%	14,945	102	0.69	590	1,810	10	2,410
Construction & Extraction Occupations	209,510	3.24%	214,737	5,227	2.49	6,824	16,433	523	23,780
Installation, Maintenance & Repair Occs	224,702	3.48%	226,684	1,982	0.88	7,206	14,889	198	22,293
Production Occupations	438,273	6.78%	424,742	-13,531	-3.09	17,101	32,861	-1,353	48,609
Transportation & Material Moving Occupations	514,691	7.97%	528,724	14,033	2.73	24,098	41,957	1,403	67,458

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

ii. Emerging Industry Sectors

The priority sectors methodology described in the previous section is a collaborative process to fully implement a coordinated workforce development strategy around industry clusters. The initial stages of this process utilize a supply and demand analysis to categorize industries based on their concentration (and thereby their importance) in the state, as well as their projected employment growth characteristics.

Special attention must be given to the cluster of emerging industries. While emerging industries are relatively small, they are quickly gaining in economic importance and job creation. Emerging industries have the potential to transform into leading industries, which provide the largest number of job openings in the economy, and maturing industries, which have slower job growth but still have a hefty presence in the economy.

Tables 5, 6 and 7 display the categories of major industries from Table 2. Major industry categories that are not included in one of these categories because of a lack of LQ data or where workforce dollars are not usually directed are now dropped from the analysis.

Table 5: LEADING Major Industry Sectors Statewide – Leading industries are identified as those which 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). These industries are found in the upper right-hand quadrant of Figure 2a.

North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) Title	Base Year Employment 2018	Share of Statewide Base Year Employment 2018	Projected Year Employment	Net Change 2018-2028	Ten-Year Percent Change 2018-2028	Location Quotient 2018
TOTAL, ALL INDUSTRIES	**6,460,465**	**100.0%**	**6,527,343**	**66,878**	**1.0%**	**1.00**
Transportation and Warehousing	343,845	5.3%	354,347	10,502	**3.0%**	1.27
Financial Activities	400,596	6.2%	412,349	11,753	2.9%	1.12
Professional and Business Services	949,369	14.7%	971,771	22,402	2.3%	1.11
Utilities	24,626	0.4%	25,153	527	2.1%	1.08

Projections Source: IL Department of Employment Security Statewide Long-Term Employment Projections
LQ Source: https://data.bls.gov/cew/apps/table_maker/v4/table_maker.htm#type=6&year=2018&qtr=4&own=5&area=17000&supp=0

Table 6: EMERGING Major Industry Sectors Statewide – Emerging 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. These industries are found in the lower right-hand quadrant of Figure 2a.

North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) Title	Base Year Employment 2018	Share of Statewide Base Year Employment 2018	Projected Year Employment 2028	Net Change 2018-2028	Ten-Year Percent Change 2018-2028	Location Quotient 2018
TOTAL, ALL INDUSTRIES	**6,460,465**	**100.0%**	**6,527,343**	**66,878**	**1.0%**	**1.00**
Health Care and Social Assistance	807,355	12.5%	846,066	38,711	4.6%	0.96
Leisure and Hospitality	617,307	9.6%	638,252	20,945	3.3%	0.93
Construction	225,880	3.5%	229,750	3,870	**1.7%**	0.75

Projections Source: IL Department of Employment Security Statewide Long-Term Employment Projections
LQ Source: https://data.bls.gov/cew/apps/table_maker/v4/table_maker.htm#type=6&year=2018&qtr=4&own=5&area=17000&supp=0

Table 7: MATURING Major Industry Sectors Statewide – Maturing industries are identified as those that are important within the state but are not expected to grow during the projection period. These industries are found in the upper left-hand quadrant of Figure 2a.

North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) Title	Base Year Employment 2018	Share of Statewide Base Year Employment 2018	Projected Year Employment 2028	Net Change 2018-2028	Ten-Year Percent Change 2018-2028	Location Quotient 2018
TOTAL, ALL INDUSTRIES	**6,460,465**	**100.0%**	**6,527,343**	**66,878**	**1.0%**	**1.00**
Wholesale Trade	294,836	4.6%	291,529	-3,307	-1.1%	1.23
Educational Services, Private and Public	562,933	8.7%	556,212	-6,721	**-1.2%**	1.22
Personal and Other Services	270,330	4.2%	263,784	-6,546	-2.5%	1.14
Manufacturing	586,158	9.1%	578,489	-7,669	-1.3%	1.14

Projections Source: IL Department of Employment Security Statewide Long-Term Employment Projections
LQ Source: https://data.bls.gov/cew/apps/table_maker/v4/table_maker.htm#type=6&year=2018&qtr=4&own=5&area=17000&supp=0

Regional Economic Analysis of Existing and Emerging Sectors

The regional planning process utilizes the same analytic steps to assist regional teams in identifying leading, emerging and maturing industry clusters and occupations within each region. This includes the development of crosswalks between the detailed (3-digit) industry clusters and the occupational pathways for each region. Results of the crosswalk are considered starting points for conversations with employers regarding critical occupations within their industries during the regional planning process.

The data-driven conversations with employers regarding critical occupations operationalizes the action agenda laid out in the Executive Order 3 report:

Specialized industry clusters in more rural parts of the state, while important to their local economies, may not be apparent in an analysis of statewide data. As a result, the cluster identification process should occur in each of the State's Economic Development Regions to determine the economic drivers in each. Targeted regional clusters (groups of similar firms) determine in-demand occupations (groups of similar jobs) in that region. Public sector training funds are guided by in-demand occupations. Ensuring these training investments align with economic development activities will give the highest chance of success for both efforts.

Table 8 below summarizes the leading, emerging and maturing sectors 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 Sectors Identified by Economic Development Region

Region	Leading Sectors	Emerging Sectors	Maturing Sectors	Comments
Central	• Agriculture • Manufacturing • Utilities • Health Care/Social Assistance • Government	• Self Employed Workers • Construction • Financial Activities • Professional/ Business Services • Leisure/Hospitality	• Retail Trade • Other Services	Agriculture and Utilities sectors are the most significantly concentrated industries in the Central region, although

Region	Leading Sectors	Emerging Sectors	Maturing Sectors	Comments
				neither sector expects high job growth over the projection timeframe. As a leading sector, Government is projected to have the highest job growth in the next decade, followed by Professional & Business Services.
East Central	• Agriculture • Manufacturing	• Construction • Transportation/ Warehouse • Financial Activities • Professional/ Business Services • Health Care/Social Assistance • Government	• Wholesale Trade • Educational Services	Agriculture and Educational Services are the sectors of greatest employment concentration in this region. However, in a departure from recent years, employment in the Educational Services sector is projected to contract over the

Region	Leading Sectors	Emerging Sectors	Maturing Sectors	Comments
				next decade. The Health Care & Social Assistance industry is expected to create the largest numbers of jobs in the region.
North Central	• Agriculture • Utilities • Financial Activities	• Self Employed Workers • Construction • Wholesale Trade • Transport/ Warehouse • Professional/ Business Services	• Manufacturing • Educational Services • Health Care/Social Assistance	Agricultural Production is highly concentrated in this region, along with Utilities and Financial Activities. Both Manufacturing and Educational Services continue to be significant employers, although both sectors are expected to see declines in employment over the course of the projection period. Financial Activities is the sector projected to add the

Region	Leading Sectors	Emerging Sectors	Maturing Sectors	Comments
				greatest number of jobs in the area.
Northeast	• Transportation/Warehouse • Financial Activities • Professional/ Business Services	• Agriculture • Construction • Utilities • Educational Services • Health Care/Social Assistance • Leisure/Hospitality	• Manufacturing • Wholesale Trade • Other Services	Professional & Business Services is more highly concentrated in this region than in any other in the State. Transportation & Warehousing and Financial Activities also are highly concentrated. All three of these leading sectors are projected to see overall employment growth through 2028. The biggest job-creating sectors in this region are anticipated to be Health Care & Social Assistance and Leisure &

Region	Leading Sectors	Emerging Sectors	Maturing Sectors	Comments
				Hospitality.
Northern Statelin e	• Agriculture • Utilities • Transportation/Warehouse • Health Care/Social Assistance	• Self Employed Workers • Retail Trade • Educational Services • Leisure/Hospitality • Government	• Manufacturing • Other Services	Manufacturing is more highly concentrated in this region than in any other region; this region also features a high concentration of employment in both Utilities and Agriculture. As a leading industry in this region, Health Care & Social Assistance is expected to generate the greatest number of jobs in the coming decade.
Northwest	• Agriculture • Manufacturing • Wholesale Trade • Utilities • Transportation/Warehouse	• Self Employed Workers • Construction • Financial Activities • Professional/ Business Services • Health Care/Social Assistance	• Natural Resources/ Mining • Retail Trade • Other Services • Government	Agricultural Production and Utilities are both highly concentrated sectors in this region. Manufacturing is also

Region	Leading Sectors	Emerging Sectors	Maturing Sectors	Comments
				a leading sector, though this sector is not projected to have high numbers of employment growth. The Professional & Business Services sector has the highest job creation expectation through 2028 in the Northwest EDR.
Southeast	• Agriculture • Natural Resources/ Mining • Manufacturing • Utilities • Transportation/Warehouse • Health Care/Social Assistance	• Self Employed Workers • Construction • Financial Activities • Professional/ Business Services • Government	• Other Services	Agriculture and Manufacturing are both highly concentrated sectors, and both sectors are projected to add jobs over the next decade. Over this projection time frame, the biggest job creator in this region, however, will be the Health Care & Social

Region	Leading Sectors	Emerging Sectors	Maturing Sectors	Comments
				Assistance sector.
Southern	• Agriculture • Natural Resources/ Mining • Utilities • Transportation/Warehouse • Health Care/Social Assistance	• Self Employed Worker • Financial Activities • Professional/ Business Services	• Manufacturing • Retail Trade • Educational Services • Government	Agriculture and Natural Resources & Mining are top leading sectors, though neither sector is expected to add significant numbers of jobs in the next decade. Health Care & Social Assistance is expected to create significant employment growth over this projection period.
Southwest	• Agriculture • Utilities • Transportation/Warehouse • Leisure/ Hospitality	• Self Employed Workers • Natural Resources/ Mining • Construction • Wholesale Trade • Financial Activities • Professional/Business Services	• Manufacturing • Retail Trade • Educational Services • Other Services • Government	Transportation & Warehousing and the Leisure & Hospitality sectors are both more highly concentrated in this region than in any other region of the state. Additionally,

Region	Leading Sectors	Emerging Sectors	Maturing Sectors	Comments
				Agriculture and Utilities are leading sectors in the region. Of these four sectors, Leisure & Hospitality is projected to add the most jobs. Health Care & Social Assistance and Professional & Business Services sectors will both create significant employment in this region over the coming decade.
West Central	• Agriculture • Manufacturing • Wholesale Trade • Transportation/Warehouse • Health Care/Social Assistance	• Natural Resources/ Mining • Utilities • Financial Activities	• Retail Trade • Educational Services • Government	Agricultural Production, Manufacturing, and Wholesale Trade are the sectors of greatest employment concentration in this region. Of these, Wholesale Trade --- along with

Region	Leading Sectors	Emerging Sectors	Maturing Sectors	Comments
				another leading sector, Health Care & Social Assistance-- is projected to add the most jobs in the region over the next decade.

The selection of priority sectors in response to Gov. Pritzker's EO3 considered if the data indicated a sector was Leading, Maturing or Emerging. In addition, we looked at the status of all sectors in each of our ten regions. Giving greater weight to Leading and Emerging sectors, sectors 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: Updated Sector Ranking with Regional Weighting

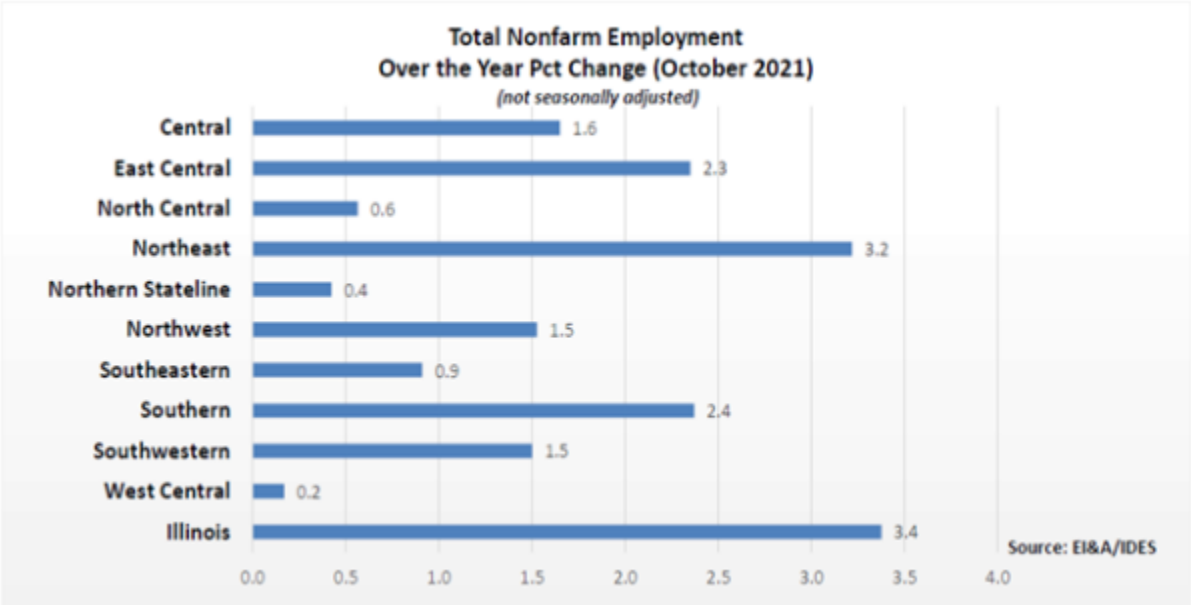
RANKED WITH REGIONAL WEIGHTING		Weight			
		3	2	1	
Sector / Industry	State Status	Leading Regions	Emerging Regions	Maturing Regions	TOTAL
Utilities	Leading	21	4	0	**25**
Transportation & Warehousing	Leading	21	4	0	**25**
Health Care & Social Assistance	Emerging	15	6	1	**22**
Manufacturing	Maturing	15	0	5	**20**
Financial Activities	Leading	6	14	0	**20**
Professional & Business Services	Leading	3	14	0	**17**
Construction	Emerging	0	14	0	**14**
Wholesale Trade	Maturing	6	4	2	**12**
Educational Services Private and Public	Maturing	0	4	5	**9**
Leisure & Hospitality	Emerging	3	6	0	**9**

These updated rankings used the most recent U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) 10-year industry employment projections in order to be consistent with the methodology used for the 2020 WIOA Unified State Plan. Table 9 updated the 2018-2028 projections using the most recent employment data from June of 2020. We know many industries experienced employment growth throughout 2021 as illustrated in the following Sector Employment Changes Charts. The rankings in Table 9 above must be tempered with the preliminary employment data in the Sector Employment Charts. For example, Leisure & Hospitality was found to be a Leading sector in one region and Emerging in three regions, leading to a value of "9" while preliminary data indicate its statewide employment growth was the highest of all sectors (over 13 percent) through October 2021.

The dividing line in Table 9 indicates the median point, with five sectors above and below the line; it does not indicate a State prioritization of attention or resources. We will continue to monitor economic fluctuations and react accordingly at the state level. It will be important for the WIOA Regional Plans to factor in their locally sourced primary data from businesses along with the latest available labor market data when determining their key sectors.

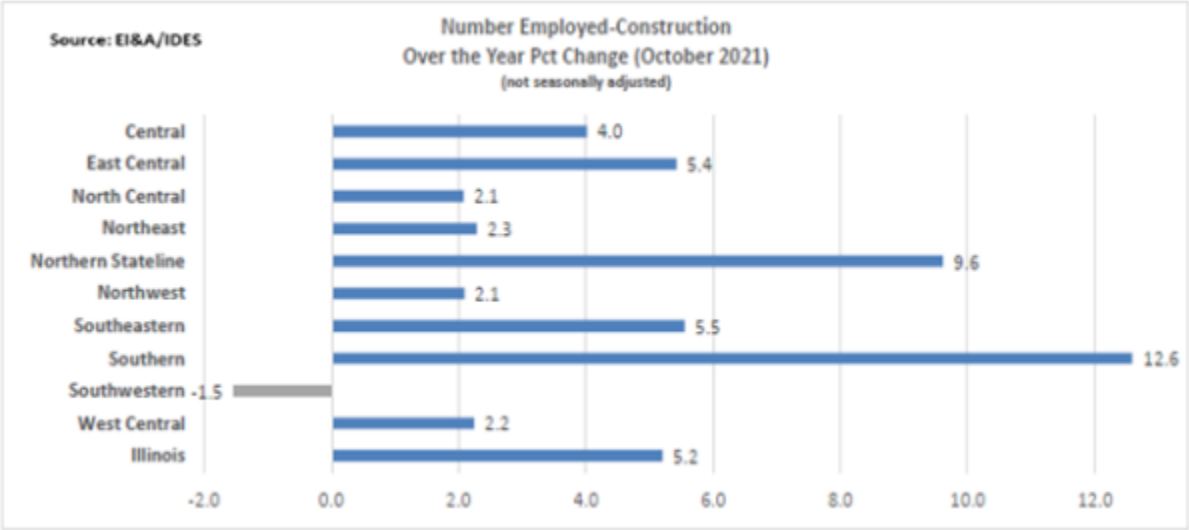
To understand how sector employment was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the WIOA Planning Data Team analyzed the change in employment from October 2020 to October 2021. The Team reviewed data on the percent change in all employment for the state and for each of the ten WIOA planning regions. Overall, statewide employment increased 3.4 percent while each of the regions increased between 0.2 and 3.2 percent. All regions experienced a growth in employment, albeit some regions were modest, with six of the ten regions seeing growth at or above 1.5 percent.

Sector Employment Changes: Chart 1

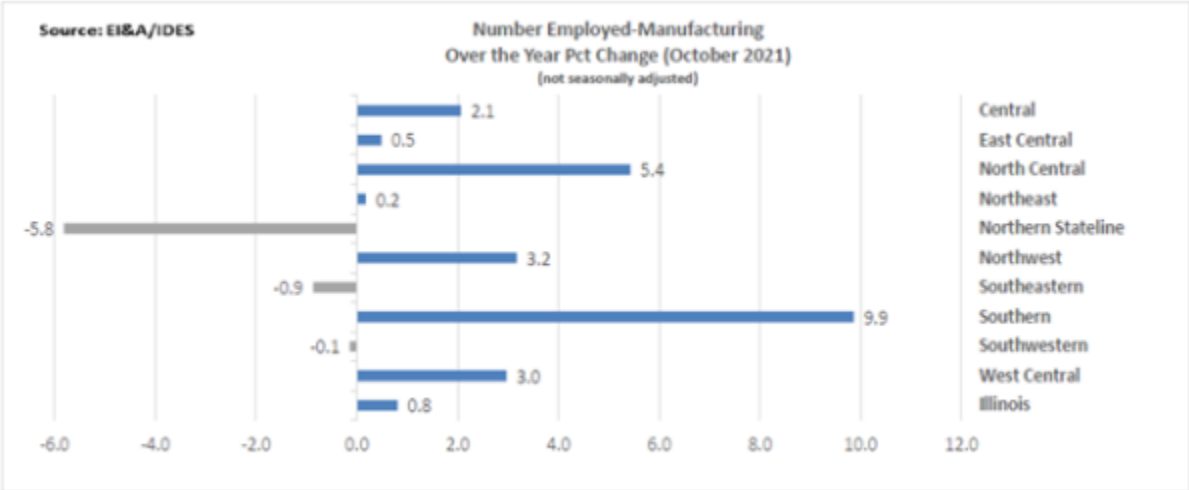


The team also examined how sector employment changed over the same period for the state and in each planning region. The following charts illustrate the degree to which the number of workers employed in selected sectors changed. The change for all planning regions is displayed together alongside the statewide data for each sector. These charts were provided to each WIOA regional planning team to use in developing their respective plans. We will continue to monitor the change in employment over the next two years and inform local workforce boards and program staff of significant changes.

Sector Employment Changes Chart 2

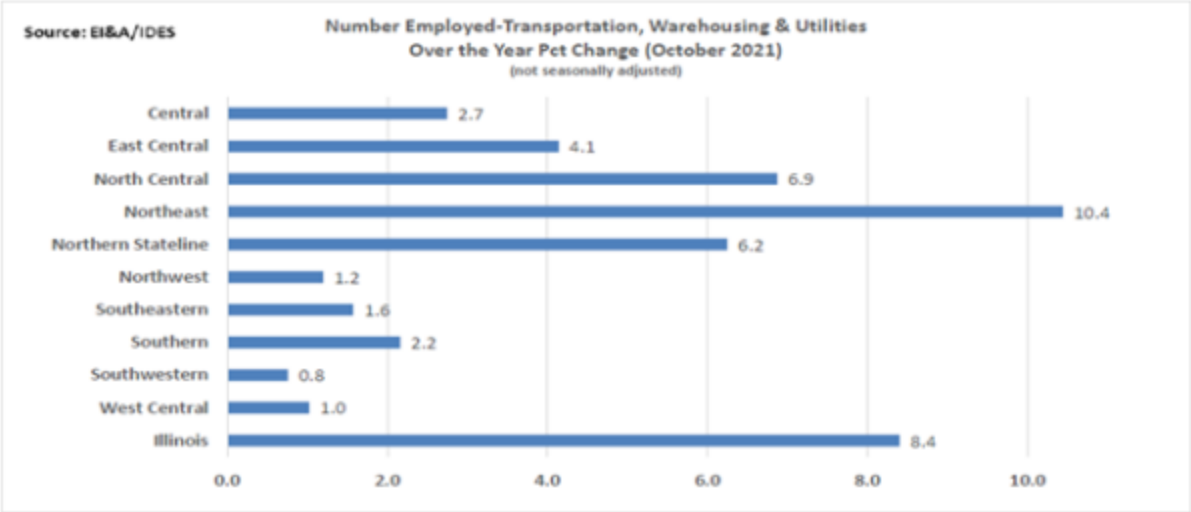


Sector Employment Changes Chart 3

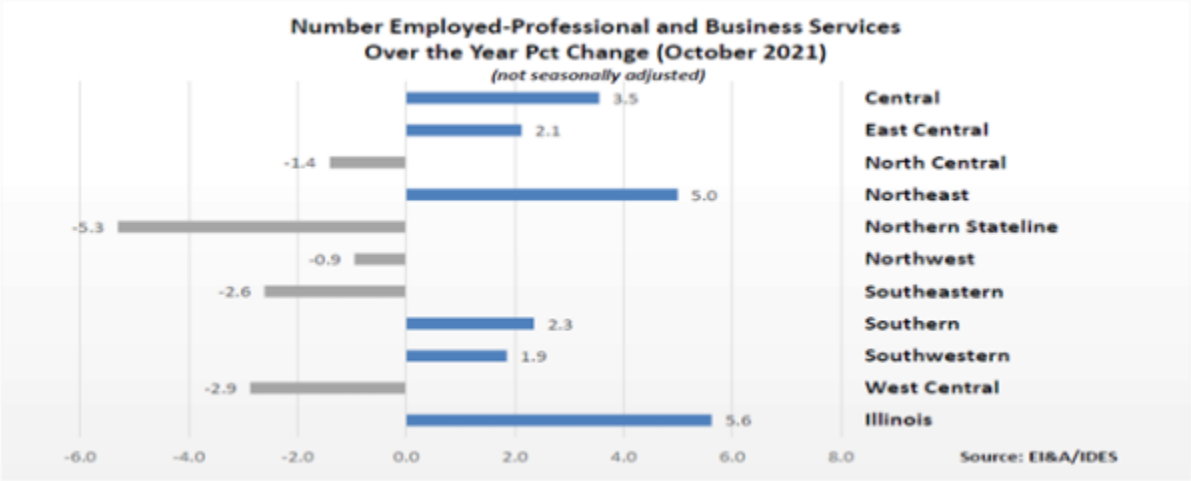


Sector Employment Changes Chart 4

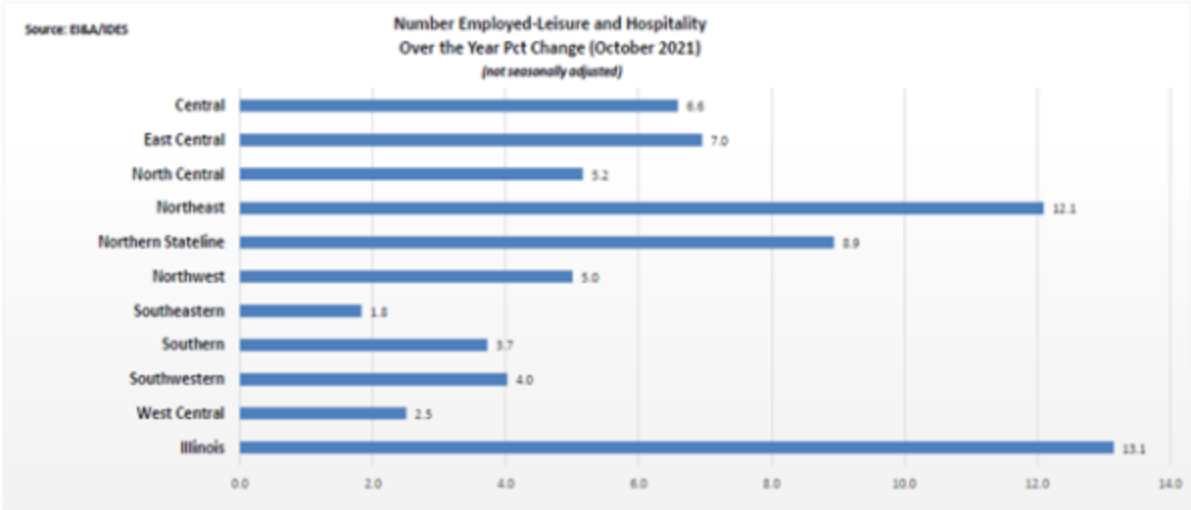
Sector Employment Changes Chart 5



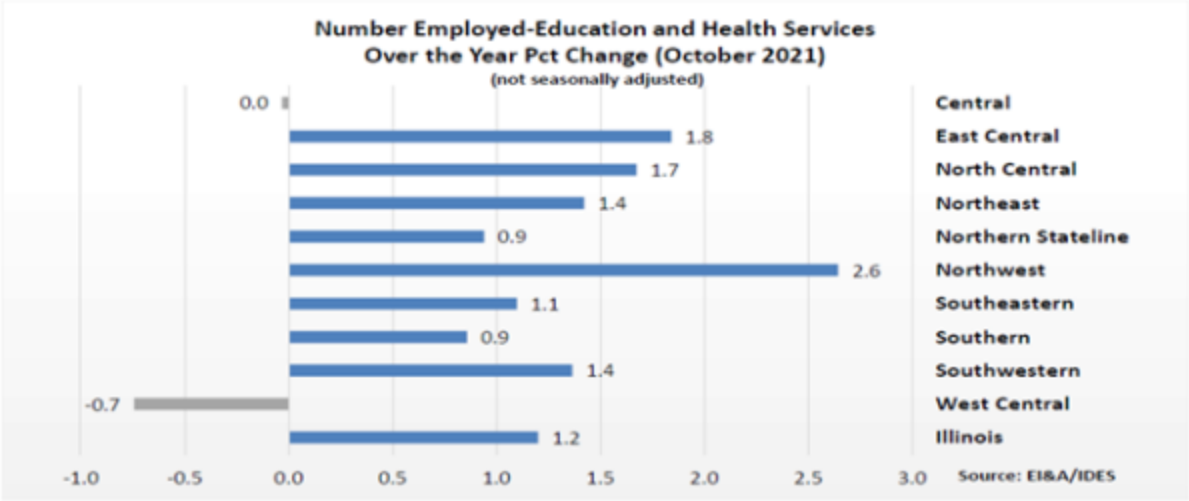
Sector Employment Changes Chart 6



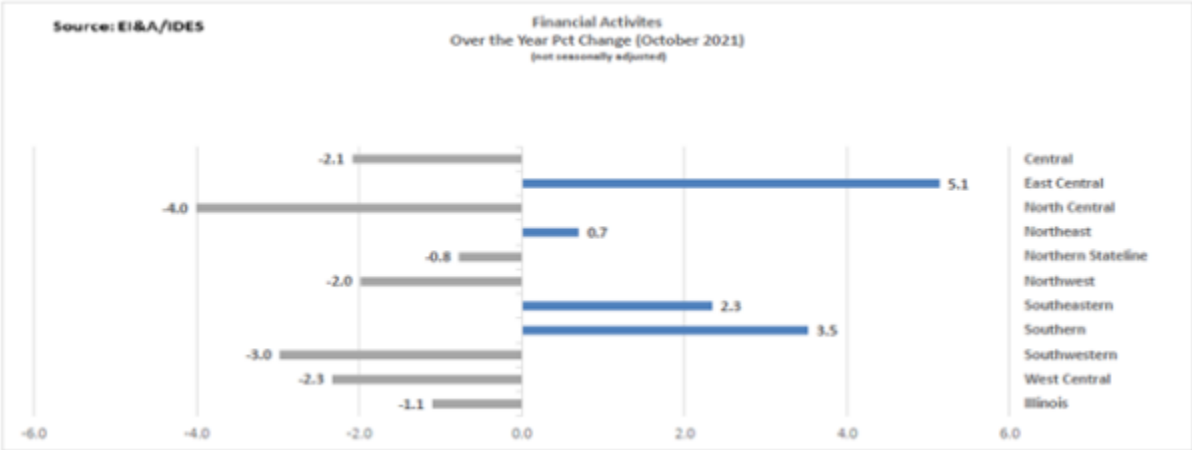
Sector Employment Changes Chart 7



Sector Employment Changes Chart 8

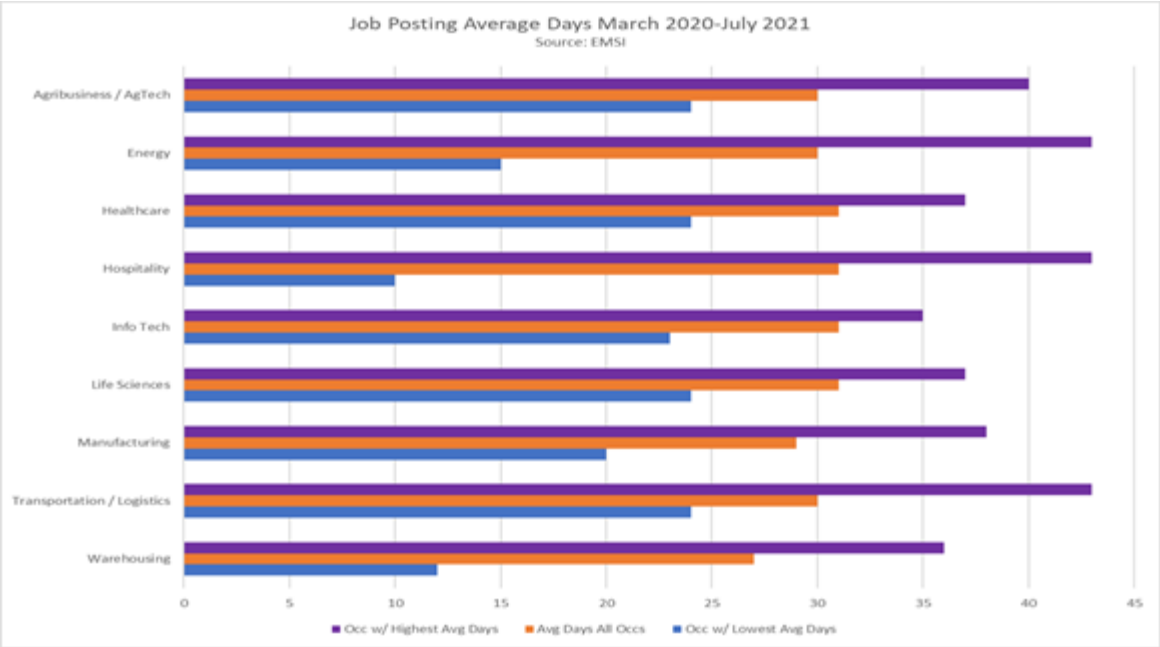


Sector Employment Changes Chart 9



The team also examined the duration of online job postings for approximately two dozen occupations in each sector to assess which sectors were taking longer to fill vacant jobs. The chart below illustrates the average number of days online ads were posted for the occupations taking the most days to fill, along with the average days to fill for all two dozen occupations in the sector, and the occupation taking the fewest days to fill. The data indicates that on average, all sectors' ads for all jobs were posted for approximately one month. Within the sectors, some jobs were posted up to 43 days and as few as 10 days, on average. We note the hospitality and warehousing sectors experienced the most extreme range.

Chart 3: Job Posting Data



iii. Employers' Employment Needs

An effective workforce system must at minimum ensure that a pool of appropriately skilled workers is available when and where businesses need them. The workforce and education systems must be nimble and ready to respond to the changing skills and abilities that workers need to succeed in industries and occupations vital to the state and in each region. Connecting employers and job seekers and giving employers access to the skilled workforce they need are key areas of concern for Illinois' workforce development system. This assertion has proved to be even more relevant as we embark on an economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Increasing employer awareness of available workforce development resources will be important to retaining existing jobs and attracting new business and industry.

The workforce system in Illinois has proactively sought input from business leaders with a variety of approaches before and during the pandemic. For example:

- In 2020, the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) established an employer-focused standing committee, known as the IWIB Business Engagement Committee (BEC). Through this committee, the IWIB seeks to focus Illinois' workforce development system on the needs of businesses and to hear their needs on workforce skills and education priorities. The mission of the BEC is to provide guidance and direction to help bridge the gap between Illinois' important business sectors and employers and the Illinois workforce development system.

- A key finding of the BEC in 2021 was that lack of uniform messaging between Illinois WIOA partners has led to low levels of engagement by the business community. This limits delivery of important economic services to the business community. Illinois needs to create perception in the business community that the Illinois workforce system is a powerful partner that shares one voice, is easy to access and helps businesses thrive by accessing and building the talent they need to do so. In response, the BEC gathered a diverse group of employers and workforce practitioners to develop a common message to business that will succinctly identify the advantages of utilizing Illinois' workforce partners. The message is designed to preface more detailed and partner-specific information but communicate quickly the principal value of connecting:

Businesses thrive when they have access to the skilled workers they need, now and in the future. We help businesses recruit, hire, train and retain the skilled employees that they need to thrive and grow.

- In 2021 the BEC also found that an opportunity exists to leverage existing sector champions across the state to implement industry partnership strategies (such as Talent Management Pipeline (TMP)) more effectively. Businesses continue to struggle with unfilled positions, career advancements, turnover, and retention, along with improving diversity opportunities. Throughout Illinois, industry partnerships have successfully developed an end-to-end process to address local workforce challenges. Industry champions (e.g., business associations) can support expanding industrial collaborations across the state to communicate specific workforce challenges in building a talent supply chain. The BEC seeks to partner with key industry organizations to pilot this approach, learn more about workforce needs directly from industry leaders, connect business with workforce service available through the Illinois workforce development system, and ensure that sector partnership activities deliver a clear return on investment for businesses in the industry. To lay the groundwork for the next two years, the BEC will be partnering with the Technology & Manufacturing Association (TMA) to pilot and refine outreach and awareness of sector strategies and workforce services in manufacturing throughout the state, given TMA's long-standing workforce development leadership in Illinois's manufacturing industry and its established relationship with IWIB members.
- The IWIB established an Apprenticeship Illinois Committee in 2020 to guide the state's efforts to promote apprenticeships and other work-based learning solutions. Current business members include representatives of infrastructure and technology, manufacturing, health care, transportation, distribution and logistics (TDL), finance, insurance and real estate (FIRE), clean energy/electric vehicles, healthcare, supply chain, finance/insurance, clean energy/electric vehicles, and construction. The committee's marketing work group redesigned the apprenticeship website (www.apprenticeshipillinois.com) with employer input in the summer 2021 and is actively working on marketing and outreach for businesses interested in apprenticeship. The marketing work group may sponsor an industry specific webinar series every other month for employers as part of an apprenticeship outreach campaign in 2022. This will feature employers talking to other employers about how to get started with apprenticeships and their benefits.

Business leaders across all sectors and industries have emphasized the critical importance of essential employability skills. Many business leaders contend workers must have strong employability skills alongside strong technical skills. The workforce system is adapting to this by supporting awareness of the importance of employability skills to educators, students, workforce career services staff and program participants, and encouraging employability skills training embedded into classroom and work-based training models.

Technical skill development in Illinois continues the trend of emphasizing industry-recognized credentials and the use of work-based learning models where businesses have the greatest influence in setting the curricula to match their employment needs. Illinois is currently using U.S. Department of Labor grants to expand apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships.

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board Continuous Improvement Committee (CIC) approved new outcomes related to WIOA Policy 8.4 - Training Expenditure Requirement. One of the outcomes of this policy that we expect to be evaluated is that the results of local workforce innovation areas, expending a minimum of 50% of their formula WIOA funds on direct training activities, are better positioned to meet the needs of employers with properly trained job applicants.

Looking Beyond 2022

In the long run, Illinois' workforce must evolve in step with the job market. Advances in technology continue to render some skills less valuable as new skills come into higher demand, and the workforce system will strive to ensure workers are equipped with the skills necessary to meet employers demands.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, more workers were transitioning to the so-called "Gig Economy," a workforce defined by short-term engagements, temporary contract work, and independent contracting. Advances in information and communication technologies were largely driving this shift, as more and more jobs did not depend on location or timeslot. The pandemic accelerated this shift. Most businesses that could operate remotely did so during the height of the pandemic. As COVID-19 vaccines were made available, some businesses returned to an office setting. Others continued to offer the ability for employees to work remotely or some hybrid arrangement. The long-term implications of this shift are not certain, but it is possible effective labor-exchange services will become more valuable to connect businesses with skilled workers.

Another major ongoing implication from the pandemic is that many people who left the labor force because of the pandemic, either because of layoffs or other circumstances, continue to remain outside the labor force. People cite safety, lack of childcare, and a reprioritization of their life among a myriad of other reasons for staying out of the job market. The ongoing labor shortage continues to be a major issue for many employers in Illinois. Highlighting the difficulty in drawing conclusions in the current environment, some economists observe that workers may not be withdrawing from work entirely, but rather shifting to different occupations. This remains a rapidly evolving situation that will place greater emphasis on developing more current employment data.

Illinois will continue to promote the use of sector strategies to create regional, sector-based, public-private partnerships to help address common concerns and take advantage of common opportunities for businesses. In particular, we will continue to promote the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Talent Pipeline Management initiative (TPM), which was active in 25 states in 2020 and is now active in 38 states, an increase of over 50% in just two years. TPM is a framework for similar businesses to better understand their talent needs and work collectively in a region to improve the talent pipeline, partially through better communication of their needs to the workforce and education systems.

We plan to improve local capacity for the integration of business services across core partners. Many businesses are frustrated with the myriad workforce and education organizations and institutions working in silos. Lack of coordination on business engagement is a common business complaint. The IWIB's service integration policy recognizes that integrating business services for the employer customer is as important as integrating services for the job seeker client. During the first full year of implementing the service integration policy, the need to strengthen the coordination and seamlessness of employer services was one of 15 specific integration goals all local workforce areas need to discuss. Workforce areas that identified business service integration as a priority have developed and implemented an action plan to improve employer customer satisfaction. Creating a regional sector partnership is one approach available to businesses to create a streamlined process to funnel information between businesses and public organizations. However, workforce and education partners must do better at communicating, coordinating, and eventually integrating outreach and service delivery to businesses.

Strategic efforts to improve statewide business engagement remains a focus. This includes professional development such as Business U training and other strategies to enhance local and regional business services. Using input from businesses across a variety of sectors, a Business HUB landing page is now available on Illinois workNet. The Business Hub provides links to key

information companies identified as value-added in an easy-to-use, logical layout. The Hub continues to be refined based on employer feedback.

An improved understanding of business needs is a vital first step to building a better talent pipeline. However, just as important is the willingness of state and local workforce system leaders to adapt and change how we operate in light of an improved understanding of employers' needs. We described earlier the need to be nimble and responsive to business needs. Going forward, system leaders and staff must remain committed to continuous improvement in this area to help create long-term public-private partnerships, deeper and sustained business engagement, improved outcomes for program participants, and a workforce with the skills needed by employers[2].

An example of being adaptable and responding to employers' needs is the introduction of Virtual Job Fairs. Virtual Job Fairs (VJF) were launched as part of the Get Hired initiative in response to the labor market and health and safety issues caused COVID-19. Through the VJF platform, job seekers had the opportunity to explore employer information and find job opportunities while employers may host informational VJF sessions and recruit potential candidates for their job openings. More than 700 employer virtual job fair booths were added totaling more than 40,000 job openings across all employer booths since May 2020.

Regional Economic Analysis for Employment Needs

In addition to an analysis of leading, emerging, and maturing industries, the diverse Illinois economy requires an accompanying analysis in each of our ten economic development regions. The core partners provided the latest U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data to each of Illinois' regional planning teams, who used these data as a key part of their assessment of business needs in their regional economies. Planning teams were encouraged to augment the BLS data with their own primary data sources, such as business interviews and surveys, discussions with business, industries, associations, and staffing agencies.

Regional plans highlighted the need to understand the challenges and opportunities in the private sector. Important to understanding these challenges is an awareness of the specific knowledge, skills and abilities in demand in each region. The local workforce boards recognized the importance of considering employers' employment needs as the foundation for prioritizing workforce system efforts. The following is a summary of the fundamental activities that are identified in Illinois' ten regional plans that support the identification of employer needs:

Building an Aligned Career Pathways System in Illinois

Over the past decade, the State of Illinois has embraced an approach of career pathways envisioning that Illinois residents will be enabled to progressively build toward college and career success through aligned education, training, and employment opportunities over their lifetime. Along with uniting around regional cluster strategies, the Governor's Action Agenda for EO 3 also articulates a vision to "Prepare Illinois workers for a career, not just their next job." The executive order identifies strategies to prepare workers for high-demand careers by developing core academic, technical and employability skills throughout their lifetimes.

Both the public and private sectors are conducting a broad number of efforts pertaining to education, workforce development, and economic development through a lens of career pathways. The development of a college and career pathway system is fully described under the "Partner Engagement with other Education and Training Providers" section of this plan. These strategic initiatives are designed to increase the knowledge, skills and abilities of Illinois citizens so that they may obtain the portable, stackable credentials and licenses that businesses require.

These initiatives have been tied to a number of aligned approaches, including Illinois Pathways, the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR) Act, Illinois' participation in the National

Governors Association Work-Based Learning Policy Academy, scaling of apprenticeship models, and the State's plans for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and Career and Technical Education (Perkins V). Built on longstanding strengths in Illinois, particularly in CTE Programs of Study, this broad work on career pathways addresses two goals: first, to increase the number of Illinoisans who attain a postsecondary credential and are prepared for employment in high-demand, high-wage, and high-skill occupations; and second, to spur state and regional economic development by developing a homegrown talent pipeline for areas of workforce need.

Since 2016, the implementation of the PWR Act has utilized deep employer engagement to identify the specific essential employability competencies, as well as technical competencies needed in the State of Illinois. In consultation with state agencies and key industry experts including hiring professionals, education and training professionals, and industry associations, industry-based steering committees were formed to identify and propose technical and professional competencies in six sectors that have since been adopted by the State's relevant education and training agencies. The first iteration of this document included four industry areas selected for their alignment with state economic development priorities: Health Sciences and Technology (HST), Information Technology (IT), Manufacturing, Engineering, Technology, and Trades (METT), and Finance and Business Services (FBS). Two additional areas (Arts and Communication – A&C, Human and Public Services – HPS – particularly the Education Pathway) were mapped, as well as entrepreneurial competencies. These Technical and Employability Competencies serve as quality indicators of an individual's readiness to enter an industry or to pursue further education. Competency statements apply to current industry needs, contain both employability skills and technical skills, and leave opportunity for specialized training and career advancement. State agencies will be aligning the essential employability skills competencies developed under the PWR Act with the Essential Employability Skills Framework – a framework developed in 2017 through a Title II Adult Education state-level workgroup that included private-sector employers. This framework was developed to address employers' expressed concerns regarding the lack of non-technical skills in new hires and existing employees.

Career pathways are defined in Illinois as "a combination of rigorous and high-quality education, training, and other services that aligns both vertically and horizontally across Secondary Education, Adult Education, Workforce Training and Development, Career and Technical Education, and Postsecondary Education systems, pathways, and programs. Collaborative partnerships with these entities and business and industry, along with human service agencies, corrections, and other community stakeholders, serve as the foundational structure for high-quality and sustainable career pathways. A career pathway also includes multiple entry and exit points to facilitate individuals to build their skills as they progress along a continuum of education and training and advance in sector-specific employment." Career pathways are administered by a variety of private, state, and local entities. In turn, multiple state education and workforce committees (including an extensive base of stakeholders) conducted definitional work to ensure alignment across agencies, legal frameworks, and initiatives. Based on the unified adoption of the Illinois Career Pathways Dictionary in 2018, the State entities and committees pertaining to the broader education and workforce systems in Illinois have a common foundation for continued exploration leading up to 2024:

State Agencies

- Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)
- Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE)
- Illinois Community College Board (ICCB)
- Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES)

- Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC)
- Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO)

State Committees & Entities

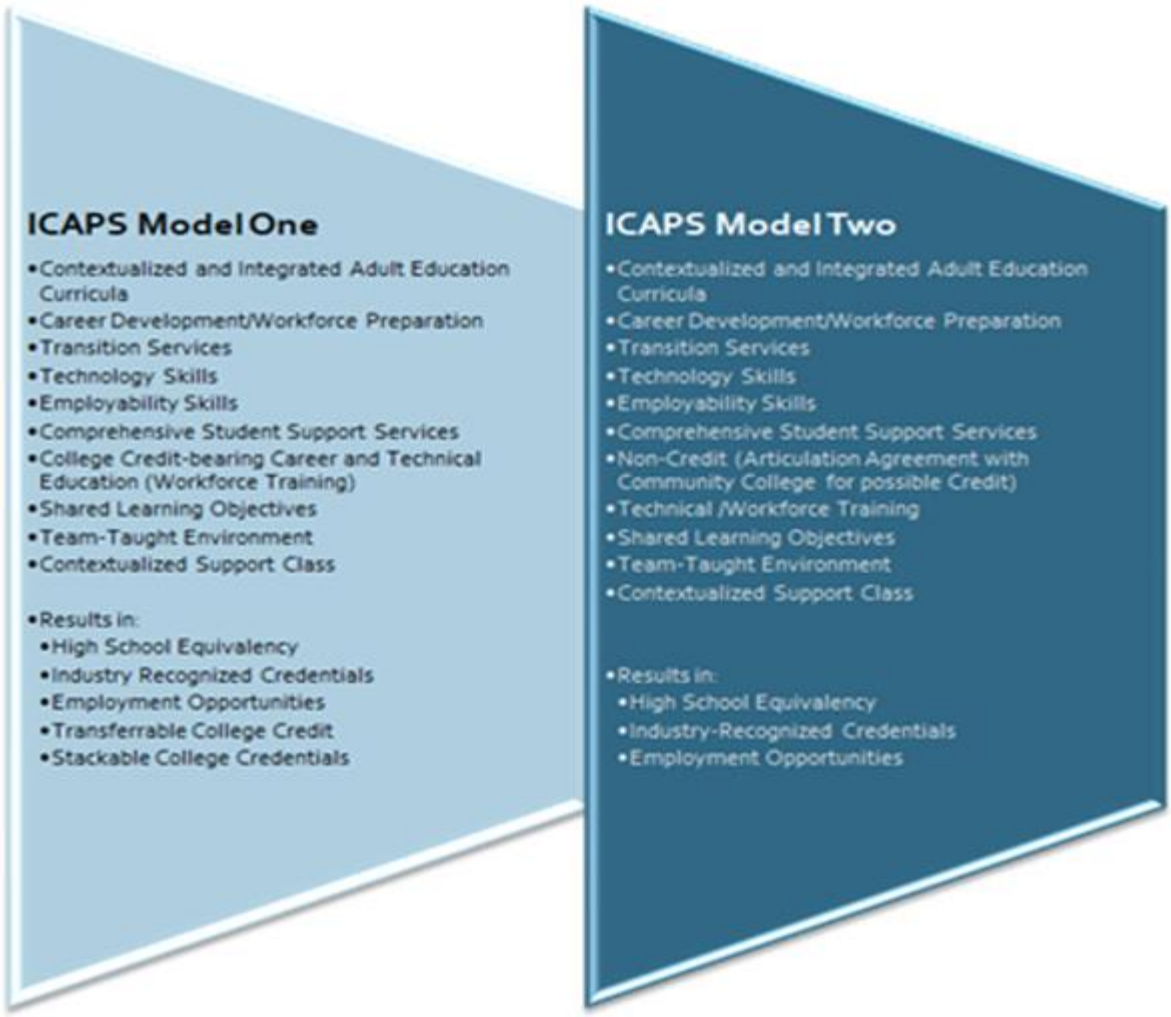
- Illinois P-20 Council Data, Accountability, & Assessment (DAA) Committee
- Workforce Readiness through Apprenticeships & Pathways (WRAP) Committee of the Governor's Cabinet on Children and Youth
- Illinois P-20 Council College & Career Readiness (CCR) Committee Illinois
- Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) Apprenticeship Illinois Committee
- Governor's Office Education Team

For example, Illinois continues to prioritize college and career pathways as a cohesive framework for linking education and training to real-world applications, in ways that both engage employers deeply and meet their talent needs. At each level, college and career pathways system elements are incorporating deep employer engagement, feedback and participation to ensure the system functions well. The work-based learning continuum outlined in the Career Pathways Dictionary shows the increasing levels of employer engagement as individuals progress to more involved types of work-based learning, such as apprenticeships.

The implementation of college and career pathways is rapidly expanding throughout the Illinois P-20 education and workforce systems. For example, a network of over 100 high schools in more than 70 school districts across the state are implementing College & Career Pathway Endorsement systems aligned to the PWR Act. This network provides a foundation for future scaling through continued alignment of funding, policy and support at the State level.

Other Current Initiatives

Through a partnership between Title II Adult Education and Literacy and Postsecondary Perkins CTE, a basic skill and training model was developed and called the Integrated Career and Academic Placement System (ICAPS), which includes stackable and industry recognized credentials. The Integrated Education and Training (IET) aims to provide an integrated pathway of career and technical education (CTE) or non-credit workforce training, inclusive of credential and/or certificate opportunities for Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) students that lack basic skills. Students work to complete their high school equivalency and are concurrently in credit CTE or non-credit training courses through an integrated instructional model—supplemented by support courses, comprehensive student supportive services, and augmented by team teaching that includes CTE faculty and basic skills instructors. The model provides career pathway opportunities for students while enabling their transition into additional postsecondary education or employment. In 2020, ICCB supported a joint collaboration between CTE and Adult Education through the braiding of federal Perkins V Leadership and federal Adult Education and Family Literacy Leadership funding to support the development, implementation, scale and evaluation of IET programs. The ICCB aims to support the growth of quality IET opportunities across the state.



Through Title II Adult Education, a state-level workgroup that includes private-sector employers created "The Essential Employability Skills Framework" in 2017. Since then, the framework has addressed employers' concerns regarding the lack of non-technical skills in new hires and existing employees and is currently being utilized by employers and community colleges. This framework and self-assessment have been incorporated into the State's Perkins Plan. Recipients of Perkins funding will be required to incorporate employability skills into their CTE curriculum.

The framework describes and provides detailed examples of the four core elements identified by the state-level working group, which included employers: personal ethics; work ethic; teamwork; and communication. An innovative feature of the Essential Employability Skills Framework is the self-assessment designed to address exposure to employability skills in classrooms and work-based learning activities and to provide an opportunity to reflect on how instruction is aligned with the framework's definition of essential employability skills.

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity funded a project with the Greater Oak Brook Chamber of Commerce to promote student awareness of key essential skills by bringing young professionals into schools as mentors and coaches for business-based team challenges. This project is mentioned in other sections of the plan as it also involves business engagement and capacity building.

[1]*Note that the LQs used in the development of Table 2are derived from the 2018 BLS LQ determinations, in order to be consistent with industry projection timeframes. LQs used in the*

development of the maps shown below utilize 2020 BLS LQ determinations in order to be consistent with the data set used for that purpose.

[2]*A more detailed discussion on TPM and Integrated Business Services may be found in the "Implementation of State Strategies" section of this plan*

B. Workforce Analysis

The workforce in Illinois faces a chronic underlying structural threat, population loss. This is driven by the long-term trend of a decreasing birth rate and continued net out of state migration.

Illinois' population in the 25-54 age group declined by just over 290,000 (-2.3%) between 2011 and 2019, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates. Much smaller declines occurred in the 15–19-year-old population and the 20–24-year-old age group as well. During that same period, the population in the 55-64 age group increased by over 221,000 (+1.7%). As the overall population gets older, the available labor force in Illinois will likely continue to decline.

A chronic threat to maintaining a robust workforce is population loss due to changing demographics or outmigration. As with most Midwestern states, Illinois' overall population and its share of the national population have been trending downward for years. The Illinois Congressional delegation has been reduced with every decennial census since 1970 because our population growth did not keep pace with other states, or our population dropped outright.

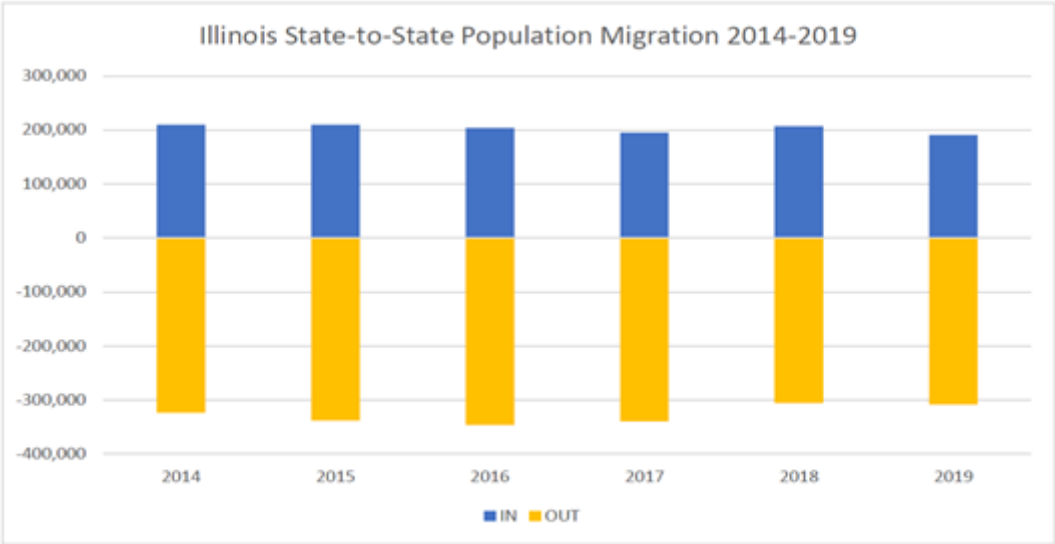
Using data from the US Census Bureau's annual American Community Survey, migration out has exceeded migration in each year since 2014.[7] Over this time frame the migration has ranged from a net loss of 144,514 in 2017 to a net loss of 99,007 in 2018.

Migration Table 1

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
IN	209,536	209,828	203,713	195,092	206,620	190,627
OUT	-323,579	-337,705	-346,330	-339,606	-305,627	-308,179
NET	-114,043	-127,877	-142,617	-144,514	-99,007	-117,552

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, State-to-State Migration Flows, 2014-2019.

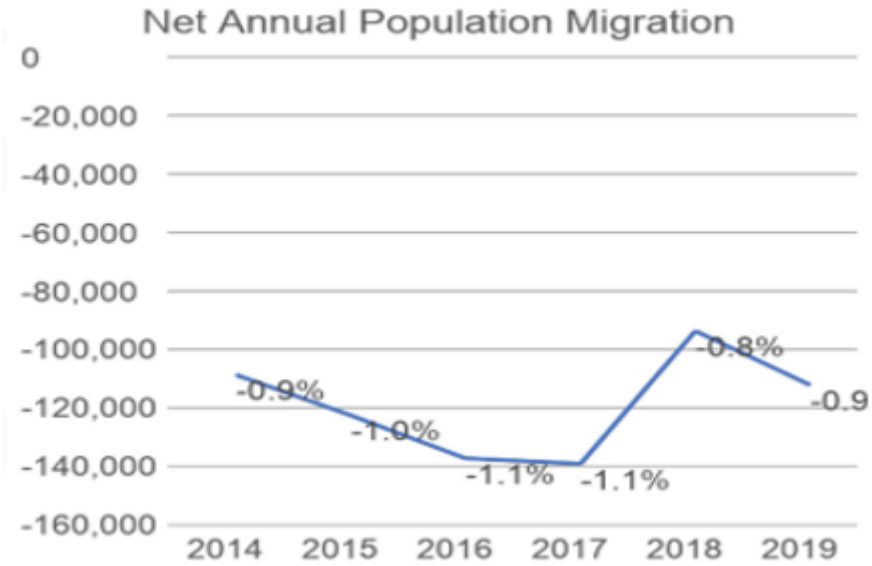
Migration Chart 1



Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey

The annual net loss represents approximately one percent of the state's total population. Over the six-year timeframe since 2014, the percentage loss has ranged from -0.8 percent (2018) to -1.1 percent (both 2016 and 2017).

Migration Chart 2



Migration Table 2 provides a snapshot of net migration in Illinois compared with our Midwest Neighbors. Illinois has a total population nearly double of each of the next most populous border states, Indiana and Missouri. Of these states, all but Illinois, Iowa and Kentucky experienced net migration-related growth in 2019.

Migration Table 2

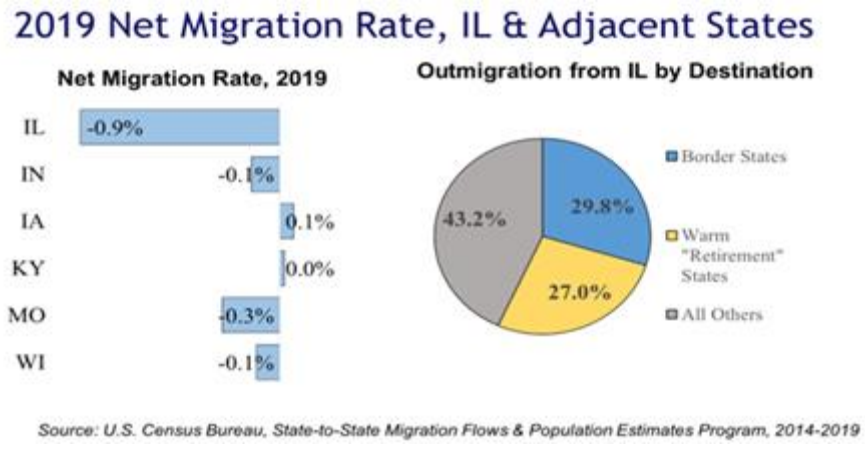
	Total Pop	IN	OUT	NET	Net as % of Total Pop
IL	12,671,821	190,627	308,179	-117,552	-0.9%
IN	6,732,219	151,443	142,441	9,002	0.1%
IA	3,155,070	72,651	74,697	-2,046	-0.1%
KY	4,467,673	100,057	101,061	-1,004	0.0%
MO	6,137,428	152,345	135,762	16,583	0.3%
WI	5,822,434	107,973	101,668	6,305	0.1%

Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey

Focusing on outmigration, an analysis of where the 308,179 Illinois residents that left the state migrated in 2019 reveals the following insights:

- Nearly one-third went to a border state
- Slightly less than this amount went to a warm-weather state
- The most popular border state destination was Indiana, with 36,300 migrations
- The most popular destination states overall were Florida, with 24,400 migrations, California (24,100) and Texas (23,800)

Migration Chart 3



Migration Table 3

Destination	Number	Percent
Border States	91,782	29.8%
Warm "Retirement" States	83,172	27.0%
All Others	133,225	43.2%

Migration Table 4

Illinois Outmigration to Border States

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
IN	38,177	34,221	29,883	29,526	31,556	36,328
IA	13,612	19,702	14,948	12,997	15,699	10,843
KY	5,478	4,776	6,394	5,333	5,108	4,843
MO	24,210	23,915	25,906	22,767	20,041	17,366
WI	30,423	23,233	31,323	26,963	25,155	22,402
Border States	111,900	105,847	108,454	97,586	97,559	91,782

Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey

Migration Table 5

Illinois Outmigration to Warm States

AZ	11,858	11,017	13,387	13,095	13,247	10,915
CA	21,441	26,189	21,539	27,117	22,165	24,085
FL	25,095	26,406	23,319	28,631	27,622	24,425
TX	23,258	21,927	21,848	26,214	19,241	23,747
Warm States	81,652	85,539	80,093	95,057	82,275	83,172
All Other States	130,027	146,319	157,783	146,963	125,793	133,225
Total Outmigration	323,579	337,705	346,330	339,606	305,627	308,179

Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey

When compared to all states (and the District of Columbia) in 2019, Illinois is in the top five states for the number of people leaving, trailing only California, Florida, Texas, and New York. However, when we examine the outmigration number as a percent of the total population, Illinois drops to nearly the bottom third of the pack, ranking 28th in the nation. So, while outmigration is larger than we would like, the significance of the outmigration number is lessened when viewed in the context of total population and how Illinois compares to the rest of the nation.

Furthermore, as detailed in the response report to the Governor's EO 3 report, the last few decades have seen slow and steady depopulation of the less urbanized areas of states across the Midwest as economic forces have reduced job prospects in these regions. From 1990 to 2017,

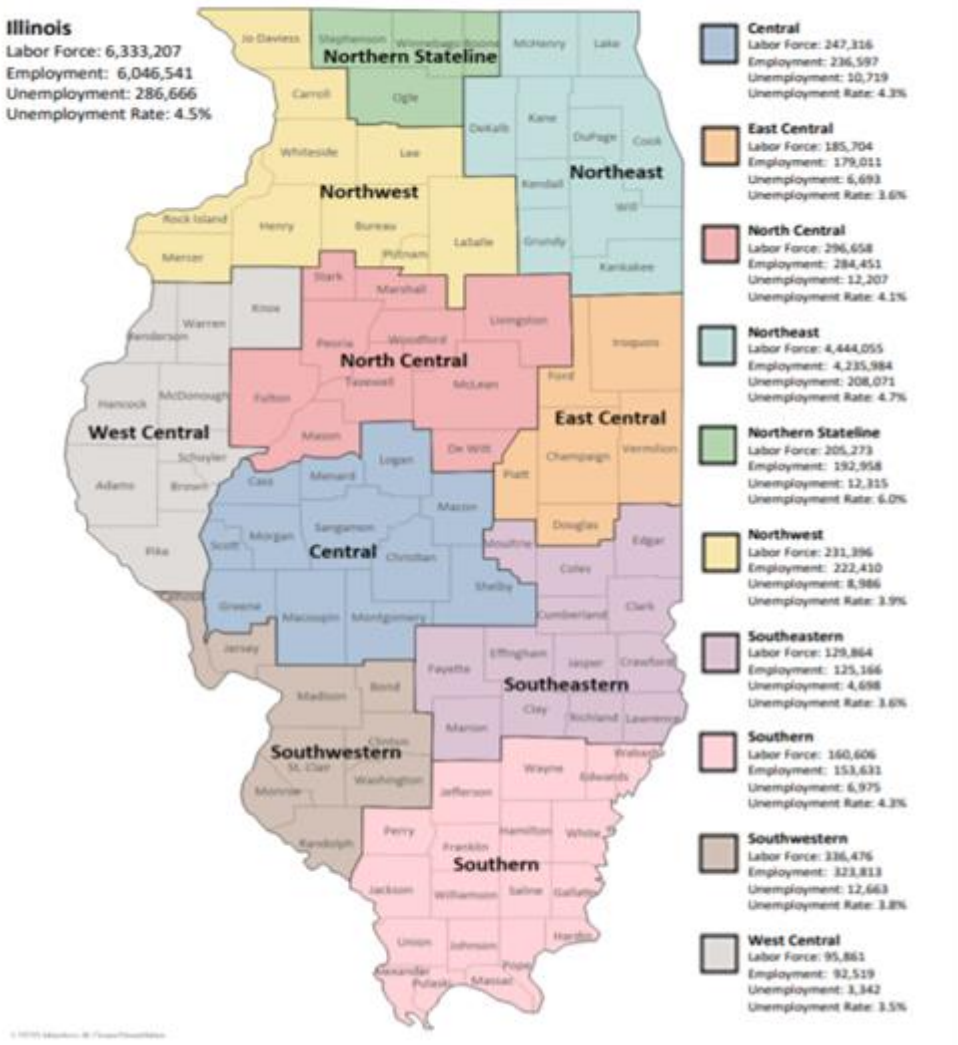
the Northwest, West Central, South and Southeast regions of Illinois lost more than 3% of their population at a time when the overall state population grew by more than 12%. Of equal concern is the aging population of these regions, which rank highest in their share of population age 65 or older, and rank among the lowest in their share of population below age 19. Finally, the percent of residents in these regions who are college graduates lags the state, indicating a "brain-drain" of the most educated members of these communities.

i. Employment and Unemployment

An Uneven Recovery

As the pre-COVID-19 Illinois economy reconstitutes itself, we have witnessed continuing declines in the unemployment rate across the State. As of November 2021, the statewide unemployment rate registered 4.5 percent -- the eighth consecutive month of decline, and well-below its highest pandemic level of 16.3 percent in April 2020. Though this downward trend in jobs losses is encouraging, a closer look reveals that not every area – nor every worker – is experiencing the same recovery. In the first part of this section, we will observe the regional variations in recovery, followed by the second part in which we review the impact of the pandemic on employment across cross-sections of Illinoisans.

Figure 3: Illinois Labor Force Statistics by Economic Region



As one can see from the map of Illinois' ten Economic Development Regions, the most recent unemployment rates (not seasonally adjusted) range from a low of 3.5 percent in the West

Central region, to a high of 6.0 percent in the Northern Stateline area. The differences in jobs losses among Illinois' regions reflect a confluence of factors, including the feasibility of telework, reduced demand in some sectors, and varying local policy responses to the pandemic. Additionally, a major driver in the employment recovery variability stems from the structural differences in the regional economies, primarily along the goods-producing vs services-producing dimension.

Service-producing employment, which includes leisure & hospitality, education & healthcare, and retail trade, has seen steep declines across Illinois. Select data from the unemployment insurance programs, as administered by the Illinois Department of Employment Security, illustrate the differential impacts of the pandemic on various industry sectors in Illinois. The sectors which saw the largest increases in continued claimants during the pandemic include Accommodation and Food Services, Retail Trade, and Health Care/ Social Assistance.

Chart 4: Industries with large increase in Unemployment Insurance Claimants

Broadly speaking, those economic development regions with a higher concentration of jobs in these three industry sectors experienced the greatest loss of jobs in the early months of the pandemic—and, because these sectors of the economy are still struggling to connect workers with jobs, these regions still face higher levels of unemployment.

The following charts were developed to track the jobs recovery by industry for each of the ten regions; specifically, these capture the pre-pandemic employment levels from October 2019 through October 2021.

Charts 5 – 15: Regional Sector Employment Data

Chart 5

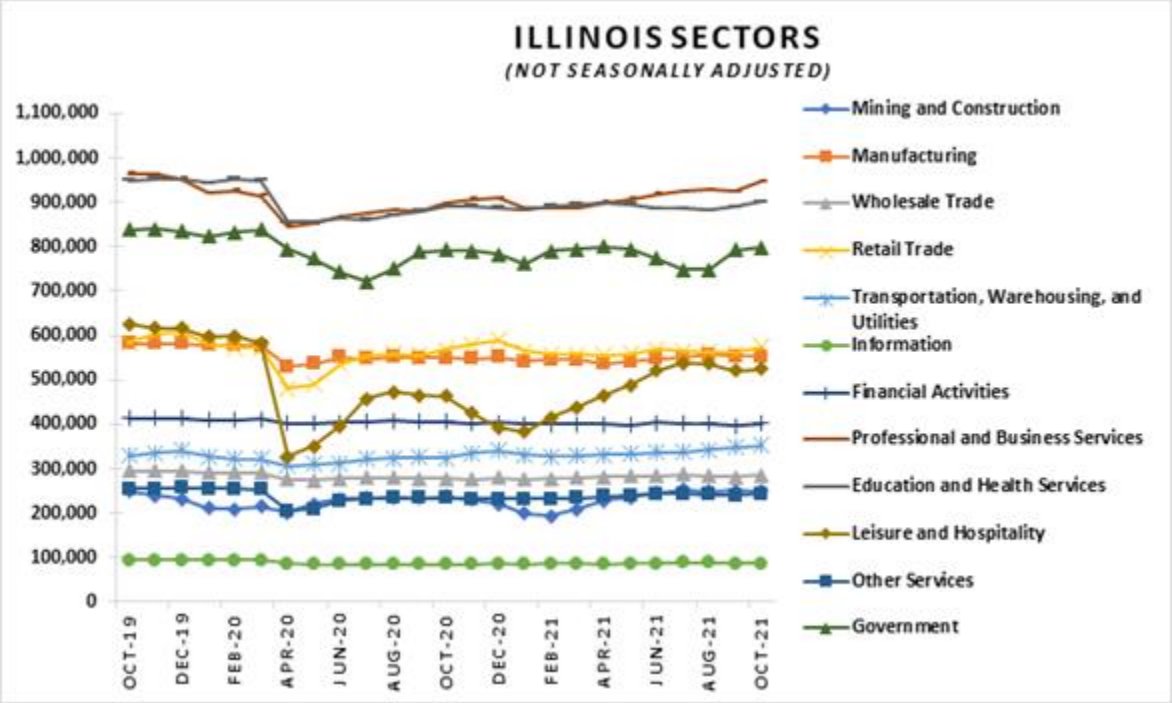


Chart 6

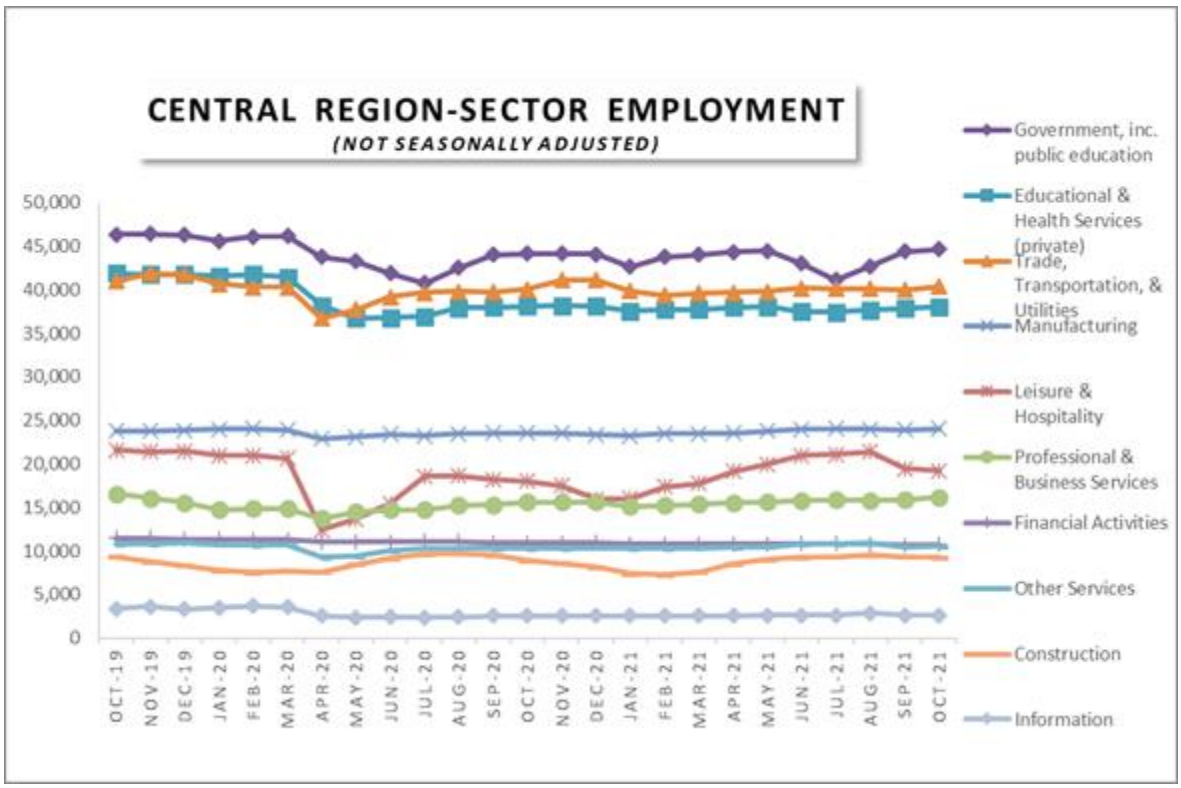


Chart 7

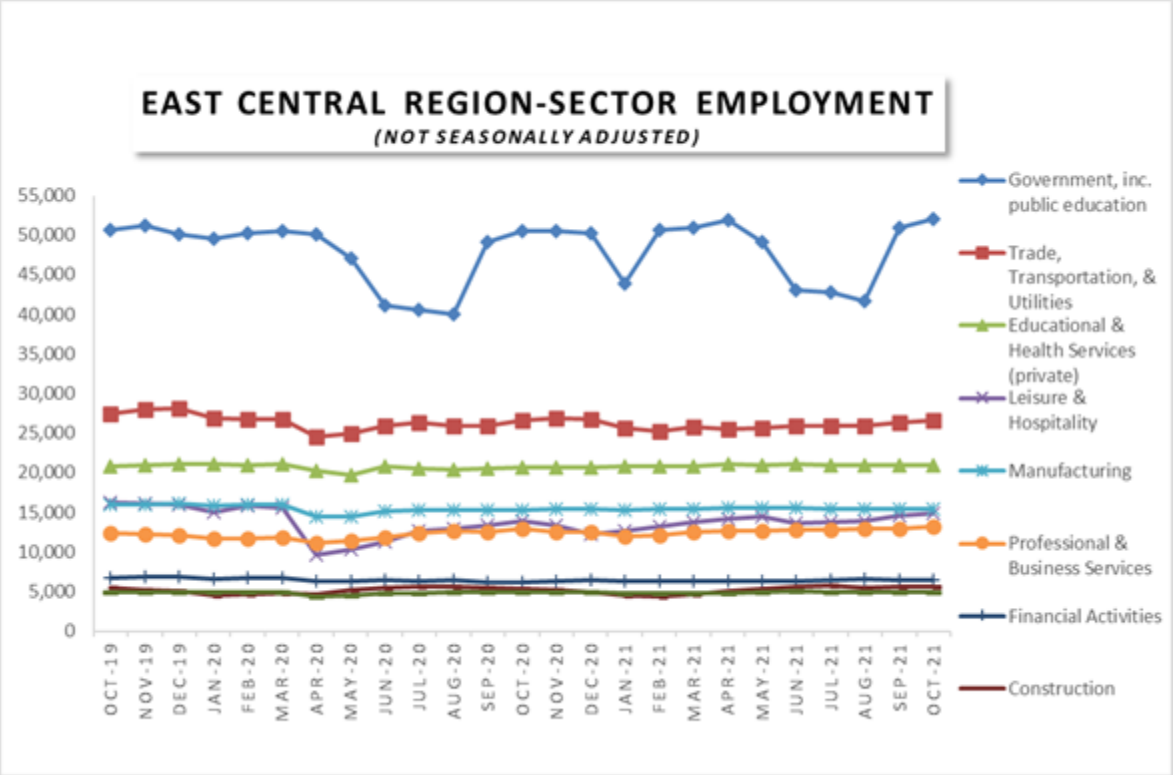


Chart 8

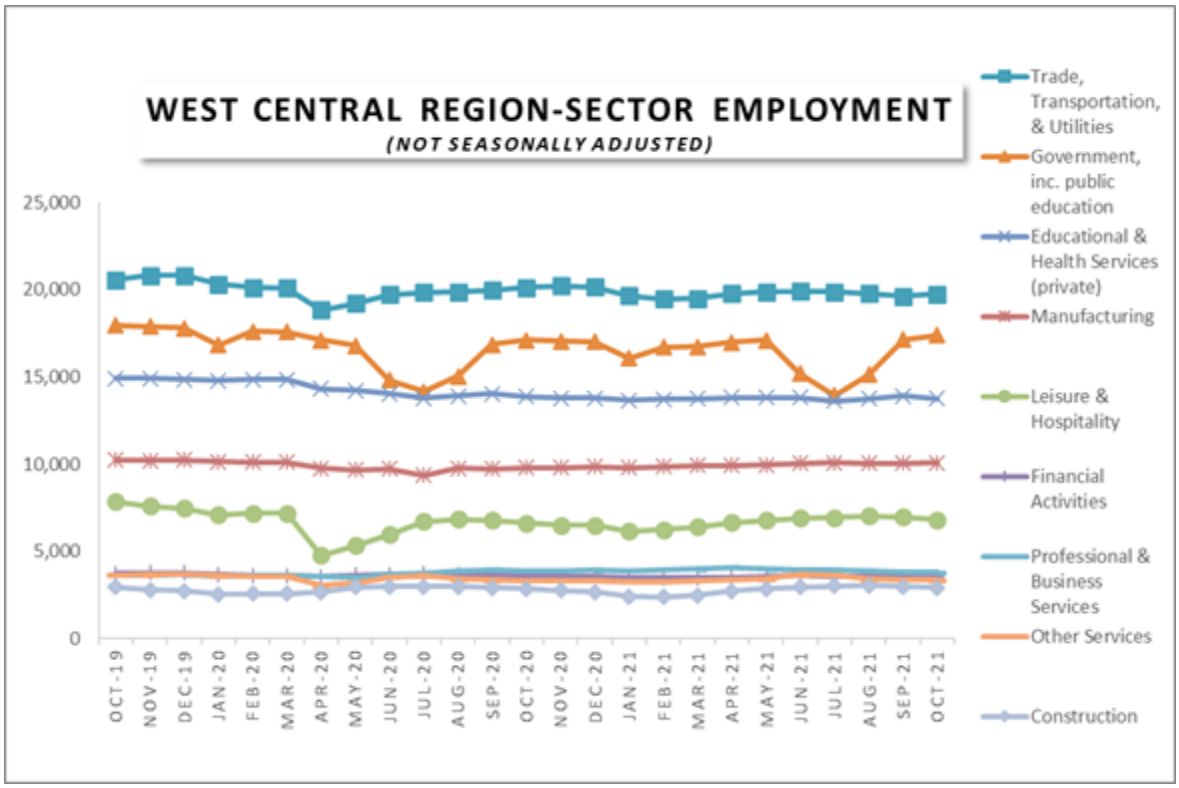


Chart 9

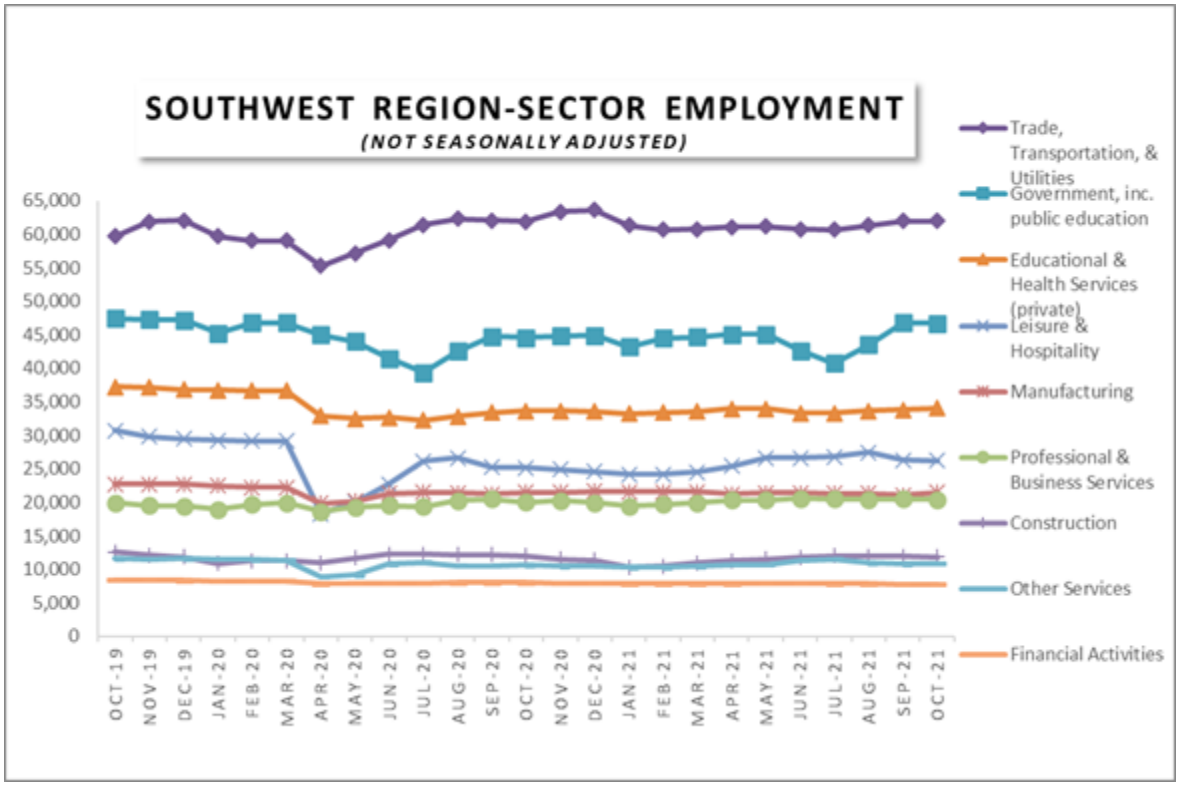


Chart 10

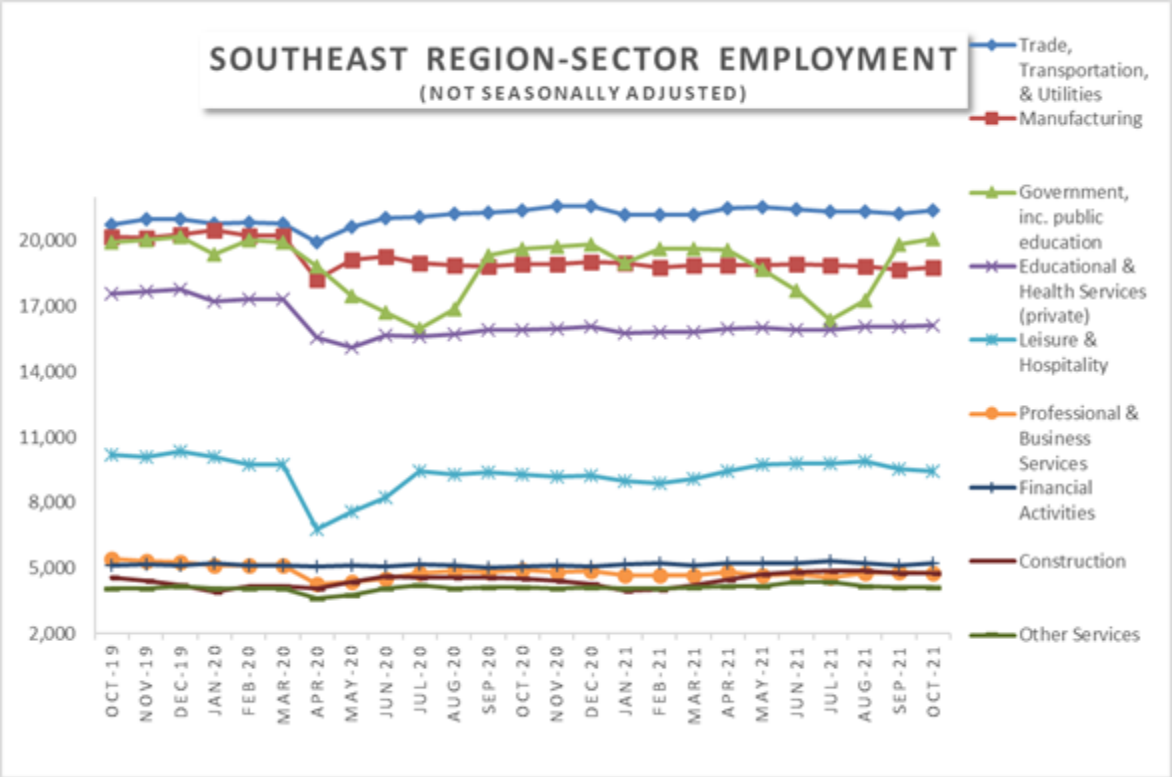


Chart 11

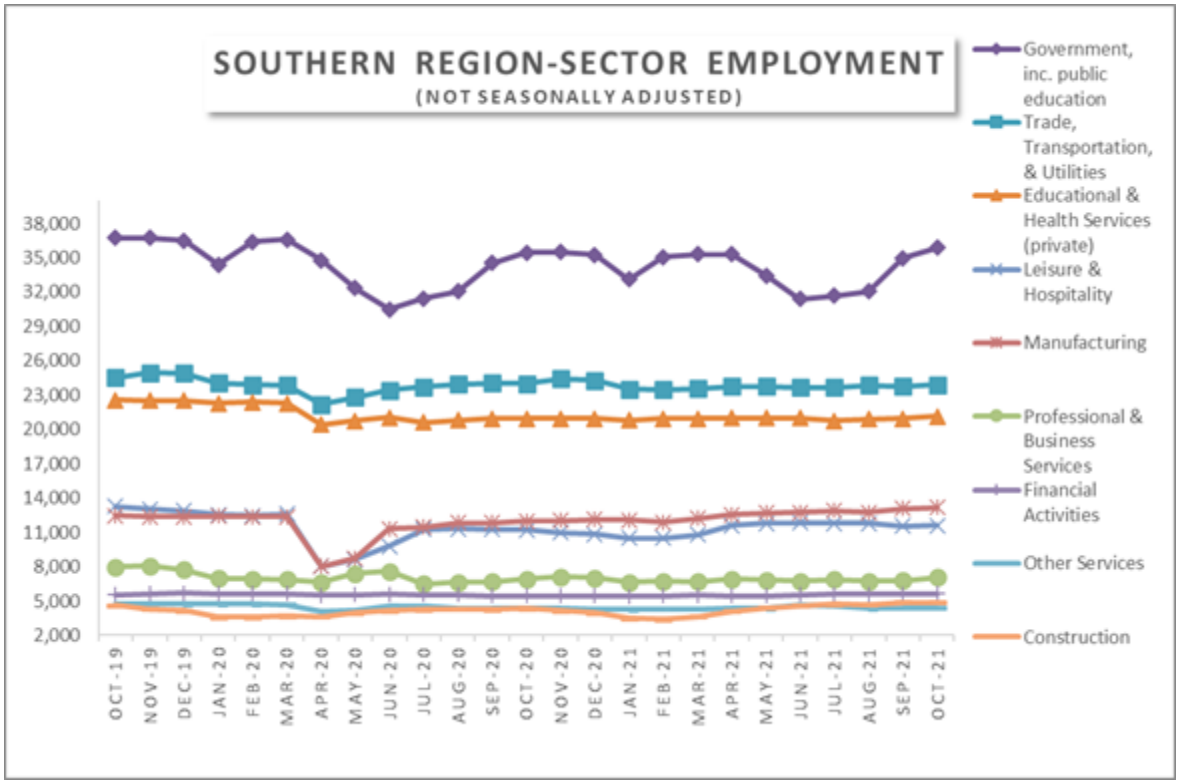


Chart 12

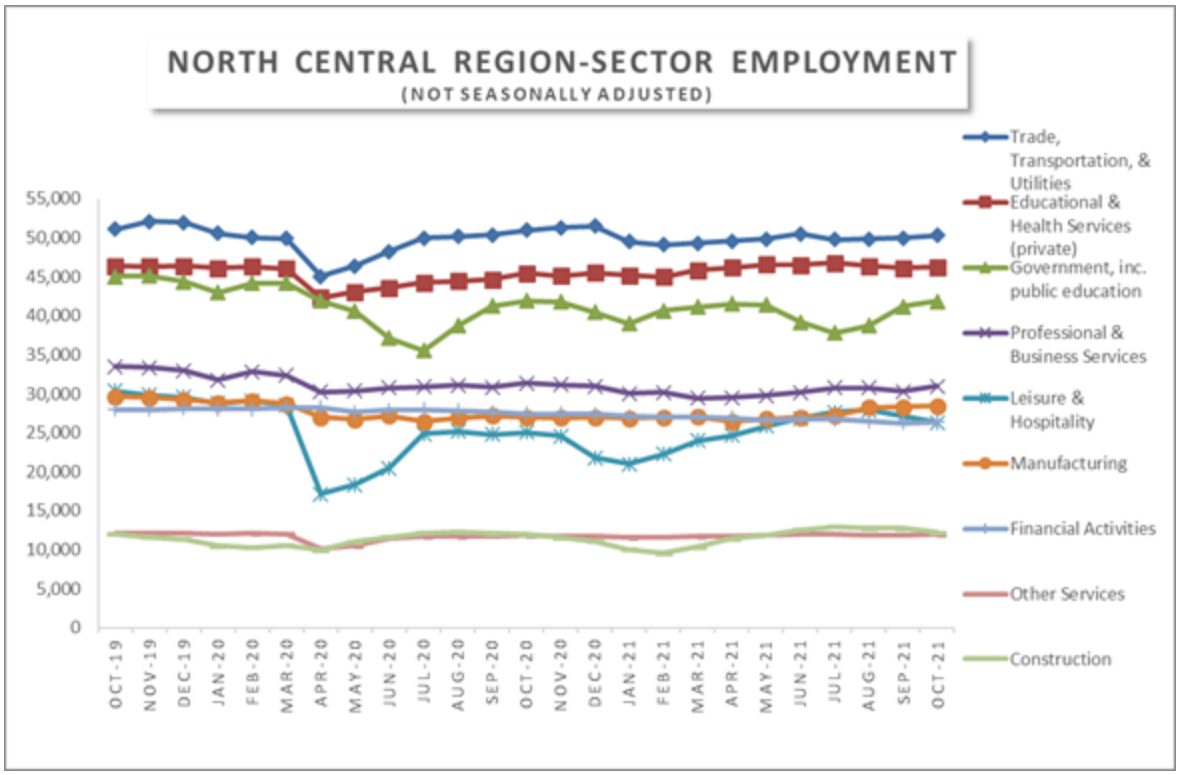


Chart 13

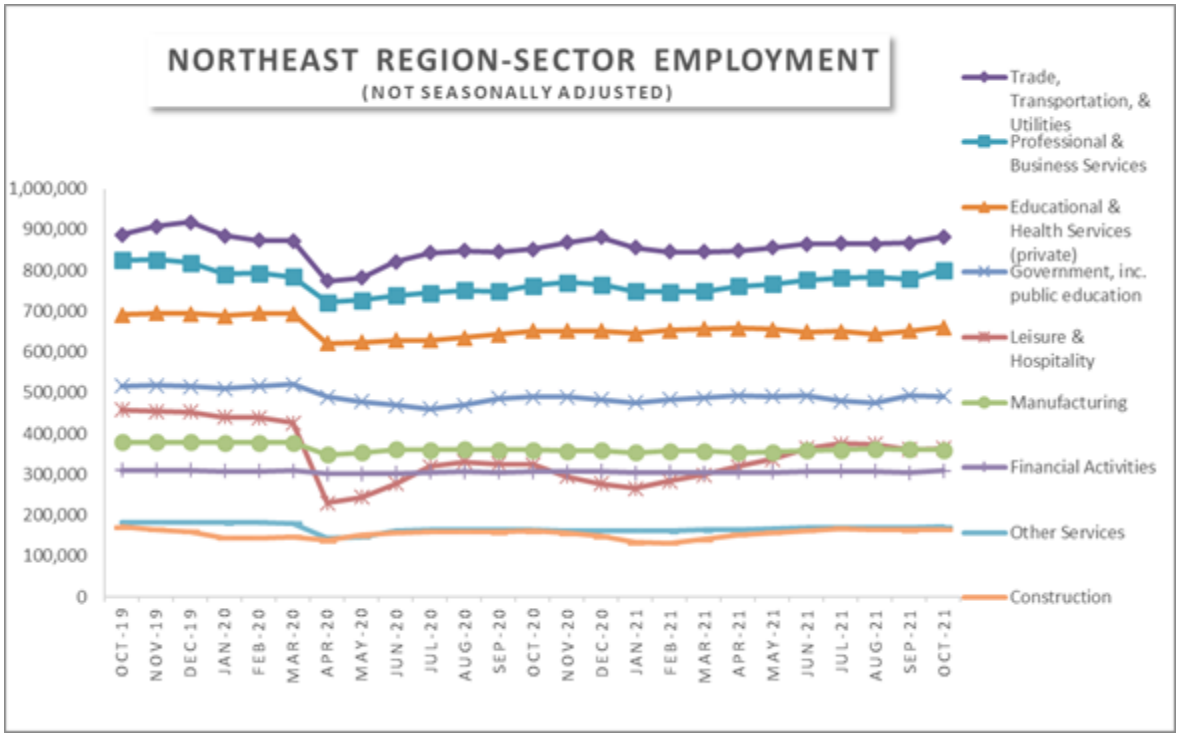


Chart 14

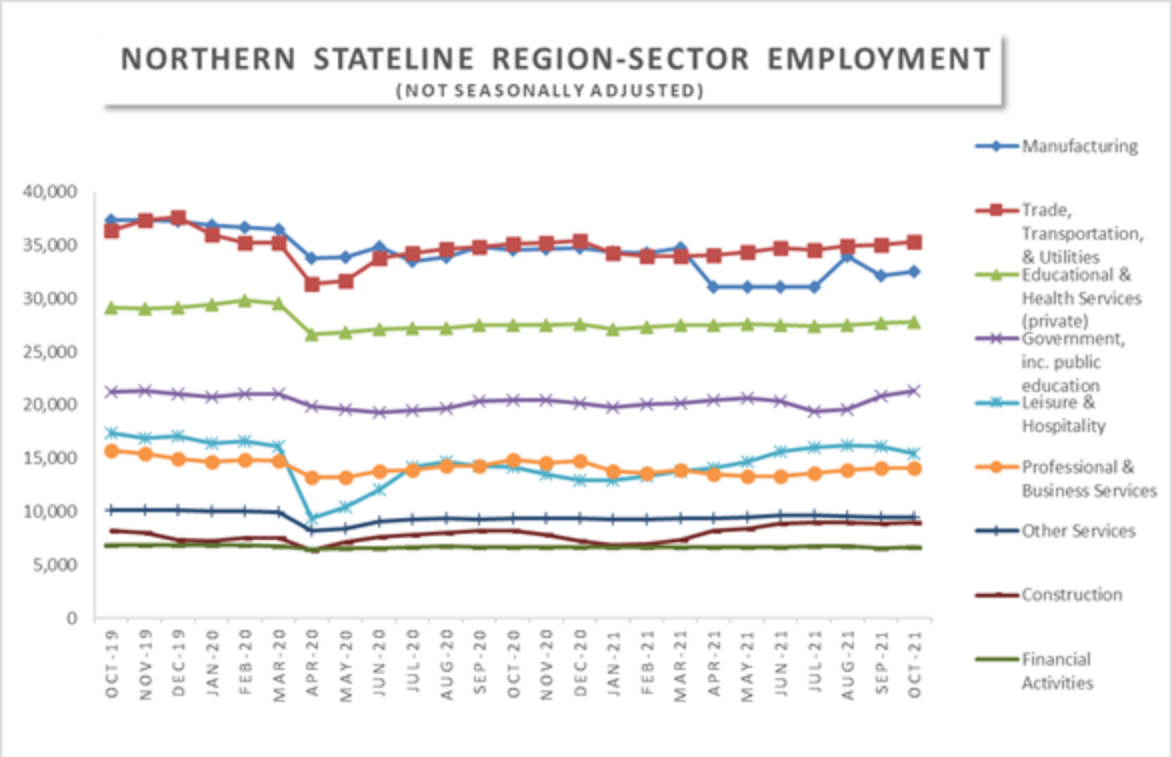
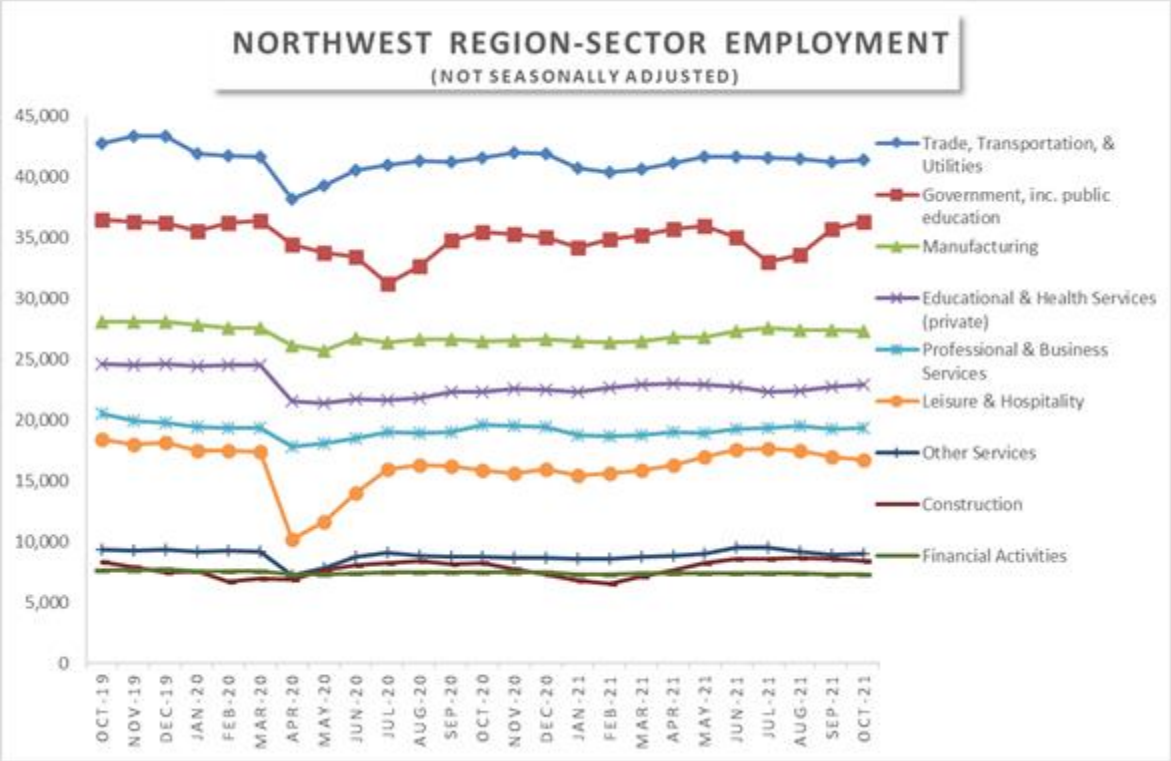


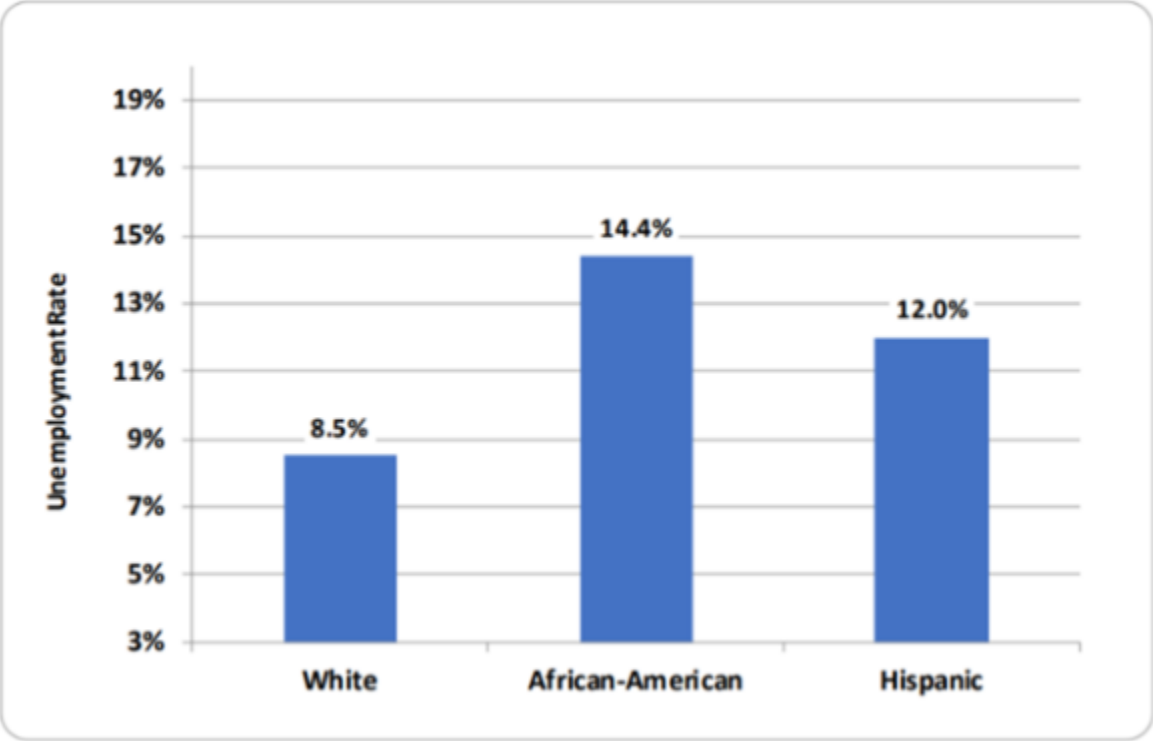
Chart 15



Pivoting to the impact of the pandemic on the state's workers, while the Illinois economy has rebounded somewhat from it's low of 5.3 million employed in April 2020 to the recent level of 5.9 million in November 2021, the months-long pandemic has shocked the economy more than the Great Recession of 2007 to 2009. In Illinois, as well as in the nation, the unemployment rate increased in 2020 for all racial groups, men and women alike. However, the impact of the pandemic was not uniform, and affected certain demographics more significantly than others. The charts that follow capture the differential impact of the pandemic on Illinois workers.

By the end of the first year of the pandemic (2020), the Illinois unemployment rate was 14.4 percent for African-Americans, 12.0 percent for Hispanics, and 8.5 percent for whites (See Figure 4).

Figure 4: Unemployment Rate by Race/Ethnicity in Illinois 2020

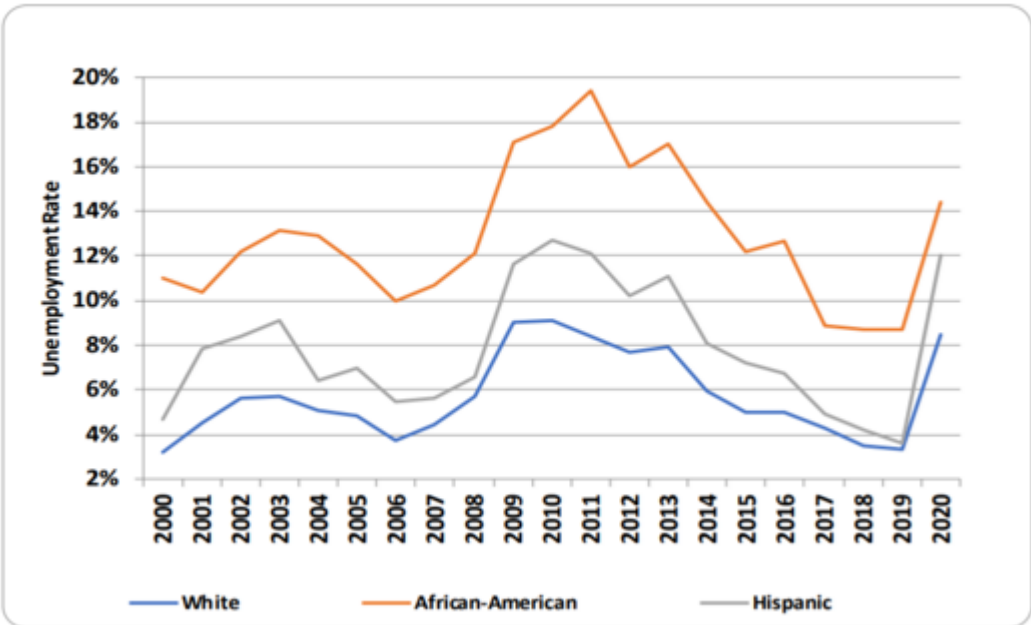


Historically, African-Americans have had unemployment rates that are at least double the rate for whites. 2020 was an exception but the African-American unemployment was still 170 percent of the white unemployment rate. (See Figure 5)

The unemployment rate for Hispanics has exceeded the unemployment rate for whites by at least one percentage point for nearly all years since data by race and ethnicity began to be reported in 1981. The Hispanic-white unemployment rate differences decreased steadily during 2017-2019 but then widened significantly in 2020.

Hispanics have had lower unemployment rates than African-Americans each year since unemployment rates for both races began to be reported in 1981.

Figure 5: Unemployment Rate by Race/Ethnicity in Illinois, 2000-2020



When comparing genders of the same racial or ethnic group in Illinois, several interesting trends emerge. White women had a higher unemployment rate (9.3 percent) as compared to white men (8.5 percent) in 2020. However, African- American women, when compared to African-American men had a lower unemployment rate (12.4 percent vs. 16.8 percent). The unemployment rate for Hispanic women was higher (12.7 percent), as compared Hispanic men (11.5 percent).

African-American men in Illinois have reported the highest unemployment rate among all racial groups and both genders since data on gender and race began to be reported in 1981, except for two years, 1984 and 1998, when African-American women had higher unemployment rates; see Table 10 for historical comparisons.

Table 10: Historical Comparisons of Unemployment Rate by Race

Year	White Men	White Women	Hispanic Men	Hispanic Women	African-American Men	African-American Women
2020	7.8	9.3	11.5	12.7	16.8	12.4
2019	3.3	3.3	3.9	3.1	9.6	7.8
2018	3.7	3.4	4.0	4.3	10.7	6.8
2016	5.0	4.9	6.8	6.6	14.2	11.3
2014	6.0	5.7	6.8	10.0	17.9	11.7
2012	8.2	7.3	9.9	10.5	18.1	14.4
2010	10.2	7.8	12.8	12.7	21.9	14.4

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

For a more up-to-date review of the employment status of workers in Illinois, we can review the unemployment insurance program claims data. These data are collected from the recipients of unemployment benefits (in other words, self-reported), and provides breakdowns across gender and race/ethnicity lines.

Chart 16: Percentage of Illinois continued UI Claimants by Gender

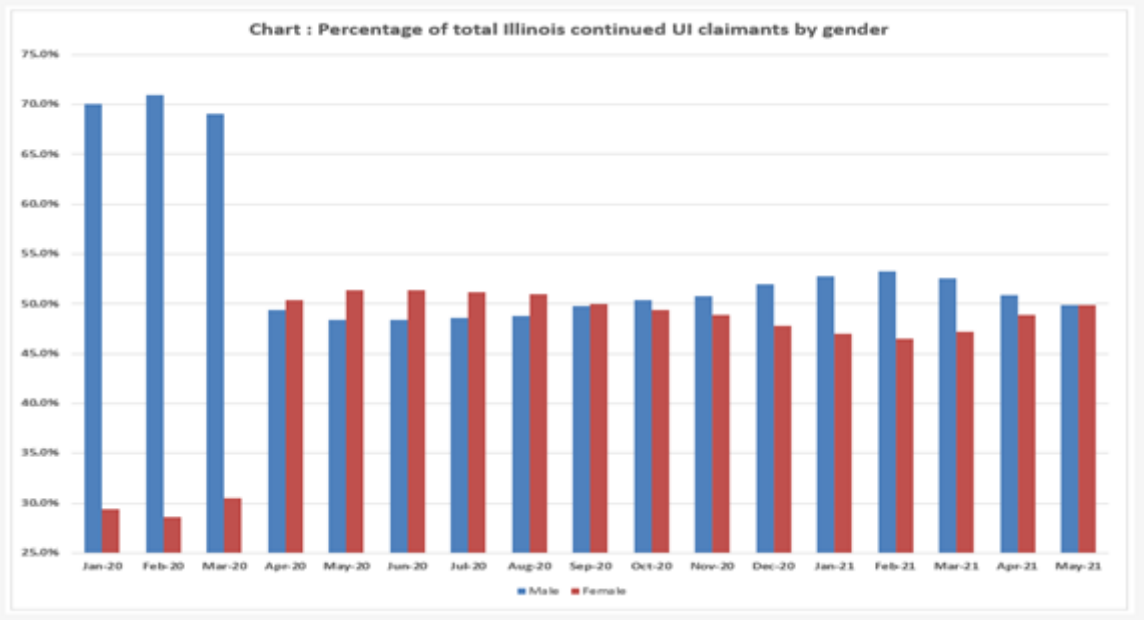
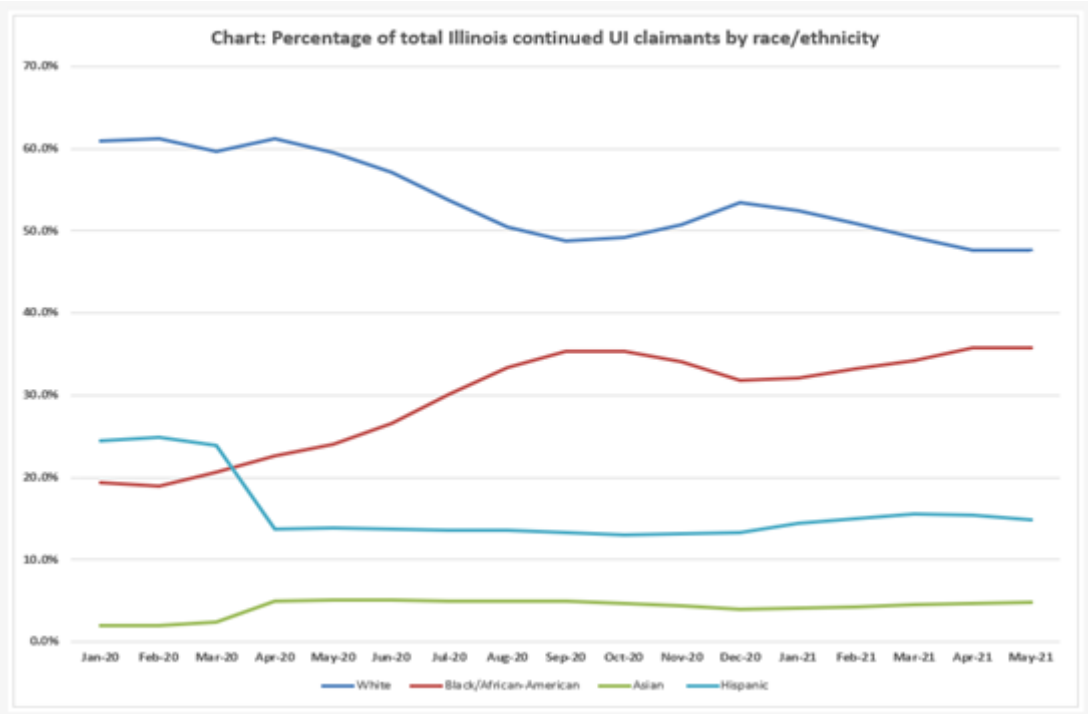


Chart 17: Percentage of Illinois continued UI Claimants by Race/Ethnicity



Workforce Equity

An analysis of the most recent US Census data, through 2019, indicates that African Americans face the highest rate of unemployment, followed ,in descending order, by multiracial, American Indian or Alaska Native, Hispanic, Other Race, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, White, Non-Hispanic and Asian. See Chart 4 for further details.

Chart 18: Labor Force and Unemployment by Race/Ethnicity

Table 11 provides population and employment information for working-age individuals in the State of Illinois, broken down by census categories of race and ethnicity. The data in the table reflect pre-pandemic levels, representing the labor force at the close of 2019, the most current data available.

Table 11: Working-Age Population and Labor Force Data

State of Illinois	16+ Year Old Population	Percent of Population Labor Force	Labor Force Participation Rate	Employment/Population Ratio	Unemploy-ment Rate
Population 16 years and over	10,838,045	100.0 percent	68.1 percent	63.0 percent	7.3 percent
White alone	6,524,597	63.9 percent	64.7 percent	61.8 percent	4.3 percent
Black or African American alone	1,420,485	13.9 percent	60.7 percent	51.9 percent	14.1 percent
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	26,526	0.3 percent	65.0 percent	58.9 percent	9.0 percent
Asian alone	575,618	5.6 percent	66.2 percent	63.4 percent	4.2 percent
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	3,534	<0.1 percent	74.6 percent	70.4 percent	5.2 percent
Some other race alone	549,830	5.4 percent	72.2 percent	67.9 percent	6.3 percent
Two or more races	184,442	1.8 percent	70.1 percent	63.4 percent	8.9 percent
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	1,553,013	15.2 percent	70.9 percent	66.2 percent	6.4 percent

Overall, unemployment rates are highest (and labor force participation rates are lowest) for African-Americans. Looking deeper into this issue, unemployment rates for the 16-19 age group are much higher than the overall rate, and are especially high for African-Americans, Hispanics and those in the "other" race category. Part of this discrepancy among racial/ethnic groups may be related to living in areas where few appropriate job matches are available. Unemployment rates are lowest among Whites for the 20-24, 55-64, 65-69 and 70+ age groups, while Asians have the lowest rates for the 16-19 and 25-54 groupings.

While unemployment rates for youth (ages 16-19) are high, the rates for older workers (65+) have remained relatively low. This is likely a result of many older individuals leaving the labor force after separation from work (voluntarily or involuntarily). Other targeted populations include veterans, single-parent families (headed by either a male or female) and persons with disabilities. The unemployment rate for all veterans is below the rate for the entire population. However, the rate for veterans in the 18-34 age groups is still higher than the overall state average. Nevertheless, this gap has closed as fewer veterans are being discharged in recent years, resulting in fewer making the transition from the military to civilian employment. Unemployment rates for single-parent families remain higher for heads of households of both genders, but significantly higher for females compared to males. Rates for individuals with disabilities are higher than any other group except for youth.

There is anecdotal evidence of increased entrepreneurial activity. To better understand what is happening, for the first time the plan incorporates an analysis of registered startup companies in Illinois. The following table provides the number of companies in each sector, the demographic characteristics of ownership. We will continue tracking this data to stay informed of trends in the evolution of the workforce.

Table 12: Diversity of Illinois Start-up Companies

Source: Crunchbase Note: Women owned companies may be double counted if the owner is also in one of the other race categories
Sectors are Crunchbase sector assignments

SECTOR	BLACK	%	LATINX	%	ASIAN	%	WOMEN	%	TOTAL
Agribusiness/Agtech	1	0.2%	2	0.4%	3	0.6%	21	4.2%	501
Energy	-	0.0%	1	0.2%	-	0.0%	10	2.2%	459
Life Sciences	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	3	5.5%	55
Information Tech	10	0.3%	8	0.2%	4	0.1%	123	3.1%	3,972
Manufacturing	-	0.0%	1	0.0%	2	0.1%	29	1.0%	3,021
Trans Logistics	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	1	0.2%	7	1.4%	489
Hospitality	1	4.2%	1	4.2%	3	12.5%	21	87.5%	24
Healthcare	8	0.3%	4	0.1%	3	0.1%	50	1.7%	2,868
Warehouse/Distribution	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	92
Total	**22**	**0.2%**	**19**	**0.2%**	**16**	**0.1%**	**264**	**2.3%**	**11,481**

A regional analysis of Chicagoland to develop an informed plan to advance an equitable workforce system was performed in 2020. The study, "Advancing Workforce Equity in Chicago: A Blueprint for Action" was produced by the National Equity Atlas, a research partnership between PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute.

Overarching findings of the study include:

- A diversifying workforce causes racial inequality to carry increasing economic costs.
    - People of color make up a large and growing share of the Chicagoland workforce, but they are not sharing equitably in its prosperity
    - Racial economic exclusion hampers the region's economic growth

- The structure of the regional economy and labor market reinforces racial gaps in employment and wages
    - Occupational segregation is stark
    - The region faces a shortfall of good jobs that do not require a college degree
- People of color – especially Black and Latino residents – face systemic and structural barriers to opportunity
    - Equity in higher education attainment is essential, but insufficient, to achieve racial economic inclusion

COVID-19 specific findings include:

- The COVID-19 pandemic is compounding pre-existing racial inequities and economic inequality. It will further disrupt the labor market by accelerating automation and digitization
    - Workers of color are disproportionately left out of the early jobs recovery
    - People of color face disproportionate risk of automation-driven job displacement
- Black and Latinx workers experienced higher unemployment rates throughout the pandemic
- Online job postings for positions held by Black and Lantix workers prior to the crisis are recovering more quickly than for those held by White workers.
- The labor market recovery has been concentrated in jobs that require the least preparation and training. Postings for jobs that require greater preparation remain down.

The plan suggests the following action-steps:

- Use sector-based workforce development strategies to build pathways into good jobs for workers of color
    - Job-training grants, expanded apprenticeship programs, subsidized employment opportunities designed with equity in mind.
    - Neighborhood-based career services that engage local businesses in communities of color
- Improve job quality and economic security for workers of color
    - Eliminate sub-minimum wage for certain occupations, guarantee access to paid sick leave, fair scheduling, affordable health care benefits, preventing wage theft.
    - Use public employment and spending policies to exert strong and indirect upward pressure on job quality in the private sector
- Develop strategies to close racial gaps in the social determinants of work
    - Invest in navigation and case management services
    - Expand childcare, housing, transportation and other support resources to which workforce partners can refer job-seekers.
- Elevate and amplify worker voice and worker power

- Supporting outreach and communications strategies to educate workers about their rights in the workplace

Key datapoints from the study are included below.

Charts 19 - 27: Racial Inequity in the Chicagoland Workforce

Chart 19

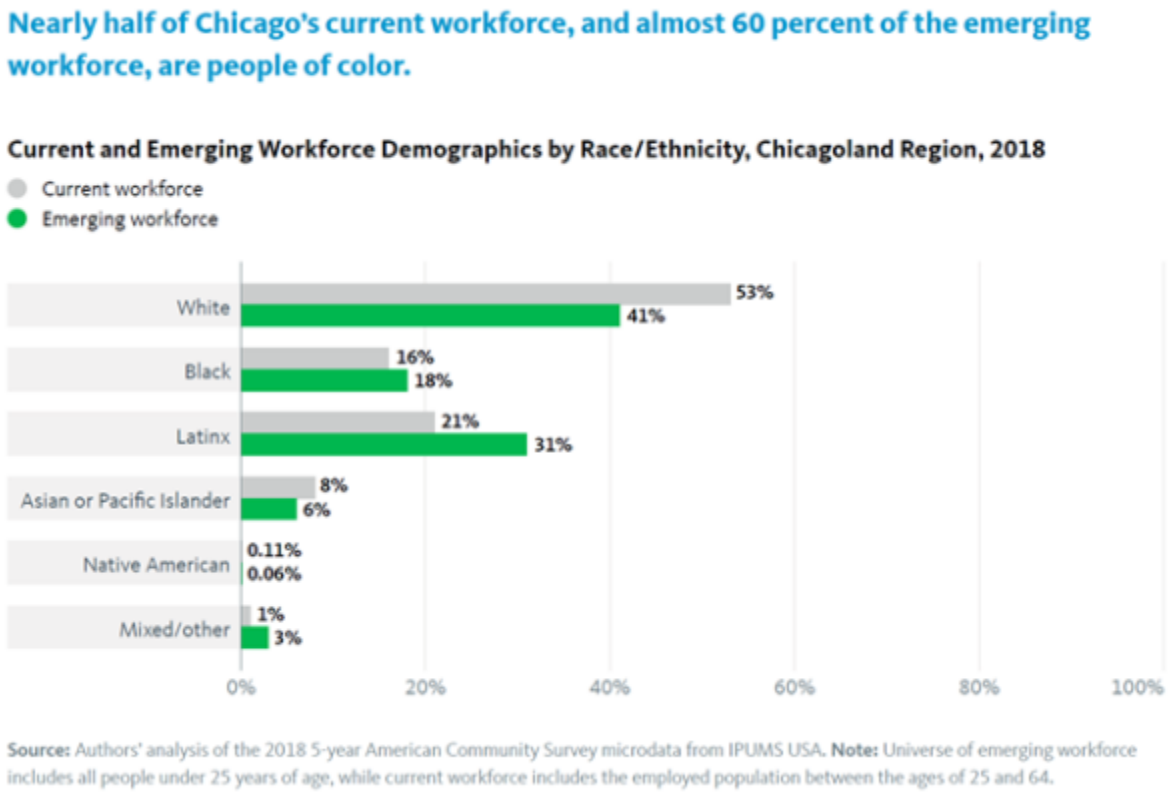
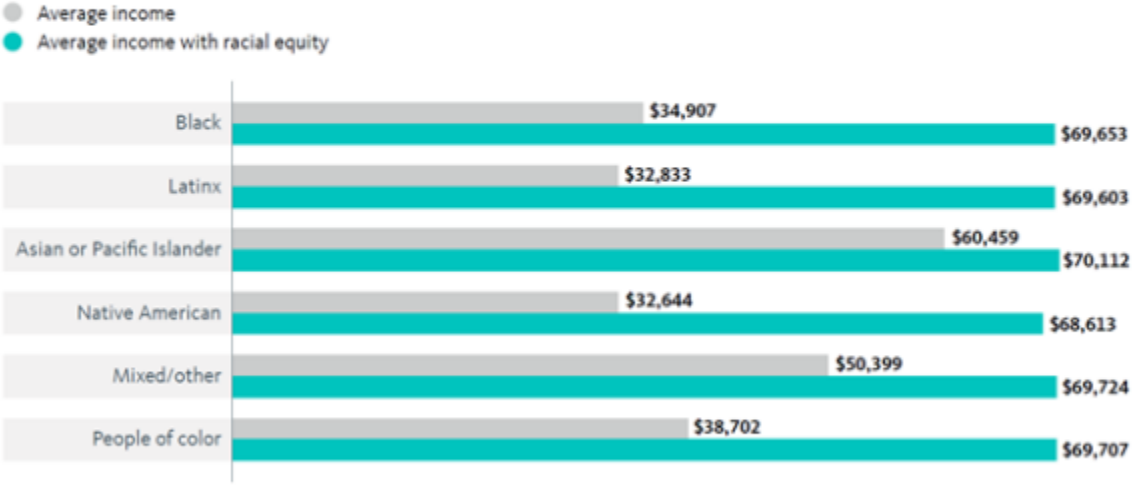


Chart 20

Racial equity would double the average incomes of Black, Latinx, and Native American workers to more than $68,000 per year.

Income Gains with Racial Equity in the Workforce, Chicagoland Region, 2018

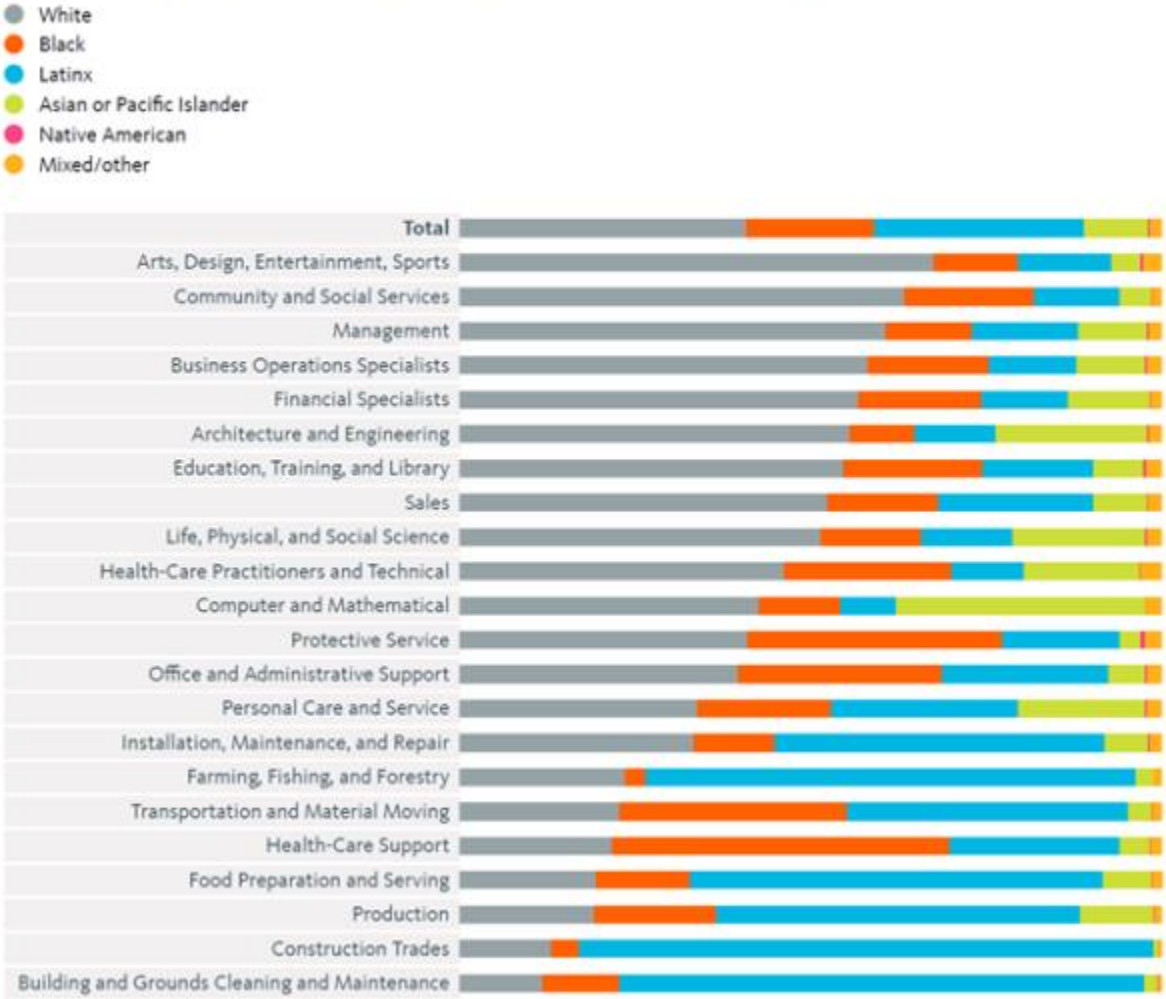


Source: Authors' analysis of the 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. **Note:** Universe includes the population ages 25-64. Data reflect a 2014-2018 average. Values are in 2018 dollars. See the data and methods for details on the analysis.

Chart 21

Black and Latinx workers are underrepresented among high-wage industries and occupations.

Occupational Groups by Race/Ethnicity and Nativity, Chicagoland Region, 2018

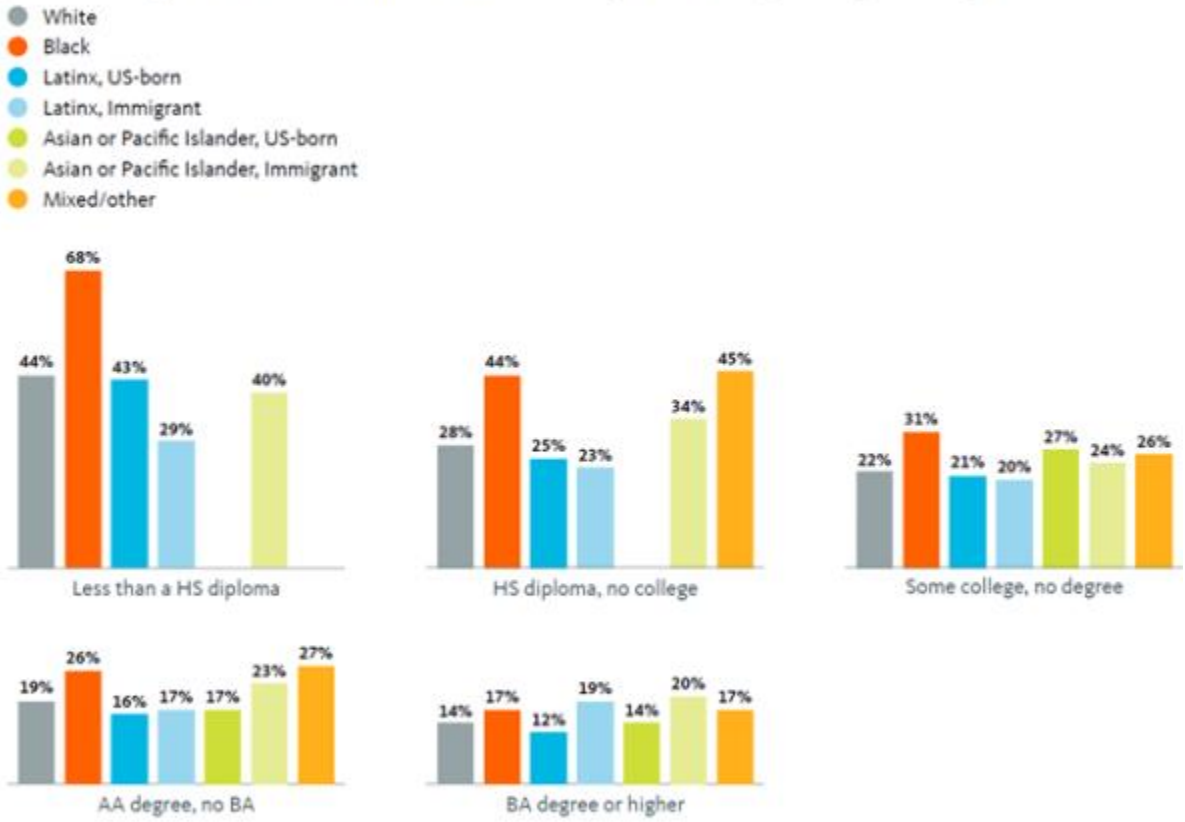


Source: Authors' analysis of the 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. **Note:** Universe includes the employed population ages 25-64. Data reflect a 2014-2018 average.

Chart 22

Across racial/ethnic and nativity groups, joblessness declines steadily as educational attainment increases, but racial inequities remain.

Joblessness by Educational Attainment, Race/Ethnicity, and Nativity, Chicagoland Region, 2018

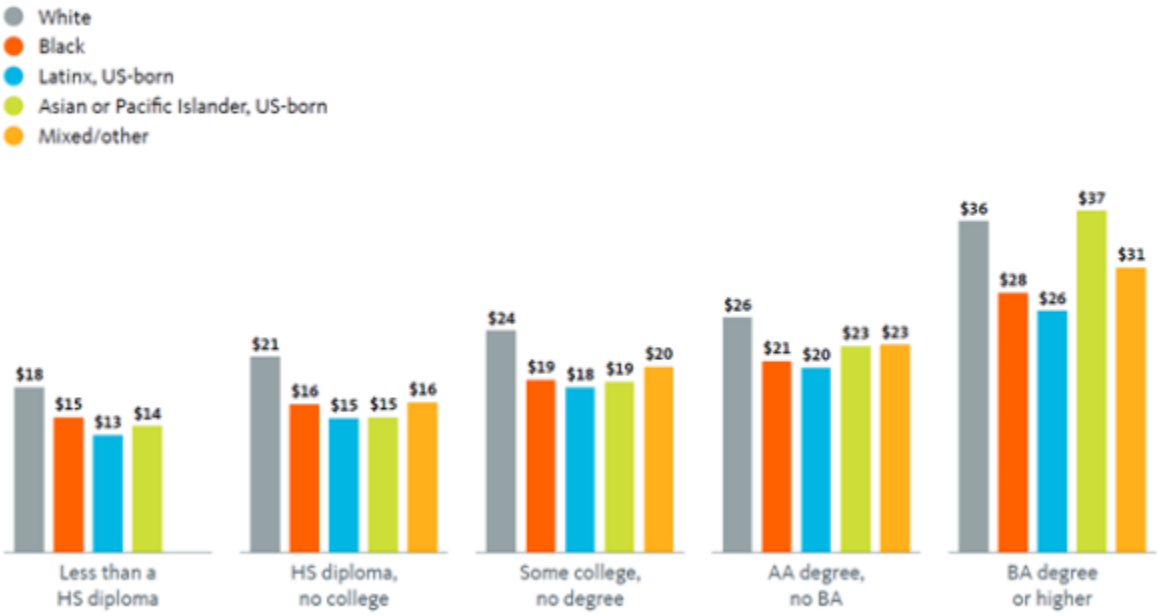


Source: Authors' analysis of the 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. **Note:** Universe includes the civilian noninstitutionalized population ages 25-64. Joblessness is defined as those unemployed or not in the labor force as a share of the total population. Data reflect a 2014-2018 average; Native American workers, and Asian or Pacific Islander workers at some educational levels, are not included because of small sample size.

Chart 23

Black and Latinx workers earn substantially less than their White counterparts at every level of educational attainment.

Median Wages by Educational Attainment and Race/Ethnicity, Chicagoland Region, 2018



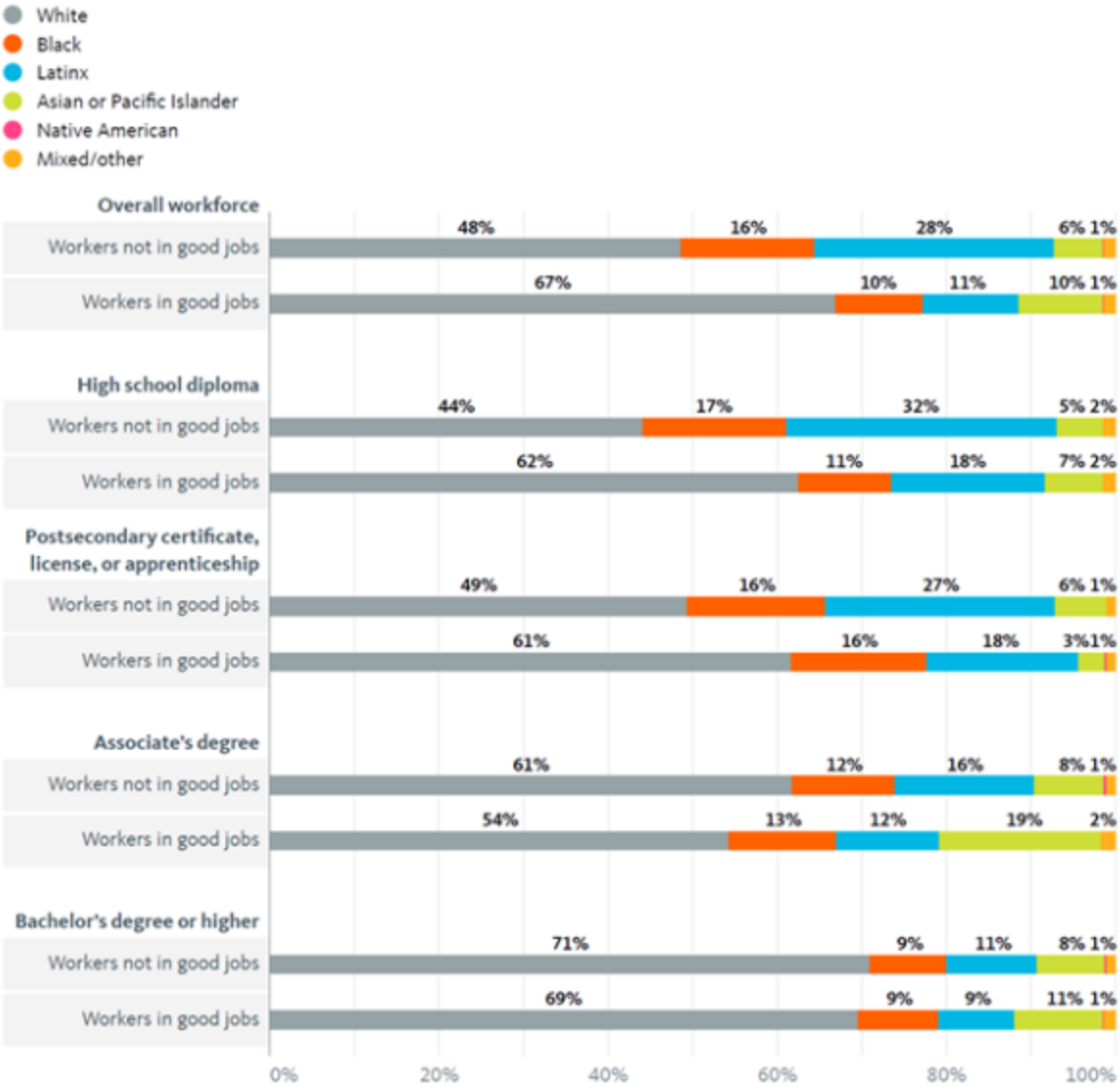
Source: Authors' analysis of the 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. **Note:** Universe includes civilian noninstitutionalized full-time wage and salary workers ages 25-64. Data reflect a 2014-2018 average; Native American workers are not included because of small sample size. Values are in 2018 dollars.

Chart 24

Major Racial Inequities Exist in Access to Good Jobs

White workers are overrepresented in good jobs overall, and particularly overrepresented in good jobs that do not require any postsecondary education.

Distribution of Workers by Race/Ethnicity, Job Quality, and Educational Requirements, Chicagoland Region, 2018

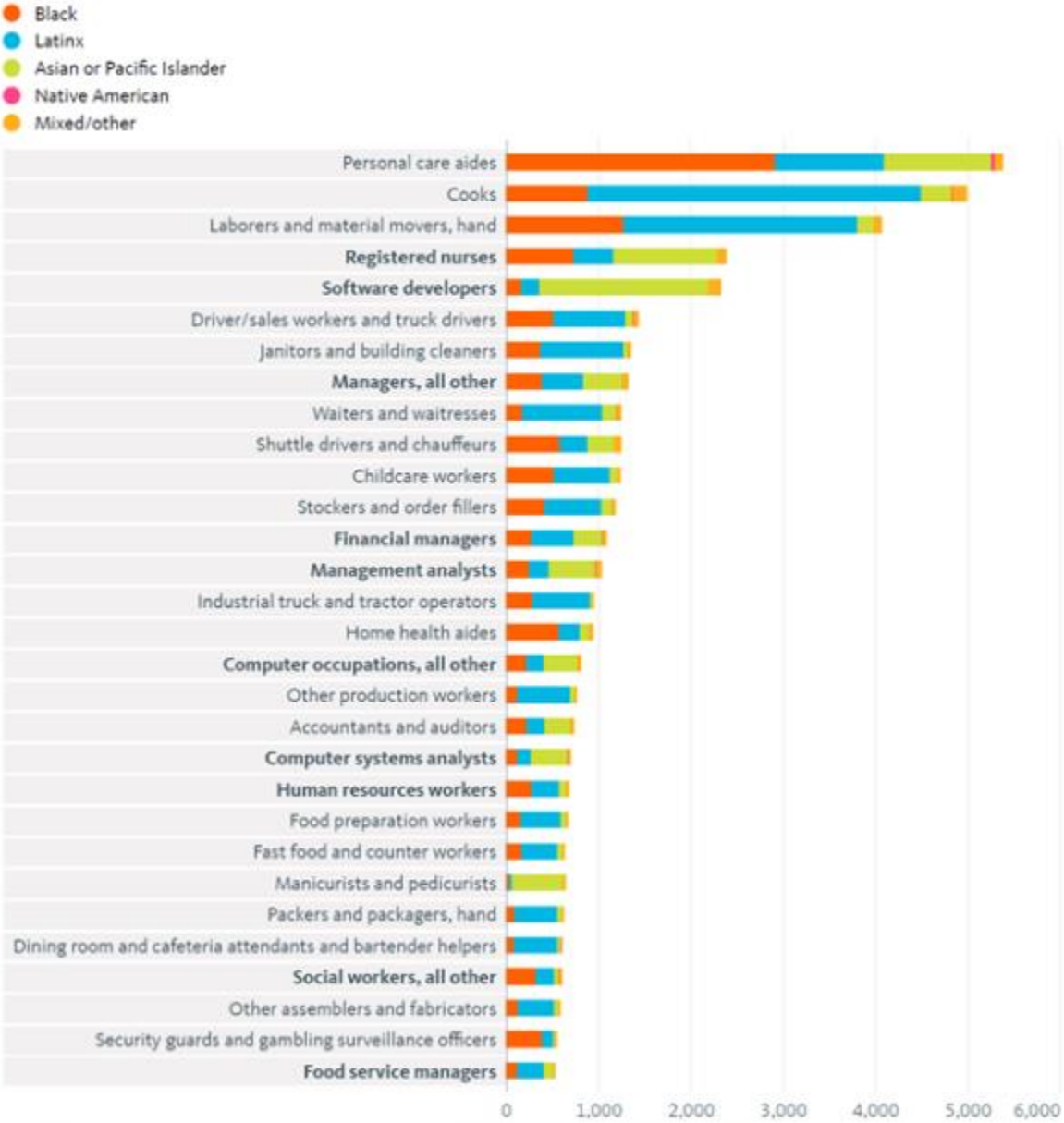


Sources: Employment from 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA, and occupational characteristics from Burning Glass job posting data and 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA.

Chart 25

Projected job growth for Latinx and Black workers is heavily concentrated in low-quality jobs.

Occupations Projected to Add the Most Workers of Color by Race/Ethnicity, Chicagoland Region, 2020–2030

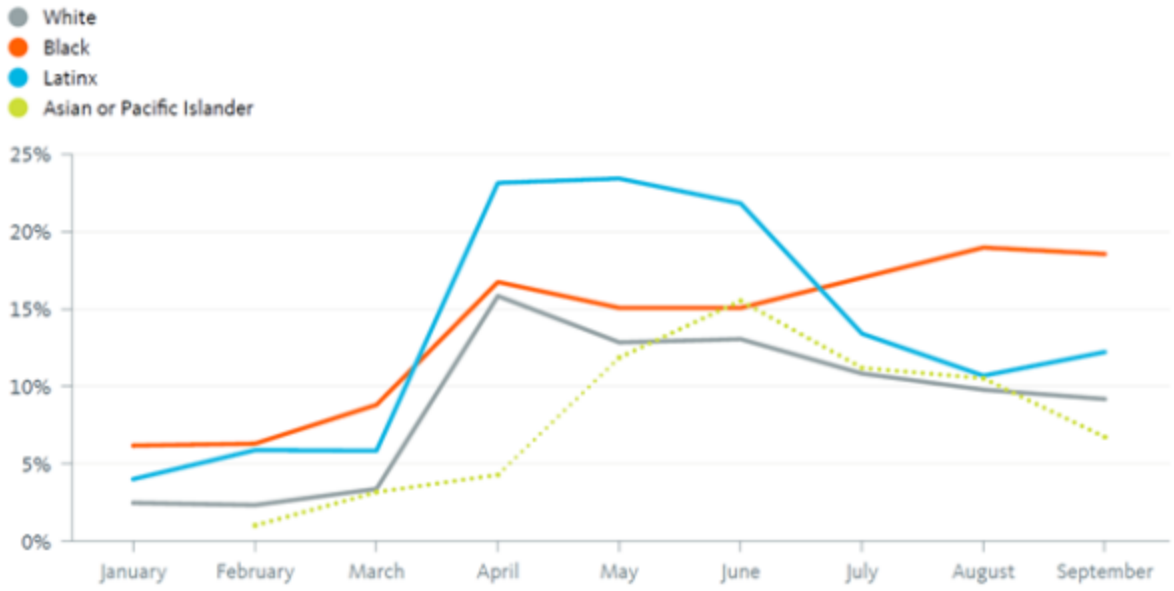


Sources: Burning Glass modeling for occupational growth, and 2018 5-Year ACS microdata from IPUMS for demographic characteristics of occupations. **Note:** Occupations marked in bold are classified as good jobs.

Chart 26

Black and Latinx workers have experienced higher unemployment rates through the pandemic.

Unemployment Rates by Race/Ethnicity, Chicago Metropolitan Area, January to September 2020

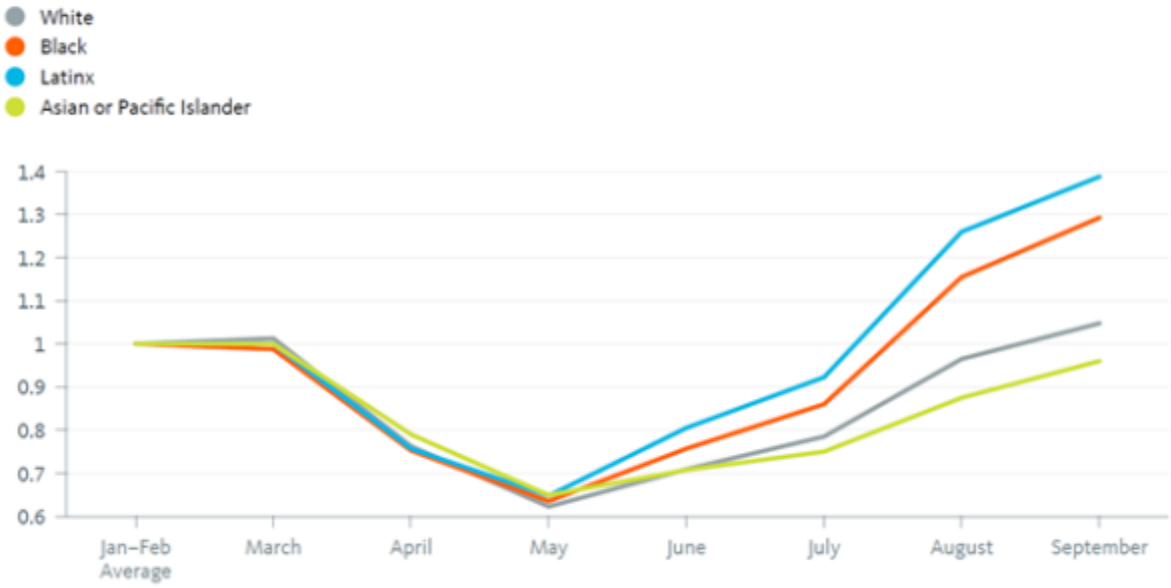


Source: Unemployment estimates for the Chicago Metropolitan Statistical Area from the Current Population Survey (CPS) microdata from IPUMS USA. **Note:** Dotted line denotes a two-month rolling average of unemployment rates due to small sample size.

Chart 27

Online job postings for positions held by Black and Latinx workers prior to the crisis are recovering more quickly than for those held by White workers.

Job Postings Relative to April Baseline by Pre-Crisis Occupational Demographics (Race/Ethnicity), Chicago Metropolitan Area, March–September 2020



Source: Authors' analysis of Burning Glass job posting data (January–September 2020), with job postings allocated according to occupational race and ethnicity characteristics from 2018 5-year American Community Survey (ACS) microdata from IPUMS USA.

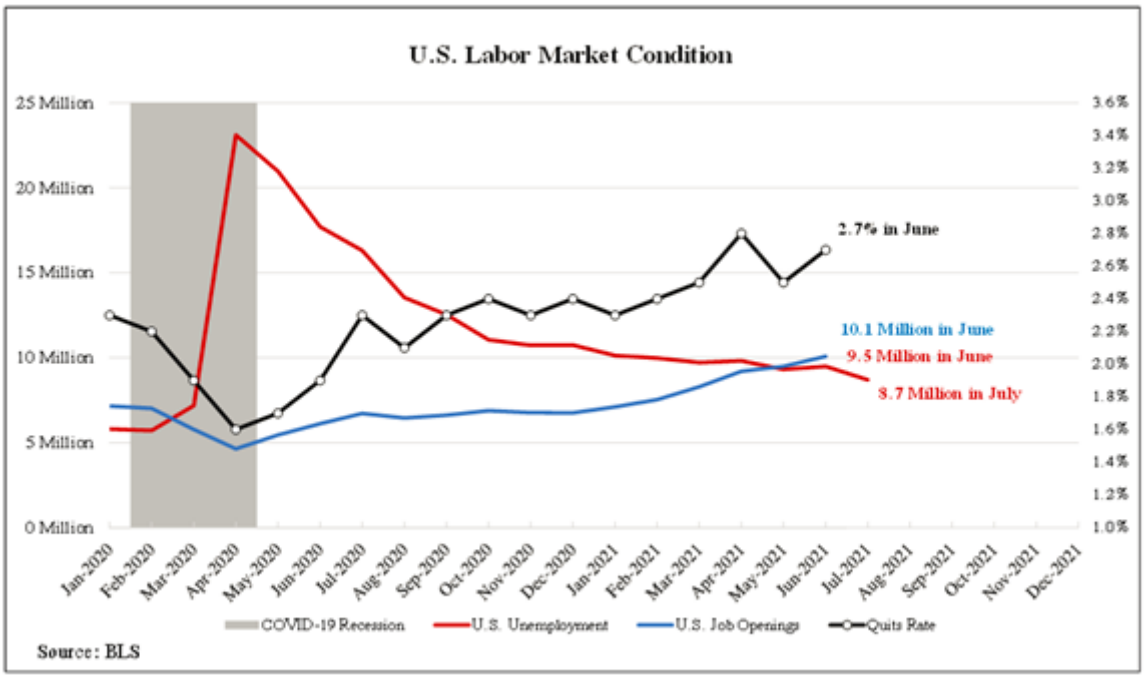
ii. Labor Market Trends

Key Labor Market Trends

The evolving workforce is a constant challenge to workforce and education systems. We must provide education and training to meet the demands of businesses but also be able to adjust our priorities and service delivery strategies to anticipate medium- and long-term labor market trends. By 2020, on average, 65 percent of all jobs will require postsecondary education. However, Illinois is above the national trend with 70 percent of our jobs requiring postsecondary education. **COVID-19 Pandemic Implications**

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was sudden, widespread and after almost two years the nature of a "normal" workplace continues to evolve. Traditional definitions of a "normal" workplace were upended for many. Working remotely became the norm for many jobs that previously were not considered suitable for such an arrangement. Data is just now becoming available to quantify how companies and workers are adapting.

Chart 28: U.S. Labor Market Condition



- A September 2021 analysis by the Illinois Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability (COGFA) provided national trend data on the number of job openings, the number of unemployed workers and the Quits rate, the rate of workers leaving jobs voluntarily. The analysis notes there are now more job openings than unemployed workers creating an exaggerated labor shortage because more workers continue to retire, many workers had to leave the workforce to care for family members that were unable to remain in long-term care facilities, or adult and childcare facilities or students who were no longer attending classes in school or who left the workforce for fear of exposure to COVID-19.

- Increasing Quits rates and decreasing labor participation rates led to what initially became popularly known as the "Great Resignation"; but the latest data indicates most workers are not leaving the workforce, they are leaving jobs to find a better job. Quits are elevated but so are hires and the term "Great Reshuffle" has been introduced to better describe the evolving dynamic.

- The tight labor market is prompting employers to offer higher wages, better benefits and greater flexibility on working remotely and scheduling; this has prompted greater mobility from workers seeking better wages and working conditions.

Chart 29: The Great Reshuffle

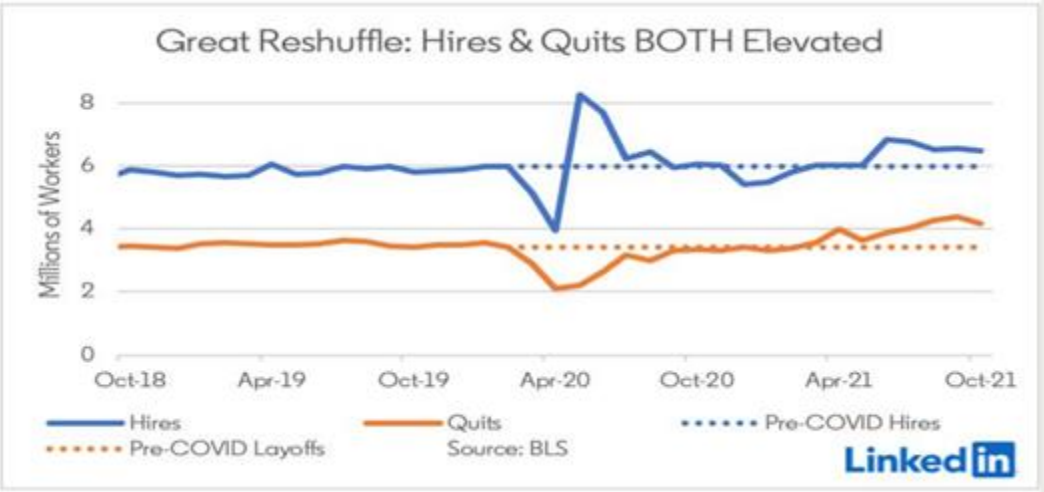
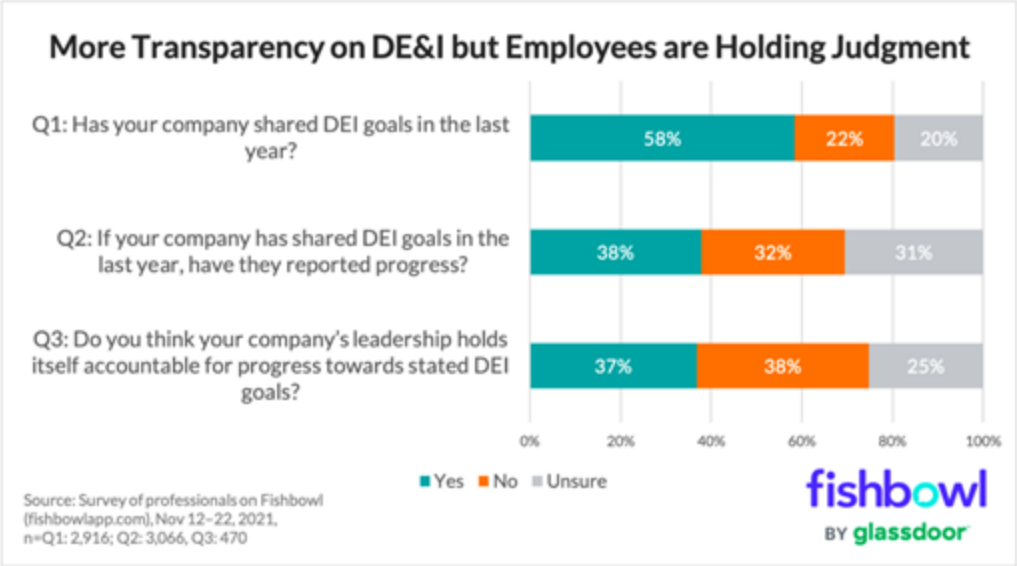


Chart 30: Illinois Labor Participation Rate



- Since 1976, the Illinois labor participation rate ranged from a low of 63 percent in the mid-70s and in early 2020 to a high of 70 percent in 2000; at the low point during the pandemic the rate dipped to just under 60 percent. It has since rebounded to 63 percent but remains at a historic pre-pandemic low.

Chart 31: Transparency on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

- Observations from economic research firm Glassdoor include:
    - In 2020 companies were in crisis response mode
    - In 2021 companies were adapting to challenges ranging from employee burnout and remote work to hiring and retention in a job market defined by labor shortages and unprecedented employee turnover.
    - Going forward companies must navigate the new normal of increased employee power in a tight labor market.
        - Hiring will remain difficult due to lingering effects of an evolving pandemic, reduced availability of workers that are retirees and parents, and a quicker than expected recovery of customer demand; which is on top of pre-existing trends of a shrinking workforce.
        - The possibility of remote work will allow companies to access a labor pool not limited to commuting distance; and likewise will allow workers the freedom to live where they want and pursue better employment elsewhere. The share of employers facing remote competition for local job listings has doubled since 2019, from 10 percent to 20 percent in just two years.
        - Employers will prioritize diversity, equity and inclusion efforts. More companies are releasing demographic data on their workforce, and this greater transparency will foster accountability

Short-Term Labor Market Trends

- Generation Gap
- Baby boomers, Gen X, Millennials, and now Gen Z occupy the same workspace. That's four distinct generations with different views, expectations, and priorities. Companies will have to adopt new methods for just about everything — from recruitment and benefits to training and advancement; which means workforce development must also adopt new methods.
- Ongoing Skill Gap Issues
- Some executive surveys indicate nearly 80 percent of companies perceive the existence of a significant skill gap.

- Meanwhile, surveys of workers indicate that the opportunity to continue learning and growing is becoming more important to employees.
- Current Employee Retention & Engagement Statistics
- 40 percent of employers plan to fill current and future openings with full-time workers, and 47 percent plan to hire part-time workers going into 2019 (CareerBuilder)
- 50 percent of HR managers have current openings for which they can't find qualified candidates (CareerBuilder)
- 36 percent of workers and nearly half of Millennials would consider quitting a job that didn't provide learning opportunities (Docebo)
- 70 percent of staff members would be at least somewhat likely to leave their current organizations and take a job with one that is known for investing in employee development and learning (The Harris Poll)
- Among employees who left their previous job, 34 percent said finding a new job with more career development opportunities spurred them on (The Harris Poll)
- Career development ranked 2nd to compensation as the reason employees left their organizations (The Harris Poll)
- When Millennials jump ship, it's most often because they feel underutilized and stagnant at work (O.C. Tanner)

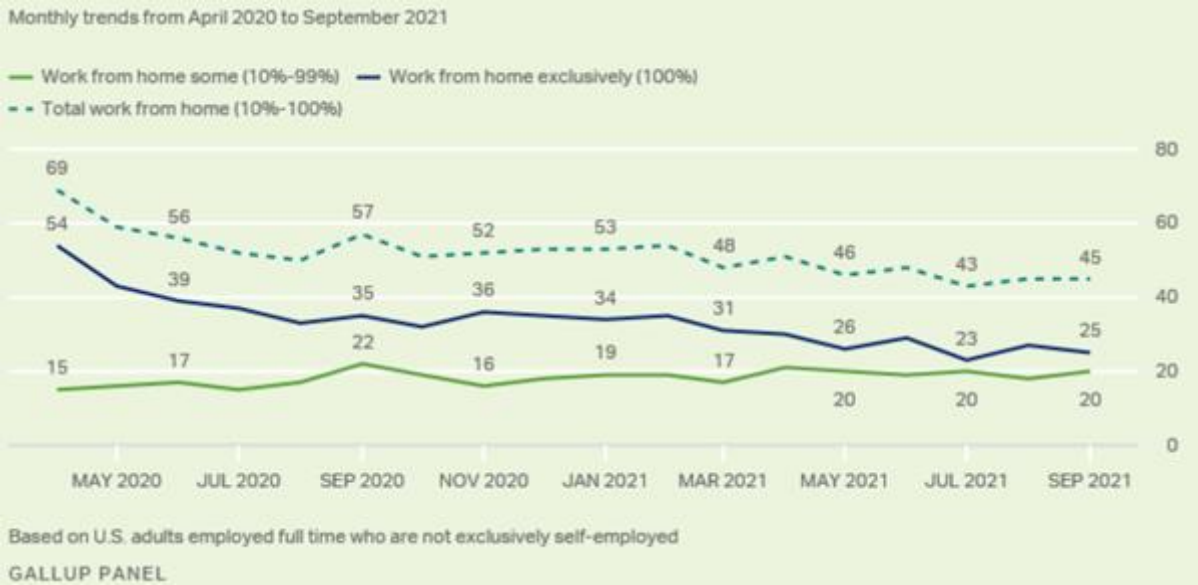
Longer-Term Trends

- Continuous upskilling and digital dexterity will outweigh tenure and experience.
- The most highly valued work will still be cognitive in nature. Employees will have to apply creativity, critical thinking and constant digital upskilling to solve complex problems. Going forward, workers will need to change their skills at an accelerating pace.
- Smart machines will be our co-workers. Artificial Intelligence (AI) will permeate the work landscape. Smart machines are getting smarter and more ubiquitous, not only completing tasks previously reserved for humans, but also what was thought to be impossible for machines.
- The use of automated kiosks is becoming more prevalent. We now check-in at the airport, doctor's office and cell phone stores while handling our own check out at the big box retailers. A recent kiosk census report indicates there will be record growth for the interactive kiosk industry 'as consumers continue to embrace self-service technology and businesses rush to reap the benefits of improved customer engagement.' The most promising technologies include touchscreens, integration with mobile devices, and remote machine management. This transition to increasingly using kiosks and working with collaborative robots, or "cobots", means continued demand for skilled manufacturing and technician workers such as fabricators, tool & die and mold building.
- The federal Government Accountability Office (GAO) projects that the top three occupational groups to decline due to the adoption of advanced technologies between 2016 and 2026 will be Production (40 occupations), Office and Administrative Support (30 occupations), and Transportation and Material Moving (10 occupations).
- With data analytics and AI-enabled tools striving to create decision-making as prejudice-free as possible, a mature conversation on diversity appears to be a quickly evolving trend. More companies today are coming forward to recognize the need for proper

diversity education and not just sensitization. With that, the dialogue has shifted from having a laundry list for diversity and inclusion (DI) initiatives to more meaningful and actionable plans that could actually make a difference.

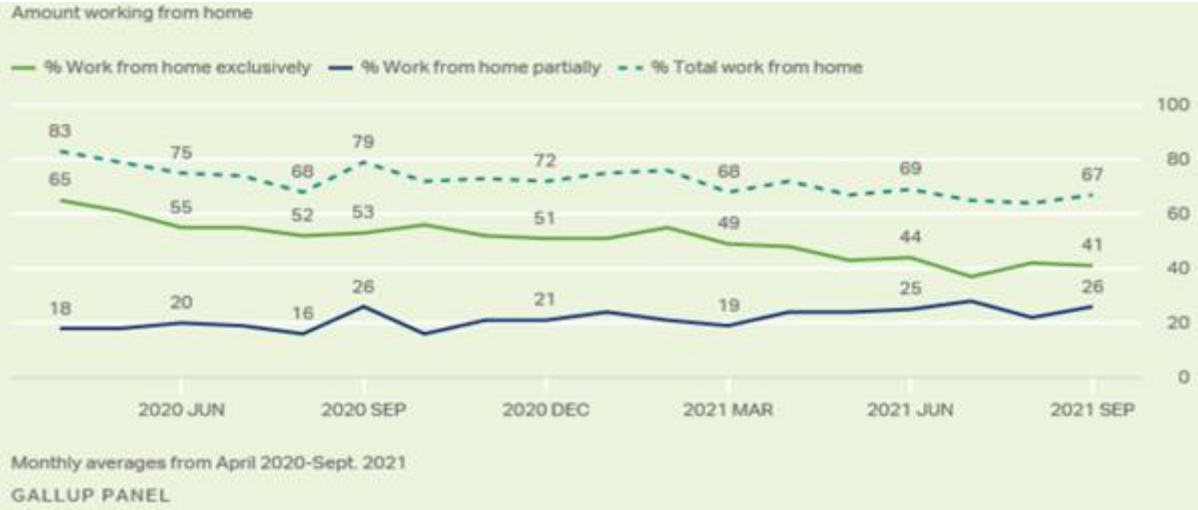
- Talent Mobility
    - Employees are now choosing among jobs based on the level of work flexibility offered. As an increasingly important parameter for job- decisions, talent mobility will drive the quality of employee engagement, as well as the overall quality of the workforce. "This is a trend that shows no signs of stopping. Thirty-eight percent of hiring managers predict that their employees will work predominantly remotely in the next ten years," says Zoe Harte, Senior Vice President, Human Resources and Talent Innovation, at Upwork.
    - This prediction was quickly overtaken by the pandemic. Per Gallup, at its peak 69 percent of all employees were working from home at least 10 percent of the time; and 54 percent were working exclusively from home. While the rate of those working totally from home has been halved, the rate of those working remotely some of the time has increased one-third.

Chart 32: U.S. Employees' Work Location Throughout the Pandemic



- The remote working rate is significantly higher for white-collar jobs.

Chart 33: Remote Work Rates Among U.S. White-Collar Employees



- Further, 9 in 10 employees now working remotely in some form wants to continue working remotely, and nearly half of on-site workers whose job could be done from home would like to work remotely.

Chart 34: U.S. Employee's Preferred Future Work Arrangements

	Prefer exclusively on-site %	Prefer hybrid %	Prefer exclusively remote %	Total prefer remote %
Remote workers				
Working from home exclusively	6	45	49	94
Working partially from home/partially on-site (hybrid)	15	70	15	85
Total working remotely (hybrid or exclusively)	9	54	37	91
Potential remote workers				
Working on-site, but job can be done from home	52	37	11	48

GALLUP PANEL, MAY 26-JUNE 9, 2021

Time preservation is a key reason for wanting to work remotely: Not having to commute, needing flexibility to balance work and personal obligations, and improved wellbeing (which likely results from having more time) are the top-cited reasons for preferring remote work.

- Employers are at risk of losing talent if they do not allow remote work. Three in 10 employees working remotely say they are extremely likely to seek another job if their company eliminates remote work.

- Most workers don't foresee remote work harming company culture. While most workers don't think remote work will improve their office culture, they don't think it will hurt it either. Two-thirds of all full-time U.S. employees think that having people work remotely long term will have either no effect or a positive effect on their workplace culture; the remaining third think it will be negative.

Chart 35: U.S. Employees' Likelihood of Leaving Job over lack of remote work options

If your employer decides not to offer opportunities for you to work remote some or all of the time long term, how likely would you be to look for opportunities for employment with other organizations?

	Currently fully remote	Currently hybrid	Currently fully on site
	%	%	%
5 (Extremely likely)	37	19	11
4	17	19	8
3	17	19	17
2	10	12	14
1 (Extremely unlikely)	19	30	50

GALLUP PANEL, MAY 26-JUNE 9, 2021

- An overwhelming majority of remote workers would consider leaving a job if not allowed to continue working remotely. Of those currently fully remote, 71 percent say they would be likely to look for another job; with 37 percent saying they would be extremely likely. Of current hybrid workers, 57 percent would be likely to look for different employment.
    - Hybrid looks like the way of the remote future.
        - 76 percent of remote workers say their employer will allow people to work remotely going forward, at least partially.
        - 61 percent of remote workers say they anticipate working hybrid for the next year and beyond; 27 percent expect to be fully remote.
    - Workforce system leaders must consider the implications of this changing landscape on how they train and deliver services to participants, how they recruit and utilize their own staff.
- Illinois is part of a National Governors' Association on-demand workgroup exploring and working to define the on-demand world (e.g.: platform workers, day-laborers, self-employed and independent contractors), and determine their needs and gaps of these workers, such as lack of worker protections and access to training. As part of this initiative, Illinois is currently working to define this population in Illinois and to develop innovative methods for them to access training to move into more sustaining work.
- Two potential growth sectors that are just now emerging in Illinois are in Information Technology and Agriculture:
    - There is an uptick in cyber-security training, which, although small, may continue to grow as increasing numbers of security breaches occur across many sectors.
    - With the legalization of industrial hemp production and the legalization of cannabis, we could see growth in the agricultural sector and the need for workers in both the agricultural side and the dispensary side. Both areas require short-term training at the entry level. While training for recreational cannabis-related activity remains off-limits for WIOA funding, there are likely to be more job placement opportunities in the next two-years.

Trends Across Key Industry Sectors & Occupations

Employment shifts among U.S. industry sectors in the decade between 2010 and 2020 were in full swing even prior to the pandemic, featuring a reduction in goods-producing industries in favor of service-producing industries. This shift continued a long-term trend, with manufacturing employment declining due to strong productivity gains in high value-added industries and offshoring of low value-added production to lower-cost economies. Among

goods-producing industries in the U.S. and the Midwest region construction was the only sector in which employment held its own between 2010 and 2020, despite a sharp dip at the start of the pandemic, by the end of 2021, jobs in the construction industry nationwide had recovered to near pre-pandemic levels. Maintaining this level of employment is due primarily to the fact that, despite the shelter-in-place initiatives related to the COVID-19 pandemic that impacted other industries, construction activities were often classified as 'essential business activities'. Manufacturing employment has decreased as a share of total employment in 2020 relative to 2010: continuing structural shifts in the economy were already impacting this sector's growth, while the pandemic forced smaller entities to (if only temporarily) shutter their doors.

Table 13 shows the industry employment distribution of the U.S. and the Midwestern states. Every state in the region has a smaller proportional share than the U.S. for construction.; besides Ohio, every other Midwest state has a higher proportion of their workforce employed in the construction sector than does Illinois. The share for construction increased over the last ten years for Illinois and all other Midwestern states with the exception of Ohio. Manufacturing is still an important component of the Midwestern economy, even though the long-term trends of increased productivity and offshoring to low-cost economies have led to the loss of many manufacturing jobs. Midwest manufacturing employment accounts for more than a quarter of national manufacturing employment. A decrease was seen in the employment share for the U.S. (-0.3 percent) and for Illinois (-.28) between 2010 and 2020. All of the Midwestern states had a higher share of manufacturing employment than did the U.S. (8.6 percent) in 2020.

Table 13: Employment Distribution by Industry as Share of Total Nonfarm Payrolls

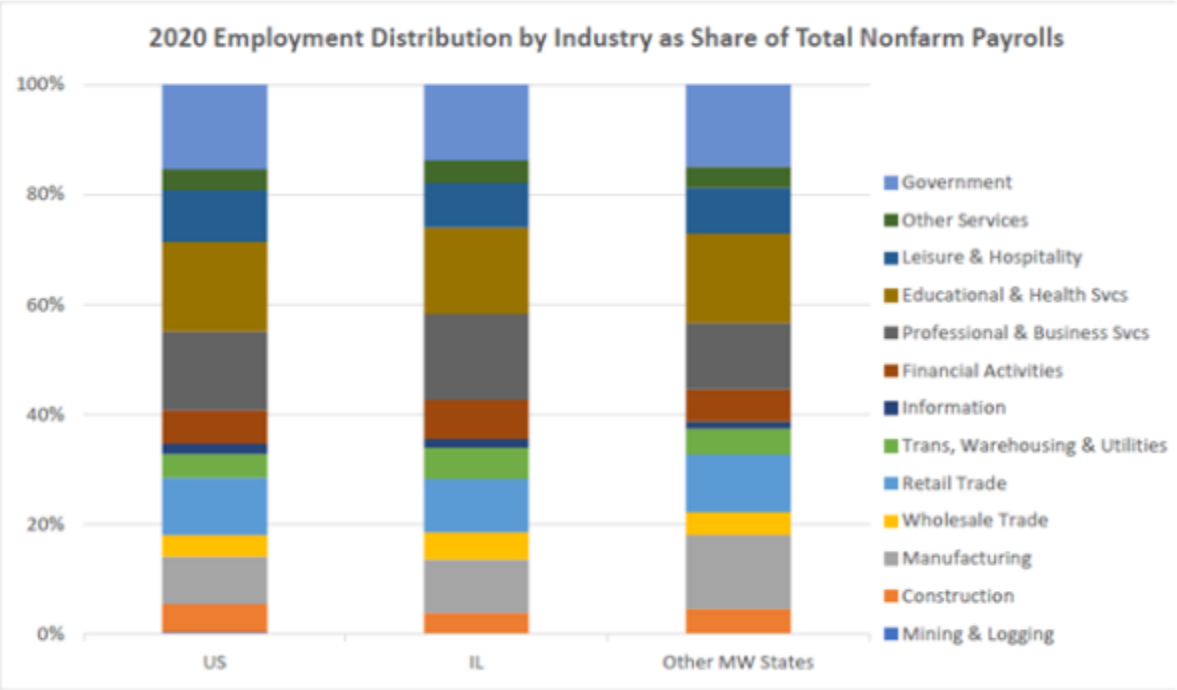
	US	IL	IN	IA	KY	MI	MN	MO	OH	WI
Mining & Logging	0.44%	0.12%	0.18%	0.15%	0.41%	0.16%	0.22%	0.16%	0.18%	0.12%
Construction	5.11%	3.81%	4.83%	5.10%	4.24%	4.09%	4.44%	4.52%	4.16%	4.40%
Manufacturing	8.56%	9.73%	16.92%	14.38%	12.84%	13.81%	11.11%	9.58%	12.43%	16.31%
Wholesale Trade	3.97%	4.94%	3.98%	4.31%	3.95%	3.99%	4.48%	4.31%	4.29%	4.22%
Retail Trade	10.44%	9.73%	10.22%	11.18%	10.97%	10.62%	9.86%	10.51%	10.12%	10.19%
Trans, Warehousing & Utilities	4.28%	5.67%	5.53%	4.49%	6.62%	3.91%	3.72%	4.19%	4.72%	3.98%
Information	1.90%	1.54%	0.86%	1.27%	1.10%	1.25%	1.54%	1.62%	1.21%	1.59%
Financial Activities	6.13%	7.14%	4.69%	7.26%	5.05%	5.53%	6.97%	6.28%	5.76%	5.40%
Professional & Business Services	14.24%	15.64%	10.91%	8.92%	11.25%	14.78%	12.93%	13.15%	13.20%	10.99%
Educational & Health Services	16.33%	15.67%	15.48%	14.75%	14.94%	15.84%	19.18%	17.28%	17.02%	15.95%
Leisure & Hospitality	9.40%	8.11%	8.85%	7.83%	9.02%	8.04%	7.33%	9.11%	8.86%	8.03%
Other Services	3.79%	4.10%	3.73%	3.63%	3.35%	3.56%	3.58%	3.96%	3.59%	5.10%
Government	15.40%	13.80%	13.81%	16.72%	16.25%	14.41%	14.63%	15.33%	14.45%	13.72%

Decline from 2010
No Change from 2010
Growth from 2010

The share of employment in Transportation, Warehousing and Utilities increased to 5.7 percent in Illinois, 1.4 points higher than the United States and 1.03 points higher than the average of the other Midwestern states. In the region only Kentucky, at 6.6 percent, has a higher share of its workforce in this sector than Illinois.

Chart 36, based on Table 13, provides a graphic representation of this analysis.

Chart 36: 2020 Distribution of Industry as Share of Total Nonfarm Payrolls – U.S. vs. IL vs. Other MW States



Charts 37-39 show how the industry distribution has changed over the last decade, with data shown for 2010, 2015 and 2020.

Chart 37: U.S. Employment Distribution by Industry as Share of Nonfarm Payrolls

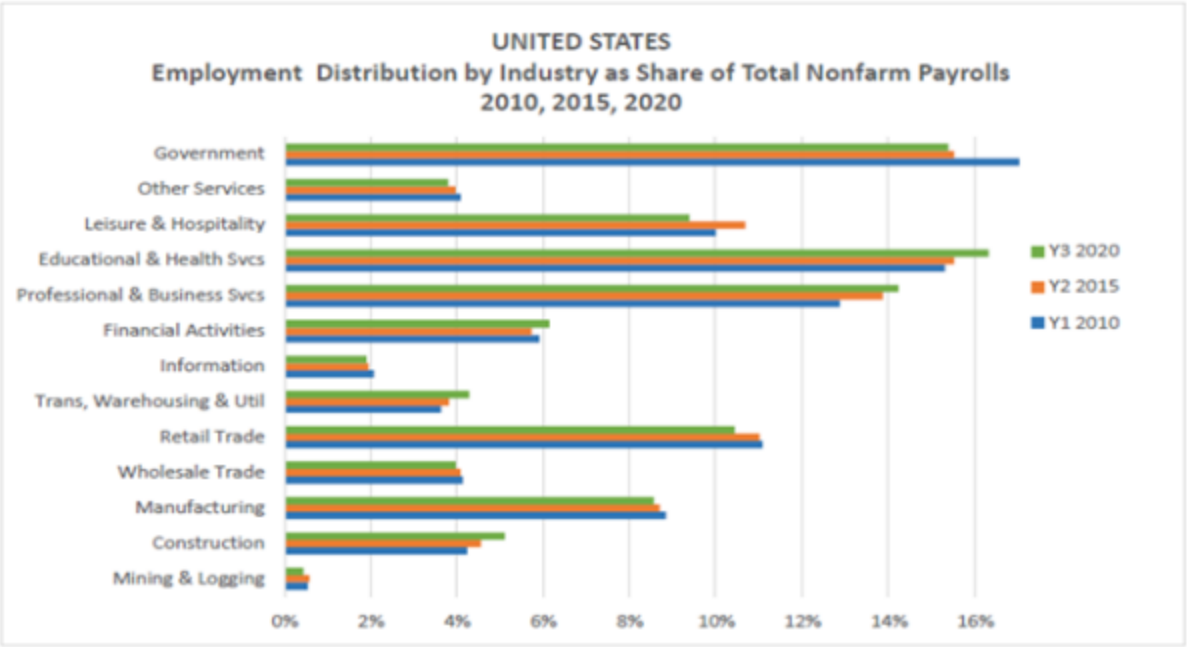


Chart 38: IL Employment Distribution by Industry as Share of Nonfarm Payrolls

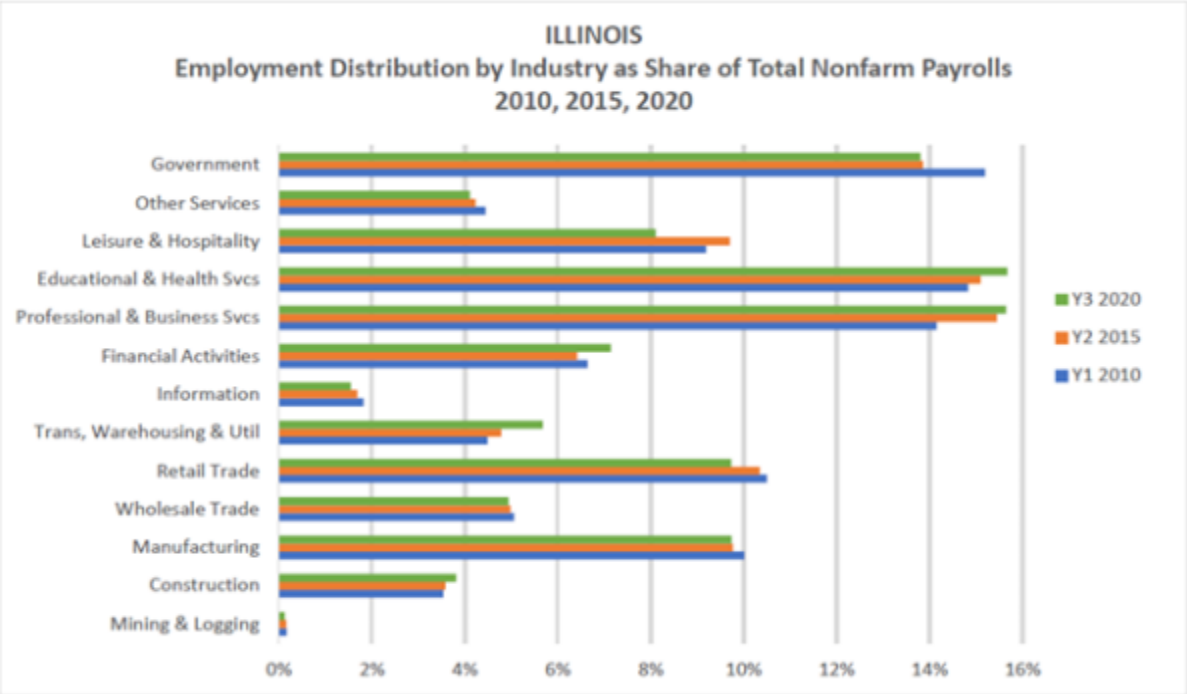
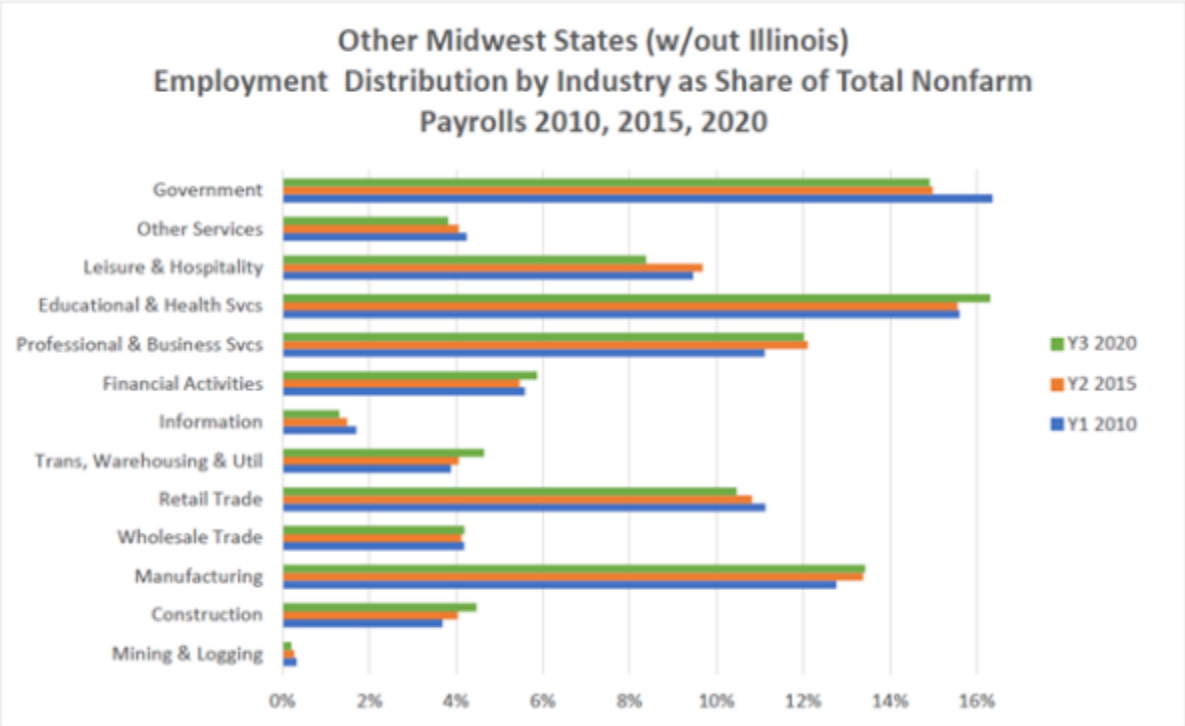


Chart 39: Midwest (outside of Illinois) Employment Distribution by Industry as Share of Nonfarm Payrolls



In the United States, the employment distribution within the service-producing industries changed between 2010 and 2020, with increases in Educational & Health Services, Transportation, Warehousing & Utilities and Professional & Business Services, and declines in Government and Leisure & Hospitality.

In Illinois, the employment distribution changed between 2010 and 2020 with increases in Educational & Health Services, Professional & Business Services, and Transportation, Warehousing & Utilities, and declines in Government.

In other Midwest states, the employment distribution changed between 2010 and 2020 with increases in Educational & Health Services and Professional & Business Services, and a decline in Government.

In an effort to understand how sector employment was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the WIOA Planning Data Team analyzed the change in employment from October 2020 to October 2021. The team reviewed data on the percent change in all employment for the state and for each of the ten WIOA planning regions. Overall, statewide employment increased 3.4 percent while each of the regions increased between 0.2 and 3.2 percent. All regions experienced a growth in employment, albeit some regions were modest, with six of the ten regions seeing growth at or above 1.5 percent.

Table 14 adds data from 2010 and 2020 to Table 9 to give a side-by-side view of employment distribution at three different points in time, 2010, 2015 and 2020, at the national and state levels, and in the other Midwest states, to show how the employment distribution has changed over time and how these shifts in Illinois differ from the US and other Midwest states.

Table 14: Employment Distribution and Change – 2010-2020

Employment Distribution and Change between 2010 - 2020	UNITED STATES					ILLINOIS					OTHER MW STATES				
	Y1 2010	Y2 2015	Y3 2020	Change Y1 - Y3	Percent Change Y1 - Y3	Y1 2010	Y2 2015	Y3 2020	Change Y1 - Y3	Percent Change Y1 - Y3	Y1 2010	Y2 2015	Y3 2020	Change Y1 - Y3	Percent Change Y1 - Y3
Mining & Logging	0.5%	0.6%	0.4%	-0.1%	-19.4%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%	-26.5%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%	-0.1%	-37.5%
Construction	4.2%	4.6%	5.1%	0.9%	20.8%	3.5%	3.6%	3.8%	0.3%	7.6%	3.7%	4.0%	4.5%	0.8%	21.5%
Manufacturing	8.8%	8.7%	8.6%	-0.3%	-3.2%	10.0%	9.8%	9.7%	-0.3%	-2.7%	12.8%	13.4%	13.4%	0.7%	5.2%
Wholesale Trade	4.1%	4.1%	4.0%	-0.2%	-4.0%	5.1%	5.0%	4.9%	-0.1%	-2.2%	4.2%	4.1%	4.2%	0.0%	0.2%
Retail Trade	11.1%	11.0%	10.4%	-0.6%	-5.8%	10.5%	10.3%	9.7%	-0.8%	-7.3%	11.1%	10.8%	10.5%	-0.7%	-6.0%
Trans, Warehong & Utilities	3.6%	3.8%	4.3%	0.7%	18.0%	4.5%	4.8%	5.7%	1.2%	26.6%	3.9%	4.1%	4.6%	0.8%	19.9%
Information	2.1%	1.9%	1.9%	-0.2%	-8.7%	1.8%	1.7%	1.5%	-0.3%	-15.5%	1.7%	1.5%	1.3%	-0.4%	-23.0%
Financial Activities	5.9%	5.7%	6.1%	0.2%	3.9%	6.6%	6.4%	7.1%	0.5%	7.5%	5.6%	5.5%	5.9%	0.3%	5.2%
Professional & Business Svcs	12.9%	13.9%	14.2%	1.4%	10.6%	14.2%	15.4%	15.6%	1.5%	10.5%	11.1%	12.1%	12.0%	0.9%	8.1%
Educational & Health Svcs	15.3%	15.5%	16.3%	1.0%	6.6%	14.8%	15.1%	15.7%	0.8%	5.7%	15.6%	15.6%	16.3%	0.7%	4.5%
Leisure & Hospitality	10.0%	10.7%	9.4%	-0.6%	-6.1%	9.2%	9.7%	8.1%	-1.1%	-11.8%	9.5%	9.7%	8.4%	-1.1%	-11.3%
Other Services	4.1%	4.0%	3.8%	-0.3%	-7.3%	4.4%	4.2%	4.1%	-0.3%	-7.6%	4.2%	4.0%	3.8%	-0.4%	-10.2%
Government	17.3%	15.5%	15.4%	-1.9%	-10.7%	15.2%	13.9%	13.8%	-1.4%	-9.2%	16.4%	15.0%	14.9%	-1.4%	-8.8%

The Change Y1 – Y3 columns indicate the change in the sector's share of the total between 2010 and 2020. A positive number indicates the share of total employment increased and a negative number indicates the sector's share of total employment declined.

In most cases the trends align at all three geographic levels except for the following significant outliers:

- Illinois *increased* greater than US and Midwest:
    - TTU-Transport/Warehouse/Utilities - the share increased in Illinois at a rate of nearly 50 percent greater than that of the U.S. and Midwest
- Illinois *decreased* greater than US and Midwest:
    - Construction - Despite construction employment growth in Illinois, the share of jobs in construction as a percent of the total fell in Illinois more so than in the US and Midwest states.
    - Manufacturing - the share decrease in Illinois was in line with the US; but the -0.3 point drop in Illinois represents a -2.7 percent change while the 0.7-point gain in the other Midwest states represents an increase of just 5.2 percent.

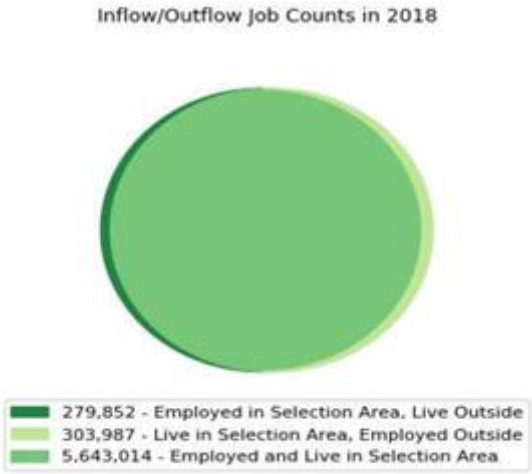
This means that over the past ten years, when compared to changes in the U.S. and Midwest, in Illinois the share of employment in Transportation, Warehousing and Utilities **increased more**, while the share of employment in Manufacturing **decreased more** in Illinois.

Commuting Workers

The US Census Bureau, not the DOL Bureau of Labor Statistics, is the keeper of data on where people live and work. This data is sourced through census data and tax data housed at the Internal Revenue Service. The most recent worker inflow / outflow data available is for 2017, and it indicates Illinois is near equilibrium for cross-border workers. Of approximately 6 million workers, 4.7 percent work here but live elsewhere, while 5.0 percent live here but work elsewhere. Almost the same numbers of people commute into Illinois for work as go to their jobs in other states. So, the overall net impact of cross-border workers is minimal.

Chart 40: Inflow/Outflow

A deeper analysis of worker inflow and outflow data indicates the vast majority of cross-state employment involves workers aged 30 - 54, earning more than $40,000 annual wages working in non-goods producing, services industries. Generally, the inflow and outflow by worker type follows a similar pattern - the items with the largest inflow also have the largest outflow. However, there are types with a bit of wider margin, notably workers under age 29 and workers earning less than $15,000 per year and workers in the Other Services industry class have greater outflow than inflow.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap, 2018

Table 15: Inflow/Outflow

ILLINOIS WORKERS INFLOW / OUTFLOW ANALYSIS	Number of Workers in Thousands				
	INFLOW		OUTFLOW		NET
	Count	Share	Count	Share	OUTFLOW
Workers Inflow/Outflow	279.9	100.0%	304.0	100.0%	(24.1)
Workers Aged 29 or younger	59.9	21.4%	80.8	26.6%	(21.0)
Workers Aged 30 to 54	151.6	54.2%	155.0	51.0%	(3.4)
Workers Aged 55 or older	68.3	24.4%	68.1	22.4%	0.2
Workers Earning $1,250 per month or less	55.8	19.9%	72.5	23.8%	(16.7)
Workers Earning $1,251 to $3,333 per month	83.9	30.0%	92.6	30.5%	(8.7)
Workers Earning More than $3,333 per month	140.2	50.1%	138.9	45.7%	1.3
Workers in the "Goods Producing" Industry Class	55.7	19.9%	60.4	19.9%	(4.7)
Workers in the "Trade, Transport., & Utilities" Industry Class	63.0	22.5%	62.4	20.5%	0.6
Workers in the "All Other Services" Industry Class	161.2	57.6%	181.3	59.6%	(20.1)

Source: US Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application 2018

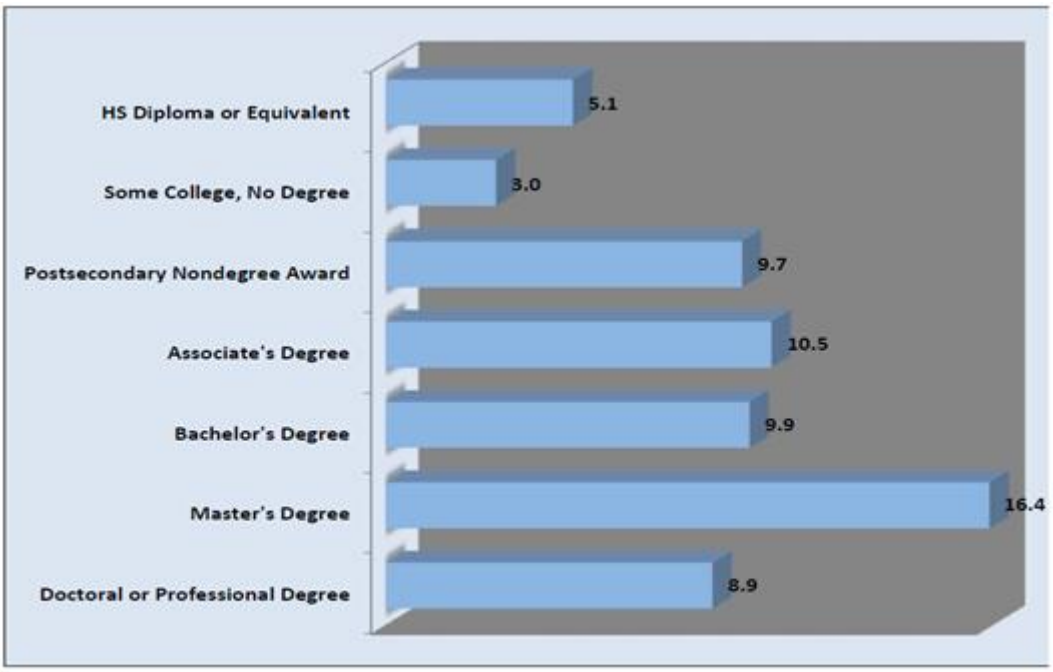
iii. Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce

Occupational skill requirements are increasing across the workforce due to a number of factors, including the increasing pace of technological change and the increasingly global nature of the economy. As detailed in the previous section, ("Labor Market Trends"), creativity and critical thinking are expected to join digital dexterity at the apex of skill needs across the labor force. Technology-fueled economic forces, such as automation, Artificial Intelligence and deep data analytics will continue to supplant human muscle and (increasingly) human intelligence.

As a recently released McKinsey Global Institute report puts it, "Millions of jobs (nationally) with a high share of automatable tasks could be phased out in the decade ahead. Others will be created, more than making up for those losses in many scenarios—*although they may be different occupations located in different places*" (emphasis ours). Add to this the increasing desire (and need) for talent mobility, both geographically and occupationally, and the pressures upon a state like Illinois to educate, train and fully employ its workforce is more critical than ever.

In its most recent set of occupational employment projections released in 2021, the BLS shows the increasing need for advanced education and training to qualify for occupations with the highest growth rates.

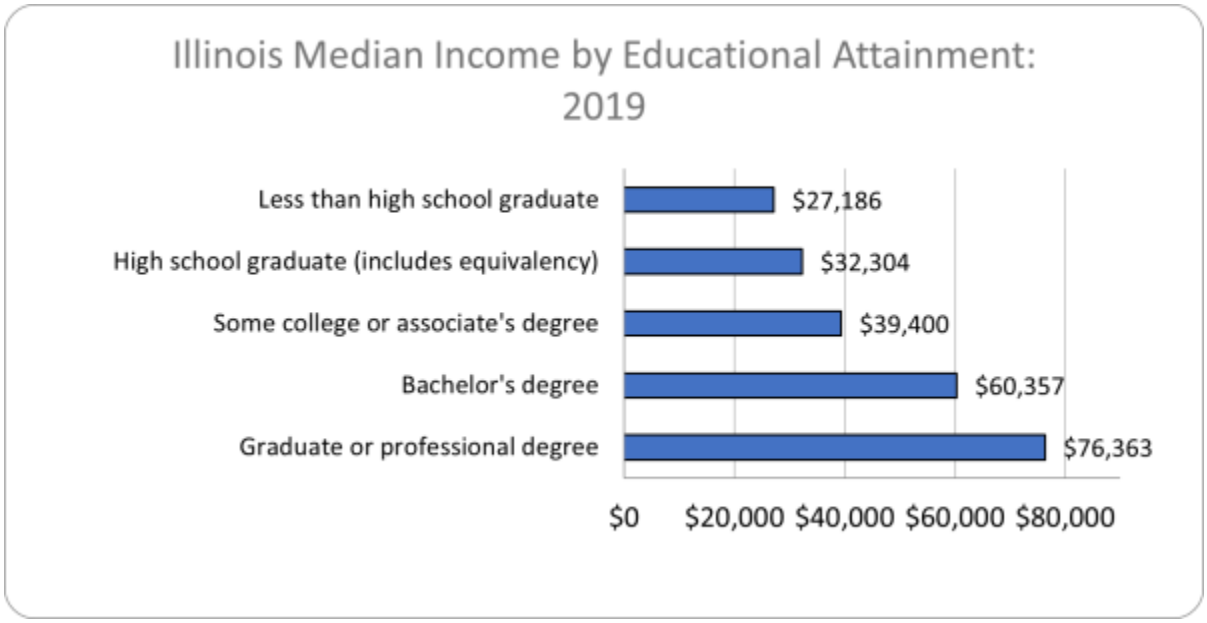
Chart 41: 2020 – 2030 Projected US Employment Growth by Educational Requirements



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Employment Projections Program

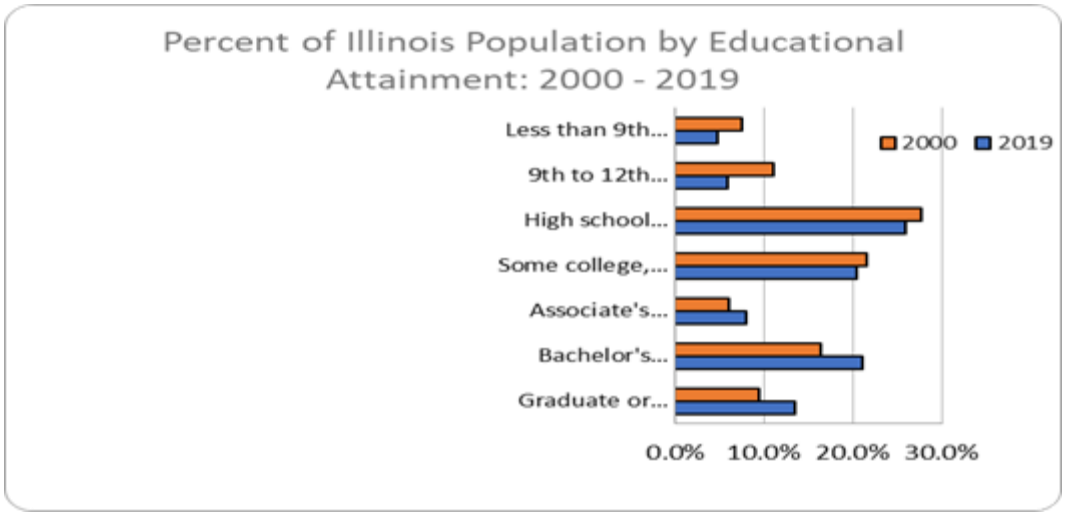
Growth is highest for jobs requiring education at the master's degree level. Moreover, the education and skill requirements of occupations are directly related to the earning power of those occupations, as evidenced by Illinois' data from the 2019 American Community Survey.

Chart 42: Illinois Median Income by Educational Attainment (Most Recent Data Available)



These data sets highlight the importance and the value of educational achievement and degree attainment. For Illinois to compete in this globalized, technology-charged economy, we must train our workforce to meet the challenges of these increasing education and skill requirements. Since the turn of the century, Illinois has made progress in increasing the overall educational attainment of its population. However, the number of individuals with low literacy skills has remained a significant concern as we seek to meet the demand for an educated and skilled workforce.

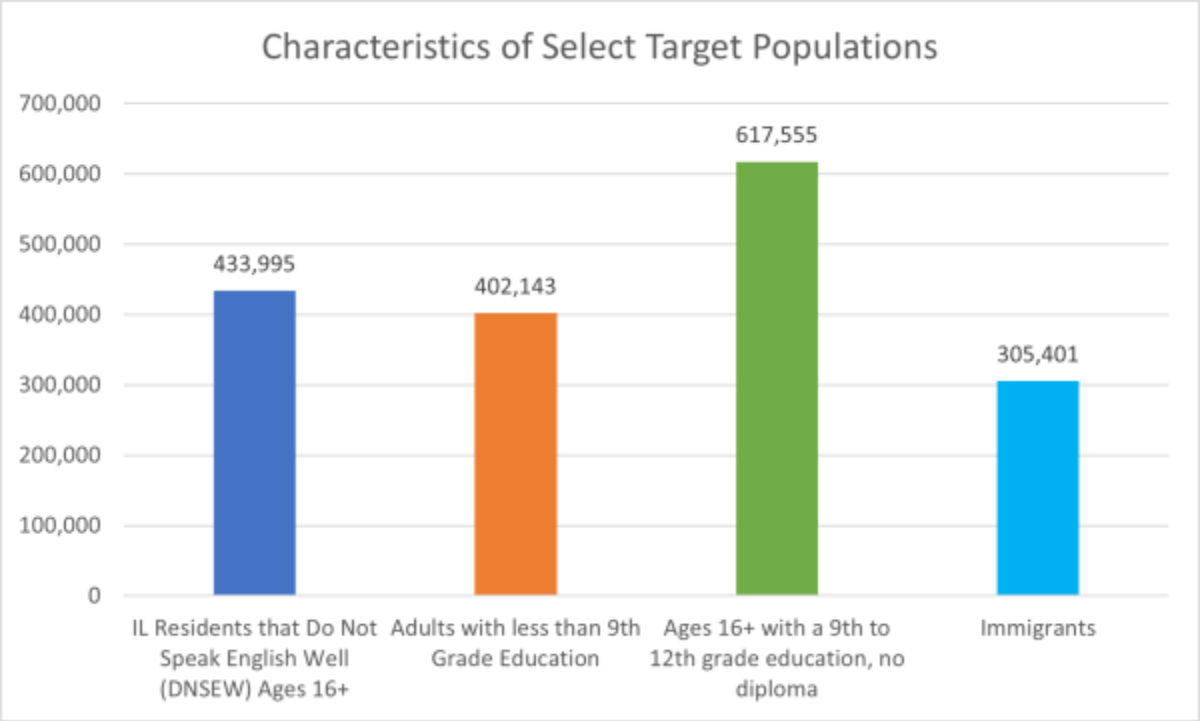
Chart 43: Percent of Illinois Population by Education Attainment (Most Recent Data Available)



The percentage of Illinois' population (age 25+) with some type of post-secondary degree increased from 32% in 2000 to nearly 43% in 2019. However, Illinois recognizes that this number is still too low. The Illinois P-20 Council set a goal that 60 percent of the state's population has a high-quality degree or credential by 2025, an initiative referred to as "60 by 2025." Data shows that the state is clearly moving towards that goal, but there is still a long way to go in the next decade. Illinois' economic and income growth is dependent on reaching the "60 by 2025" goal.

Chart 44 and Table 16, which follow, show data regarding the incidences of various target population cohorts in Illinois. Target populations, as described in TEGL 19-16, are as follows in the capture excerpt below.

Chart 44 – Target Population Characteristics



In Illinois, approximately 617,000 residents 16 and older have some high school education but do not have a diploma, and more than 400,000 adults have less than a 9th-grade education. These individuals could benefit from a variety of workforce and adult education programs, especially bridge programs that incorporate English, reading and math skills contextualized for a targeted industry.

Table 16 provides information on the sub-populations that may have barriers to employment and are targeted to be served by one or more of the WIOA core programs. These data, where available, will be provided at the regional level for utilization in developing, aligning and integrating service delivery strategies as well as resources in each region. Data were sourced from a variety of national collections and Illinois-specific administrative data systems.

Table 16 – Target Population Characteristics

Total Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population 16+ 2020 Estimate (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)	9,960,000
Low Income Indicators: Adults (Age 16+) in Poverty 2020 (ICCB Index of Need table 6[1])	1,024,689
Public Aid Recipients 2020 (ICCB Index of Need table 3)	2,929,494
Adult Public Aid Recipients 2020 (ICCB Index of Need table 3)	1,569,265
TANF Recipients Monthly Average 2020 (IDHS online)	67,032
SNAP Recipients Monthly Average 2020 (IDHS online)	1,923,258
Estimated Individuals with a Disability 2017 (American Community Survey table S1810)	1,388,827
Adults with Disabilities (age 18-75+) 2017 (American Community Survey table S1810)	1,290,787
DHS Division of Rehabilitation Services-Vocational Rehabilitation Program Data Summary FY2019:	
Number Served (Age 25+)	17,851
Number Served Youth (Age <25)	28,819
Number in Plan Status (Age 25+)	5,270
Number in Plan Status Youth (Age <25)	15,681
Successful Employment (Age 25+)	2,472
Successful Employment Youth (Age <25)	2,647
IDHS Prioritization of Urgency of Needs for Services (PUNS) Reports - Summary by Diagnosis Code as of August 2019 (Active counts of residents with disabilities in potential need of DHS-funded services)	

Total Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population 16+ 2020 Estimate (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)	9,960,000
(DHS online):	
Autism	5,834
Childhood Disintegrative Disorder	58
Pervasive Developmental Disorder	251
Cerebral Palsy	611
Mild Intellectual Disability	3,520
Moderate ID	2,724
Severe ID	821
Profound ID	333
Unspecified Intellectual Disability	8,761
Epilepsy	1,145
Other Diagnosis Codes	507
Adult Parolee Population, September 30, 2021 (DOC online) Youth in Aftercare Population, 2020 (DJJ 2020 Annual Report)	20,370 503
Population in Households in which English is not the Primary Language Spoken 2020 (ICCB Index of Need table 5)	2,734,886
Average Annual Unemployed 2021 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)	416,493
Estimated: Unemployed 27+ Weeks 2018 (Current Population Survey)	69,854
Older Individuals (Age 65+) 2020 (U.S. Census Quick Facts)	2,027,360
Homeless Individuals 2020 Estimate (U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness) Unaccompanied Young Adults (Age 18-24)	10,431 671
Single Parents 2017 (American Community Survey table B09002)	777,109
Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers - 2019 Domestic & WIOA-Eligible (IDES)	613
Veterans – Estimate 2017 (American Community Survey table S2101)	

Total Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population 16+ 2020 Estimate (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)	9,960,000
Total Age 18-34 Age 35-54 Age 55 and over	614,725 48,120 134,292 432,313
Total in Foster Care 2019 (DCFS web):	14,564
Department/Private/Fictive Foster Care	5,821
Relative Foster Care	8,933
Institutional/Group Care	1,337
Exiting Foster Care (Age 18+)	896

[1] http://www2.iccb.org/iccb/wp-content/pdfs/reports/IndexOfNeedTables_2020.pdf

iv. Skill Gaps

Gov. Pritzker's Action Agenda to Executive Order 3 describes skill gaps as arguably Illinois' most serious barrier to economic prosperity. Building a pool of job seekers and workers with the right skills at the right time is essential if Illinois businesses and workers are to compete in the global economy today and in the future. All three of the action areas that frame his workforce development agenda recognize the importance of investing in skill development that supports regional cluster strategies, prepares Illinois workers for careers in high-demand industries and shortens the time required to connect skilled workers with available employment opportunities.

Table 16 identifies the top 10 occupations with the greatest number of projected annual openings grouped by educational attainment requirements, along with average entry-level and mid-career level Illinois wages.

Table 17: Occupations by Education Attainment Requirement

EDUCATION BEYOND BACHELOR'S DEGREE				
		Hourly Wages		
Occupation	Annual Openings	Entry	Experienced	Skills
General & Operations Managers	11,398	$24.47	$80.19	Active Listening, Coordination, Monitoring
Management Analysts	5,151	$27.79	$60.07	Active Listening, Critical Thinking, Reading Comprehension
Financial Managers	3,914	$38.62	$87.87	Active Listening, Critical Thinking, Monitoring
Sales Managers	2,362	$35.49	$84.78	Persuasion, Active Listening, Speaking
Marketing Managers	2,007	$37.27	$82.53	Speaking, Active Listening, Service Orientation
Lawyers	1,892	$35.71	$93.00	Active Listening, Speaking, Reading Comprehension
Clergy	1,803	$14.91	$34.06	Active Learning, Active Listening, Critical Thinking
Computer & Information Systems Managers	1,500	$48.57	$86.70	Critical Thinking, Active Listening, Reading Comprehension
Administrative Services Managers	1,479	$29.49	$59.12	Speaking, Active Listening, Coordination
Educational/Vocational/School Counselors	1,465	$17.01	$33.27	Active Listening, Speaking, Reading Comprehension

BACHELOR'S DEGREE				
		Hourly Wages		
Occupation	Annual Openings	Entry	Experienced	Skills
Registered Nurses	9,289	$26.09	$40.72	Active Listening, Social Perceptiveness, Service Orientation
Accountants & Auditors	5,705	$23.73	$43.52	Active Listening, Mathematics, Reading Comprehension
Insurance Sales Agents	5,168	$14.84	$41.76	Active Listening, Reading Comprehension, Speaking
Business Operations Specialists, All Other	5,011	$24.41	$50.26	Active Listening, Critical Thinking, Reading Comprehension
Elem. School Teachers, Ex. Special Ed.	4,488	N/A	N/A	Instructing, Speaking, Learning Strategies
Market Research Analysts & Specialists	3,931	$19.01	$39.73	Reading Comprehension, Active Listening, Complex Problem Solving
Secondary Teachers, Ex. Spec/Voc. Ed.	2,880	N/A	N/A	Instructing, Learning Strategies, Speaking
Software Developers, Applications	2,851	$34.81	$59.84	Programming, System Analysis, System Evaluation
Substitute Teachers	2,633	N/A	N/A	Speaking, Instructing, Learning Strategies
Human Resources Specialists	2,558	$19.74	$37.62	Active Listening, Speaking, Reading Comprehension

ASSOCIATE DEGREE				
		Hourly Wages		
Occupation	Annual Openings	Entry	Experienced	Skills
Registered Nurses	9,289	$26.09	$40.72	Active Listening, Social Perceptiveness, Service Orientation
Computer User Support Specialists	2,246	$16.35	$31.37	Active Listening, Speaking, Reading Comprehension
Paralegals & Legal Assistants	1,634	$19.82	$33.64	Reading Comprehension, Active Listening, Speaking
Computer Occupations, All Other	1,287	$27.05	$53.87	Critical Thinking, Reading Comprehension, Active Listening
Computer Network Support Specialists	852	$20.80	$37.53	Critical Thinking, Active Listening, Judgement/Decision Making
Dental Hygienists	683	$28.44	$39.30	Speaking, Active Listening, Critical Thinking
Physical Therapist Assistants	650	$20.90	$33.24	Active Listening, Monitoring, Social Perceptiveness
Engineering Techs, Ex. Drafters, All Other	643	$22.41	$37.86	Active Listening, Critical Thinking, Reading Comprehension
Medical Records/Health Information Techs	529	N/A	N/A	Reading Comprehension, Active Listening, Critical Thinking
Life/Phys/Social Science Techs, All Other	432	$15.93	$29.38	Active Listening, Critical Thinking, Reading Comprehension

POSTSECONDARY VOCATIONAL AWARD				
		Hourly Wages		
Occupation	Annual Openings	Entry	Experienced	Skills
Nursing Assistants	6,942	$12.53	$16.21	Service Orientation, Active Listening, Social Perceptiveness
Fitness Trainers & Aerobics Instructors	3,410	$11.37	$28.65	Instructing, Service Orientation, Social Perceptiveness
Hairdressers/Hairstylists/Cosmetol-	3,153	$9.81	$18.88	Active Listening, Speaking, Service Orientation
Automotive Service Techs/Mechanics	2,855	$13.40	$28.70	Equipment Maintenance, Repairing, Troubleshooting
Preschool Teachers, Ex. Special Education	2,692	$12.07	$19.30	Speaking, Learning Strategies, Instructing
Medical Secretaries	1,913	$14.10	$20.54	Speaking, Active Listening, Service Orientation
Licensed Practical & Vocational Nurses	1,518	$20.43	$29.15	Service Orientation, Active Listening, Coordination
Bus/Truck/Diesel Engine Mechanics	1,026	$14.81	$30.58	Repairing, Troubleshooting, Operation & Control
Massage Therapists	965	$14.86	$29.13	Active Listening, Speaking, Social Perceptiveness
Emergency Medical Techs & Paramedics	799	$12.23	$28.53	Critical Thinking, Active Listening, Coordination

Using the list of occupations in Table 14, an analysis of academic year 2020 (the most recent available) program of study completers in Illinois indicates a clear trend - the higher the required level of education the more likely the occupations on the list have more completers in programs tracked by the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) and the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB). Conversely, the shortfall gap between projected annual openings and the number of completers widens as the level of required credential decreases. This is partially due to some training programs at those levels not reporting data to IBHE or ICCB, some training is primarily via apprenticeships, and some are truly done on-the-job, largely foregoing formal classroom training.

The following charts indicate the **Gap Ratio** for each of the occupations in Table 14 for which there is completer data provided by ICCB and IBHE. The Gap Ratio is a proxy measure that

indicates potential oversupply or undersupply of workers for a given occupation. Readers are cautioned to consider: annual completers are not the entire available supply of workers. For example, trade apprenticeships are not captured by IBHE and ICCB unless the trainee is enrolled in a post-secondary institution, nor are skilled unemployed workers; and the crosswalk between codes in the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) and Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) data sets is not exact; and the number of unemployed workers is not collected at the occupational level, therefore cannot be included as part of the supply.

A Gap Ratio value of 1.0 indicates the number of completers equals the number of projected annual openings. A value less than 1.0 indicates a potential undersupply and values more than 1.0 indicate a potential oversupply.

Chart 45: Gap Ratio – Post-secondary Certificate Occupations

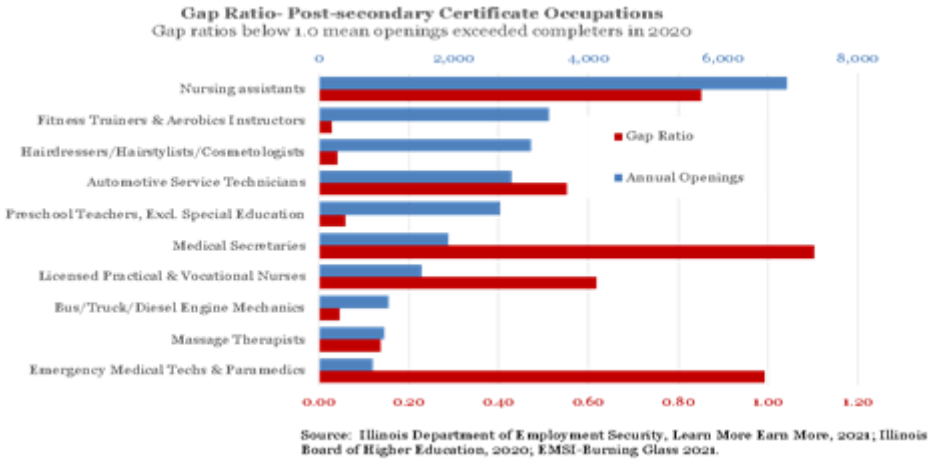


Chart 46: Gap Ratio – Associate's Degree Occupations

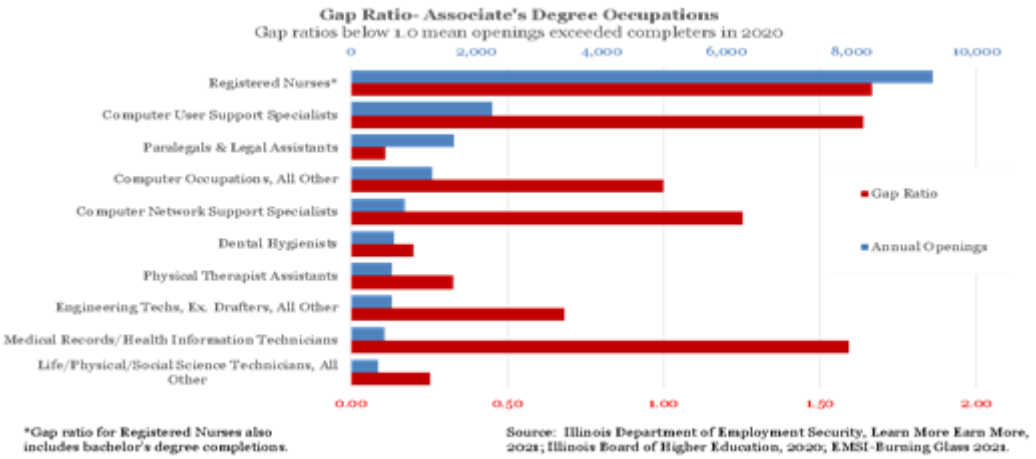


Chart 47: Gap Ratio – Bachelor's Degree Occupations

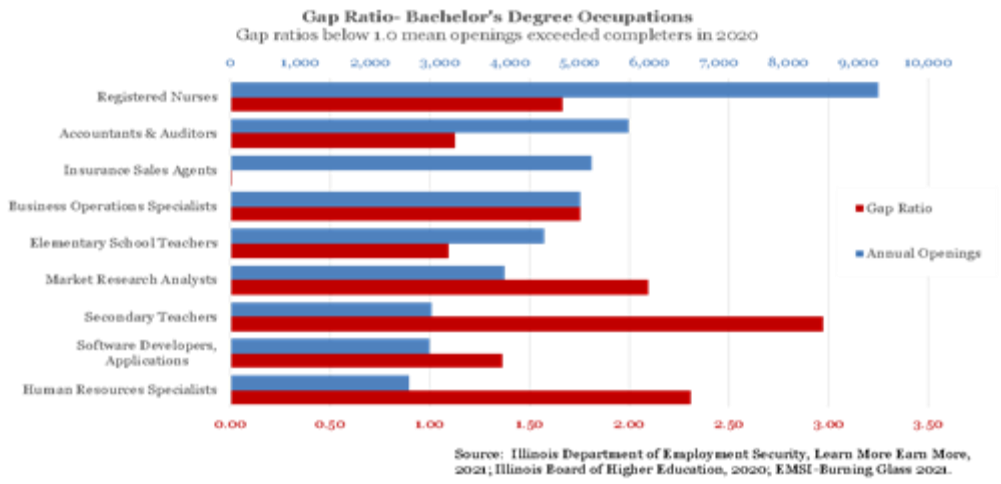


Chart 48: Gap Ratio – Beyond Bachelor's Degree Occupations

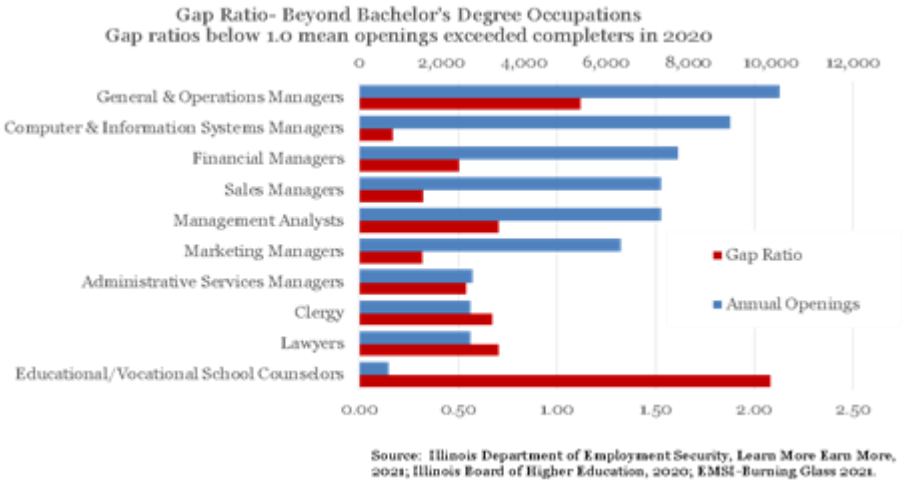
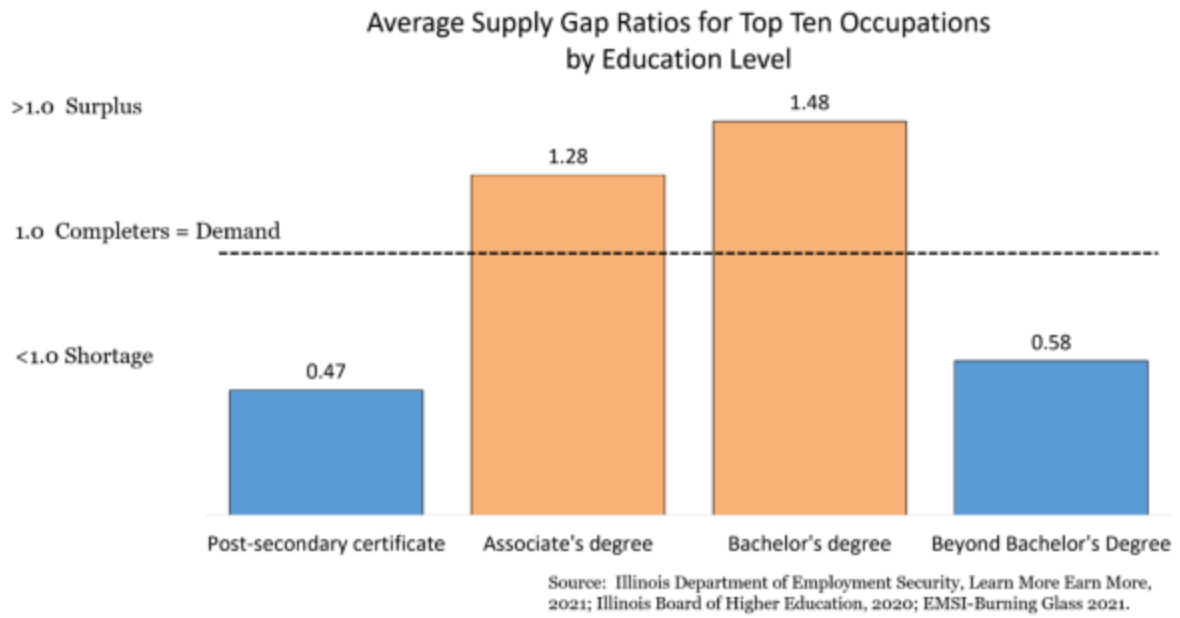


Chart 49 highlights that the top occupations for associate's and bachelor's degrees have a surplus of completers, while occupations requiring a post-secondary certificate and occupations beyond a bachelor's degree have a shortage of completers. Note that at the lowest level, post-secondary certificate occupations, one of the top ten occupations reach 1.0. – the point where the number of completers equals the number of annual openings. This is driven to a large extent by fewer training programs available (which limits the number of graduates) due to the hands-on training traditionally used for many of the occupations.

Chart 49: Average Supply Gap Rations in Illinois



For bachelor's degree occupations, nine of the top ten occupations have a surplus of completers. The data for occupations requiring a bachelor's degree yields some interesting observations.

1. There is a generally accepted consensus that we have a national and statewide teacher shortage. However, for secondary education teachers, that cannot be attributed to a lack of people graduating from education programs. The most likely explanation is that many graduates from secondary education programs do not seek employment as teachers and elect to either continue their education or enter a non-education related career pathway. .

2. The programs of study and demand for registered nurses cut across educational levels (bachelor's and associate's degrees) which counts the same jobs and completers across different educational levels and points out a limitation of the data. Like the secondary education gap ratio, the raw data indicate a sufficient number of program completers to meet the demand for registered nurses. Regional shortages are likely driven by program completers not entering the job market due to pursuing additional education or by entering employment in another state.

3. The apparent shortage for Insurance Sales Agents is mainly attributable to there being very few programs of study specific to this occupation. While many insurance agents have a bachelor's degree, all agents have licensing requirements, and educational institutions typically do not offer education or training related to licensure testing.

For the Associate's Degree chart, note that the projected openings for registered nurses is the same as that shown in the Bachelor's Degree chart. This is due to the programs tied to nursing being co-mingled. Other than this anomaly, the chart indicates the number of completers for Computer Network Support Specialists, User Support Specialists, and Medical Records/Health Information Technologists is more than the annual openings.

Caveats to consider for Post-Secondary Certificate Occupations include:

1. The number of completers for most of the top ten occupations in terms of projected openings is less than the demand. While completers do not make up the entire supply

pool, the occupations with gap ratios of 0.5 or less are very likely to be experiencing a significant shortfall of skilled workers.

2. There is a very high attrition / turnover rate for Nursing Assistants, which elevates the number of annual openings for this occupation. Note the gap ratio indicates there are a significant number of completers. This is partially due to nursing assistant training being a prerequisite for registered nurse education. In some regions of Illinois, the high number of applicants for nursing assistant training creates a barrier for access to registered nursing training. Registered Nursing schools and employers should jointly consider a combination of strategies to simultaneously manage: 1) ensuring adequate access to training for individuals in the registered nurse pathway while also, 2) not creating a larger shortfall of nursing assistants who are in high demand and hospitals and long-term care facilities. Strategies to meet the projected demand for this occupation must include a thorough understanding of the root causes to develop effective measures to reduce the attrition rate.

As mentioned previously, there are education and training programs available in addition to those reporting through the IBHE and the ICCB, thus the supply shown on the long-term OJT chart is likely understated.

Again, there are education and training programs available in addition to those reporting through the IBHE and the ICCB, thus the supply shown on the moderate-term OJT chart is also likely understated.

[1] http://www2.iccb.org/iccb/wp-content/pdfs/reports/IndexOfNeedTables_2020.pdf

2. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

A. State Workforce Development Activities

Illinois workforce development and economic development communities are developing and implementing strategies that place a new focus on increasing the state's competitiveness. Governor Pritzker's EO3 and the subsequent Action Agenda are driving stronger collaborations that are coalescing around statewide goals and are providing a mechanism to compile and assess activities that have supported -- and will continue to support -- the strategies developed in the report. Some of those strategies and some exemplary associated activities are listed here:

Identify high-impact regional clusters and associated in-demand occupations:

- Illinois' Eligible Training Provider policy defines the method for choosing demand occupations. The criteria were revised and approved by the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) in March 2021. While still reflecting projected annual average job openings and wages, an educational component was added to direct WIOA Title IB training funds towards postsecondary education training programs when paid through individual training accounts (ITAs). Additionally, the criteria focused on statewide demand with the ability of Local Workforce Innovation Boards to petition the State to consider approval of other occupations when there is justifying information such as State or Local priorities, new data and information supporting demand, or employer needs identified. Shortages in early childhood care prompted the state to include those occupations on the previous Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) and carried those over to this newly approved list. As Illinois starts implementation of the state's Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, which includes a strong workforce component, the ETPL will be updated to include occupations that support Illinois' move to clean energy and the production of electric vehicles.

Adding the education component while having the potential to narrow the occupations available, directs resources to career pathways that should lead to self-sustaining wages. As part of continuous improvement and to evaluate the impact, the IWIB has convened system partners and stakeholders to review the criteria and has requested analysis be conducted to ensure the system is meeting the needs of employers, especially as they continue to recover from the COVID pandemic and ramp up production, prompting much higher levels of need than previously was indicated through available data. Over the next several years, the IWIB will review the information and determine if changes are needed to the criteria, process, and list of demand occupations.

Implement coordinated workforce development strategies around regional clusters:

- A regional business-led sector strategy focused on aerospace – the Rockford Area Aerospace Network (RAAN) – has been developed in the Northern Stateline region centered on Rockford. RAAN brings together the region's Tier 1 aerospace companies, many of their regional suppliers, regional economic development organizations, and education and training providers at all levels. While RAAN responds to a range of industry concerns, it emphasizes talent pipeline development that feeds all levels of industry employment needs, from factory floor production and maintenance to product design, engineering, and development.

Strengthen workforce development in all parts of the state:

- The Calumet Area Industrial Commission (CAIC) is working with its advanced manufacturing company members and others in the southern part of Chicago/Cook County to develop a regional talent development supply chain, regional partnership, and management metrics. These efforts include support for on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, and apprenticeship programs. The CAIC is currently administering a program to offer tuition-free manufacturing training at area community colleges. The program covers the cost of tuition, books, fees and materials for people looking to earn an associate degrees or certifications in manufacturing.

- The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) allocates funding to Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIA) to support each local workforce system and operate American Job Centers (AJC). The local workforce system is led by a Local Workforce Board (LWIB). LWIBs are responsible for the strategic development of the local workforce system by looking at current trends and forecasting future needs, while offering nimble and flexible programs and services supported by WIOA. Led by local employers, working with economic development agencies, educational providers, labor organizations and other community stakeholders, workforce boards are responsive to the unique needs of their local economy. This helps to ensure partners are working together throughout the state to build and maintain a workforce system to meet the needs of businesses, job seekers, and workers. Regional and local workforce plans are developed in concert with the core and required partners and stakeholders and align with the state's workforce vision, principles, and Unified State Plan.

- Through collaboration, the Illinois Workforce Partnership (IWP) is making a difference in workforce development throughout the state of Illinois. IWP is a statewide association representing the 22 local workforce areas across the state of Illinois. The partnerships spread across 10 Economic Development Regions, working with chief elected officials in every city and county to develop a local workforce to support each area's local economy. Meetings are held monthly along with committee work to address capacity building, promising practices, and advocacy for workforce development legislation.

Increase apprenticeship opportunities

- Illinois is one of 23 states that are Office of Apprenticeship states, whereby all registered apprenticeships are approved through a U.S. Department of Labor regional Office of Apprenticeship. The others have state apprenticeship offices and can register apprenticeships directly. Registered apprenticeship data is entered into a U.S. DOL database called RAPIDS (Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Management Data System). This system DOES NOT collect information about non-registered apprenticeships or pre-apprenticeships. Various federal grants to state agencies such as DCEO and ICCB have performance data requirements that are separate and additional to data entry into RAPIDS.

Table 18: U.S. Department of Labor RAPIDS (Registered Apprenticeship Sponsor Information Database)

	9/3/2021	11/29/2021
Current # of registered programs	499	515
Current # of active apprentices	16,467	16,393
Current # of new programs this quarter	28	4
Current # of new apprentices this FY	4,177	484

The State of Illinois has been awarded $8 million in funding from the U.S. DOL over the past 3 years under the Apprenticeship Expansion Program. DCEO leveraged a portion of the WIOA statewide activities funds to expand registered apprenticeships throughout Illinois.

- 2021: $5.9 Million U.S. DOL Apprenticeship Grant = ~$5 million in Grants (recommended)
- 2019-20: $2.1 Million UDSOL Apprenticeship Grant + $3 million in WIOA Statewide Activities Funds = ~$5 million in Grants

Under the 2021 Apprenticeship Expansion Program, it is anticipated that the state will award approximately $5 million to grantees with a goal of serving 750-800 new registered apprentices and 40 new registered apprenticeship programs.

DCEO will use $5 million from the U.S. DOL Apprenticeship Expansion Award to target in-demand industries and ramp up efforts to recruit diverse apprentice candidates. This program will continue to expand and diversify registered apprenticeships assisting in developing a talent pipeline meeting Illinois' workforce's need.

The grant will support efforts to reach industries heavily impacted by COVID-19. Programming will prioritize low-income individuals, older workers, women, returning citizens, persons with disabilities, veterans, and youth while ensuring programmatic design, recruitment, and retention efforts reflect overarching diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goals.

- Effective January 1, 2020, employers are allowed a tax credit for qualified educational expenses associated with qualifying apprentices. Employers may receive a credit of up to $3,500 per apprentice against the taxes imposed by subsections (a) and (b) of Section 201 of the Illinois Income Tax Act, and an additional credit of up to $1,500 for each apprentice if (1) the apprentice resides in an underserved area or (2) the employer's principal place of business is located in an underserved area. The total tax credits issued

by the Department under this program may not exceed $5 million in any calendar year, which shall be allowed on a first-come first-served basis, based on the date on which each properly completed application is received by the Department. In 2021, 13 employers took advantage of this tax credit.

- The IWIB Apprenticeship Illinois Committee is one of 4 content-focused committees of the IWIB. The chair is a member of the IWIB. Other members of this committee do not have to be appointed by the Governor and can be invited by the chair. There are 21 voting members of this committee, and include representatives of IT, manufacturing, labor and more. The committee has also re-engaged Illinois State Board of Education's Career and Technical Education Director as a member to work on expanding youth apprenticeship.

The committee focuses on providing leadership on:

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

Other activities being performed by the committee include:

- redesigning the Apprenticeship Illinois website with employer input;
- actively working on marketing and outreach for businesses interested in apprenticeship;
- a monthly email update;
- exploring the creation of some sector advisory groups to work with U.S. DOL Office of Apprenticeship on standards for registering apprentices;
- exploring sponsoring an industry specific webinar series for employers as part of apprenticeship outreach campaign in 2022;
- publishing a youth apprenticeship report in September 2021 outlining challenges and opportunities to expand youth apprenticeship in 2022;
- prioritizing apprenticeship data during the upcoming years.
- In early 2019, DCEO funded 10 organizations to serve as apprenticeship intermediaries, navigators, or both to expand existing and create new apprenticeship programs. This investment is modeled after the experience of other states in using apprenticeship navigators and intermediaries.
- ICCB was awarded a $3.9 million U.S. DOL Scaling Apprenticeships Through Sector-Based Strategies grant in 2019 that runs through June 2023. Over the four years, ten community colleges will offer pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships in the Information Technology sector through what is being called the Customized Apprenticeship Programming-Information Technology (CAP-IT). This collaborative effort will utilize Jobs For the Future (JFF) to promote large-scale expansion of apprenticeships including. Additional activities and training that have been added include monthly learning communities, quarterly operational meetings, and individual coaching sessions for the participating colleges.

- ICCB completed a pilot survey with community colleges to identify the depth and breadth of community college apprenticeships. This has provided a baseline for ICCB to take a closer look at community college apprenticeships and refine the survey as appropriate. Additionally, ICCB captures those students identified as being in apprenticeships.

- The St. Clair County Intergovernmental Grants Department (LWIA 24) is working with Soulcial Kitchen, which has established a food truck court and restaurant in Swansea, Illinois. The restaurant serves as a commissary and training facility for individuals with intellectual disabilities, veterans, and returning citizens that are Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding eligible. The unique program, the first of its kind in the United States, provides access to a two-year registered apprenticeship (Cook – Restaurant and Mobile operations) developed with the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship. Upon successful completion of the apprenticeship, the individual will have the opportunity to receive private funding to launch their own food truck and develop a unique hospitality business with an established route to market.
- Addressing the analysis done in Section II.a.1.A.iii and Section II.a.1.B.iii, Illinois' Title II and Title I partners, in collaboration with other statewide partners, are national leaders in Integrated Education and Training (IET), an adult educational strategy that primarily assists those without a high school diploma, English language learners, or those with basic skills deficiency with goal-oriented, relevant, practical knowledge. IET combines adult education basic skills with career and technical education training designed to provide college credit and industry-recognized credentials. This approach can offset the opportunity costs of education for individuals with family and work responsibilities by offering education leading to educational and economic mobility. For example, several community colleges serving large communities of English language learners have redesigned their curriculum to teach career and technical education concurrently and contextually leading to an industry-recognized certificate.
- The exponential increase in demand for Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) services during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the need for new and increased just-in-time communication strategies to the unemployed. Because every unemployed person's experience and need is unique IDES has looked at multiple ways to improve communications with a focus on those individuals who experience barriers to accessing public services. IDES improved web-based information (making IDES website mobile-friendly; adding information about other types of assistance; using plain language; providing information in the top six languages spoken in Illinois.) The options that offered are considerate of barriers that people in poverty typically face - transportation, caregiving, digital and language access - and are intended to reduce the time associated with receiving services, reducing the chances of not getting benefits in a timely manner, and provide information about how to find WIOA partner services and financial resources from other sources (SNAP, TANF, utility relief, etc.)
- In March 2021, Illinois was awarded one of ten competitive grants from the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices and accepted into the inaugural cohort of the NGA Workforce Innovation Network (NGA WIN) state grantees. This IDES led initiative included representation from the Governor's Office, Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), Department of Human Services (DHS), Department of Veterans Affairs, Central Management Services, and DCEO's Office Employment and Training. The Illinois team is targeting services to veterans who experience barriers to employment. The projected was completed in January 2022 and the lessons learned, best practices

and applicable discoveries will be applied to better serve an additional targeted population moving forward.

- Building on the lessons learned from the Kewanee Life Skills Reentry Center Project, DCEO and the Illinois Department of Corrections are strengthening their collaborative effort to meet the state-wide needs of both the labor market and returning citizens. Initially, DCEO provided seed funding to pilot the provision of one-stop services within the center which resulted in a resource room and on-site one-stop services in Kewanee and Murphysboro. Any further expansion was delayed by COVID. Most recently, DCEO and Corrections are working to expand partnerships in other local areas. IDOC's Reentry Administrator has met with DCEO and LWIA's to provide an overview of the facilities and protocols, information on the detainees and services they receive while incarcerated, and the home communities of parolees. Working together, the entities will align training with business and industry needs, bridge services within facilities and in the community, and strengthen the support system for individuals entering career pathways into the workforce.

- As part of Illinois Workforce Recovery Initiatives response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the state set aside $50 million in American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 funds to address the economic impact experienced by employers and individuals either under-employed, unemployed, or facing one or more barriers to employment. These funds were invested to retool the Job Training and Economic Development Program (JTED) that had been previously eliminated due to funding cuts. As part of the changes to the program, definitions and priorities aligning with WIOA were incorporated. This alignment with WIOA is part of Illinois' continued movement toward streamlining the workforce system that leads to a coordinated approach to service and expands job training opportunities to underserved populations.

- JTED emphasizes building strong pathways for displaced workers and youth through partnerships with employers in high demand sectors. The renewed investment in this approach, building on lessons learned, focuses on high opportunity career pathways in growing sectors identified in the State's WIOA Unified State Plan and the State's Five-Year Economic Plan. A significant component to the revamped program is a flexible pool of funds (barrier reduction funds) to help increase family stability and job retention by covering accumulated emergency costs for basic needs, such as housing-related expenses (rent, utilities, etc.), transportation, child care, digital technology needs, education needs, mental health services, substance abuse services, income support, and work-related supplies that are not typically covered by programmatic supportive services.

Establish and support equity goals

- In January 2021, the Illinois General Assembly passed HB 2170 The Education and Equity in Workforce Act. The Act required a feasibility study for the consolidation of State agencies charged with delivering WIOA services and to explore how efforts could be better aligned. The study reviewed the structure and activities of several peer states and offered recommendations for Illinois to move forward, including the establishment of a new statewide commission.

- The State's CTE Plan identifies goals to create an educated and skilled workforce. With equity being a tenet of the Plan, equity metrics are incorporated into each goal. Similarly, ICCB supports continuous quality improvement processes that assist colleges in developing, implementing and evaluating CTE programs of study with a specific focus on equity.

- Local workforce boards and employers are required partners within local Perkins applications. Local Perkins recipients must complete the Local Comprehensive Needs Assessment every two years. This assessment informs how Perkins funding will be spent in a specific region or local area, guiding equity-driven decision-making.
- The ICCB through its Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI) is focused on providing instructional and support services for African American students to ensure they gain short-term certificates that will yield high wages of at least 30% above the regional living wage. In its third year, the WEI 18 colleges will continue the efforts to reach more students, promoting equity and engaging more employers.
- The IWIB Equity Task Force has conducted extensive analysis of WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth participant data, disaggregated by race and sex. This analysis will be presented to the IWIB in June, 2022, along with recommendations to use disaggregated data by race, gender, and target populations to reveal disparities in policies and programs and to help establish equity goals for the Illinois workforce system.

Shorten the time from credential to employment

- Addressing the analysis done in Section II.a.1.A.iii and Section II.a.1.B.iii, with the assistance of the state's Title II and Title I partners, community colleges and universities in Illinois can award credit for prior learning if individuals can demonstrate they have achieved the objectives for one or more specific courses. Specific statewide policies are in place to award academic credit for military training. The State's CTE Plan emphasizes the importance of accelerating pathways for veterans and others by expanding prior learning assessment and competency-based education. Many institutions have already begun to explore or implement CTE style programs by becoming Entitled Institutions to offer Gateway Credentials for Early Childhood programs.
- Illinois continues to participate in the National Governors Association's State Collaborative Consortium to Understand and Support the On-Demand Workforce. Participation in this initiative will help Illinois identify ways to build the skills and knowledge that self-employed workers need to compete in the on-demand economy and develop socially responsible mechanisms for employers to leverage this talent.
- Addressing the analysis done in Section II.a.1.A.iii and Section II.a.1.B.iii, with the assistance of the state's Title II and Title I partners, the *Illinois Postsecondary Profiles* (IPP) is a data and accountability website initiative whose central vision is the creation of a powerful but accessible website through which interested stakeholders can access data pertinent to the Illinois Career and Technical Education, Associate Degree, Baccalaureate, and Graduate postsecondary experience for both the 2-year and 4-year sectors in meaningful and useful ways. The user interface of the IPP employs an innovative approach that is designed around user interests and allows exploration of the data along one of three distinct paths that should significantly enhance and simplify the experience. The user has the choice of searching by institutions that meet a certain set of criteria, searching based on their research or career interest area, or searching for information about the experiences of particular kinds of people. The tool draws from mainly local agency data, making it more current, more detailed, and more flexible than other postsecondary data tools.
- The *Illinois Community College Board Online Directory of Programs* web tool released in spring 2019 allows stakeholders to search all programs offered by the 48 community colleges in Illinois. The Directory includes information on programs in Career and Technical Education, Associate Degree, and Adult Basic/Secondary Education & English as a Second Language. The program information is searchable by community college

and/or area of study and includes program title, credential type, program length in credit hours, unique college prefix and number, program approval date, and nationally standardized classification of instructional programs (CIP code) taxonomy for ease of program comparison. The tool helps inform prospective students and various stakeholders, such as employers on the availability of programs to meet individual and workforce needs.

- Illinois launched a new centralized data portal for prospective Illinois college students that compiles information on graduation rates, costs, student debt, and, for the first time, potential career earnings of graduates of the state's two- and four-year institutions. The Illinois College2Career website features information from more than 100 public and private colleges on subjects including basic tuition and financial aid, program offerings and popular career paths for certain graduates.
- Addressing the analysis done in Section II.a.1.A.iii and Section II.a.1.B.iii, Illinois's Title I, Title II and Title III partners, with the assistance of other statewide partners, the Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS) enables seven state agencies to link early childhood, education and workforce data over time to better understand program effectiveness and anticipate future education and workforce needs. ILDS can deepen our understanding of the education and employment outcomes of Illinois learners and citizens. Examples include:
    - How many Illinois children do the state's early childhood programs serve, and what is the impact of these programs on later learning?
    - Are high school graduates prepared to succeed in community colleges and four-year universities?
    - What are the employment outcomes for college graduates and completers of various workforce-training programs?
- The Economic Information and Analysis Division (EI&A) of IDES has primary responsibility for the development and dissemination of workforce and labor market information in Illinois.
- Addressing the analysis done in Section II.a.1.A.iii and Section II.a.1.B.iii, Illinois's Title III and Title I partners created the Illinois Employment Business System (IEBS), a new cloud-based software platform that was developed by Commerce. IEBS is an example of a smart and predictive tool that provides quality workforce information and layoff tracking data from multiple sources to help avert layoffs and promote economic and workforce development. This system is easy to access and understand, enabling users to quickly locate real-time Dun & Bradstreet global business data, IDES labor market information, and State and local workforce layoff tracking data. IEBS may be accessed by smartphone, tablet, or laptop, providing current on-the-fly dashboards, analytic tools, and industry cluster information.

Integrate workforce services for job seekers

- The IWIB adopted a service integration policy that has been implemented in all Illinois workforce areas. This policy provides a detailed description of how service integration strengthens the operation and effectiveness of the State's network of one-stop centers. A self-assessment guide was developed that laid out a process for one-stop centers to use in collaborating with partners to agree on a baseline of service integration for seven goals identified as priorities by the IWIB.
- Training sessions were held along with webinars to engage and inform all partners in Illinois' workforce system as we moved from pilot to full implementation. Pilot LWIAs

tested out the self-assessment process, and lessons learned will be integrated into professional development, released as best practices or turned into new or revised policy. Also as part of the policy implementation, DCEO issued a funding opportunity for grant proposals that support the systemwide adoption of best practices in service integration and WIOA regional & local planning priorities outlined in the regional workforce development plans.

- The upcoming charges of the Workgroup include determining how often the self-assessment must be administered to document progress and identify improvement targets and looking at how to integrate/combine/fold one-stop certification into this process. Additionally, after evaluation of the pilot projects and the service integration grant outcomes, the Workgroup will determine what the next phase of service integration will encompass.

Give employers easy access to the skilled workforce they need

- The federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is available to employers who hire and retain veterans, recipients of TANF and SNAP, people with disabilities, people with a felony conviction, people living in designated empowerment zones or rural renewal communities, long term unemployed, and youth. Employers claim about $1 billion in tax credits each year under the WOTC program, and there is no limit on the number of individuals an employer can hire to qualify for this tax credit.

- The Employer Training Investment Program (ETIP) supports Illinois workers' efforts to upgrade their skills so they can remain current in new technologies and business practices. Employers must match training funds received from the ETIP program.

- WIOA provides the opportunity to improve services to employers and promotes work-based training through the One-Stop System. Illinois has leveraged the waiver process for work-based training to assist employers in meeting their needs for skilled workers. Illinois has requested and received two such waivers that allow the state to improve the workforce development system services to employers. One waiver allows the Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIBs) to increase the percentage of reimbursement allowable to employers for On-the-Job Training (OJT) to 90% under certain circumstances. The LWIB may approve increasing the reimbursement wage rate from the standard fifty percent (50%) to up to ninety percent (90%) when taking into account the following factors: participants have barriers to employment that require more intensive training than individuals without barriers; the size of the employer; the quality of the employer-provided training and there are advancement opportunities within the employer; and other factors the LWIB determines are appropriate. A second waiver request allows the state to adjust the six-month employment requirement for the purposes of conducting Incumbent Worker Training (IWT). Employees that do not have an established employment history with the employer for six (6) months or more can now receive incumbent worker training (IWT) that provides skills to advance in their job or get skills to stay in a job (layoff aversion).

- DCEO launched the Virtual Job Fair (VJF) platform as part of the Get Hired initiative which was one of the immediate responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Get Hired portal blended IDES and DCEO resources to provide a virtual marketplace for both job seekers and employers. From July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021, a total of 570 employer VJF booths were added totaling 33,393 job openings across all employer booths. 137 live VJF events included 310 employers and 9,232 participants.

Illinois has strongly advocated and supported the alignment of efforts towards in-demand industries, occupations, and skills. The intent is to firmly link education and training to the skills identified by businesses, ensuring that all program completers have acquired appropriate skills

when they enter the workforce. Additionally, Illinois promotes comprehensive career services that enable individuals to make informed decisions on education and training opportunities and maximize the individual potential for successful and rewarding careers, including those with developmental disabilities, low-skilled adults and other targeted populations. The state will work to develop policies and incentives to support the strategies and activities as outlined in this plan.

The fundamental approach to workforce development in Illinois is captured in our Vision Statement, jointly adopted by all WIOA partners:

"Promote business-driven talent solutions that integrate education, workforce and economic development resources across systems to provide businesses, individuals, and communities with the opportunity to prosper and contribute to growing the state's economy."

Illinois is focused on a variety of strategies and activities including:

- Coordinating Demand-Driven Strategic Planning at the State and Regional Levels
- Providing data and tools to support regional planning to align education, workforce and economic development strategies
- Conducting outreach to regional and local economic development organizations to improve regional collaboration in economic development planning
- Aligning and integrating business and job seeker services among the programs along with state and regional economic development partners
- Providing Career Pathways for Economic Advancement
- Exploring ways to fully mainstream targeted populations into sector-based career pathway initiatives ensuring equitable access and the opportunity for full participation (see the section on "Targeted Populations")
- Creating new pathways for success by preparing skills-deficient adults to take advantage of sector-based bridge programs
- Coordinating and Enhancing Career Services and Case Management
- Establishing case management teams to coordinate and support the delivery of enhanced case management services to participants across programs
- Supporting awareness of the benefits of work-based learning strategies for businesses, jobseekers and students
- Promoting continuous improvement in career services and case management through the identification of best practice models and incentivizing demonstration projects
- Promoting expanded use of labor market information by employers and job seekers that will allow them to promote and access job openings, review changing labor market trends, and identify education and training programs
- Supporting awareness and adoption of innovative private-sector models, such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Talent Pipeline Management Initiative
- Improving the Public-Private Data Infrastructure
- Working with core partners and the State of Illinois Chief Information Officer to develop a framework to integrate state intake, case management and reporting systems

- Expanding and improving the state education and workforce longitudinal data system to support the seven strategies
- Expanding pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships in all sectors to meet employers' needs for a well-trained workforce and to give individuals the skills to compete and be successful in the world of work

WIOA Implementation & Coordination

Under WIOA, the Illinois Workforce System began an evolutionary process that is already accelerating. This evolution is grounded in a new emphasis on inter-agency collaboration, data-driven strategies and continuous improvement through rigorous, ongoing analysis and evaluation. The following are representative examples of coordinated workforce development activities undertaken or planned.

WIOA Interagency Operations and Assistance

Illinois utilizes a designated WIOA Interagency Team, comprised of WIOA Core and Required Partner program administrators at the state and local levels review and address new and ongoing program implementation issues.

As new challenges arise throughout a program year, the WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team convenes State agency directors, executives, legal teams and program administrators to consider feedback from required partners throughout the state and to issue clear guidance for operationalizing the State of Illinois' vision and/or policies. This includes coordinating the issuance of annual the Governor's Guidelines for local MOU negotiations, development and amendments, as well as any other operational challenges related to shifts in service delivery and economic fluctuations. To ensure compliance and agreement, the WIOA Interagency TEam team also conducts state-level remediation with individual LWIAs to ensure agreement and effective implementation on MOUs and annual infrastructure funding agreements.

Economic Information and Analysis

IDES provides statewide and sub-state occupational employment projections to assist local workforce areas, along with other partners, to determine in-demand occupations and plan education and training curricula. The Interagency Work Group established an Interagency Data Team to develop comprehensive data reports that will be used in the state and regional plans. The Data Team will continue to work with the regional planning teams to provide additional data as needed. For the regions to be able to access labor market information that is specifically tied to the WIOA regional plans, the team will continue work on developing vehicles to access this specific information on whichever platform is utilized for the state. Currently, IDES provides labor market information on its website in a variety of formats including the Illinois Virtual Labor Market Information System (VLMI) that is supported by the DOL Workforce Information Grant and that is a required deliverable for all states. New industry and occupational employment projection tools are planned for rollout in 2022 that will make data analysis more user-friendly. These will continue to be refined as users identify additional features they would like to add.
The Data Team will also continue to expand its analysis to include data not previously reviewed, such as the number of startup companies, refining worker supply data and calculating supply gaps.

Staff from the core WIOA partners also worked on a proof-of-concept pilot project to analyze outcomes for certain community college program completers. This talent flow analysis led to a successful evaluation of where graduates found employment and identified wage differentials based on industry and locale. The project led to the US Chamber of Commerce posting a summary analysis and a technical how-to guide online to share with communities involved in its Talent Pipeline Management Initiative.

Workforce Education Strategic Planning

The ICCB worked with state and local partners in the development of a statewide Workforce Education Strategic Plan (WESP). Currently, ICCB has developed surveys that will be shared with the President's Council and be completed by the community colleges. The surveys are linked to the Strategic Directions (below) in the WESP and will inform ICCB regarding community college employer engagement, among other topics. Additionally, the results will be shared with stakeholders across the workforce and education systems and with the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board to ensure that various entities can utilize the information to strengthen the workforce system's ability to effectively respond to the business community.

WESP Strategic Directions:

- Strategic Direction 1: Increase Early Career-Related Education and Exposure
- Strategic Direction 2: Address Essential and Occupational Skill Gaps
- Strategic Direction 3: Align Education and Training Programs to Employers' Needs
- Strategic Direction 4: Strengthen Connections among Public Partners and Engagement and Alignment with Business

Technical Assistance and Professional Development

Illinois continues to coordinate technical assistance and professional development activities to support the priorities outlined in this plan. The CAP-IT Initiative – utilizing the U.S. DOL Scaling Apprenticeships through Sector Based Strategies grant – has at its core a strong professional development component designed to engage the community colleges and their partners in understanding employers' needs and how to recruit and work with them to build apprenticeships that meet the needs of employers. Professional development is being conducted by leading community colleges, major IT corporations and national entities, such as Jobs For the Future.

ICCB has established, grown, and expanded the Transitions Academy to assist colleges and partnerships working on developing Bridge and ICAPS (Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System)/IET programs by increasing awareness of the expanding partnership between Adult Education and Career and Technical Education as it relates to the IET/ICAPS models, Illinois Bridge programs, and Illinois Programs of Study.

Professional development for the workforce development system is designed by the WIOA Professional Development Committee. The WIOA Professional Development Committee includes representatives DCEO, ICCB, IDES, and DHS.

The WIOA Professional Development Committee is charged with coordinating regional and statewide professional development for the WIOA System as it relates to WIOA implementation, service integration and policy.

WIOA State Summit

The WIOA Summit started as a statewide workforce development professional development event in 2017. The Summit has taken place each year following - though the Summit content was rolled out virtually over three months in 2020 due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Summit reflects the commitment to collaboration and the unified mission fostered by WIOA. The Summit leadership team, composed of representatives from each WIOA core partner, worked together to develop an engaging and dynamic conference providing useful information to professionals working across the vast range of aligned WIOA partner services.

The WIOA Professional Development Team intentionally designed the 2021 Summit to assist our local core partner staff and board members, by providing practical guidance on service integration.

The overarching goals for the Summit are:

- deepening collaboration among workforce development, education, economic development, and other partners
- fostering the development and expansion of innovation in service integration
- and increasing opportunity for equity and multi-partner service delivery.

On April 27 and 28, 2021 the WIOA professional development committee hosted the 2021 Virtual WIOA Summit with the theme of service integration: collaboration and innovation. Over 1,000 of our local core partner staff, stakeholders, and board members joined virtually to experience the WIOA Summit. The Summit theme reflects the commitment to collaboration and the unified mission fostered by WIOA. The 2021 Virtual WIOA Summit was intentionally designed to assist our local core partner staff, and board members by providing practical guidance on service integration.

All session recordings are available on the Illinois Workforce Academy website.

As we move into 2022 the WIOA Professional Development committee is working to finalize the structure for a hybrid conference in April of 2022 to increase access and provide a safe platform for dialogue.

Workforce Wednesday Webinars

The WIOA Professional Development Committee facilitates and supports the Wednesday Webinar series. Direction and selection of topics for the webinars are determined by evaluations from previous events and guided by the WIOA Professional Development Committee.

Every Monday an announcement is shared with the WIOA system (1,000+ recipients) on upcoming WIOA Professional Development. All webinars are recorded and shared on the Illinois Workforce Academy Website and workNet. On average, the Workforce Wednesday webinars are attended by 250 WIOA professionals each week.

In 2021, the committee made the intentional choice to change the name from the WIOA Wednesday Webinars to the Workforce Wednesday Webinars to acknowledge the broad range of professional development and attendance.

WIOA Portal & Newsletters

The state has developed a web portal to organize implementation documents, policies and technical assistance information. To facilitate common and ongoing communications, the Interagency Work Group initiated a joint monthly newsletter entitled “Illinois Works Together” to provide a source of common information about WIOA implementation progress for all local program partners and stakeholders. Additionally, the ICCB collaborated with the partners to release a newsletter to highlight WIOA activities providing a better understanding of partner agencies' requirements to the adult education and career and technical education community.

Work-Based Learning Technical Assistance

Ongoing technical assistance and the use of additional DOL funds to expand the use of apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships are currently underway. The experience local areas and community colleges are gaining through these projects is expected to help embed WIOA formula funding support for apprenticeships across the state along with other funding as it

becomes available. Online resources, such as assessments and planning tools were made available on Illinois workNet. An analysis of work-based learning activity is found in the Title IB section of this document.

Business Engagement

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) established an employer focused standing committee, known as the IWIB Business Engagement Committee (BEC). The committee helps inform the state's workforce development system of the needs of businesses, including their workforce skills and education priorities.

The Committee established Work Groups that were charged with developing policies and procedures towards each of the three major committee priorities. The work groups and priorities are as follows:

1. The Industry Partnerships Work Group helps the committee engage Illinois' business community in the development and direction of regional industry-led sector partnerships that will convene employers, workforce development professionals, and other regional institutions and partners. These partnerships will seek to coordinate investments, align workforce and education systems, and promote economic growth across the state.

2. The Communications Work Group helps the committee develop and improve communication mechanisms between employers and the workforce development system to increase employers' awareness of the services that are designed to provide them with the skilled workforce they require.

- The Board Recruitment Work Group helps the committee assist the IWIB with outreach and recruitment to the board of business representatives from across the state, and to assist Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIBs) with outreach and recruitment to those boards as well.

Current BEC projects include:

- piloting a project to encourage industry partnerships in the Manufacturing sector through a relationship with a business association in that sector who will act as a "business champion" to help carry the message of the positive impact of industry partnerships for developing a companies workforce;

- a project to develop and implement a unified messaging strategy to be utilized by all levels and regions of Illinois' workforce development system to clearly project the utility of that system to business; and

- development of written and online onboarding materials that will more easily acclimate new board members to the activities of workforce boards and their role as business people in guiding workforce system development.

In addition to the BEC efforts, collaboration at the state level between local workforce and economic development agencies continues to create unique and exciting opportunities. Opportunities to further integrate and align business services is supported through information sharing and referrals across programs. This is supported at the state level between interagency teams such as the DCEO's Office of Employment, cross-functional DCEO offices (Regional Economic Development, Office of Minority Economic Empowerment and Office of Trade Investment) and IDES Business Service Teams. Supported strategies include:

- Business Engagement: Establish collective business engagement teams to conduct coordinated business outreach and employer meetings to understand and assess current workforce and economic development needs.

- Coordinated Presentations: Work with Chambers and other membership organizations to coordinate business service presentations on state and local services.
- Ongoing Communication: Schedule monthly or quarterly system convenings designed to bring together all workforce-related business service providers in the region or local level and offer information sessions focused on information sharing and networking.
- Outreach: Strategic business outreach designed to collectively serve businesses, so services are not siloed but focuses on delivering solutions to expressed business needs.
- Promotion: Identify opportunities to disseminate comprehensive business services resources through various outreach channels such as newsletters, mailings, social media, etc. to champion
- Shared Resources: Coordinate, connect, and align state and local grants, programs, and assets through shared client ownership and accountability.

Additionally, Illinois is building a workforce system that fortifies Illinois' talent pipeline which requires business engagement. Through strategies focused on understanding employers and their need for talent, the workforce system can broadcast those skill competencies and credential requirements to skill providers, such as community colleges, community-based organizations, business associations, and other training programs. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Talent Pipeline Management® (TPM) initiative is one strategy being utilized to help address chronic regional and local skill gaps. TPM is an employer-led approach that organizes the business community into employer collaboratives to address its most critical workforce needs using talent supply chain strategies and practices. TPM® was started in 2014 by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce as an effort to mobilize the business community to close the skills gap by applying lessons learned from supply chain management to education and workforce partnerships. The TPM strategy has shown success in Illinois when recruiting employers to sponsor apprenticeships, create consistent messaging, address barriers, and provide opportunities to align workforce solutions and continues to be integrated in workforce initiatives.

Support Employer-Driven Regional Sector Initiatives

The workforce system must have a better understanding of business needs to ensure that efforts are truly leading to solutions for critical skill shortages. A proven model to improve communication between businesses and workforce programs is the use of an employer-driven sector partnership. The state has and will continue to provide funding and technical assistance to promote the development of business collaborations. DCEO provided on-site technical assistance to groups of businesses and stakeholders working to establish manufacturing sector partnerships in three economic development regions.

Regional sector-based listening sessions were held in the fall of 2018 and early 2019 in Manufacturing and Healthcare. Findings regarding issues raised by businesses at these events were added to cross-sector surveys conducted by the interagency Integrated Business Services Workgroup. A findings and recommendations report was issued in late 2019 and is currently being used to inform ongoing and future business engagement efforts. This workgroup evolved into a standing committee of the IWIB dedicated to business engagement efforts.

Commerce staff continue to speak to business groups. In 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2021, staff addressed the Illinois Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives to encourage business leaders to work together to jointly address their workforce needs. In 2019, we continued this partnership by working with this group to arrange a speaker from the Chicago Apprentice Network to provide business-to-business information sharing on the benefits of apprenticeships.

Staff from DCEO and IDES jointly participated in a Talent Pipeline Management Academy attended by system representatives from all regions of the state to provide foundational information on the benefits of business-driven collaborations. In 2019 local staff at these agencies attended a series of Talent Pipeline Management training events in Washington DC. This training provided practical lessons in working through the six phases of TPM and allowed trainees to learn and ask about best practices from more experienced practitioners from across the US. DCEO continues to promote awareness and adoption of Talent Pipeline Management principles among businesses and other stakeholders across the state. Ongoing, in-state training academies for business groups, local workforce staff, state rapid response staff, and other stakeholders are planned for the duration of this plan.

Inclusion Initiatives

The Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Rehabilitation Services is working with the core partners to integrate the national technical assistance effort funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute for Community Inclusion into the State's business engagement strategy. This effort is focused on engaging businesses throughout the state through job-driven vocational counseling concentrated on potential opportunities for individuals in high-growth sectors.

WorkShare Illinois

In May 2021, IDES launched a short-term compensation program to provide employers with an alternative to layoffs. Under a WorkShare Illinois plan, employers reduce the hours of employees who, in turn, receive a partial unemployment benefit for the duration of the partial layoff. Employers benefit from the program by maintaining a trained workforce during temporary periods of business downtown and avoiding turnover costs associated with hiring and training new employees. Employers can have multiple plans, allowing flexibility to tailor plans for the needs of business units with different challenges. IDES and DCEO are coordinating on outreach to employers and DCEO is securing a vendor to assist with marking materials.

Career Pathways for Targeted Populations

Illinois' efforts to align education, workforce, and economic development through a statewide definition for career pathways lays a solid foundation to promote leading career pathway models and best practices. This uniquely positions the IWIB to facilitate connections between workforce and education with business and industry partners. Furthermore, this positions the IWIB and the State to create a common set of expectations that will enable the alignment of career pathways programs and build a stronger talent pipeline across all populations.

Career pathway development in Illinois continues to expand so that it will encompass every level of the education system to meet the needs of our diverse populations, including those that face multiple barriers to achieving self-sufficiency. The pathways are a basis for clusters of specific occupations or careers grouped together because they share similar interests, strengths, and skills. A key to a robust career pathways system is the full incorporation of portable, stackable credentials into the system, particularly at the postsecondary level. Fortunately, in Illinois, the incorporation of portable, stackable credentials has been an ongoing commitment of the postsecondary career and technical education system since the implementation of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act (Perkins IV) and there is a strong partnership between the education and workforce systems to ensure alignment that meets the needs of students, jobseekers, and businesses.

Public Comment

Illinois' Unified State Plan was released for public comment on February 1, 2022. There were two public webinars held during February to explain the modification and its contents. The summary of the comments submitted regarding the Unified State Plan modification is available

in Attachment B (https://www.illinoisworknet.com/WIOA/Resources/Documents/ATTACHMENT%20B%20-%20public%20comments%20for%202022%20wioa%20usp%20modification.pdf).

To further increase collaboration in the development of the Unified State Plan, surveys of the business and organized labor communities in Illinois were conducted in December 2021. The purpose of these surveys was to further inform this Plan's economic analyses and outlined strategies. Full results of the two surveys are included as Attachment C (https://www.illinoisworknet.com/WIOA/Resources/Documents/Attachment%20C%20-%20Stakeholder%20Surveys.pdf).

B. The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities

This section provides a snapshot of the strengths and weaknesses of Illinois' workforce system, particularly since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and other economic fluctuations since 2020. Core partners collaboratively identified the strengths and weaknesses as part of the unified planning process and as part of the 2022 modification process, focused on better aligning and integrating service delivery to achieve the state's vision, principles, goals and strategies even as the global and economic context changes.

Illinois' Strengths in Regard to Activities listed in Part A.

WIOA motivated state leadership to establish systems and protocols that foster deep and ongoing interagency communication. The level of trust and collaborative problem-solving has accelerated and broadened in scope since 2020, leading to multiple innovative workforce development activities.

WIOA Implementation & Coordination

- The IWIB continues to strengthen its role in the implementation and oversight of the WIOA provisions.
- The Governor in 2021 formed a Commission on Workforce Equity and Access, which continues to examine the state's workforce system from a holistic approach and is examining design enhancements. This includes streamlining state services and governance in a way that reflects and advances equity and accountability. The Commission is planning to issue recommendations later in 2022, benefitting from broad stakeholder engagement that will be continued and incorporated into planning for Illinois' WIOA State Plan for 2024.
- The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) partnered with the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) and other workforce partners to develop the Illinois Employment Business System (IEBS), during the past two years. The employer-focused system utilizes nationally and regionally available data, information and services to paint a landscape of macro and micro-economic conditions in the state. State and local workforce education specialists and economic development specialists utilize the tool to make data-driven decisions and strategies for self-sustaining jobs and long-term business stability.
- Multiple core partners contributed to the development of the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) Workforce Education Strategic Plan (WESP), which laid the foundation for the joint development of the WIOA Unified State Plan.
- Illinois has been successful in administering innovative education and training initiatives, such as adult education curricula that includes career development, workforce preparation, transition services, technology integration, employability skills, and comprehensive student support services which result in a student engaging in

college credit bearing courses while obtaining a high school equivalency certificate and an industry recognized credential, and pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships.

- Through a statewide partnership, a five-year Adult Education Strategic Plan was that includes an emphasis on best practices, college and career readiness, technology and postsecondary transitions and lifelong learning. All of these assists in the development of talent to fill the workforce needs.
- The IWIB continues to develop statewide to ensure full stakeholder input and effective implementation plans. This includes the development and implementation of the certification and service integration policies and updates to the eligible training provider list (ETPL) service integration policy.
- The state is encouraging the use of lean principles in workforce development programs.
- State partners continue to work collaboratively and explore opportunities for service alignment through service integration.
- The State continues to refine activity tracking systems to allow for improved understanding of activities, outcomes and businesses engaged.

Technical Assistance & Professional Development

- Another strength is Illinois' focus on technical assistance and professional development through state-level teams and two-way communication with required program partners around the state.

The WIOA Professional Development Committee includes representatives from the Illinois DCEO, the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS), and IDES.

The WIOA Professional Development Committee is charged with coordinating regional and statewide professional development for the WIOA System to support WIOA implementation, service integration and policy.

The WIOA Professional Development Committee jointly plans the following:

- The annual WIOA State Summit – a gathering of more than 1,000 workforce development professionals, program leaders and staff from across Illinois engage to share best practices and lessons learned on implementation issues including service integration, equity, and system integration.
- Workforce Wednesday Webinars – weekly virtual professional development for the WIOA system on topics ranging from performance to trauma.

In addition, Illinois has designated interagency teams of state-level program executives, administrators and legal counsels to provide operational guidance and ensure compliance with Federal and State regulations and policies. This includes public webinars, written guidance and direct technical assistance to support required partners in regional and local planning and successfully negotiating Memoranda of Understanding on shared costs and service delivery in American Job Centers.

Business Engagement

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB)'s standing committee known as the IWIB Business Engagement Committee (BEC) remains one of Illinois' strengths. Through this committee, the IWIB seeks to focus Illinois' workforce development system on the needs of businesses and to hear their perspectives on workforce skills and education priorities. The mission of the BEC is to provide guidance and direction to help bridge the gap between Illinois'

important business sectors and employers, and the Illinois workforce development system. The BEC has three main priorities in the fulfillment of this mission:

1. To engage Illinois' business community in the development and direction of regional industry-led sector partnerships that will convene employers, workforce development professionals, and other regional institutions and partners. These partnerships will seek to coordinate investments, align workforce and education systems, and promote economic growth across the state.

2. To develop and improve communication mechanisms between employers and the workforce development system to increase employers' awareness of the services that are designed to provide them with the skilled workforce they require.

3. To assist the IWIB with outreach and recruitment to the board of business representatives from across the state and to assist Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIBs) with outreach and recruitment to those boards.

The Committee established work groups to develop policies and procedures addressing each of the three priorities described above. Those Work Groups are the Industry Partnerships Work Group, tasked with priority 1 above; the Communication Work Group, tasked with priority 2, and; the Board Recruitment & Engagement Work Group, tasked with priority 3.

The BEC, and particularly its work groups, spent a number of months engaging in planning, fact-finding and taking initial actions. This eventually culminated in the development of five findings that guided its work in 2021. These findings led to the following activities.

1. System Messaging (Communication Work Group)

- A broad group from Illinois' community of practice—Illinois Workforce Partnership (IWP), WIOA partners, Integrated Business Services, DCEO Team RED, Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development, business representatives—convened to work on the message. They suggested the following common message that could be shared by the workforce community of practice:

"Businesses thrive when they have access to the skilled workers they need, now and in the future. We help businesses recruit, hire, train and retain the skilled employees that they need to thrive and grow."

- This statement has been tested within the business community before release for discussion, acceptance and implementation by the wider community of practice in 2022.

2. Communication Within the Workforce System (Board Recruitment & Engagement Work Group)

- The IWIB now publishes a monthly newsletter distributed broadly to consistently communicate goals, activities, initiatives and highlights of individual IWIB members.

- A survey of Illinois Workforce Partnership (IWP) members was conducted to gain feedback on communication needs. IWP will continue to collaborate with the BEC to examine and develop mechanisms to better communicate with local partners.

- A quarterly report or newsletter of Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIB) activities will be developed to better inform the IWIB's own goal and initiative development processes. Suggestions for integration were virtual forums, podcasts, Facebook groups, video messaging, an RSS feed to collect relevant social media posts, links to LWIB minutes and other documents, and other technology-based means of communication. Also proposed were to have IWIB members attend LWIB meetings on a more regular basis, as well as having IWIB members attend IWP meetings.

3. Small Business Focus (Communication Work Group)

- THE BEC and IWIB will identify the resources and supports available to small businesses across the state to recruit, hire, train, retrain and retain workers.
- The state will clearly and simply communicate the resources and support available to small businesses in a manner that makes it easy for them to navigate the system to find support for their specific needs.
- Develop a network of Business Sector Champions to help deliver important information statewide and locally.
- Make the latest information and updates easy to access for small businesses. Identify instant help options such as web-based chat or virtual assistants to help navigate resources as needed, when needed (24/7).

4. Industry Partnerships (Industry Partnerships Work Group)

- A set of training modules were developed that will allow IWIB members, LWIB members and business association leaders to receive training on the concepts and implementation of sector strategies and Talent Pipeline Management. Deeper training based on the current TPM Navigator model will also be available for business services staff throughout the state.
- A practice of identification and recruitment of business champions for each targeted industry, along with new and emerging business partnerships, is being piloted in 2022 with the Technology Manufacturing Association.

5. Board Member Onboarding (Board Recruitment & Engagement Work Group)

- A manual for onboarding of local (LWB) and state (IWIB) workforce board members, including membership responsibility and expectations, roles within committees and workgroup structure, has been completed.
- Targeting business representatives on local boards and businesses currently using the system for membership on IWIB was written into the recruitment strategy for gaining new business members on the state board.
- A "college" within the Illinois Workforce Learning Academy has been developed that will provide orientation information for use in IWIB and LWIB onboarding processes.
- The BEC is writing a proposal for a process to recommend to the Governor's Office, with timing to make recruitment, appointment and onboarding a more structured annual activity.

As required by WIOA 101(d)(3)(iv), the IWIB Business Engagement Committee will work together with the various cross-agency teams to better align and integrate business services among the core programs, along with state and regional economic development partners.

Business Service Teams (BST) will promote, market, connect and provide access to initiatives that afford businesses the opportunity to access and implement available workforce programs and services applicable to their needs.

The state provided technical assistance to local programs regarding business engagement, sector strategies, work-based learning, labor market information and best practice models to improve services to special target populations. This effort will continue.

Illinois is expanding the number of effective business-led regional sector partnerships that exist and that can be leveraged as models for the rest of the state. Additionally, the state, through a

statewide partnership, has developed an Essential Employability Skills framework designed to address employer needs.

The state also developed the Service Integration Policy, corresponding framework and self-assessment tools for the local partners. This is based on the WINTAC model and is designed to assess partners' level of integration. Through the self-assessment, local areas will be able to identify where they have strengths and weaknesses in moving towards integration and will enable them to strategize how to continue to move forward together.

The Governor's Interagency Technical Assistance (TA) Team, through a review of individual agency reporting systems and partner business engagement, may now identify areas where assistance is needed. The Governor's Interagency TA Team will support these business service teams through guides and tools, as well as professional development and training, and will take steps to confirm that integrated business services teams are functioning and working within the agreed parameters as described by the State of Illinois Integrated Business Services framework document. It should be noted that the Governor's Interagency TA Team is different and has a much larger charge than the WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team.

Career Pathways for Targeted Populations

One of the most effective ways in which the post-secondary CTE system has modeled good partnerships in Illinois is through the implementation of the Pathways to Results (PTR) initiative. PTR has been utilized in over 120 post-secondary CTE programs across the state.

Illinois adopted a statewide definition of bridge programs, which allowed for consistency in program development. The state's bridge programs continue to prepare adults with limited academic or limited English skills to enter and succeed in post-secondary education and training leading to career-pathway employment.

Illinois created a Career Pathways Dictionary and agreed upon a statewide career pathways definition, which is included in this plan.

Illinois was awarded several apprenticeship grants that will continue to strengthen the ability of the state to increase the number of individuals who successfully move through career pathways and into good-paying jobs.

The state is pursuing innovation in providing employment opportunities to individuals with disabilities by connecting them with businesses that match their skills and helping them overcome any barriers they have to employment.

Connecting Job Seekers with Employers

Developed by the State of Illinois Governor's office since 2020, Get Hired Illinois is an online portal that provides an access for connecting employers and job seekers. The site highlights job listings, job fairs, and virtual training resources for job seekers. The site also provides direct links to both DCEO and IDES resources and employer job openings.

Virtual Job Fairs (VJF) were launched in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to provide information sessions to recruit potential candidates for job openings. VJF was launched in May 2020 as part of the Get Hired initiative. Employers across industry sectors could host individual or collaborative virtual events. By setting up an employer booth and hosting a VJF, employers could connect to job seekers across economic development regions.

Illinois Career and Technical Education

Illinois Career and Technical Education (CTE) provides students with the academic and technical skills necessary to succeed in the knowledge and skills-based economy. Students participating in these programs are held to specific and reliable industry-based learning

standards to ensure that they are fully prepared for postsecondary education and for the high-wage, high-skill and high-demand career of their choice.

ICCB moved early to adopt a holistic career pathways approach to implementation. For example, the ICCB, CTE and Adult Education divisions partnered to develop an Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System (ICAPS). The purpose is to provide integrated CTE and Adult Education instruction, so adult students can earn at least one "stackable," credit-bearing, post-secondary education credential as well as industry-recognized credentials that lead to high-wage employment in Illinois. In integrated programs, career and technical educators teach classes alongside adult education instructors, ensuring that students receive not only integrated curriculum inclusive of basic skills enhancements, but also curriculum tied to the latest in industry standards developed in partnership with employers.

In 2017, the Illinois General Assembly passed Public Act (PA) 100-0261 and PA 100-0195, allowing the ICCB to curate credit for prior learning policies from community colleges throughout the state. PA 100-0195 is specifically attentive to military credit for prior learning. The ICCB has focused on Military Occupational Specialties, such as criminal justice, human resources, and occupations in the transportation, distribution, and logistics fields. Additionally, state regulations will be enacted by June of 2018 that require each community college to develop credit for prior learning policies that address a variety of methods for earning these credits. Community colleges, four-year colleges and universities in Illinois play a key role in helping residents pursue credentials that will help them access high-skill, high-wage jobs. Partnerships with high schools ensure graduates are college-ready, while dual credit opportunities, transfer assistance, recognition for prior learning, and other innovative approaches help learners – particularly low-income individuals – move through the P-20 pipeline.

Bridge Programs

The goal of bridge programs is to sequentially bridge the gap between the initial skills of individuals and the skills they need to enter and succeed in postsecondary education and career-path employment. Illinois' 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 as identified by the local labor market information. Individuals in all targeted populations could potentially benefit from a bridge program. Illinois has had a unified bridge definition between the community college system and the workforce since 2010. This definition has since been integrated into the Career Pathways Dictionary and adopted by the broader stakeholder group that created the Dictionary. Bridge programs must be built on the criteria below to be an approved program in the state.

- The delivery of bridge programs does not have to be through an eligible training provider with a certified training program. They may be provided by an approved and funded Adult Education program, the credit or non-credit department(s) of a community college, Community-based organization (CBO) or other type of provider that offers non-credit workforce training.
- Training programs may be offered by a single entity (e.g., a community college or a CBO) or by a partnership (e.g., a CBO and a community college). Regardless of the provider, they may provide opportunities to earn college credit (such as through escrow credit accounts), may offer dual enrollment in credit and non-credit programs, or may offer a multi-level program that moves people from an adult education course offered by one provider to a non-credit occupational course offered by the same or another provider.
- All bridge program providers must use pre-skill assessments consistent with program requirements to place students into the appropriate courses as well as post-skill assessments to measure progress.

- All providers will use data tracking systems to collect and analyze key information about bridge program participants and graduates.

Under WIOA, the partners will update and enhance the current bridge definition policy by engaging Title I, Title II and college credit leaders and providers to learn what is working with the current policy and what could be adjusted to ensure that bridge programs are more widely implemented across Illinois. As a result, any new policy developed around the bridge definition and model will cut across all four of the core partner programs to ensure services are maximized for the students in the adult education programs. Furthermore, information garnered from the review of the definition, will inform new initiatives that promote sector-based pre-bridge and bridge activities, enhance and expand bridge programs offerings, and align with core partner WIOA requirements. The focus will be to expand access and success in these sector-based bridge programs across all WIOA partners, as a way to braid funding to ensure an integrated approach to service. As the leader in the development of bridge programs for Illinois, ICCB will use their lessons learned to help expand the program model across partners.

Integrated Education and Training (IET)

The ICCB Adult Education and Career and Technical Education divisions continue to support IET initiatives to provide adult education students with the opportunity to earn industry-recognized credentials, college certificates and college credit while studying to obtain a high school equivalency certificate or learn the English language. Through the IET program in Illinois, Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System (ICAPS), many students will be connected to Title I to ensure they have the services necessary to gain access to resources for training and employment opportunities upon completion. Additionally, ICCB created ICAPS Model Two – a non-credit model that includes all of the elements in ICAPS Model One but does not carry a postsecondary certificate. However, it does require a strong connection with a postsecondary institution and also requires the preparation of students to earn industry-recognized credentials.

Initiatives for Employment Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities

The Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services has worked effectively with DCEO on projects throughout the state that support employment opportunities for people with disabilities in the one-stop system. In one instance, DRS provided cooperative funding to support individuals with disabilities seeking to establish their own businesses. In another, DRS provided funding to community providers as part of an overall package including DEI funds. DRS and Commerce have a strong level of communication around the needs of the individuals being served and the goals of the projects. In 2017 Commerce and DRS developed a series of online video presentations providing information on state disability programs and workforce services for people with disabilities. This includes a set of videos in American Sign Language for the benefit of deaf individuals. DRS will continue to pursue development and expansion of agreements that further service integration and promote employment of people with disabilities. This includes agreements relating to services to students and youth with disabilities and transition services generally.

Assistive Technology

People with disabilities often rely on technology to access information, services and even employment. This makes it vital to ensure that web sites and information systems are compatible with assistive technologies – screen magnifiers, screen readers, speech recognition systems, etc. The Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services has expertise regarding assistive technologies and accessibility standards and will provide information and technical assistance to partner agencies to help ensure that all web sites and information systems within the workforce system are accessible by people with disabilities.

- DCEO and Corrections are building on the lessons learned from the Kewanee Life Skills Reentry Center Project, to strengthen their collaborative effort to meet the state-wide needs of both the labor market and returning citizens. IDOC leadership has met with DCEO Regional Managers to discuss the impact of and best practices for the existing parolees. These meetings have included discussions of community employers currently committed to hiring returning citizens, guided information shared at a Roundtable meeting of the Illinois Manufacturing Association and have clarified career-pathways training and employment readiness needs for the communities. The meetings have also served as preliminary planning for implementation of One-Stop Centers at targeted facilities, allowing IDOC and DCEO leadership to begin implementation of activities related to the Corrections/Workforce collaboration. These activities include:
    - Establish and implement training for IDOC and workforce staff
    - Explore and enhance business / corrections collaborations
    - Create One-Stop Centers within IDOC facilities
    - Increase detainees' awareness of workforce services
    - Assist IDOC establish and implement career pathways training opportunities within IDOC facilities
    - Establish data-sharing tools
- The Illinois Adult Education and Literacy Adult Education Advisory Council represents all categories of eligible adult education providers and stakeholders with the mission of identifying, deliberating, and recommending instructional priorities. During Fiscal Year 2019, the council included a committee focusing on the various needs of returning citizens as it related to the development of workplace skills and employability training. The recommendations from this committee will drive future actions with potential outcomes such as strengthening the educational pipeline between county jails and the Illinois Department of Corrections, developing a referral process for returning citizens to access One-Stop programs and local community colleges upon release, and develop a resource guide for returning citizens that provides information on adult basic education, ESL services, workforce training, and employability skills. The Illinois Adult Education and Literacy Adult Education Advisory Council will continue to host a committee focusing on the educational and workforce needs of justice-involved individuals and returning citizens.
- DCEO continues to support the Safer Foundation to provide individuals with arrest and conviction records (a priority population), primarily in Chicago's West and Southside neighborhoods the opportunity to participate in apprenticeships through the Safer Foundation Carpentry Construction Apprenticeship Program. Safer specializes in recruiting and connecting persons who have been overlooked, as well as the long-term unemployed, to meaningful career pathways and immediate income-producing "earn and learn" work experiences. The model provides support, resources, training, and career pathways for economic advancement for people with arrest and conviction records through accelerated work-based learning. It aligns and integrates programs of study leading to industry- recognized credentials and improved employment earnings, by building on training and available career services.
- The SAFER Foundation recently received an ICCB Innovation Bridge and Transitions grant. As a leader in working with returning citizens, SAFER Foundation will train individuals in the Information Technology (IT) field by equipping them with the tools,

industry knowledge and stackable credentials to enter and advance in IT. Entering participants will go through an initial IT Readiness Camp before advancing to the credential track.

Illinois' Weaknesses with Regard to Activities Listed in Part A.

The challenges for the workforce system in Illinois are summarized in this section. Illinois is positioned to address these challenges through the IWIB and its committees, the WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team and the local areas, including local partners. These groups constantly adapt and communicate, focusing on opportunities for future alignment between the core and required partners and guidance to operationalize any new standards.

WIOA Implementation & Coordination

- The quality of local career services currently lack consistency. Efforts continue to build capacity of field staff to provide high quality information, support, and guidance to program participants.
- The State needs sustainable funding for information technology (IT) and data systems to manage a new cohesive Management Information System (MIS) for both the DCEO and IDES.
- The State needs User Interface (UI) modernization and funding resources for sustainability of new IT systems.
- The level of regional and local cross-program collaboration varies but has improved significantly as local partner staff follow guidance from the State Interagency Technical Assistance Team.
- Historically, the service delivery model was characterized by a "siloed" approach. This weakness has improved significantly since 2015 among the state agency WIOA partners, but it remains a work in progress in some LWIAs. Illinois is challenged by geographical and local boundary alignment. Some program boundaries do not align with LWIA boundaries. For example, under Adult Education, "Area Planning Councils Districts" align with Community College Districts, while CSBG and SCSEP provider territories overlap with designated LWIAs.
- Required partners and agencies that administer core partners do not share a common understanding of data sharing and requirements or parameters under WIOA.

Technical Assistance & Professional Development

- While many live and recorded webinars are scheduled and intended to provide interactive communication with required partners and stakeholder groups, participation levels and range of participants widely varies. Continued exploration is needed to ensure a full menu of options for accessing technical assistance and professional development resources on many platforms, including digital and in person.
- An ongoing goal is to provide field staff professional development that improves outcomes for customers and participants.

Business Engagement

- The level and quality of employer engagement varies. However, local areas have embraced the importance of establishing ongoing business relationships and have demonstrated a strong interest in the state's unified business services framework. The IWIB Business Engagement Committee seeks to promote improved cross-agency collaboration and integration between both state-level and local area staff. The mission

now is to develop a single, reliable, agreed-upon strategy to support engagement and contact between employers and the workforce/economic development system.

- The level and quality of regional and local public-private sector partnerships vary. In 2018, the state invested in developing the capacity of intermediaries to promote the creation of regional sector partnerships. In 2021, DCEO invested additional resources to begin the development of in-state Talent Pipeline Management academies, working in concert with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. The first academies are slated for early 2022, with the intention to hold additional cohorts going forward to foster the development of sector partnerships and use of the TPM model.

Career Pathways for Targeted Populations

- Federal laws governing some programs limit data sharing, and the information collected is often not aligned across core partners due to statutory regulations (e.g., Adult Education does not require a social security number to receive services).
- There is also a misunderstanding on the part of some local partners as to what data sharing is permissible under WIOA. This is an example of something that can be addressed through technical assistance and guidance.
- Program statutory and regulatory requirements can serve as roadblocks to alignment. For example, DRS intake by other entities is prohibited because only DRS staff are allowed to handle "non-delegable functions" by statute.

Equity and Access

- While progress has been made in creating a more equitable and accessible workforce, the COVID-19 pandemic exemplified that the state's workforce system still needs to focus on being equitable, accessible, and effective. All executives, administrators, staff and partners must be better informed about how racial, social, and geographic inequities inform the jobseekers' and employers' experiences and outcomes across workforce programs. They must also be equipped with the knowledge, skills, and tools to identify inequities within the workforce system, explore the cause of those inequities, and implement solutions to advance equity within the system.

General Awareness

- Despite ongoing efforts to engage state, regional and local policy makers, from the state Congressional delegation to locally elected officials, it is clear that many do not have a complete and accurate understanding of Illinois' workforce system. Leading up to 2024, the IWIB and WIOA required partners plan to explore options to improve awareness and understanding of workforce programs across the state.

C. State Workforce Development Capacity

This section of the plan includes a summary of the workforce system and the capacity of state agencies and boards that are responsible for the administration of the workforce and education programs.

2021 - Workforce Consolidation Feasibility Study

In response to Illinois Public Act 101-0654 (HB2170), the Education and Workforce Equity Act, the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) was directed to "conduct a feasibility study regarding the consolidation of all workforce development programs funded by the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and conducted by the State of Illinois into one solitary agency to create greater access to job training for underserved populations."

To complete this mandate, the IWIB appointed a team to provide an objective perspective. The team worked with the state agencies administering the four core WIOA partner programs with these goals in mind:

- give a picture of both the ongoing accomplishments of the Illinois workforce system and the areas where there is room for improvement;
- describe the range of workforce consolidation choices while identifying fundamental questions that still need to be answered; and
- identify models and lessons learned from other states that have consolidated or partially-consolidated their workforce systems.

The team issued a report with multiple options for consolidating some or all WIOA core partner programs but advised a thorough review of customer and stakeholder experiences for each core partner program and the same for infrastructure and technology systems for WIOA and non-WIOA workforce programs.2021 - Governor's Commission on Workforce Equity and Access

Recognizing the need for a holistic and streamlined state workforce system with a focus on those who were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, the Governor formed the Commission on Workforce Equity & Access in 2021. The Commission is charged with creating a vision for an equitable, accessible, and effective state workforce system grounded in an understanding of user and stakeholder experience, including how racial, social, and geographic inequities inform experience and outcomes across Illinois' federally and state-funded workforce programs.

Among its top priorities, the Commission will find ways to strengthen and diversify existing workforce training programs to address shortages, expand access to talent and to promote equity and inclusion across all industries. The membership of the Commission includes a diverse group of workforce ecosystem stakeholders, including state agencies, workforce providers, employers, organized labor and workers' rights advocates, local workforce innovation areas, and education leaders.

Interagency Coordination and Planning

The Governor's Office and the IWIB provide the major mechanisms for promoting joint planning and policy development around the vision, principles, goals and strategies outlined in Illinois' Unified State Plan. The state workforce board has become a true strength to Illinois due to the business-focused efforts of its members. The IWIB has addressed its statutorily required functions through many avenues. Beginning in 2015, the Executive Committee has overseen a formal board professional development process that continues today and will lead to more technology-based, interactive elements beginning in 2020. A new manual, revised orientation plan, mentoring among members and with local boards, formalized and consistent protocols, and compliance with mandated activities of appointed members are only a few of the developments that continue to strengthen the knowledge and understanding of board members to WIOA, their functions, and the responsibilities to the board and the entire WIOA system. These are mentioned as an overview of the many efforts to educate the members on the system, available services and programs of the partners, and best practices in engaging them throughout their work.

The current IWIB Strategic Plan is in the process of being modified to reflect the current priorities of the board and State of Illinois, including the Governor's EO 3, Five-Year Economic Development Plan and elements of Illinois' Unified State Plan. Stronger collaboration with state and local partners will be key to the success of the board moving forward.

Discussions on appropriate modifications have led to changes in the current standing committees as the board deactivated the Information Technology Committee, created a

Business Engagement Committee, and better reflected the board's emphasis on leading the system in identifying and supporting continuous improvement opportunities through a revised set of priorities under the Continuous Improvement Committee (formerly labeled as the Evaluation and Accountability Committee). These changes address a more streamlined set of priorities of the board that will lead to achievable outcomes over the next 2-4 years. Collaboration is a strength of these standing committees, and other sub-groups of the IWIB, as they ensure input is received by multiple stakeholders including state and local board members, businesses, partner agencies and other key stakeholders.

The state continues to utilize a designated WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team (TA Team), consisting of WIOA core and required partners, to identify and jointly address WIOA implementation issues at the state, regional and local levels. The intended outcome is to provide consistent, coordinated direction and technical assistance to regional and local-level partners as they continue to enhance and strengthen established, effective One-Stop Delivery Systems.

The TA Team meets monthly to discuss WIOA implementation and one-stop service delivery issues raised by a local workforce board, local program partner or state partner staff, whether they are based in the central office, a regional office or in a local one-stop. Through regular feedback mechanisms, the TA Team is nimble enough to respond quickly to arising needs, such as adapting operations to evolving health and safety protocol and coordination with Federal and State guidance for in-person and remote service delivery. In addition, the TA Team continuously evaluates and acts on opportunities to collaboratively develop guidance to ensure state and local compliance with regulations for regional and local plans and for memoranda of understanding (MOUs) and annual infrastructure funding agreements. No local workforce area in Illinois has declared an impasse on MOUs and infrastructure funding agreements since the start of WIOA.

The WIOA Professional Development Workgroup continues to plan and host regional professional development events for the WIOA partner programs. The April statewide 2020 summit was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however the event returned in 2021 as a hybrid in-person/virtual event. Annual statewide summits are planned through June 2024.

These interagency planning efforts are supported through the efforts of three of Illinois' major public universities: Northern Illinois University (NIU), Illinois State University (ISU), and Southern Illinois University (SIU). Each institution brings valuable resources to the table. NIU's Center for Governmental Studies and Educational Systems Center support IWIB policy and data initiatives in areas that include service integration, apprenticeship, one-stop certification, and career pathways, among others. NIU also provides facilitation and logistical support for several IWIB committees. ISU's Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support (ICSPS) creates, supports and delivers professional development for career and technical education professionals across Illinois. ICSPS services include technical assistance, publication development, and the facilitation of program improvement strategies relating to college transition, recruitment, retention and completion. SIU's Center for Workforce Development designs and supports electronic tools and services offered on Illinois workNet in service to statewide workforce development activities under WIOA. Partnering with these institutions leverages important intellectual, technical, and administrative assets and offers an important opportunity for these universities to play a direct role in Illinois' workforce development.

State and Regional Planning Process

Governor Pritzker, in the opening days of his administration, issued EO 3, focused on workforce and economic development. State agencies, including those identified with WIOA were charged with responding and aligning with the Executive Order and prepared an action plan in response. EO3 is taken into consideration as workforce and economic development decisions are made at the state, regional, and local levels.

A Leadership Team includes high-level state policymakers with the authority to make commitments on behalf of their respective agencies, and other key public and private stakeholders whose involvement is critical to the development of the Unified State Plan.

The Leadership Team is responsible for establishing the vision and principles and directing the implementation of strategies included in the Unified State Plan. The Leadership Team has also worked with the WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team to oversee and direct the development of the regional planning process in Illinois. The planning process in each of Illinois' economic development regions included the review of data, establishment of goals, development of strategies and the integration of services.

The IWIB, through its committee structure, is continuing to provide leadership to align the IWIB Strategic Plan, the Unified State Plan, and the Governor's EO 3. The standing committees include the Executive Committee, Continuous Improvement, Apprenticeship, Career Pathways for Targeted Populations, and Employer Engagement. Oversight and direction provided by these committees provide continuity and support for the WIOA partner collaboration and integration that is demonstrated throughout the 2020 Unified Plan, Regional and Local Plans and MOUs.

State Agency Capacity

The following is a discussion of the capacity of the state agencies and boards that are responsible for the administration of the workforce, education and economic development programs outlined in WIOA.

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) – Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs

The Office of Employment and Training oversees funding of Title IB administration, training and wraparound services provided by the 22 local workforce areas in Illinois. The office employs just over 50 staff located in Chicago, Springfield, Marion and Peoria. Staff provides program oversight and technical assistance to local workforce boards and Title IB administrators and staff support to the IWIB. The Office of Employment and Training experienced vacancies in a small number of key positions mainly due to retirements in early 2019. Some of these have already been filled. Vacancies as of this writing are covered by temporarily reassigned duties until the position is filled. Additional details on program activities are in the section dedicated to Title IB.

DCEO – Employment and Training under the Community Services Block Grant Program (CSBG, authorized under Department of Housing and Urban Development)

Federal CSBG funds are administered by the Department and are awarded to 35 Community Action Agencies across the state. These agencies are required one-stop partners and have a presence in all comprehensive one-stops.

DCEO – Trade Adjustment Assistance Act Programs (Training)

The Office of Employment and Training oversees the administration of Trade funding for individuals connected with Trade-certified dislocation events. The Trade staff are housed in the Office of Employment and Training and in SFY21/PY20 managed 41 dislocation events impacting nearly 6,300 dislocated workers.

DCEO – Regional Economic Development

The Office of Regional Economic Development has over a dozen staff, most of which are housed in each of the ten Economic Development Regions to help connect communities and businesses to the myriad of programs and information sources available at the Department. Regional staff are briefed on workforce development issues and also provide stakeholder input for WIOA

regional planning. Regional Economic Development staff can connect businesses and regional industry groups to the appropriate local workforce area staff to help meet their talent needs.

DCEO – Business Development

The Office of Business Development operates an 800-line that provides assistance to businesses in, or considering operations in, Illinois. Call center staff are briefed on WIOA programs and can direct callers to the appropriate local American Job Center, or State of Illinois workforce staff for further assistance.

Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) - Wagner-Peyser Program

IDES administers the Wagner-Peyser program in 36 locations throughout Illinois' 22 local workforce areas. IDES employs approximately 72 staff to perform basic WP career services throughout the state, working diligently to connect job seekers and businesses. IDES employs staff throughout five regions who oversee the administration of the Wagner-Peyser services to job seekers and businesses in the local workforce innovation areas. IDES also operates the state's labor exchange system, Illinois Job Link. Unemployment Insurance/Trade Readjustment Assistance (UI/TRA)

IDES administers the Unemployment Insurance program in 36 locations throughout Illinois' 22 local workforce areas. IDES employs approximately 50 staff to perform basic UI and TRA career services in the American Job Centers. The 50 staff are located in American Job Centers, as well as through direct linkage. IDES also has staff throughout five regions that oversee the administration of the Unemployment Insurance/TRA programs in the local workforce innovation areas.

IDES – The Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) Program

JVSG staff provides veterans and other eligible persons with professional employment services throughout the American Job Center Network. Assisting veterans and other eligible persons in finding meaningful employment is a top priority at IDES. These services are provided at 36 locations throughout Illinois' 22 local workforce areas in all designated comprehensive one-stops. In addition to our frontline Employment Specialists, IDES has Veterans Employment Representatives that specialize in providing a full array of services to assist veterans and other eligible persons. Twenty offices are assigned a Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist and fifteen offices have an assigned Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER). For those offices where a DVOP is unavailable, the veterans and other eligible persons will be referred to an appropriate non-JVSG AJC staff member to receive basic/individualized career services, and/or training services, on a priority of service basis. DVOP specialists provide individualized career services to veterans and other eligible persons with significant barriers to employment. LVERs conduct outreach to employers and business associations and engage in advocacy efforts with hiring executives to increase employment opportunities for veterans and other eligible persons and encourage the hiring of all veterans and other eligible persons. LVERs promote the DOL-VETS HIRE Veterans Medallion Program to employers so they can be recognized for hiring/retaining veterans. IDES employs sixteen (16) LVER staff and twenty (20) DVOP staff. Program Authorization; Title 38, United States Code, Sections 4102A (b) 5 (38 U.S.C. §4102A(b)5). JVSG staffing levels are subject to the annual DOL-VETS grant funds received. Please see the "Stand Alone" JVSG State Plan for more details.

IDES – The Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFW) Program

IDES provides outreach services to the migrant and seasonal farmworkers (MSFW), to ensure that all services provided to (MSFWs) are qualitatively equivalent and quantitatively proportionate to the services provided to non-MSFWs as required by U.S. Department of Labor federal regulations (20 C.F.R. 651-658). To ensure compliance, the State Monitor Advocate (SMA) monitors IDES to ensure equity of services to MSFWs, provides technical assistance and

training to IDES staff, administers the Statewide Complaint System, and promotes the use of the Agricultural Recruitment System. To bring these services to MSFWs who are not being reached by the normal intake activities conducted by the local offices, the MSFW Program staff conducts outreach to MSFWs in their living, working or gathering areas to inform them about services available from the local job center offices. The services available include: the availability of referrals to agricultural and non-agricultural employment and training, referral to support services, testing, counseling, other job development services, information on the Statewide Complaint System, farmworker rights and services/resources provided by state agencies and community-based organizations. IDES has designated five (5) offices (Springfield, Champaign, Peoria, Mt. Vernon, and North Aurora) as Significant Local Offices due to an estimated large number of MSFWs in their respective service areas. Four MSFW outreach staff and the interim State Monitor Advocate are responsible for MSFW program activities. Illinois Community College Board (ICCB)

The ICCB was established to create a system of public community colleges that would be in reach of every Illinois resident and is now the largest provider of workforce training in Illinois and the third largest community college system in the country. Comprised of 48 community colleges in 39 districts, the system ensures that all Illinois residents have educational and training opportunities leading to high wage and high growth employment. Additionally, the ICCB oversees Adult Education and Family Literacy (a WIOA core partner - Title II) currently to over 75 providers, serving over 59,000 students, and receiving $51,728,825 in FY2020 state and federal funding. The ICCB also administers the Perkins postsecondary funds - $17,905,733 for FY2020 (WIOA required partner) for the 48 community colleges. Recently, ICCB received a Department of Labor Scaling Apprenticeships Through Sector-Based Strategies Grant for $3.9M that will serve over 1700 Illinois residents.

Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services (IDHS-DRS)

The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) administers Title IV activities and is the state's lead agency serving individuals with disabilities. DRS works in partnership with individuals with disabilities and their families to assist them in making informed choices to achieve full community participation through employment, education and independent living opportunities. The primary focus of the vocational rehabilitation program is to assist individuals with significant disabilities in obtaining and retaining competitive integrated employment. Vocational rehabilitation services are designed to prepare an individual for employment through an individualized planning process. DRS staff also provides assistance to workforce partners in the area of program accessibility and assistive technology. DRS provides services to individuals with disabilities in 45 field offices throughout the state. These offices are divided into 5 different regions. DRS serves approximately 40,000 individuals each year as young as age 14. Services provided include transition services to youth with disabilities in secondary education, post-secondary education training and supports, job placement assistance, counseling and restorative services. In FY19, DRS assisted 5,114 individuals with obtaining a successful employment outcome.

IDHS – Division of Family and Community Services

The Illinois Department of Human Services' Division of Family & Community Services is the state administrator of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. TANF is a time-limited cash assistance program for low-income families. DHS operates 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 barrier reduction service needs. These issues may be related to substance abuse, mental health and domestic violence. The FCRC identifies the customer's needs to create a Responsibility and Service Plan (RSP), which is a guide to services. The RSP contains employment and training needs, supportive service needs (e.g., transportation and uniforms) and childcare. Most TANF

customers are also eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and medical assistance.

The Division contracts with community-based organizations to provide either work experience or job placement for TANF Employment and Training customers. The Division provides oversight of programs statewide and the Division's goal is to cultivate more career pathway opportunities for our TANF customers.

The Department of Human Services' Division of Family & Community Services has a strong presence in Comprehensive One-Stop Centers and is committed to increasing workforce engagement with collaborative partnerships 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. Staff located in the Comprehensive One-Stop Centers is 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. To streamline the referral process, DHS is actively involved in cross-training sessions at the one-stop centers to enhance awareness of services and resources provided on-site.

Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA)

The Department administers the distribution of a significant amount of federal Senior Community Services Employment Program funding across the State. IDoA issues grants to local providers through a competitive application process and conducts oversight and monitoring of grants in accordance with federal regulations. Other national awardees of these program funds also issue grants to local providers in Illinois. In some cases, a provider may receive funds for this program of IDoA and these other federal awardees.

Illinois Department of Corrections

The Illinois Department of Corrections operates 28 Correctional Centers across the state of Illinois. Each facility offers adult basic education, GED programming, cognitive-behavioral programming, medical services, mental health assessment and treatment and vocational training to individuals in their custody. Within the Illinois Department of Corrections population, various needs are identified as barriers to positive re-entry back into the community. IDOC is committed to being a partner with other state agencies to assist in identifying barriers, collaborating on linkage to services and providing additional options for enrollment in appropriate benefits prior to release. IDOC is also committed to increasing workforce engagement in collaboration with state agencies to increase positive release outcomes for the individuals in their custody.

Local Area Capacity

The State of Illinois consists of 10 Economic Development Regions and 22 Local Workforce Innovation Areas. All local areas have established boards in place and have at least one comprehensive one-stop center. Staffing levels vary from area to area. In SFY21/PY20 more than $125 Million in WIOA formula grants were allocated to the local areas, with individual awards ranging from $1 to $50 Million.

The State Core Partners continue efforts to enhance local area capacity on several fronts including:

- Service integration for individuals
- Service integration for businesses
- Services to individuals with disabilities and other special populations

- Professional development

For example, the State is promoting a strong emphasis on improved service integration. The WIOA Core Partners are using the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's relationship with the U.S. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services to leverage resources from its Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC). Using the WINTAC service integration continuum, the State developed a process to build local area capacity for improved service delivery to both individual customers and businesses. Every local area completed an initial service integration self-assessment with input from all required one-stop partners. Local areas are tracking progress on locally selected goals and action items to improve service integration. Annual self-assessments will be completed to benchmark progress and identify new and/or refined action items for continuous improvement.

While Service Integration Plans set the foundation, there have been many evolutions in the post-pandemic environment of service delivery that service integration will need reexamined to live out the Governor's Commission on Workforce Equity and Access's vision of a more equitable and accessible workforce system, regardless of remote or in-person service delivery. More details about the Commission can be found in the Vision section.

Additional details on the service integration initiative are covered in the Operational elements.

B. STATE STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS

b. State Strategic Vision and Goals

In the spring of 2019, IWIB members and State agency leaders representing core and required partners came together to review and update the vision, principles and goals for the State of Illinois. The National Governors Association facilitated this process by leading exercises, such as identifying strengths and weaknesses prior to drafting updated language. The process led to a consensus that language must emphasize equity and inclusion for all. Other critical elements identified include:

- Support systems for workers to thrive
- Target industries for workers to retain long-lasting careers
- Emphasis on life-long learning
- Data-driven solutions
- On and off ramp for career pathways
- Two-way connection between employers and workers

All considerations were used to develop the updated strategic vision and principles ultimately approved by the IWIB providing a foundation for the Unified State Plan, Regional Plans and Local Plans.

Vision Statement

Foster a statewide workforce development system that supports the needs of individuals and businesses to ensure Illinois has a skilled workforce to effectively compete in the global economy.

Principles:

- Demand-Driven Orientation - Through a sector strategy framework, the state will support the system assessment of business needs for talent across local, regional and state levels.
- Strong Partnerships with Business at All Levels - Strong partnerships with business will assist employers to define in-demand skills and articulate those needs to education and training providers. Strong partnerships at the regional and local level will be recognized and promote development of high-quality partnerships across the state.
- Pathways to Careers of Today and Tomorrow - Partnerships with business will drive the development of career pathways that meet employers' skills needs today, while offering individuals clear opportunities to build and upgrade their skills, earn industry-recognized stackable credentials and advance their career over time. Those pathways should be integrated within the P-20 system to help all Illinois residents identify career pathways including apprenticeship options that offer flexibility to build upon their skills to meet the evolving needs of the global economy.
- Cross-agency Collaboration and Connections - The development of career pathways and industry-recognized stackable credentials will promote collaboration and alignment across agencies that contribute to Illinois' overall talent pipeline. There will be a focus on improving the strategic connections across all components and levels of the education and workforce systems.
- Integrated Service Delivery - Illinois will more effectively serve business and individual customers by implementing service integration strategies. Multiple state agencies and partners are positioned to provide the best experience possible for all WIOA customers by effectively planning and coordinating services available within local workforce systems.
- Equitable Access and Opportunity for All Populations - Connecting individuals with relevant supports, such as transportation, child care and transition services will enable the system to be responsive to the workforce readiness needs of all individuals and help targeted populations prepare for and advance along a career pathway.
- Clear Metrics for Progress and Success - Illinois will develop or adopt metrics that will define successful career pathway programs, assess equity and inclusion, return on investment of system resources, and monitor for progress and success informing continuous improvement and innovation efforts.
- Focus on Continuous Improvement and Innovation - Illinois will advance systemic and sustainable change that drives us to be prompt, agile and responsive to changing economic conditions. The system will establish mechanisms for continual assessment of system performance and improvement encouraging innovation and dissemination of non-traditional methods for delivering education and training

Over the past two years there has been a drive to use a lens of equity when viewing the workforce system. Building on Governor Pritzker's equity and economic prosperity agenda, IWIB created an Equity Task Force in November 2020 to address equity within the Illinois workforce system. The Task Force members represent businesses, workforce partners, educators, and community representatives who are developing a framework of recommendations within Illinois' workforce and education system to establish goals and improve inequities for the populations the system is meant to serve.

While the Task Force's recommendations will not be presented to the IWIB until June, 2022, work to-date points to six key needs/opportunities.

1. Fully integrating an equity lens into the work of the IWIB

2. Building a culture of equity in the Illinois workforce system
3. Conducting and sharing data analysis, tracking disaggregated outcomes, and identifying disparities and the contributing factors to those disparities.
4. Diversifying workforce leadership and staff and providing system-wide training on equity, cultural competence, and cultural awareness and sensitivity for those served by the system.
5. Providing funding to and partnering with culturally competent organization
6. Prioritizing workforce services that include wraparound supports

In addition to the work the Task Force is doing, Governor Pritzker formed the Commission on Workforce Equity & Access in 2021. The Commission is charged with creating a vision for an equitable, accessible, and effective state workforce system grounded in an understanding of user and stakeholder experience, including how racial, social, and geographic inequities inform experience and outcomes across Illinois' federally and state-funded workforce programs. Among its top priorities, the Commission will find ways to strengthen and diversify existing workforce training programs to address shortages, expand access to talent and to promote equity and inclusion across all industries. The work of the Commission will be explored over the next two years and be used to help inform the 2024 state workforce plan.

2. Goals

Charting a new course for Illinois' economic future requires that we learn from the past, which was a commitment in the report responding to the Governor's EO3. Illinois must scale up practices that have proven to be effective, re-engineer those that have not delivered on promised success, and abandon those with little to no return. Six lessons learned leading up to the drafting of Illinois' 2020 Unified State Plan helps guide our path forward and form the basis for the statewide goals that follow:

1. As a driver of economic development, workforce development efforts must support the industries and occupations targeted at the state and regional levels while responding to the needs of local employers.
2. The skills gap is arguably Illinois' most serious barrier to economic prosperity, yet it has not been addressed as a top State priority. Building a pool of job seekers and workers with the right skills at the right time is essential if Illinois business and workers are to compete in the global economy today and in the future.
3. Our job creation efforts must be statewide and extend to employers of all sizes. Effective economic development strategies are needed in urban and rural areas alike and must reach beyond the headline-grabbing financial incentive packages intended to lure corporate headquarters to our state. We must also recognize that almost two-thirds of the nation's private-sector workforce is employed by small business. Strategies to stabilize, retain and grow this bedrock of our economy are urgently needed throughout Illinois.
4. All our investments must generate an acceptable return on investment. These returns must be measured in terms of outcomes most meaningful to Illinois residents—such as jobs, earnings, and long-term career prospects—not just in dollars spent or number of participants. We must be accountable for how we invest our public resources and the initiatives in which we ask our partners to co-invest.
5. Programs to prepare individuals for the workplace too often ignore the harsh economic realities of low-income populations. Education and training models that offer an "earn as you learn" component enable economically at-risk populations to acquire new skills

while supporting themselves and their families. For others, support for childcare and transportation can mean the difference between advancing on a career pathway or remaining in poverty.

6. The system-level change we envision will require that all State agencies with a stake in education, job creation, or workforce development support each other. We need to align our services, program eligibility, funding and even basic terminology so we do not work at cross-purposes.

Goals for Achieving the State's Strategic Vision

1. *Unite workforce development partners around regional cluster strategies*: Regional cluster strategies will focus resources on the industries with the highest potential to add jobs and increase prosperity in regions across Illinois. These strategies bring together the public and private sectors in each region to build on their unique strengths.
2. *Prepare Illinois' workers for a career, not just their next job*: Regardless of background, life circumstances or education level, Illinois workers can be prepared for high-demand careers by developing core academic, technical and essential employability skills throughout their lifetimes.
3. C*onnect job seekers with employers*: Assist Illinois businesses to find the productive workers they need, through more efficient training and better services for job seekers and employers.

A. Goals for Preparing an Educated and Skilled Workforce

Illinois looks to expand career pathway opportunities through more accelerated and work-based training and align and integrate programs of study leading to industry-recognized credentials and improved employment and earnings. By identifying service integration as a key component in meeting both the employer and job seeker needs and implementing service integration strategies, Illinois is more effectively able to meet those needs in a more targeted and aligned way with all partners. Key elements and metrics include:

- Increase the number of businesses that work with the state, regional and local workforce partners to communicate specific occupational competencies.
- Increase the number of businesses that work with the state, regional and local partners to identify industry credentials and their related competencies.
- Increase the number of workforce professionals that promote work-based learning and earning of industry credentials as part of their programs of study, particularly for returning veterans who have an opportunity to build on occupational skills acquired in the military.
- Increase the number of businesses that offer work-based learning opportunities.

Additionally, Illinois is increasing career services and opportunities for populations facing multiple barriers to close the gap in educational attainment and economic advancement through career pathways and improved career services and expansion of bridge programs. These elements align with many activities identified in the State's CTE Plan. Key elements and metrics include:

- Provide more youth, dislocated workers, veterans and individuals with barriers to employment with coordinated wrap-around services, such as:
    - Mentoring,
    - Remedial math and reading,

    - Contextualized bridge programs,
    - High School Equivalency (HSE) testing,
    - Disability accommodations,
    - Acquiring workplace skills and other training tailored to address barriers to employment for special populations prior to or along with technical skill training,
    - Integrated education and training,
    - Pre-apprenticeships, and
    - Apprenticeships.
- Promote a lifelong learning approach that leverages the accelerated time to earnings and full productivity model and follows up with additional skill training to allow workers to advance in their chosen career pathway; particularly for veterans building on occupational skills acquired in the military.
- Promote the ten success elements for workforce pilot programs serving "opportunity youth" (i.e., young people who are not in school and not working) that were identified by the IWIB Youth Task Force. These elements utilize the principles and strategies of the WIOA Unified State Plan, and include:
    - Partnerships with education, employers and workforce boards to plan and leverage resources.
    - Business engagement in the development and management of career pathway programs.
    - Credentials, certifications and/or postsecondary access that result from career pathway programs.
    - Targeting of high demand industries and higher skill occupations that meet youth earnings and career goals.
    - Development of work-based learning opportunities to experience the workplace first-hand.
    - Individual career/employment plans for each youth participant.
    - Availability of individual support to meet the unique needs of each youth program participant.
    - Contextualized learning and work-based skills that prepare youth for employment.
    - Measuring results within the context of a continuous improvement methodology that will maintain and enhance program quality.
    - Sustainability plans that connect the program to broader long-term talent strategies.

B. Goals for Meeting the Skilled Workforce Needs of Employers

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. Key elements and metrics include:

- Create an environment favorable to the formation of employer-led sector partnerships and the improvement of communications between business, economic development, workforce development and education.
- Increase the number of meaningful, public-private relationships.
- Improve the quality of the new and existing public-private partnerships.
- Promote data and demand-driven workforce and education initiatives.

This includes expanding the ability of employers and job seekers to access services by improving the Illinois public-private data infrastructure. Utilize this infrastructure to support the alignment and integration of economic development, workforce development and education initiatives to develop sector partnerships and career pathways. Key elements and metrics include:

- Develop and promote data analytics that identify which services provide a better return on investment for various industries, populations and locations.
- Help businesses, jobseekers and students make better-informed decisions through understanding the options available and the implications of each.
- Invest in Geographic Information Systems to provide improved spatial analysis to identify patterns in-demand service deserts and economic hot spots.

IWIB GOALS

Equitable access is a fundamental principle within WIOA, the Illinois WIOA Unified Plan, as well as a high priority of the Governor. The work of the IWIB is to establish goals to eliminate inequities in services to our customers, create accessible career pathways – that address barriers to employment – for all customers, and enhance equality among partners. These goals are the same as they were in 2020, but despite the sea change in the economy and labor markets since then, they remain foundational to a thriving workforce system.

Business Engagement:

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

Customer-Centered Design:

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

Technology:

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

Workforce Board Impact:

Strengthening state and local workforce board effectiveness moves these boards into a strategic position for prioritizing and direction setting with a better understanding of roles and responsibilities for implementation.

IWIB Composition and Coordination

The Governor-appointed Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) includes leaders from state, business, industry, labor, education, and community-based organizations with the goal of evaluating and meeting the workforce needs of Illinois' employers and workers. As required, IWIB membership represents four key areas: Business and Industry, Education and Training, Government and Public Administration, and Business Management Administration.

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 State Unified Plan by creating an environment favorable to employer-led sector partnerships and the improvement of communications between business, economic development, workforce development, and education through the work of the IWIB Business Engagement Committee. The IWIB works to increase the number of meaningful, public-private relationships and improve the quality of the new and existing public-private partnerships within the work of the Apprenticeship Illinois Committee. Moreover, through the Continuous Improvement Committee, the IWIB promotes data and demand-driven workforce and education initiatives. The IWIB supports utilizing the WIOA system infrastructure to support the alignment and integration of economic development, workforce development, and education initiatives to develop sector partnerships and career pathways through the Career Pathway Targeted Populations Committee. Each of the committees have their individual charges and priorities that are outlined in the IWIB Strategic Plan and are coordinated through the Executive Committee and the IWIB Leadership Committee.

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

Furthermore, the IWIB strategies and activities discussed within this plan align with those found in the Illinois Unified State Plan, the EO3, and the Perkins V state plan.

Illinois' proposed performance targets along with supporting documentation (including source references) associated with the PY 2020-2021 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) proposed performance targets. This has been prepared in response to the instructions provided by the United States Departments of Labor and Education. Illinois will enter into another negotiation with U.S. DOL, Region 5 in 2022 to come to agreement on goals for Program Years 2022 and 2023. This will be followed by local negotiations with the Title I programs 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. The six primary

indicators of performance under WIOA for each core partner (note that primary indicator 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;
- Effectiveness in Serving Employers (not yet defined by DOL or the United States Department of Education (ED)) - This will be based on indicators developed as required by Section 116(b)(2)(A)(iv) of WIOA.

The core partners present performance data to the IWIB regularly, to meet the requirement in WIOA that the board assess overall effectiveness of the workforce system. See the Assessment and Evaluation Section of the Strategic Elements of the state plan for further details about the evaluation of the performance goals.

Performance indicators negotiated for Program Year 2020 and Program Year 2021 are:

- Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs: indicators for employment 2nd quarter, employment 4th quarter, median earning 2nd quarter, credential attainment rate, and measurable skill gains;
- Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy program: indicators for employment 2nd quarter, employment 4th quarter, median earning 2nd quarter, credential attainment rate, and measurable skill gains;
- Title III Wagner-Peyser Employment Service: indicators for employment 2nd quarter, employment 4th quarter, and median earning 2nd quarter; and
- Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation: measurable skill gains.

Baseline indicators are indicators for which states will NOT propose an expected level of performance in the Unified State Plan submission and will not need to come to agreement with the Departments' negotiated levels of performance:

- Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation: indicators for employment 2nd quarter, employment 4th quarter, median earning 2nd quarter, and credential attainment rate; and
- All Titles (I-IV): effectiveness in serving employers.

The context within which Illinois developed its proposed levels of performance for Adult, Dislocated Workers, Youth and Wagner-Peyser measures encompasses past performance outcomes. Averages for prior program year outcomes were computed (using the five prior program years), as well as a Target Outcome and Predicted Outcome that was produced by DOL. Target values were established using all the above and the ninety percent threshold applied to the DOL Target Outcome. Taking all data element outcomes into account, along with the environmental factors in Illinois, each target was set as shown in Table 19.

Table 19: Performance Goals for Program Year 2022 and 2023

	Program Year: 2022		Program Year: 2023	
	Expected Level	**Negotiated Level**	**Expected Level**	**Negotiated Level**
Employment Rate – 2nd Quarter After Exit				
Title I – Adult	76.5%		76.5%	
Title I – Dislocated Worker	81.0%		81.0%	
Title I – Youth[1]	73.5%		73.5%	
Title II – Adult Education[2]	27.7%		27.0%	
Title III- Wagner – Peyser	61.0%		61.0%	
Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation[3]	56.0%		60.0%	
Employment Rate – 4th Quarter After Exit				
Title I – Adult	74.0%		74.0%	
Title I – Dislocated Worker	79.0%		79.0%	
Title I – Youth	65.0%		65.0%	
Title II – Adult Education	28.4%		27.6%	
Title III- Wagner –	65.0%		65.0%	

	Program Year: 2022		Program Year: 2023	
Peyser				
Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation	49.0%		51.0%	
Median Earnings – 2nd Quarter After Exit				
Title I – Adult	$6,200.00		$6,200.00	
Title I – Dislocated Worker	$8,950.00		$8,950.00	
Title I – Youth	$3,275.00		$3,275.00	
Title II – Adult Education	$4,651.00		$4,926.00	
Title III- Wagner – Peyser	$5800.00		$5800.00	
Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation	$3,627.00		$3,942.00	
Credential Attainment				
Title I – Adult	66.0%		66.0%	
Title I – Dislocated Worker	67.0%		67.0%	
Title I – Youth	65.0%		65.0%	
Title II – Adult Education	27.1%		31.0%	
Title III- Wagner – Peyser				
Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation	29.5%		31.0%	
Measurable Skill Gains				
Title I – Adult	36.0%		36.0%	
Title I – Dislocated Worker	36.0%		36.0%	
Title I – Youth	28.0%		28.0%	
Title II – Adult Education	44.8%		37.1%	
Title III- Wagner –				

	Program Year: 2022		Program Year: 2023	
Peyser				
Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation	72.5%		75.0%	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers				
Retention with the Same Employer in the 2nd and 4th Quarter After Exit Rate				
Employer Penetration Rate				

[1] Title I Youth Program Measure includes participants in education or training activities, or unsubsidized employment.

Table 20: PY2022 and PY2023 WIOA Expected Levels of Performance for Illinois

TITLE I ADULT	All measures were negotiated between U.S. DOL Region 5 and the State in May 2020 for Program Years 2020 and 2021. No measures remain in baseline status. However, the Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit, Measurable Skill Gains and Credential Attainment rate measures will not be evaluated for performance success or failure until PY2022. A Statistical Adjustment Model (SAM) will be applied to all negotiated goals to determine adjusted levels of performance. Actual performance outcomes will be compared to the adjusted levels to determine success or failure by the State.
TITLE I DISLOCATED WORKER	All measures were negotiated between U.S. DOL Region 5 and the State in May 2020 for Program Years 2020 and 2021. No measures remain in baseline status. However, the Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit and Credential Attainment rate measures will not be evaluated for performance success or failure until PY2022. A Statistical Adjustment Model (SAM) will be applied to all negotiated goals to determine adjusted levels of performance. Actual performance outcomes will be compared to the adjusted levels to determine success or failure by the State.
TITLE I YOUTH	The Employment Rate 2nd and 4th Quarter after Exit measures for the Title I Youth program

TITLE I ADULT	All measures were negotiated between U.S. DOL Region 5 and the State in May 2020 for Program Years 2020 and 2021. No measures remain in baseline status. However, the Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit, Measurable Skill Gains and Credential Attainment rate measures will not be evaluated for performance success or failure until PY2022. A Statistical Adjustment Model (SAM) will be applied to all negotiated goals to determine adjusted levels of performance. Actual performance outcomes will be compared to the adjusted levels to determine success or failure by the State.
	also includes participants who were enrolled in Education or Training. All measures were negotiated between U.S. DOL Region 5 and the State in May 2020 for Program Years 2020 and 2021. No measures remain in baseline status. However, the Education or Training, or Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit and Credential Attainment rate measures will not be evaluated for performance success or failure until PY2022. A Statistical Adjustment Model (SAM) will be applied to all negotiated goals to determine adjusted levels of performance. Actual performance outcomes will be compared to the adjusted levels to determine success or failure by the State.
TITLE II ADULT EDUCATION	Employment, credential attainment and MSG targets were negotiated for PY2020 and PY2021 using the Statistical Adjustment Model and targets are required to show Continuous Improvement. Targets for PY2020 and 2021 are indicated above for all measures, except Effectiveness in Serving Employers (which remains in baseline). In PY2020, Credential Attainment and Median Earnings performance indicators were above OCTAE negotiated targets, while MSG and Q2 & Q4 Employment Rate performance indicators were below negotiated targets. Negotiations for the next two program years should begin in February/March 2022. **Title II Adult Education Employment Rate 2nd Quarter and 4th Quarter after exit and Median Earnings indicators require a file submittal to the state wage agency in order obtain wages on*

TITLE I ADULT	All measures were negotiated between U.S. DOL Region 5 and the State in May 2020 for Program Years 2020 and 2021. No measures remain in baseline status. However, the Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit, Measurable Skill Gains and Credential Attainment rate measures will not be evaluated for performance success or failure until PY2022. A Statistical Adjustment Model (SAM) will be applied to all negotiated goals to determine adjusted levels of performance. Actual performance outcomes will be compared to the adjusted levels to determine success or failure by the State.
	the individuals. It's important to note that current matching algorithms to track individuals into employment require an SSN. While students without an SSN are included in the tracking cohort (i.e., denominator), only students with a valid SSN can be successfully tracked and positively counted for employment. This results in undercounting for successful employment. No self-reported or survey data from programs on successful employment of students is included in these rates.
TITLE III WAGNER- PEYSNER	Non-baseline measures - Employment Rate 2nd and 4th Quarter After Exit and Median Earnings were negotiated on May 19, 2020, for PY 2020 & 2021. Based on a full year of actual outcomes in PY 2019, Illinois' expected outcomes in these measures for PY20/21 are Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit 68.0%, Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit 69.0% and Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit $5,800. will remain the same as the negotiated measures in PY18/19 with the exception of Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit that will increase from 60.0 to 61.0 in PY20/21. Credential Attainment and Measurable Skill Gains does not apply and will never be reportable for WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser.
TITLE IV VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION	PY2020 was the first year for which State Title-IV Vocational Rehabilitation programs would have performance success or failure determined for the Measurable Skills Gains (MSG) indicator. For PY2020 and PY2021 the negotiated goal and expected level of performance for our MSG Rate is 62.2%. All other metrics remain in baseline status until PY2022. For that reason, Illinois Title-IV

TITLE I ADULT	All measures were negotiated between U.S. DOL Region 5 and the State in May 2020 for Program Years 2020 and 2021. No measures remain in baseline status. However, the Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit, Measurable Skill Gains and Credential Attainment rate measures will not be evaluated for performance success or failure until PY2022. A Statistical Adjustment Model (SAM) will be applied to all negotiated goals to determine adjusted levels of performance. Actual performance outcomes will be compared to the adjusted levels to determine success or failure by the State.
	success for PY2020 is determined by 90% of the MSG Rate target goal of 62.2% or 55.98%. For PY20, the Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services Vocational Rehabilitation Program attained an MSG Rate of 59.8%. This will be considered successful and is one of the highest rates attained by any VR program in the country. In PY2021, our Title-IV VR program will continue focusing on improving our MSG rate but will also begin implementing steps to prepare for PY2022 and negotiated targets for our remaining Indicators of Performance still in baseline.

Assessment

IWIB Continuous Improvement Committee

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

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

Following this Charge, the CIC has established that the process of developing policies includes defining the intended outcomes and the measures by which the outcomes will be evaluated before new programs or initiatives and are implemented. Two examples of this in action are new policy on Minimum Training Expenditure requirements and the Service Integration policy.

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

The CIC believes that carrying out this charge requires the committee to determine and compare the effectiveness of a program's policy as written and implemented to meet the intended outcomes and recommend change to ensure continuous improvement. Following a review of submitted Service Integration Self-Assessments from all Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIBs), a review occurred in 2019 to identify best practices and areas of success within

the seven functional outcomes and fifteen goal areas. Through technical assistance, development of resources, and other outreach, these results were shared with all LWIBs.

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

To meet this Charge, the CIC addresses the core performance requirements under WIOA by utilizing available data and performance outcomes compared to the negotiated state and local measures. Where local areas and programs are exceeding expectations, the IWIB seeks to identify the local decisions that contributed to the success.

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

Core performance measures are best supplemented by key learnings and best practices for continuous improvement. The CIC is well positioned in 2022 to begin defining new benchmarks of excellence in preparation for the 2024 Unified State Plan. Once determined, these new benchmarks of excellence will become part of the WIOA Annual Workforce Development Report Narrative submitted to the General Assembly annually.

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

In collaboration with performance experts across core programs, businesses and other stakeholders, the CIC is also positioned to identify critical data and information needed to assure evaluations can be performed in an effective and efficient manner and with an eye for transparency in sharing the results with interested stakeholders.

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

The CIC made decisions to ensure a clear focus on the most important system activities and priorities while maximizing limited resources. Holding itself accountable to its own standards, the CIC has recognized that the current IWIB Strategic Plan will require modifications in 2022. To ensure priorities are appropriately addressed, the board will look at revised or new priorities that are manageable with limited resources as the system continues to gather insights to inform the 2024 Unified State Plan.

Additional CIC priorities are to:

1. Evaluate policies.
2. Develop an understanding of how WIOA programs (under Title I, II, III, and IV) are evaluated, what continuous improvement processes are in place and included, and what lead agency technical assistance is involved.
3. Provide the IWIB committees with a clear understanding of how outcomes are evaluated, and define the process for upcoming policy.

2020 – 2022 Strategic Plan Summary

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 with the goal of evaluating and meeting 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 businesses, consumers, employees, community members, and partners. These boards have the responsibility of 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.

Furthermore, the IWIB acts as a convener of the system by 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.

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

A formal Vision and Mission for the IWIB, along with the priority areas for 2020-2022, set a framework for the board to make strategic decisions to lead the workforce system. As a starting point, the IWIB identified five priority areas that focus on integrated and equitable service delivery design, business engagement through sector strategy framework, career pathway development, and metrics for measuring success.

VISION

Illinois will strive to be a national workforce development leader by creating a cohesive, business-led system that equally supports job seekers and businesses through regional economic prosperity and global markets.

MISSION

The Illinois workforce system's purpose is to integrate education, workforce, and economic development resources and services that support economic growth and job creation for individuals, businesses, and communities in the State.

PRIORITY AREAS

1. Integrate service delivery, improving access and opportunity for all populations.
    a. Promote business demand-driven orientation through a sector strategy framework, grounded in strong partnerships within business and among business at all levels of the system.
    b. Grow career pathways to enhance opportunities for Illinoisans to stimulate the economy.
2. Monitor, track, and assess clear metrics for progress and success to inform continuous improvement and innovation efforts.
3. Ensure accountability as a board and as system partners for outcomes and transparency through marketing and outreach to the system.

IWIB GOALS

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

Business Engagement:

The IWIB will continue to engage the business community through sector strategies and career pathways that strengthen and expand the building and sustainability of business-led partnerships. Engagement will be targeted through industry sectors and emerging pathways by

promoting work-based learning, seeking out minority-owned businesses, and developing innovative approaches to improve competitiveness and equity among partners.

Customer-Centered Design:

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

Technology:

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

Annual Workforce Development Performance Report Narrative

Illinois developed and submitted its most recent report narrative on the state of workforce development performance in December 2021 in response to TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT GUIDANCE LETTER No. 05-18 *(November 07, 2018)*, and subsequent changes. The report is also submitted annually to the U.S. Department of Labor and U.S. Department of Education, we well as to the Illinois General Assembly and to the public.

The annual report compiles outcomes that are documented throughout the year in quarterly progress reports of Unified State Plan strategies and activities, performance data tables, other benchmarking measures as determined by the IWIB.

The CIC now has two work groups to guide the work of the committee.

- **EvaluationWork Group**

The evaluation work group has four charges:

- **Evaluation Design -** Create an evaluation framework for the WIOA system including evaluation elements of policies, programs, and processes created or overseen by the IWIB to be used by the WIOA system.
- **Evaluation Outcomes** - Disseminate the evaluation framework, once approved by the CIC, to WIOA partners.
- **Continuous Improvement at Local Level -** Review the data from the evaluation model and information provided by the CIC. Adapt evaluation frameworks and dissemination of information as appropriate.
- **Priority Activities -** Adapt priority activities of the workgroup to remain in step with the CIC.
- **Performance Work Group**

The Performance Accountability Work Group has been tasked by the CIC to provide information as a summary overview of the following items:

- Provide an overview of the definition of each measure under WIOA.

- Provide specific information on each target by fiscal year and measure, as set by each title in negotiation with their respective federal agency and the timeline for those negotiations.
- Provide information on each title's actual performance on each measure as outlined in item (a) and in the context of the targets outlined in item (b).
- Provide information on the timeline for submittal of performance and other data reporting each title has to its respective federal agency.

In response to a CIC request for a centralized public performance transparency site, in 2020 the Performance Accountability Work Group designed and developed a performance dashboard hosted on the Illinois workNet website. The dashboard displays U.S. Department of Labor reporting data for the four key WIOA partners: DCEO, IDES, ICCB, and IDHS. Combined outcomes and searchable data elements are available by WIOA titles. The display shows projected, negotiated, and actual numbers. This site will be further developed to have quarterly data displays. There will be ongoing enhancements to the site and available data as the work group and CIC continue to collaborate on data needs and requirements.

The State will also consider information developed by the interagency Data Team and other program-specific evaluations, research reports and pilot programs in the development of an integrated evaluation and research approach. For example, Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity staff routinely perform analyses on:

- Local area training enrollment plan vs. actual (including work-based learning) and expenditures on direct training activities;
- The number of businesses and workers involved in incumbent worker training by LWIA, region and sector;
- Commercial driver training graduates vs. drivers' licenses issued; and
- Work-based learning enrollment and outcomes.

All State workforce innovation grantees are required to use a state-designed template to conduct an evaluation of project activities and outcomes as a final deliverable. The evaluation covers best practices and lessons learned on project development, project implementation, planned versus actual outcomes and potential for replicating the project elsewhere. Other planned evaluation efforts include youth pathway programs and transitions from pre-apprenticeship to registered apprenticeship programs.

Additional information on these analyses is in the Title IB program section.

[1] Title I Youth Program Measure includes participants in education or training activities, or unsubsidized employment.

[2] Title II will negotiate performance indicators for PY21 and PY22 (FY23 and FY24) in the Spring of PY21.

[3] All Title IV measures have yet to be negotiated with ED-RSA for Plan Years 2022 and 2023. We hope to have a schedule for this process following our quarterly call in March/April 2022.

C. STATE STRATEGY

Below are seven essential state strategies that underpin Illinois' commitment to engage and support all parts of our education, workforce, and economic development systems. These strategies complement the nine guiding principles of the IWIB Strategic Plan, including the identification of clear metrics for progress and success, for informing continuous improvement, system integration, and the identification of innovative efforts and ultimately, the Governor's Executive Order 3 to strengthen the state's commitment to workforce development and job creation. Every strategy outlined in Illinois' 2020 Unified State Plan has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and other economic inequities, which affects how we as a state implement the strategies listed below. While the core principles of holistic career pathway management for secondary students, postsecondary students and workers combine with demand-responsive solutions for employers serve as a bedrock of our workforce system, the implications of the pandemic and other socioeconomic factors accelerated the need to focus resources through a new strategy on designing a more equitable and accessible workforce system. The specific activities to implement Illinois' original six strategies—along the adaptations made in response to the new context of the 2020 strategies and the activity under the new strategy for 2022—are fully described in the operational planning section of this Unified State Plan modification.

Strategy 1: Coordinate Demand-Driven Strategic Planning at the State and Regional Levels

The IWIB has a demand-driven strategic planning process grounded in strong partnerships across education (secondary and postsecondary), workforce and economic development at the state, regional and local levels. This process has built on and has integrated current state and regional planning initiatives and resources of the core state agency partners and other partners, including the economic development arm of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

Strategy 2: Support Employer-Driven Regional Sector Initiatives

Illinois has been actively engaged in sectoral work and sector strategies for over a decade. The IWIB continues to guide this important work to ensure investment in resources and promotion of skills and careers in targeted industry and high demand occupations. Illinois was one of six states invited to participate in the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices Sector Strategies Learning Academy funded by the Mott, Ford and Joyce Foundations. The initial policy recommendations resulting from this effort remain valid today: a) Promote regionalism; b) Increase funding opportunities; c) Use data to drive decisions; d) Align resources and strategies; e) Present opportunities for unified messages; and f) Build legislative support. State and regional strategic planning activities align all levels of education, workforce and economic development and lay the foundation for employer-driven regional sector initiatives.

Strategy 3: Provide Economic Advancement for All Populations through Career Pathways

State and regional sector initiatives will provide the foundation for sector-based career pathway initiatives that expand career and educational opportunities for students and workers, including those facing multiple barriers to employment to achieve economic advancement. Cross-agency collaboration and alignment will continue to be a focus in the development and promotion of industry-recognized, stackable credential models of training and education.

Strategy 4: Expand Service Integration

The IWIB adopted a service integration policy that established 15 goals for effectively planning and coordinating the many workforce development programs offered locally through WIOA. Defined as "a combination of strategies to align and simplify access to one-stop center services and supports for employers, job seekers, and workforce professionals within the system," the goal of service integration in Illinois is to provide the best experience possible for all WIOA customers. Seven service integration functions are addressed in this policy as the focus of Illinois' local one-stop delivery system: customer-centered design, staffing, intake and

assessment, services, career pathways, information and evaluation. 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 occurs locally through the WIOA planning, one-stop certification and MOU negotiation processes.

Upon the adoption of the State's service integration policy in 2018, the IWIB worked collaboratively with interagency partners and sought stakeholder consultation to develop a self-assessment guide, supporting Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIBs) in identifying where their local workforce areas were on a continuum of service integration qualities. Adapted from material developed by the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center through a project funded by the U.S. Department of Education, the service-integration self-assessment provided a foundation for ongoing consideration and education of what true service integration looks like at the state and local levels.

While the COVID-19 pandemic required immediate and sometimes less coordinated responses to keep required programs going in new remote environments, the IWIB, required partners and LWIBs continue to develop practical ways to build a common understanding and standard qualities of integrated operations in an emerging model of service delivery. Examples follow.

1. *Building an understanding of the policy, its importance, and the systems change model put in place to achieve service integration*: Service integration continues to be featured in multiple professional development opportunities, such as statewide WIOA summits, "Workforce Wednesday Webinar" series, and direct technical assistance to support local partners in applying a service integration self-assessment to a realistic operational plan. These activities focused on the self-assessment process, effective practices in service integration, building a supportive and accountable one-stop culture, implementing successful collaboration between one-stop partners, and service integration and the one-stop certification process.

2. *Developing capacity at the local level to implement the service integration policy*: The IWIB and required partners continue to lean from the experience of a cohort of eight LWIAs that piloted the service integration self-assessment, holding two statewide in-person technical assistance sessions, developing a "Facilitator's Guide" to the self-assessment process, and developing a web presence on Illinois workNet for the latest service integration information (www.illinoisworknet.com/si).

3. *Tying service integration to other strategically important state-level workforce initiatives*: The IWIB's work on service integration was immediately incorporated into the Governor's Executive Order 2019-03 and the Unified State Plan. Efforts continue in 2022 to link ongoing assessments and continuous improvement to WIOA regional and local planning efforts. Efforts also continue to offer opportunities through the WIOA Statewide Workforce Innovation Program to support local areas in operationalizing service integration plans for job seekers and employers.

An analysis of the results of the LWIB's self-assessment processes as required by the policy has been conducted. In addition to providing action plans for addressing their top 3-5 service integration goals, LWIBs were also asked to describe the strengths and improvement opportunities of the self-assessment process. The next step for service integration in Illinois will be for the IWIB's Service Integration Policy Work Group to analyze service integration self-assessment results, discuss the effectiveness of service integration activities to date, identify improvement opportunities, and advise on the next phase of implementation leading up to a new vision in 2024.

Strategy 5: Promote Improved Data-Driven Decision Making

The Interagency Data Team provides a statewide analysis of current economic, labor market and demographic trends to the WIOA State Plan development team, IWIB, and a regional

analysis of these elements to regional and local WIOA planning teams, including local workforce boards. This information is available to the public and workforce and education partners to assist businesses, jobseekers and students in making informed decisions. The data included in these analyses will be expanded between 2022 and 2024 to better capture the near-term and long-term implications of COVID-19 on the workforce system.

Core Partner agencies will design, develop and use the statewide public-private data infrastructure (Strategy 6) to provide both employers and job seekers with information and tools to promote and access job openings, review changing labor market trends and opportunities, identify funding opportunities and fund education, training and support services. This requires partners to ensure privacy and security issues are addressed. Additionally, Illinois will continue to expand its resources for labor market information to ensure it accurately reflects the ever-changing environment within Illinois' workforce, especially in the wake of COVID-19. Information related to economic and labor market information is currently available online at the IDES Labor Market Information web page. Regional planning data is available online at the 2022 Regional & Local Planning web page on the Illinois workNet portal. Information on WIOA training programs, providers and their performance history is available for jobseekers and students and career services staff at the Illinois workNet portal. DCEO, in partnership with IDES, continues development of online tools that link labor market information with Dun & Bradstreet data to help identify companies that may benefit from Title IB and Title III workforce system services.

Improved data-driven decision making also applies to Core Partner program staff and IWIB evaluation efforts. To this end, Core Partners also refine data tracking systems as needed to provide enhanced understanding of activities undertaken and outcomes for individuals and participating businesses. Enhanced tracking and reporting allow for improved understanding of how and where services are being delivered and how resources may be targeted to address service gaps to geographies, target populations and priority sectors.

Strategy 6: Advance Public-Private Data Infrastructure

Focusing on the IWIB Vision, the board will continue to ensure measures are implemented that will guide Illinois through sustainable, systemic change to be prompt, agile and responsive to changing economic conditions. Working with the Interagency Data Team, in cooperation with the WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team, it will expand and improve the Illinois public-private data infrastructure to support the five other strategies described above. This requires the integration of labor market information with state education and workforce longitudinal data systems, as well as program and case management systems. Labor market information from the Illinois Department of Employment Security was already matched with workforce program information from the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and also with education information from the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB). In addition to bringing other partners into this data infrastructure, the team will also coordinate with the data analysis-related projects recommended through other projects, such as the ICCB Workforce Education Strategic Plan and the Community College Presidents' Council. This will also be an opportunity for the team to include the data experts at the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) as ISBE moves toward implementing policy recommendations that infuse demand-driven career pathway approaches into secondary curriculum. Finally, this will include coming to agreement on a methodology for establishing priority state- and regional-level industry sectors and occupational clusters as required by Governor Pritzker's EO3.

To assure that the IWIB can lead the efforts of Illinois in these seven strategic areas, it has identified a need to strengthen the effectiveness and impact of its members and the membership of local workforce boards. Strategies will be developed leading up to 2024 to identify appropriate methods of outreach between the IWIB and local boards, as well as the technical assistance and resource needs that will allow board members to better understand

their functions and responsibilities and to ensure accountability in effectively conducting their business.

Strategy 7: Increase Barrier Reduction Services

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the need to re-examine the design of Illinois' workforce system to ensure a more systemic understanding and application of services to improve equity and access, particularly to populations with barriers to employment and training. The state has since 2020 increased the financial resources and program design expectations to include barrier reduction services. Illinois is combining state designated funds with WIOA supportive service funding to embed barrier reduction services into existing programs, as well as to require barrier reduction services in new programs.

1. Strategies to address the needs of Targeted Populations

Described further in Section II.c.2 of this plan, the following strategies address the needs of targeted populations including but not limited to the long-term unemployed, individuals with disabilities, out-of-school youth, veterans, English language learners, low literacy adults and low-skilled adults.

Provide Economic Advancement for All Populations through Career Pathways

State and regional sector initiatives will provide the foundation for sector-based career pathway projects that expand career and educational opportunities for students and workers, including those facing multiple barriers to employment to achieve economic advancement. This will include a future emphasis on lifelong learning and allowing each participant to reach his or her full potential. The strategy is to help participants enter or re-enter the workforce by striking an individualized balance between rapid placement in self-sustaining employment and pursuit of a career pathway that may require additional education and training, along with work experience to continue progressing. Put more simply, the emphasis will shift from finding a job to developing a career.

Expand Service Integration

Described further in Section III.b.2, the IWIB has implemented a collaborative policy development process that will inform policy to promote movement along the service integration continuum. New service integration standards include ensuring equity in service delivery, such as integrated and enhanced career services, applying more holistic approaches to assessments to adequately identify barriers to employment, and using individual career plans to coordinate services between partners. The IWIB's Service Integration Policy Workgroup will continue to meet to refine current policy and to expand service integration in new policies.

For example, Employment Security's Incarcerated Veterans Transition Program (IVTP) has been in place since 2005 and is supported by the Jobs for Veterans State Grant funding. The IVTP program is modeled off the original Federal Incarcerated Veterans Transition Program Grant and the Department of Defense / Department of Labor – Veterans Employment and Training Services Transition Assistance Program (TAP). The IVTP staff provide eligible incarcerated veterans with employment service workshops in designated medium security level Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) facilities. Employment Security coordinates with IDOC to provide quarterly employment workshops for eligible veteran inmates that are within eighteen months of their maximum release date. The IVTP workshops are facilitated by nine Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists who are the IVTP Team Leads. These staff 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. Ninety days prior to an IVTP participant's release date, the Veteran notifies the IVTP Team Lead of his or her relocation address. The IVTP Team Lead will

coordinate with a DVOP nearest to the Veteran's relocation address for Individualized Career Services and possible Case Management.

Additionally, the Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) serves people with disabilities who typically have additional barriers to employment beyond the presence of a disability. The DRS case management system includes the Survey of Individual Needs, which addresses a variety of support needs that frequently present barriers to employment. Many people with disabilities have low incomes, and about one-third of DRS participants receive Social Security disability benefits. Long-term unemployment is a frequent condition for many people with disabilities, as is a poor work history and a lack of basic skills, along with limited English proficiency. The DRS program seeks to mitigate these barriers through supportive services alongside the provision of vocational services. Through participation in local workforce boards, DRS expects to expand its awareness of supportive services available throughout the community and make these available to people with disabilities as needed.

Promote Improved Data-Driven Decision Making

Core Partners continue to refine data tracking systems as needed to provide enhanced understanding of activities undertaken and outcomes for individuals and participating businesses. Enhanced tracking and reporting allows for improved understanding of how and where services are being delivered and how resources may be targeted to address service gaps to geographies, target populations. The Interagency Data Team will design, develop and use the statewide public-private data infrastructure (Strategy 6) to provide both employers and job seekers with tools to promote and access job openings, review changing labor market trends and opportunities, identify funding opportunities and fund education, training and support services. This will require partners to ensure that privacy and security issues are addressed. The intent is to create dashboards and other tools to translate the overwhelming amount of data into usable and actionable information by program staff, job seekers, educators, students and parents. A current example of this strategy that can be emulated is the U.S. Department of Education College Scorecard (https://collegescorecard.ed.gov). This application makes it easier for students and parents to compare and evaluate colleges. New data visualization tools will be in place to allow the use of enhanced LMI for teams working on the 2024 Unified State Plan and WIOA Regional Plans.

Advance Public-Private Data Infrastructure

Illinois' Interagency Data Team and interagency partners are exploring more systemic approaches to making data more accessible and easier for non-data experts to use and integrating labor market information LMI with state education and workforce longitudinal systems to support the USP strategies. This requires the integration of LMI with state education and workforce longitudinal data systems, as well as program and case management systems. Just as with LMI dashboards, there is great potential to improve the ability of job seekers and students to assess and evaluate education and training programs, know which programs are more likely to lead to career pathways employment and, in the end, help assess the potential return on investment for their available options.

Regional and Local Planning and MOU Review

Planning is set up hierarchically so that the vision and goals set at the state level by the Governor and IWIB inform and are reflected in regional planning and goal setting, which informs and is reflected in local planning and goal setting. The Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) process ensures core partner commitments to operationalize all of those commitments.

The IWIB and interagency partners collaboratively develop guidance and supporting material for WIOA regional and local plans and subsequent modifications to ensure all goals and strategies at all levels of the workforce system that align with the Unified State Plan.

Governor's Guidelines

Illinois has taken a proactive approach in developing guidelines and templates to document how the core programs, required programs and commitment of resources can continue to work toward realistic, fully integrated customer services. The IWIB was consulted regarding the work of the Interagency Technical Assistance Team on the "Governor's Guidelines to State and Local Program Partners for Negotiating Costs and Services." The Governor's Guidelines address the negotiation of local MOUs, the negotiation of infrastructure costs, the negotiation of local one-stop delivery system costs, the timelines for negotiation of MOUs and infrastructure costs, and the reporting of outcomes and appeals processes.

The Governor's Guidelines ensure MOU negotiations meet the needs of targeted populations. Through common expectations and understanding of WIOA core principles and requirements established during the MOU negotiations, clear processes are enacted to ensure all required programs make real human and financial commitments to making accessible the full range of services to best meet the needs of all customers—not just the customers under a siloed program.

To provide uniformity across the local areas and to ensure all populations' needs are met regardless of geography, an MOU template is included in the Governor's Guidelines and updated as new guidance or standards are established.

2.

Coordinated and interagency state-level reviews of regional and local plans and MOUs continue to reveal opportunities for continuous improvement and guidance on transitioning to a more flexible local workforce system. The state-level review processes lead specifically to development of professional development and technical assistance resources to support tangible progress in addressing challenges (weaknesses) of the workforce system in Illinois, including:

- Clearer standards for delivering high quality career services no matter the location or the virtual or in-person format;
- More avenues to build relationships and trust in regional collaborations;
- Joint commitments to pursue more innovative public-private sector partnerships;
- More coordinated and proactive employer engagement;
- Deeper cross-training and resource sharing between required partners who are co-located in American Job Centers; and
- More systemic, well-funded investment in the development of integrated data systems to support streamlined and compliant information sharing between partners at the state, regional and local levels.

Quality of Career Services

The quality of career services may be the most vital program element that determines the eventual success of our participants and businesses. Understanding this reality has prompted the core partners to agree that service standards must be established, and training must be provided.

As part of the coordinated career services approach, each participant will receive a holistic assessment to determine not only his or her career interests and potential barriers but also a technical skill proficiency by identifying occupational skill gaps relevant to occupations in-demand in their region. The programs will coordinate services to address barriers and skill gaps

while the individual is enrolled, as well as put in place supports for their ongoing successful employment.

Finally, each career services manager's client outcomes will be tracked for the purposes of identifying best practices that can be replicated across regions and programs.

Program staff must also better understand how to obtain and use the most current labor market information, including the characteristics of occupations, to assist participants in making informed career and training decisions. For example, when career services staff understand the actual occupational skills supply and demand in their region, they will be able to recommend training and education options more likely to lead to training-related employment.

Regional & Local Cross-Program Collaboration / Quality of Co-Located One-Stop Services / Dismantling the Service Delivery Silos

Illinois has created and implemented several teams that are built on inter-program collaboration and initiatives that encourage regional and local collaboration:

- Policy development teams are made up of state and local partners and include IWIB members and private sector employers; an example is the IWIB Service Integration Policy Workgroup.
- The WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team, which consists of core and required program executives and administrators, meets regularly to address implementation issues related to compliance, interagency collaboration and co-located one-stop programs and services.
- The WIOA Summit Planning Group is now focused on professional development at the regional level that will support information sharing while creating opportunities for cross-collaboration. Therefore, the group's membership has evolved into the Technical Assistance Planning Team to reflect their expanded activities.
- The Integrated Business Services Initiative has laid out a framework and strategy for locals to cohesively address employer needs through the review of the Adult Education plans by the LWIBs.

Coordination of career services will require program staff to be better aware of the spectrum of services administered by all required programs. The core partners are implementing systemic, cross-program procedures where appropriate to ensure each participant receives every service for which they are eligible that is relevant to their securing employment.

Illinois continues to address the challenges of a geographically and economically diverse state where the coordination of career services and programs varies widely. Since the Governor's EO3 emphasized the need to respond to the geographic and diverse needs of this state, core and required partners in Illinois have identified the need to establish more rigorous service standards and provide adequate training to career services staff in all WIOA programs. This is especially important for services provided at a Comprehensive One-Stop Center. Policies and procedures have been developed and are being implemented to emphasize individualized services, replacing a one-size-fits-all approach with a more customized suite of services designed to meet the individual on his or her own career pathway. This includes requiring cross-program integration of individualized assessments and services, among other activities.

Coordinated Business Services

Since a 2017 assessment of Illinois' business services practices and the adoption of an Integrated Business Services Framework, efforts have continued to establish the basic infrastructure to support LWIBs in more coordinated plans for regional workforce, education and economic development systems.

Experience since the adoption of the 2020 Unified State Plan has shown that areas of the state where local staff has established coordinated communication and services to businesses are more likely to have better outcomes for their participants and their employers. Public-private partnerships that are business-led are much more likely to be active and engaged and challenge the state and local education and workforce systems to keep up with their needs. Illinois' workforce and education partners have since 2020 joined in several efforts designed to bring the interests of employers to the forefront. Regional strategic planning for ICCB and the community colleges, followed by sector strategies training and then by WIOA regional planning have all emphasized the importance of business engagement. Perhaps more importantly, these efforts highlighted the need for public sector follow through. The IWIB's ongoing efforts recognize and plan to explore ways to prevent businesses from disengaging as soon as they perceive no return on their investment for participating in publicly funded initiatives.

Provide Career Pathways for Economic Advancement

State, regional, and local sector initiatives will continue to provide the foundation for sector-based career pathway initiatives that expand career and educational opportunities for students and workers, including those facing multiple barriers to employment to achieve economic advancement. This will include an emphasis on lifelong learning and allowing each participant to reach his or her full potential. The strategy is to help each participant to make an informed decision as to how best to enter or re-enter the workforce based on his or her personal circumstances.

Apprenticeships and work-based training programs are part of a larger strategy to help Illinois' companies develop their talent pipeline. As Illinois coordinates and aligns the strategy of apprenticeships with the Illinois P-20 Network education and workforce systems, and community colleges we are integrating a shared vision and language around Career Pathways. Illinois has been awarded several apprenticeship grants since 2020, allowing the state to expand the scope and accelerate the pace of the growth of apprenticeships leading up to the 2024 Unified State Plan. Additionally, because apprenticeships were a critical component of the Governor's Executive Order 3, Illinois has developed agreed-upon definitions of registered apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeship, youth apprenticeship, work-based learning and other programs to clarify how education and workforce development can better coordinate activities and resources. Collectively, these definitions establish a continuum of employer engagement and work-based learning experiences within a career pathway system.

Strategies to Address the Needs of Targeted Populations

Illinois has outlined the six interrelated strategies associated with the implementation of WIOA in Section II.c.1 of this plan. The specific strategies that address the needs of the populations targeted in Section II.a. (including, but not limited to, the long-term unemployed, individuals with disabilities, out-of-school youth, veterans, English language learners, low literacy adults and low-skilled adults) are summarized below. One example of how the system is evolving is from a local area plan, which describes collaboration between the Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Rehabilitation Services and the local Title IB staff with broader integration of programs administered by other required partners.

- Develop strategies to effectively serve individuals with barriers to employment and to coordinate 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 the 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; and
- Support the development of alternative, evidence-based programs and other activities that enhance the choices available to eligible youth and encourage such youth to reenter and complete secondary education, enroll in postsecondary education and advanced training, progress through a career pathway, and enter into unsubsidized employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency.

Another example of activities to serve targeted populations is the Secondary Transition Experience Program (STEP), which is part of the State's continuum of coordinated transition services for youth with disabilities. STEP is a training/placement program to help students with disabilities prepare for employment and community participation during and after high school. Students learn to become productive, self-sufficient adults through a variety of STEP experiences. These experiences include assisting students in the development of desirable work habits and realistic career goals. Students participate in pre-vocational classroom learning. Some students begin with on-campus work experiences. Most students participate in paid work experiences. Some of the students receive specialized job coach assistance. Throughout the year, some students participate in mock interviews with Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) staff and employers. Students are offered one-to-one interviews and receive individualized feedback on how they presented and responded to the interview situation. Students are also offered the opportunity to participate in guidance and career counseling and self-advocacy. Mentoring days provide the opportunity to tour job sites, meet with employers and get hands-on experiences in the world of work.

III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

A. STATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

1. STATE BOARD FUNCTIONS

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Illinois State Statute 20 ILCS 3975/1.require that the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) provide strategic leadership and oversight that will further the state's goals to meet the workforce needs of businesses and workers. The IWIB created and adopted bylaws to further guide the IWIB's work and processes. During 2018-2019, the IWIB initiated its first strategic planning process to ensure the expanded functions under WIOA are carried out. This process moved the board from a tactical, operational approach to one where the members think strategically and serve as system leaders. The IWIB updated its strategic plan in 2020. The WIOA Unified State Plan for Illinois continues to be a tangible product resulting from the IWIB strategic planning process, in conjunction with priorities outlined in Governor JB Pritzker's Executive Order 3, Illinois' Five-Year economic development plan, and multiple required state workforce and education state plans of system partners.

IWIB Strategic Plan

The Governor-appointed IWIB includes leaders from business, industry, state agencies, education, labor, and community-based organizations with the goal of evaluating and meeting 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 businesses, consumers, employees, community members, and partners. These boards are 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.

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.

In developing the Vision and Mission of the 2020 Unified State Plan, the IWIB and state leaders from WIOA partners recognized (with the help of facilitation by the National Governors Association) that it is better to focus on fewer priorities that can truly be identified, implemented, and evaluated to assure success than to create an extensive list that may or may not be achievable in a positive way for Illinois. As such, the IWIB approved new priority areas to be incorporated into the strategic plan modifications. A formal Vision and Mission for the IWIB, along with the priority areas, served as the framework for the board to make strategic decisions to lead the workforce system. As a starting point, the IWIB identified five priority areas that focus on integrated and equitable service delivery design, business engagement through sector strategy framework, career pathway development, and metrics for measuring success.

Vision

Illinois will strive to be a national workforce development leader by creating a cohesive, business-led system that equally supports job seekers and businesses through regional economic prosperity and global markets.

Mission

"The Illinois workforce system's purpose is to integrate education, workforce, and economic development resources and services that support economic growth and job creation for individuals, businesses, and communities in the State."

Priority Areas

1. Integrate service delivery, improving access and opportunity for all populations.
2. Promote business demand-driven orientation through a sector strategy framework, grounded in strong partnerships within business and among business at all levels of the system.
3. Grow career pathways to enhance opportunities for Illinoisans to stimulate the economy.
4. Monitor, track, and assess clear metrics for progress and success to inform continuous improvement and innovation efforts.

5. Ensure accountability as a board and as system partners for outcomes and transparency through marketing and outreach to the system.

IWIB Goals

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

Business Engagement:

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

Customer-Centered Design:

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

Technology:

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

Workforce Board Impact:

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

While the Strategic Plan and subsequent updates were a major undertaking, the IWIB continues to provide focused efforts through its structure of standing committees, task forces and policy work groups further outlined in the State Board Overview section of this plan. The IWIB continues to hold an annual retreat that provides additional opportunity for board member engagement in developing new priorities, coordinating board initiatives, and identifying areas of necessary professional development. In 2022, the IWIB is planning to update the strategic plan.

While the IWIB began strengthening local involvement in the policymaking process, the Strategic Plan modifications further emphasize the board's desire to build stronger partnerships and communication between the IWIB and local workforce boards. This will occur through direct communication between the IWIB Co-Chairs and board members and local workforce innovation boards (LWIB), invitations to jointly participate in state and local board meetings, and the development of an outreach plan to ensure that local boards understand and participate in Illinois' efforts to create a quality workforce, with a focus on the unique needs of each regional and local market. Technology solutions will be examined to facilitate and encourage better interaction among IWIB and LWIB members.

Board Member Orientation and Outreach

Acting on several of the priorities found in the Strategic Plan, the IWIB began development of outreach and orientation for current and new members.

All the work of the IWIB comes with the need to have fully engaged members. Revisions in 2021 to the IWIB By-Laws require that all members be actively participating on at least one standing committee, task force or work group. Members are encouraged to attend assigned committee, task force and workgroup meetings, as well as the full IWIB quarterly meetings. Members unable to meet these obligations will be consulted by IWIB Executive Committee members to determine any necessary changes such as identification of more appropriate involvement or could lead to a request to replace the individual with a new appointment. Furthermore, a set of operational and communications protocols were developed to formalize structure and member composition of committees, task forces and work groups, provide a consistent set of standards for conduct and compliance with OMA, and ensure all activities are consistent with board goals and expected outcomes.

A new orientation process will ensure new members are provided the information necessary to effectively participate in the activities of the board by more thoroughly understanding key tenets and functions of a state board under WIOA, the one-stop system in Illinois, the services and programs available by partners, and expectations as board members. The Member's Manual outlines all of the information and processes, including state statutes and guidance that apply to appointed boards. This "living" document will be able to be revised as necessary to reflect current information and data. A budget worksheet provides information on the resources available under direction of the IWIB and mandated training that appointed members, similar to those of state employees, must comply with annually. Another tool to inform new members will be a mentoring program to connect new members with long-standing board members with similar interests by sector or geography. This will provide new members with an immediate resource to the history of the board and a better understanding of its direction moving forward.

Committees, Task Forces and Work Groups

The IWIB continues its structure of utilizing standing committees, task forces and work groups to further expand collaborative efforts in Illinois by inviting employer and stakeholder engagement in the operation of the state workforce system. This structure was established to ensure that board members remain engaged in furthering the identification and understanding of root causes in workforce and economic development challenges, and to provide opportunities for consultation and input from those directly connected to and actively involved with the system. Staff from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) coordinate support to these bodies. In addition, the IWIB utilizes resources from WIOA partner agencies and state universities to support its work.

The IWIB continuously evaluates the success of its structure and has created new sub-groups as necessary to ensure appropriate focus on the most important priorities and activities. Moving into the new Unified State Plan cycle, the IWIB has deactivated the Information Technology Committee with reassignments of necessary activities to other committees and work groups, The new Business Engagement Committee will provide a direct resource to support the business-driven model Illinois' workforce and education systems seek.

Committees are generally longstanding groups that conduct regularly occurring business on behalf of the IWIB and are designed to focus on long-term issues and strategies. Task forces, on the other hand, are short-term and goal-oriented bodies that are appointed to achieve articulated outcomes by a specified date and employ highly engaged membership and staff support to accomplish those outcomes.

Work Groups are utilized to develop and revise policies that direct system operations for local workforce boards, agency partners, one-stop centers & operators and service providers. At any given time, there have been as many as five policy work groups engaged in the same policy development and implementation process. Each is approved by the IWIB through action items that detail the objectives and timeframes (if appropriate) of the group. All Committees, workgroups and task forces are comprised of members of the IWIB, local boards and chief

elected officials, business and core agency partners, in addition to identified stakeholders throughout the state. Going forward, and further outlined within this Plan, the IWIB addresses the following priority areas: service integration, one-stop certification, eligible training providers and demand occupations, and local workforce innovation board composition and staffing models.

The IWIB Executive Committee is responsible for establishing the committees, task forces and work groups and designating the members of these working bodies, subject to the approval of the full IWIB. While the IWIB encourages wide participation from stakeholders, a Chair, selected from among current IWIB business members, is identified for each Committee and Task Force to ensure continued effective, efficient and focused efforts on the IWIB's behalf. Chairs are encouraged for work groups as well. Recently, the IWIB held discussions and approved a process whereby a Co-Chair can be identified to lead and support the work of the standing committees. A Co-Chair can be a representative of the system with intimate knowledge and experience of the committee work and does not have to be selected from among IWIB members. This allowance provides for the ability to support areas of system development that a board member might not have as a strength.

IWIB members have increased their alignment with education groups within the state to build strong linkages that will expand work-based learning opportunities and open career pathways for all learners. Building these strong linkages is part of the board's role as a system leader, and supports further alignment of the education, workforce and economic development vision. IWIB representatives actively participate in the Illinois P-20 Council, the Illinois Pathways Advisory Council and the Higher Education Commission on the Future of the Workforce, as well as the technical assistance work group on New Skills for Youth and the 21st Century Workforce Advisory Fund Board. IWIB members also participate in the Integrated Business Services teams. IWIB staff provide information to the board related to other workforce, education and economic development efforts occurring throughout the state to assist them in better understanding their roles and how they can affect continuous improvement opportunities throughout the system.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGY

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

2. Implementation of State Strategy

A. Core Program Activities to Implement the State's Strategy

Six policy strategies were developed to reach the goals of the Unified State Plan. Attached to each strategy are specific implementation activities that leverage the collective experience of the core and required partners and build upon the experience gained through public and private sector innovation initiatives. The core partner programs under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) are fully committed to achieving improved service delivery through program alignment. Under the direction of the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) and the Interagency Leadership Team, each program collaboratively assesses service overlap and opportunities for improved alignment in support of the state strategies. Alignment extends beyond the core partners to include one-stop required partners in continuous efforts to assess and improve service integration, policy review and local area self-assessment and action plans.

Since the passage of WIOA, the core partners have contributed funding, staff and facilities to strengthen the state and regional labor market information shared with the workforce system; established strategic planning frameworks for community colleges and WIOA programs; collaborated to develop a service integration policy and implementation plan and enhanced integrated business services through the work of the Integrated Business Services Workgroup. One foundational activity in 2015 that continues to help set priorities in the Unified State Plan and align workforce and education strategies is the collaborative development of a Workforce

Education Strategic Plan (WESP) for community colleges, adult education, career and technical education, and corporate training.

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) has progressed through the implementation of the plan by surveying community colleges about the status of the four strategic directions. Additionally, the Illinois State Board of Education and ICCB continue to develop the Perkins V State Plan with input from core partners and other entities to ensure alignment with the state WIOA implementation strategies.

Strategy 1: Coordinate Demand-Driven Strategic Planning at the State and Regional Levels

The state continues to coordinate a demand-driven strategic planning process across education, workforce and economic development at the state, regional and local levels. Governor Pritzker's Economic Development Plan originally issued in 2019 informed priorities of the Unified State Plan and continues to guide activities to implement strategies at a regional level, particularly regional sector partnerships.

Activity 1.1: Develop Strategic Indicators, Benchmarks and Related Planning Data Resources

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) Continuous Improvement Committee (CIC) continues to research and identify metrics that (a) determine whether the Unified State Plan and other WIOA requirements are being carried out effectively, and (b) identify opportunities to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of Illinois' workforce development system. The CIC serves as a resource to other IWIB committees in establishing standards and metrics that can be built into new initiatives and regularly measured to continuously improve system and program performance.

To enhance accountability, the CIC will map Unified State Plan commitments and outcomes to ensure activities outlined are being addressed effectively. Much of the work of the CIC, like the IWIB, focuses on the many facets of service integration as outlined in Illinois' policy in 2019. An ongoing and systemwide review of local service integration self-assessments will continue to identify best practices and inform policy and professional development plans. The CIC is also identifying continuous improvement opportunities following a review of the common WIOA performance measures for the core partners and recommending strategies for systemwide learnings and implementation guidance.

Going forward, the committee is looking at larger questions related to evaluation and performance. It should be noted that the focus of the CIC is not to monitor local boards and one-stop systems, but to identify indicators of successful performance outcomes and recommend approaches to evaluation that can be implemented statewide. The committee will review the research agendas of various components of the system and identify opportunities to strengthen alignment and prioritization of research questions. The availability of the Illinois Longitudinal Data System and the Comprehensive Demographic Dataset, the 2017 Talent Flow Analysis pilot project and the 2017 Workforce Innovation Fund Impact Evaluation provided resources and examples of ways to use data for evaluation and research opportunities to support system improvement.

Illinois updated its model utilizing the regional data packets of industry and occupational demand and pathway supply/demand analyses, key indicators of business growth and location, labor force participation and unemployment rates with current data and labor market information. The partners will use the updated projections to identify in-demand industries and occupations for the 2022 regional and local plan modifications. The planning resources also utilized U.S. Census data to estimate the size and characteristics of the population and labor force, including targeted populations under this plan who are facing multiple barriers to employment. For example, WIOA Title II Adult Education programs are required to align Integrated Education and Training and Bridge programming with in-demand industries as

identified through the regional and local plans. Additionally, programs are required to use data to ensure the students served in Bridge and Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs reflect the targeted population, ensuring equity of services is at the forefront of their planning and implementation of services.

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted the augmentation of traditional labor market data with alternative data sources to include the most current data available. Pandemic-related economic changes were nearly unprecedented in scope and rapidity. Traditional LMI sources did not keep pace with the rapid economic changes starting in March 2020. Planning efforts incorporated new data elements, such as labor participation rates, remote-working and key occupational wages derived from current placement ads.

Illinois continues to apply key learnings from the 2019 Evaluation Peer Learning Cohort project facilitated by the Department of Labor - Employment & Training Administration. The resulting Evaluation Toolkit continues to provide a framework and tools for effective evaluation for statewide workforce programs, policies, and processes across various Titles. The toolkit uses an equity lens based on the IWIB Equity Task Force's concept that an equitable workforce system is one where diversity, equity, and inclusion are foundational-in which race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, health, ability, and other demographic or geographic characteristics no longer predict one's outcome in the labor market.

Activity 1.2: Establish Regional Planning Areas

Governor Pritzker determined that Illinois' ten economic development regions will continue to serve as the regional planning areas that are required by Section 106 of the WIOA to engage in joint planning, integrate service delivery, share administrative costs, and enter into regional coordination efforts with economic development agencies operating in the same region. The ten economic development regions were established in 2003 based on an analysis of labor market information and several other data factors including statewide commuting patterns surrounding major and minor metropolitan centers. These ten regions include the 22 LWIAs and 102 counties.

The state continues to recommend that Chief Elected Officials (CEOs) and Local Workforce Innovation Boards review the patterns in WIOA funding, participant service levels, and administrative costs and consider how these will impact service delivery and the ability to meet administrative requirements. Many efforts were already applied to streamline operations to provide more efficient service delivery to the workforce system. The state also continues to encourage CEOs to consider a voluntary consolidation of LWIAs as an option to provide as much funding as possible for direct client services. A small number of LWIAs had counties that extended into adjacent economic development regions. Three counties voluntarily realigned to adjacent LWIAs effective July 1, 2019, which allowed four LWIAs to align with their regional planning area. The IWIB will continue working with local CEOs and LWIB chairs to address the few remaining outlying counties.

Activity 1.3: Conduct Integrated Regional Planning

The state developed and continues to support an integrated regional planning process that is coordinated with local area planning and biannual modifications in each of the ten regions. As required by WIOA, this planning process includes determinations of how Local Workforce Innovation Boards will engage in the joint development and implementation of regional sector initiatives. In 2015, ICCB and state agency partners established the foundations for regional planning throughout Illinois through the process of developing an ICCB Workforce Education Strategic Plan. The ICCB continues to examine ways to incorporate local planning through Career and Technical Education development of local plans and the Adult Education Area Planning Council including various members of the education and workforce communities. The

purpose is to provide programming and services to adapt to changing economic and student needs within workforce regions and 39 community college and area planning districts.

The state continues the practice of presenting regional planning workshops and statewide summits to support regional planning and modification processes. Regional planning addresses the alignment and integration of education, workforce and economic development resources, the identification of opportunities for sector initiatives, and partnerships that will promote business and expand career opportunities for more people in the region. The regional plans also identify opportunities for the coordination and delivery of services.

The WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team continues to coordinate a Regional & Local Plan / One-Stop Memorandum of Understanding review process that includes a formal report and technical assistance review for each of the ten Economic Development Regions and twenty-two local workforce areas. It is important to note that the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), ICCB, Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services (DHS-DRS) and representatives of other required partners remain actively engaged in this routine review process. All regional plans, local plans, MOUs and Infrastructure Funding Agreements are available on an online public dashboard reflecting the review and approval status of each guiding document. All regional and local plans may be viewed at: https://www.illinoisworknet.com/WIOA/RegPlanning/Pages/Plans_MOUs_Dashboard.aspx.

Strategy 2: Support Employer-Driven Regional Sector Initiatives

Illinois has been actively engaged in sectoral work and sector strategies for more than a decade. The IWIB continues to guide this important work to ensure investment in resources and promotion of skills and careers in targeted industry and high demand occupations. Illinois was one of six states invited to participate in the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices Sector Strategies Learning Academy funded by the Mott, Ford and Joyce Foundations. The initial policy recommendations resulting from this effort remain valid today: a) promote regionalism; b) increase funding opportunities; c) use data to drive decisions; d) align resources and strategies; e) present opportunities for unified messages; and f) build legislative support. State and regional strategic planning activities align all levels of education, workforce and economic development and lay the foundation for employer-driven regional sector initiatives.

The ICCB continues to use the Essential Skills Framework, led by Adult Education with input from employers and workforce entities, that was developed for employers and workers in Illinois and used in other initiatives. The framework is embedded in initiatives such as the Innovative Bridge and Transition grant, which focuses on the development of in-demand career pathway programs for students. The framework is also embedded in the Workforce Equity Initiative, which concentrates on providing accelerated instructional and supportive services to support African American students in high demand, high wage occupations.

Activity 2.1: Promote Employer-Driven Regional Sector Partnerships

The IWIB Business Engagement Committee is charged with expanding the statewide policy framework that operationalizes the goals and guiding principles of employer-driven sector partnerships that were developed through the national Sector Strategies Technical Assistance initiative. The sector strategies framework (Attachment D, formerly Attachment G in the 2020 Unified State Plan) (https://www.illinoisworknet.com/WIOA/Resources/Documents/Attachment percent20G percent20- percent20Illinois percent20Sector percent20Partnership.pdf) describes how state and regional resources can be used to launch, expand and support employer-led partnerships. The core partners implement strategies based on the framework and other leading national and state employer-driven models, such as those developed with the support of the NGA Sector

Strategies Learning Academy, the Workforce Innovation Fund and the United States Chamber of Commerce's Talent Pipeline Management Initiative.

The Illinois DCEO continues to promote employer-led sector strategies via technical assistance regarding the Illinois Next Generation Sector Strategies Framework, and sector partnerships related to Talent Pipeline Management. DCEO staff conduct informational sessions on sector partnerships:

- at state and regional events held by the workforce system;
- with local chamber of commerce executives;
- with rural economic development professionals;
- with business and industry groups; and
- with regional economic development organizations and local chapters of the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM).

DCEO has embedded six Talent Pipeline Management strategies, the first of which is the formation of regional sector-based employer collaboratives, into apprenticeship expansion grants. Initial grantees sent a team to a U.S. Chamber Academy for training on how to implement the strategies. Plans are to host an in-state academy for interested communities presented by U.S. Chamber faculty in 2022.

Regional Apprenticeship Navigators, Economic Development Teams, and local nonprofits (e.g., economic developers and chambers) are collaboratively creating sector partnerships led by business champions to address current and future talent supply demands. The Navigator is responsible for promoting and creating a network that includes, but is not limited to, industry associations, chambers of commerce, community-based organizations, local workforce areas, community colleges, technical schools, or school districts.

Collectively, all partners will develop sector partnerships to engage in a granular overview of common pain points in developing a talent pipeline using real-time data. They will also use sector partnerships to develop apprenticeship opportunities that lead to a nationally recognized credential and expanded Illinois workforce.

For the remainder of this planning cycle, Regional Apprenticeship Navigators, Economic Development Teams, and local non-profits (economic developers and chambers) are working collaboratively to create sector partnerships led by business champions to address current and future talent supply demands. The Apprenticeship Navigator is responsible for promoting and DCEO will host two Illinois Talent Pipeline Management Academies in PY2022. The first academy is a multi-state academy. DCEO, in partnership with ICCB, will identify ten community colleges to participate in the academy focusing on training providers currently serving as apprenticeship intermediaries. Over a six-to-nine-month period, the academy will provide an in-depth view of key talent pipeline strategies and the role training providers play in the process.

The second Illinois TPM Academy will be offered to business champions, navigators, chambers of commerce and economic developers playing a significant role in the development of regional sector partnerships. The training will be offered in a hybrid format with each of the ten economic development regions focusing on a particular sector identified in the WIOA Unified State Plan. The case studies from the training will be used as identified best practices for the continuation of additional sector partnerships in each region.

Activity 2.2: Promote Sector-Based Business Services and Employer Initiatives

Businesses need to be more aware of the services, programs and opportunities available through WIOA required program partners. Businesses also need to be included in the discussion

and development of industry-led partnerships to address the needs of employers within key sectors. They also must recognize the important leadership roles available to business through state and local workforce boards. In response, the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) has established an employer-focused standing committee, known as the IWIB Business Engagement Committee (BEC). Through this committee, the IWIB seeks to focus Illinois' workforce development system on the needs of businesses and to hear their needs in discussions on workforce skills and education priorities.

The mission of the BEC will be to provide guidance and direction to help bridge the gap between Illinois' important business sectors and employers, and the Illinois workforce development system. The BEC has three main priorities in the fulfillment of this mission. One of those priorities is to engage Illinois' business community in the development and direction of regional industry-led sector partnerships that will convene employers, workforce development professionals, and other regional institutions and partners. These partnerships will seek to coordinate investments, align workforce and education systems, and promote economic growth across the state.

A work group of the BEC – the Industry Partnerships Work Group – was developed to specifically act on this priority. The primary goal of the Industry Partnerships Work Group is to advance engagement of the business community in industry-led sector partnerships. Specifically, the Industry Partnership Work Group seeks to create a network of sector-based champions and a community of practice for each target industry (identified through this plan, regional workforce development plans, and the state's economic development plan). The intent is to ensure the alignment of publicly-funded workforce development investments and efforts with the workforce needs of critical industries across the state.

The BEC and the Industry Partnerships Work Group establish a network of industry champions to assist in business outreach within targeted industries. This includes identifying existing industry leadership, leveraging existing relationships and bringing additional value to the champions and the businesses within their industry. To do so, the Industry Partnerships Work Group seeks to partner with a key industry organization to pilot this approach, learn more about workforce needs directly from industry leaders, and ensure that sector partnership activities deliver a clear return on investment. The Work Group will partner with the Technology & Manufacturing Association (TMA) to pilot and refine outreach and awareness of sector strategies in manufacturing throughout the state, given TMA's long-standing workforce development leadership in Illinois's manufacturing industry and its established relationship with the IWIB. The primary "ask" of TMA and its member companies will be to provide input and insights to shape the work moving forward. Work Group members are charged with translating that feedback into actionable plans, which will be reviewed with TMA for validation and refinement. This pilot will result in an action plan for launching a statewide industry champion network in each targeted industry sector, which will be presented to the IWIB and DCEO for consideration.

Additionally, integrated business services were embedded into the first local Service Integration Self-Assessment project in 2019. This action, along with subsequent local plans to improve service integration, ensures that integrated business services will remain a part of ongoing efforts in the field. Related initiatives will supplement these integrated business services strategies. Examples include jointly leveraging funding, emphasizing private sector investment. Supporting employer-driven sector initiatives includes leveraging local area funds for OJT and incumbent worker training, WIOA rapid response, as well as layoff aversion funds for business retention. Ultimately, the focus is on providing practical guidance to regional stakeholders so they can develop integrated business services to employers in industries and occupations that are identified as in-demand through the state and regional planning processes.

Strategy 3: Provide Economic Advancement for all Populations through Career Pathways

The IWIB continues to strengthen alignment with education groups in an effort to advance career pathways for all individuals to prepare them for economic self-sufficiency. The Illinois P-20 Council (P represents preschool, and 20 stands for grade 20, education after college) has a business membership emphasis. The P-20 Council has become the venue to develop a framework to better align the state's education systems. The IWIB Business Co-Chair plays a major role in the council and chairs the P-20 Council's School, College and Career Readiness Committee. The dual representation positions the IWIB to facilitate connections between workforce, education and business and industry partners. The IWIB will also create a common set of expectations, assumptions, and definitions to align career pathways programs and build a stronger talent pipeline across all populations. Additionally, the IWIB Business Co-Chair and state legislative members of the IWIB actively engaged with the Illinois Board of Higher Education and other education partners to ensure that WIOA implementation strategies embed policy recommendations designed to increase post-secondary education attainment and address regional workforce needs. Going forward, the P-20 Council will expand its focus to increase business engagement and ensure strategies include employer voices to meet their needs for a skilled workforce.

ICCB, through its Adult Education and Career and Technical Education Divisions, has developed model strategies to assist individuals with multiple barriers to employment connect to career pathways and improve the talent pipeline for local economic development. For example, ICCB has created and implemented Pre-bridge, Bridge, and Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs, such as I-CAPS (Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System) that are designed to improve access to training for in-demand occupations for very-underserved populations. There are now two models: I-CAPS 1 (post-secondary credit) and I-CAPS 2 (industry-recognized credentials). These models blend career pathway instruction with adult basic education instruction and industry specific training. ICCB has added the Integrated English Language Civics education to ensure ESL programs have the support to fully integrate workplace and IET programs in the ESL classroom. This combination ensures adult basic education, career pathway instruction, and industry-based training are combined to address local industry needs. The ICCB further expanded instructional efforts to support the incumbent workforce through the implementation of Workplace Literacy, adult education and literacy activities offered by an eligible Title II provider in collaboration with an employer or employee organization at a workplace or an off-site location designed to improve the productivity of the workforce. Another example includes the ICCB's partnership with the Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support and the Office of Community College Research and Leadership, whose roles include offering professional development and technical assistance to the community colleges and other applicable partners on advancing equity and adequately serving "special populations", as determined by the Perkins Act, in career pathway programs. Furthermore, the ICCB included Designing for Equity and Access for All Learners as a part of the instructional professional development pathway to ensure educators across the state are equipped with the tools to lead classroom instruction from an equity lens.

With the implementation of three strategic plans, the Workforce Education Strategic Plan, the Adult Education Strategic Plan, and the Perkins V CTE Plan, the ICCB will identify strategies and goals that address early interventions, transition to postsecondary education and employment and college and career readiness.

Policies and practices recommended from these efforts will be operationalized through current and future state and regional sector initiatives, such as those mentioned below in Activity 3.1. This will provide the foundation for sector-based career pathway initiatives that expand career and educational opportunities for students and workers, including those facing multiple barriers to employment.

Activity 3.1: Promote Leading Career Pathway Models and Best Practices

Illinois' efforts to align education, workforce and economic development provide a solid foundation to promote leading career pathway models and best practices. Career pathway development in Illinois continues to expand to encompass every level of the education system and to meet the needs of our diverse populations, including those that face multiple barriers to achieving self-sufficiency. Illinois has adopted a unified definition for Career Pathways to ensure a connection with current state initiatives, programs and services. Each agency incorporates this definition into guidelines to ensure a consistent message is understood throughout the state.

Across the system, Illinois is piloting and/or creating solutions to implement these models and to develop policy recommendations such as:

- Defining Career Pathways for the workforce and education system across multiple partners and through board actions across the IWIB, the ICCB, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (Public and Private Universities), the Illinois State Board of Education (K-12), the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, as well as the Department of Human Services.
- The IWIB Disadvantaged Youth/Adults Standing Committee (Youth Committee) was reconstituted as the Career Pathways for Targeted Populations Committee. This committee focuses on targeted populations identified in the Unified State Plan to develop strategies and initiatives that provide career pathways for Illinois' most vulnerable individuals. Working with businesses, the education system, local workforce agencies and other interested stakeholders, business-driven talent solutions will be developed that build on previous years of success, such as Illinois Pathways and the Illinois 60 by 25 Network, which was designed to increase the availability and use of career pathways.
- Engaging in professional development activities that emphasize the integrated nature of career pathways, including topics such as curriculum integration, academic and career advising across K-12 and community colleges through counselor training, Special Populations Academies and summits on nontraditional careers.
- Defining High-Quality Credentials that will place equal importance on industry-recognized credentials and creating a definition for high quality that is based on sector-demand and self-sustaining wage data.
- Determining the criteria for eligible training providers that will align data collection and program approval processes to the Career Pathways to improve informed customer choice.
- Creating community and regional collaborations, such as "60 by 25" Communities and Illinois P-20 Regional Networks, seeking ways to increase college and career success for students through regional action toward a state target of increasing adults in Illinois with high-quality degrees and credentials to sixty percent by 2025 (60 by 25).
- Developing sector-based approaches with community-based organizations serving SNAP and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients.
- ICCB initiatives, including Integrated Education and Training programs (IET). The IET program provides low-skilled adults enrolled in Title II: Adult Education and Literacy with an opportunity to gain basic skills or work towards a high school equivalency while enrolling concurrently in a Career Technical Education program. Individuals enrolled in an IET program will receive instruction that is contextualized to a specific sector and includes employability/workforce preparation skills and a technical training program (i.e., welding). Individuals completing the IET program may earn an industry-recognized

credential(s), a college certificate and college credit. Under this model, individuals can earn credentials within a year, depending on the program.

- Expanding strategies for career pathway initiatives for individuals with disabilities.
- DCEO supports awareness of best and promising practices for local staff and provides technical assistance to foster their integration into the regular WIOA local workflow.
- The Service Integration Policy Work Group modeling resource leveraging by building on the Illinois DRS Technical Assistance Grant received from the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC), funded by the U.S. Department of Education. A key focus of WINTAC Activity is service integration across a spectrum of five stages and six core functions. Dedicated workgroups will explore policy and implementation best practices to achieve service integration of the six core functions.

These efforts, as well as others, will inform the state regarding the expansion of career pathway approaches that can be implemented through regional sector partnerships and other regional sector initiatives. Policy recommendations, professional development and technical assistance are central to operationalizing these pathway approaches into the improvement of career services and the expansion of access to accelerated and integrated work-based and classroom training, aligned and integrated programs of study leading to industry-recognized credentials, and support services for targeted populations facing barriers to employment. Additionally, career pathway approaches will include strategies for fully mainstreaming targeted populations to provide access to self-sustaining wages and career advancement.

Activity 3.2: Expand and Improve Bridge and Integrated Education and Training Models

The state agency partners will focus on expanding access and success in sector-based bridge programs that provide opportunities for youth and adults with low skills and low literacy. The state will support new and expanded initiatives that promote sector-based pre-bridge, bridge programs and integrated education and training models that increase access and success for low-skilled youth and adults in career pathways. These programs are designed to introduce individuals to career pathway programs of interest. A common state definition of bridge programs was developed to ensure all core and required partners have a basic understanding of the provisions of services under these programs. The state recognizes the use of bridge programs as a foundation for career pathway systems and also as a foundation for employment opportunities and other training. To reduce barriers for adult learners' participation in Career and Technical Education, the ICCB will submit an Alternative State Plan for Ability to Benefit to the Department of Education. The purpose of Illinois' Ability to Benefit State-Defined Process is to increase access to federal financial aid for eligible adults without a high school diploma, who with proper support can be as successful as their peers in postsecondary credential and degree completion. Ability to Benefit (ATB), a provision of section 484(d) of the Higher Education Act (HEA), aids in equity of access to Federal Financial Aid for adult learners lacking a high school diploma. The ATB provision allows eligible adult learners who are participating in a career pathway program as amended in Public Law 114-113 under section 484(d)(2) of the HEA at a Title IV eligible institution to have access to financial aid.

The strategic plan for adult education, "Expanding Career Pathway Opportunities in Adult Education," engaged multiple partners in the plan development process. The plan expands opportunities for individuals, including those who lack basic literacy, English and foundational skills necessary to access in-demand employment. The ICCB will continue to seek ways in which the Adult Education Plan can be aligned to other plans of statewide significance.

Activity 3.3: Promote Innovative Career Pathway Solutions

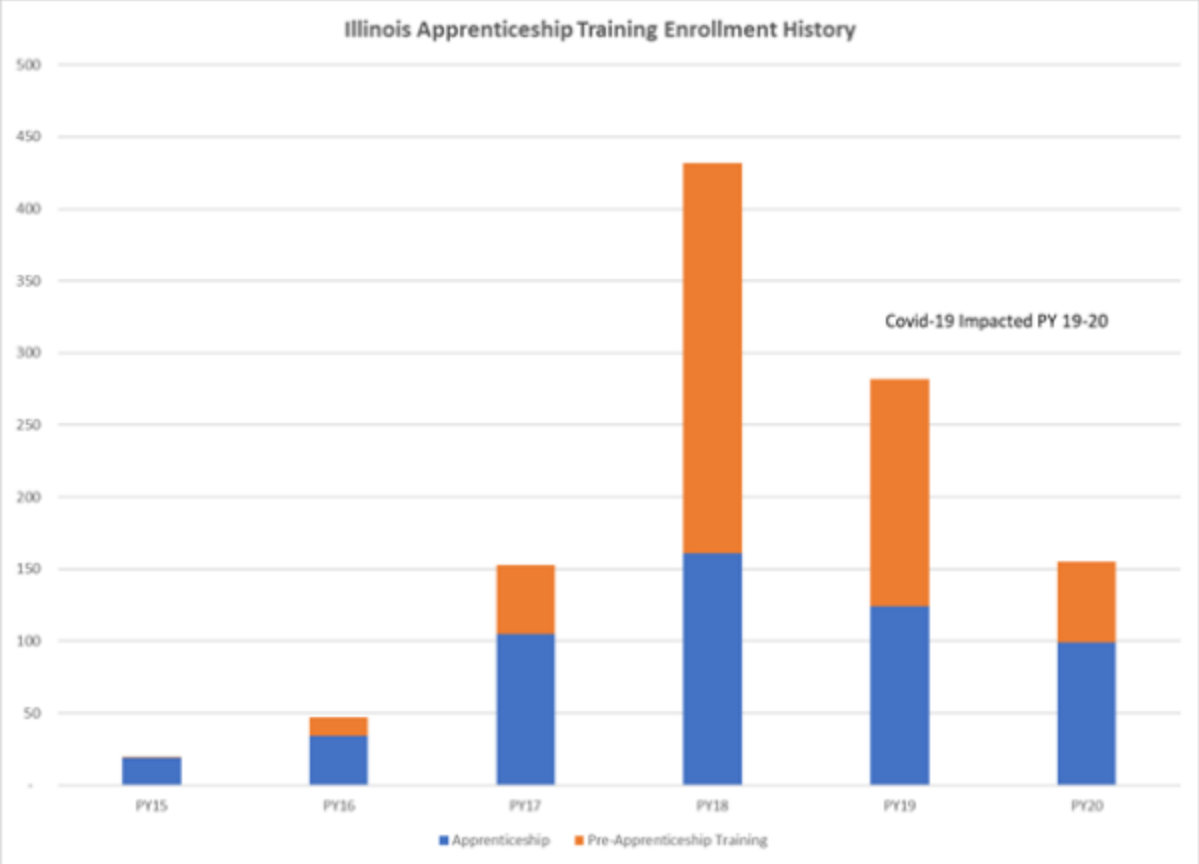
Illinois' adoption of a statewide definition for career pathways lays a solid foundation for career pathway models for all populations. One example in promoting innovation in career pathway

solutions will be an increased emphasis on solutions for youth with barriers. Informed by the work of the IWIB Career Pathways for Targeted Populations Standing Committee (previously the IWIB Disadvantaged Youth Task Force), state agency partners will use demonstrations and pilot projects to guide policy recommendations through activities such as:

- Exploring opportunities to expand career pathways for out-of-school youth, adults, and other priority populations through the blending of federal and state funding;
- Supporting education efforts to design and implement rigorous, demand-driven college and career pathway systems extending from secondary and postsecondary aligned with the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act;
- Developing joint projects between adult education programs, local workforce boards and others in areas such as aligning WIOA Title I services with efforts that currently address justice-involved youth. Illinois is exploring a range of career pathway models seen nationally and statewide as exemplary 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.
- Creating service alignment for foster youth, including youth who are aging out of the foster care system. DCEO and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) are developing an initiative to expand career pathway services to older foster youth who are nearing age-out of DCFS programs. Successful models for braiding and blending WIOA and Chafee Foster Care Funds are under consideration as a basis for Illinois' effort.

Our 2016 WIOA Unified State Plan predicted, "With increased attention given to various forms of work-based learning, apprenticeships are expected to become more common as WIOA is implemented." This proved accurate as enrollment in WIOA-funded apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships in Illinois have skyrocketed. Before the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted work-based learning programs that required in-person services, pre-apprenticeship enrollment increased exponentially each year between PY15 and PY18, with single-year growth rates ranging from 134 percent to 226 percent.

Chart 50: Illinois Apprenticeship Training Enrollment History



The IWIB Apprenticeship Standing Committee's focus and commitment on developing a comprehensive and integrated apprenticeship system contributed to the pre-pandemic enrollment trends with oversight of performance and recommendations for improvements.

The exponential expansion trend between PY15 - PY18 was reversed as social distancing requirements went into effect in PY19 and ongoing economic uncertainty with Covid-19 continued into PY20 and beyond. The pandemic reduced placement opportunities for both existing apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships and also imposed significant challenges for creating programs with new businesses and additional occupations. Despite this temporary setback, Illinois remains committed to support expansion of new and existing programs to increase placement opportunities for job seekers and students. Commerce issued a new round of apprenticeship expansion grants in the spring of 2022 that will carry through the end of this planning cycle. Additional grants will likely be awarded in 2023, depending on available funds.

The IWIB remains committed to using registered, youth, and pre-apprenticeships as a key strategy to build a pipeline of skilled workers to help businesses throughout the state remain competitive. This committee will continue to be the key resource for the IWIB to identify policies, resources, opportunities and roadblocks as Illinois seeks to establish a comprehensive "scaffold" of pathways around and towards Registered Apprenticeships.

Additionally, the Illinois Community College System has seen the growth of apprenticeships, both registered, non-registered and pre-apprenticeships. Initiatives at Harper College and City Colleges of Chicago have been focused on apprenticeships in insurance and finance. while the Highway Construction Careers Training program has focused on pre-apprenticeship preparation in the highway and construction trades. The ICCB will expand apprenticeships, registered, non-registered and pre-apprenticeships by more than 1,700 enrollments in information technology over the next four years through the Department of Labor Scaling Apprenticeships through Sector-based Initiatives grant.

Illinois is applying best practices and lessons learned out of the ApprenticeshipUSA pilot projects, including the Illinois Manufacturers' Association Education Foundation Advanced Apprenticeship Consortium project. These and the subsequent Apprenticeship Expansion Grants received by the Title I program, and additional funding received by ICCB to expand apprenticeship programs, are directly responsible for continued and rapid growth in Illinois. The expansion of apprenticeships will be encouraged and supported with WIOA Statewide Activities funds through the Illinois Talent Pipeline and Youth Career Pathways Programs. Similarly, the State's Perkins Plan promotes the expansion of quality apprenticeship programming at the secondary and postsecondary levels.

Apprenticeship navigators and intermediaries recognize that a diverse workforce results in significant business advantages including but not limited to better representation of their customer base, increased hiring efficiencies, more innovative thinking, boosted productivity, higher retention, and greater brand recognition and loyalty. Underrepresented populations are identified and addressed by tapping into talent pools previously overlooked by employers.

Apprenticeship Intermediaries ease the burden for businesses, particularly small companies that do not have the personnel to execute such tasks. Intermediaries perform administrative responsibilities such as registering businesses and apprentices, tracking activities, and reporting results. These intermediaries will be the key point of contact and support for any business or intermediary in any industry within the region. Intermediaries coordinate with a regional navigator to facilitate the registration of new programs with the U.S. DOL Office of Apprenticeship or expansion of existing programs, create registered apprenticeship program standards and develop program design, coordinate recruitment, assessment, case management, related technical training, work-based training, supportive service, and placement of participants. Supporting the business sponsors, the Intermediaries assist in identifying mentors and supporting the mentoring process during an active apprenticeship experience.

Apprenticeships are not just for entry-level positions. Apprenticeships for incumbent workers is an effective strategy to support business and expand apprenticeship programs to upskill and retain employees and provide workers with an upward career path. Incumbent worker training benefits both workers and employers by improving productivity, creating new revenue streams and making both more economically competitive. Commerce updated the Incumbent Worker policy in2021 to remove a barrier hindering the use of incumbent worker training to support apprenticeships.

Commerce refined incumbent worker project tracking to specifically identify projects involving apprenticeship training. Prior to this change, apprenticeship IWT projects were counted with other projects leading to an industry-recognized credential. The number of IWT apprenticeship projects has significantly increased over the last three program years, from 2 to 19, with registered apprenticeships being the vast majority. Each project was with a unique employer; thus, the number of participating companies is the same as the number of projects.

Strategy 4: Expand Service Integration

A collaborative policy development process, enriched by a broad range of stakeholder engagement, provided guidance to the field that continues to translate WIOA principles to operational plans at the state and local levels. In 2019 a statewide service integration self-assessment project was implemented in all LWIAs. These self-assessments shaped local action plans for improvement in alignment with their regional and local plans and with commitments made in One-Stop MOUs. The IWIB Service Integration Policy Workgroup will continue to use this collaborative policy development process to recommend to the IWIB additional guidance for implementing integrated and enhanced career services and case management.

Activity 4.1: Provide Coordinated and Enhanced Career Services

The state is working to support the delivery of enhanced career services to participants across partner programs. IDES is responsible for the Illinois Career Information System, a web-based tool that incorporates Illinois-specific actionable data regarding in-demand occupations and wages, that allows students and job seekers to make informed decisions about their career pathways. Individual career goals and plans are informed by the Career Information System data, as well as career assessments, skill assessments, and identified barriers to employment that require supportive services. Agency partners will also include the assessment of digital literacy as a basic skill and provide services to participants in gaining these skills through career services and through additional services in career pathway bridge programs. Agency partners will also provide career services guides, tools and professional development to core program staff in providing these career services. This will be supported by the WIOA Interagency Data Team to improve access to labor market information for career guidance, highlighting in-demand industries and occupations and education, training and credentialing options for achieving career and education goals in participant plans (See Activity 5.2).

Some American Job Centers now provide virtual career services. The core partners and local areas will continue to explore and implement best practices for providing coordinated virtual services as a means of staying connected with current customers and reaching additional customers.

Activity 4.2: Provide Coordinated and Enhanced Case Management Services

The IWIB Service Integration Policy Workgroup, with the assistance of the WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team, coordinates and supports the delivery of enhanced case management services to participants across the core programs and with other partners. This effort will lead to the development of policy and practices that support enhanced case management through assessment and career planning. These efforts will inform the Workforce Academy described below in Activity 4.3 to develop training in the use of case management data from aligned and integrated case management systems used by core programs and with other partners, including related human resources and supportive service programs (also see Activity 6.3). Illinois' workforce and education partners are committed to this strategy as illustrated by the following initiatives.

- The WIOA partners will continue collaborating on improved service integration, working with one-stop required partners to develop standards for integrated case management services and training for local staff to meet and exceed the established service standards. This will include improved and expanded training on best practices and linking participant outcomes data to the staff assigned to each customer.
- The ICCB will implement strategies for Local Title II providers to offer professional development on assessment for case managers. ICCB will also continue to work on alignment of the Adult Education Area Planning Councils with the LWIAs to foster better case management and customer services for individuals with multiple barriers to employment.
- Title II Adult Education will continue to strategize with core and required partners, specifically TANF and Title I, to maximize efforts to provide coordinated services to mutual clients such as underserved populations. This may include but is not limited to assessment of participants.

Activity 4.3: Promote Continuous Improvement and Ongoing Professional Development

State agency partners will promote continuous improvement in career services and case management services through state and regional initiatives that promote leading business practices, working with the IWIB as part of its expanded role (WIOA 101(d)(3)(vii)). The IWIB and the Interagency Professional Development Planning Team are leading an effort to create a

Workforce Academy. LWIB and local input of front-line and supervisory workforce personnel will be critical in the development of the Academy. The Academy will build a common understanding of Illinois' vision and support the move to an integrated delivery system building the capacity of staff through cross-training and other professional development opportunities. This capacity building and technical assistance plan is a key objective of the IWIB's Strategic Plan and will support the assurance that all partner agencies and front-line staff are adequately prepared to understand and develop an effective plan to address the customer's needs.

In addition, front-line staff will be afforded opportunities to participate in ongoing professional development through topic-specific policy academies, as well as national professional development and credentialing programs, such as the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP). Furthermore, the IWIB and the interagency Professional Development Planning Team will leverage the expertise of the ICCB Adult Education and Career Technical Education programs and support available through several Illinois public community colleges and universities to provide professional development to agency partners in the appropriate administration of educational assessment of basic skill deficiencies. To the extent possible, training and information on promising practices and lessons learned will be delivered through technological solutions to maximize access and cost-effectiveness.

The WIOA Professional Development Committee is charged with coordinating regional and statewide professional development for the WIOA system as it relates to WIOA implementation, service integration and policy. The team consists of WIOA partners at the state and local levels. The WIOA Professional Development Team also plans the annual WIOA Summit, held in the spring of each year.

Illinois has utilized technology to produce webinars (*WIOA Wednesday Webinars)* that provide a platform for all program partners to discuss WIOA topics and build a "library" of information that outlines the required and additional partner's programs. The webinars provide a forum to educate attendees about all programs, activities and resources, ask questions and offer suggestions towards improving collaboration efforts. Continuous improvement and professional development will also expand via regional roundtables and statewide summits that provide opportunities for peer-to-peer information exchange on best practices and lessons learned, establishing and strengthening cross-program relationships, and front-line feedback to state program leaders. These events will continue to include business representatives on the state and local workforce boards to understand their perspectives.

Professional development, while planned through the WIOA Professional Development Team, works in conjunction with the IWIB Continuous Improvement Committee to identify best practices that can be replicated across the State, as well as topics and areas of need as identified by evaluations and other assessments. This has already occurred through the reviews of service integration self-assessment submissions related to the guidance and requirements found in WIOA Policy 1.13 Service Integration. Where necessary, and in support of the professional development planning, further policy and guidance will be developed when effective practices are identified to incorporate across the State.

Additional professional development opportunities for LWIBs, WIOA Core Partners and regional stakeholders are planned for 2022-2024 in support of Talent Pipeline Management. An in-state academy has been arranged that will bring US Chamber of Commerce staff and their training to Illinois. This will allow stakeholders from many more local workforce areas to access this training by eliminating the need to send teams to Washington DC. Other related outreach and training opportunities conducted by WIOA State Core Partner staff are planned to follow the initial events.

Activity 4.4: Promote the Incorporation of Required Partner Services

The core partners continue to explore opportunities to incorporate the services of the Comprehensive One-Stop Center partners into case management and career services. Options for providing virtual services are being explored to help improve opportunities for staff to connect to existing and potential new customers. Illinois has made progress through the WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team and the IWIB Service Integration Policy Work Group to identify the business services, career services, training services and supportive services of the state's workforce, education and economic development partners. Through the implementation of best practices from programs, such as the Disability Employment Initiative and the Bridge and Integrated Education and Training program, the state will develop policies through the IWIB policy process to ensure that there is a customer-centered coordination of services that considers the additional needs of the targeted populations as identified in this plan. Starting with the 2020-24 WIOA Regional and Local Plans, all plans must indicate a commitment to implement local service integration action plans. Further, the Governor's Guidelines for one-stop MOUs require a specific description of how these commitments are being operationalized through American Job Centers.

Strategy 5: Promote Improved Data-Driven Decision Making

The Interagency Data Team will continue to design, develop and use the statewide public-private data infrastructure (Strategy 6) to provide both employers and job seekers with tools to promote and access job openings; review changing labor market trends and opportunities; identify funding opportunities and fund education, training and support services. This will require partners to ensure that privacy and security issues are addressed.

Activity 5.1: Improve Employer Tools for Communicating and Accessing Information

The IWIB and state partners will collectively develop new tools for employers to communicate their forecasted demand for workers and review and provide input into industry and occupational projections developed through IDES. These include new tools for employers working together in leading regional partnerships to continuously communicate short-term forecasts of job openings and competency and credentialing requirements for these jobs. This will build on tools and best practices from employer-led national and state initiatives, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Talent Pipeline Management Initiative and the Vermilion Advantage Talent Pipeline Initiative. Illinois will also improve employer capacity to easily communicate career opportunities and current job openings to regional partnerships and their broader labor market in Illinois. This will be accomplished through employer tools that can be easily integrated with their current human resource information systems and their own websites that provide information on careers and job openings. DCEO and other regional and local partners will work with businesses to improve public/private communication of workforce needs, including demand competencies and the location, timing, quantity of specific demands and talent flow analysis. A Business HUB landing page, with links to key information companies identified as value-added, is available on Illinois workNet and continues to be refined based on employer feedback.

Activity 5.2: Improve Access to Career and Education Guidance Tools and Information

The IWIB has increased its role in aligning workforce with education. This includes significantly increased coordination between workforce and secondary and postsecondary education to promote career awareness, career exploration and planning, as well as student exposure to in-demand careers. Board members have welcomed inclusion in reviews and requests to provide feedback on recommendations during the development of education legislation, such as the recent Perkins V Reauthorization and subsequent Perkins V State Plan development. This collaboration will continue to educate board members on all system-related programs and on potential overlap or relationships of each element with other initiatives.

The ICCB Title II: Adult Education and Literacy—in partnership with core partner programs, representatives of Illinois businesses, local chambers of commerce; secondary, postsecondary and adult educators and professionals and other important stakeholders—developed an Essential Skills Framework designed to address needed employability and soft-skills identified by employers. The Illinois Essential Employability Skills Framework (EES) is designed to define and clarify essential employability skills and provide a standard for the state. Essential employability skills are general skills required to be successful in all sectors of the labor market and are separate from the technical skills attained in career pathways or academic skills, such as math and reading. Various community colleges are using the EES Framework in the classroom and with employers.

The IWIB Service Integration Policy Workgroup and the WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team will also utilize existing tools and develop new and improved tools and information to support enhanced career services. The team will expand the Illinois Career Information System tools to avoid duplication and to provide the ability to use a flexible and robust system (Strategy 4). Specifically, the Illinois Career Information System platform—after a multi-year development effort—is now fully integrated with ILCollege2Career and ILHighSchool2Career, two mobile-friendly websites for students and parents to make more informed decisions about their post-high school career or education choices in Illinois. Student data from core partners—Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), ICCB and IBHE—are presented in the aggregate. ILHighSchool2Career connects high school data to higher education and employment and ILCollege2Career connects higher education data to employment data, allowing greater transparency in understanding workforce outcomes for Illinois graduates. To ensure that the website meets the needs of students and parents, IDES and the Illinois Student Assistance Commission met with students and parents to review the most recent iteration of the websites to receive constructive feedback to improve website navigation.

The team continues to explore ongoing training and support to front-line career services and case management staff to improve access and use of these tools and resources as part of the Workforce Academy.

Activity 5.3: Improve Access and Integration of Eligible Training Provider Lists

To improve the access and use of the WIOA Eligible Training Provider Lists (ETPL) by employers and job seekers, the state is moving forward with the development of a statewide technological platform branded as ProPath Illinois. The platform will integrate existing educational and workforce training provider and program data and allow for the ability of agile enhancements to educational and workforce training data. Built on the next generation of Illinois workNet cloud technology, ProPath Illinois builds on the existing state Educational PW20 system, the Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS), the Centralized Demographic Dataset Administrator (CDDA), the Illinois Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI), and the Illinois Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) systems to advance the state into the next generation of transparency and accessibility of educational and workforce training information. In addition to creating an interoperable training provider and program data directory, ProPath Illinois training provider data, such as credentials and career pathways, will be shared with a statewide Illinois-Administrative Data Research Facility (I-ADRF) longitudinal data system. That system can combine, facilitate, and accelerate data sharing, exploration, and research into the next generation of data connectivity to reveal new opportunities of helping people with barriers and disabilities overcome, achieve, and thrive. Deliverables in the next year include the development of expanded workforce outcome measures, the construction of dashboards on participant outcomes using the new measures, and the creation of a methodology to evaluate participant outcomes.

The I-ADRF is part of a national data research piloting initiative, the Administrative Data research Facility (ADRF), which enables secure access to analytical tools, data storage and

discovery services, and general computing resources for users to revolutionize evidence-based policymaking and comply with the Evidence-Based Policymaking Commission Act of 2016.

Activity 5.4: Improve Access and Utilization of Labor Market and Workforce System Information

Labor market and career information are provided on the IDES website through a variety of web-based tools included in the Illinois Virtual Labor Market Information (VLMI) System supported by Geographic Solutions and the Illinois Career Information System, which incorporates Illinois-specific labor market information (LMI). Through cooperation with the core partners, additional enhancements will improve the current platform, and changes will be made through any new technology platform utilized by the state. The ICCB will work with Adult Education providers to utilize LMI in making decisions about integrated training and bridge programs.

The Interagency Data Team continues its efforts to make LMI and workforce system information available and more understandable to a wider audience of users, including AJC staff and program customers. One example under development are visualization tools for industry and occupational employment projections. These tools will provide an interactive view of regional LMI to allow users to better see trends and provide context often missed when viewing a static data table. Beta-testing begins in early 2022, followed by a public rollout.

Core Partners also refine data tracking systems as needed to provide enhanced understanding of activities undertaken and outcomes for individuals and participating businesses. Enhanced tracking and reporting allows for improved understanding of how and where services are being delivered and how resources may be targeted to address service gaps to geographies, target populations and priority sectors.

Strategy 6: Advance Public-Private Data Infrastructure

The WIOA Interagency Data Team, in cooperation with the WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team, will expand and improve the Illinois public-private data infrastructure to support the five strategies described above. This requires the integration of LMI with state education and workforce longitudinal data systems, as well as program and case management systems.

Activity 6.1: Enhance the State Labor Market Information System

The core partners continue to work to enhance the Labor Market Information (LMI) system to support the WIOA strategies. Traditional LMI produced by IDES is readily available on the IDES 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 Illinois Career Information System (wages and projections). Traditional LMI includes occupational wage information, current economic conditions by industry and geography, as well as short term and long-term Industry and Occupational Employment Projections by local 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.

DCEO, in partnership with IDES, continues development of the Illinois Employment Business System (IEBS), which 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, 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 will empower users to have the business intelligence they need via smartphone, tablet or laptop to quickly search the economic landscape of Illinois utilizing real-time Dun & Bradstreet global business data, IDES 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 evidence-based policy making.

In addition, the Interagency Data Team continues to review national best practices to improve data analysis and presentation used in this plan and also for data packets provided to WIOA regional planning teams to make LMI more accessible to a wider audience of stakeholders. The LMI visualization tools now under development will make employment projections data more accessible and understandable to planners, AJC staff and program customers. Testing is planned in 2022 with a public rollout to follow. The visualizations will be available on the IDES LMI web page.

Activity 6.2: Expand and Improve the State Longitudinal Data System

Illinois will continue to expand and improve the state education and workforce longitudinal data system to support the seven strategies. This will include initiatives to use state longitudinal data to support regional sector partnerships based on lessons learned from initiatives, such as the Vermilion Advantage pilot project. It will also continue to build the capacity to link to state licensing, industry and professional certification data. This will build on the pilot projects and will include:

- Expanding labor market information by including improved measures of workforce outcomes (job attachment and full quarter earnings) that can be used to benchmark the outcomes for education and training graduates to other Illinois workers.
- Developing longitudinal worker profiles from improved measures for workforce outcomes.
- Developing and implementing a mapping of labor entrants and worker flows across jobs and over time to understand local labor supply and employer demand dynamics.

ICCB will continue its efforts with other State level core and required partners, specifically IDES and DCEO, to develop a system that will align and integrate labor market information with state educational and workforce longitudinal data leading to better-integrated customer services for both the jobseeker and the employer.

Illinois was awarded a Workforce Data Quality Initiative Round VII grant to DCEO with which it will be applying to the ProPath Illinois initiative to re-engineer technological platforms for training programs and training provider data and transparency. Utilizing the Illinois workNet platform, the training data will be augmented and standardized leveraging the schematics, profiles and established best practices set forth from the global Credential Engine initiative. In addition to the training provider platform, the WDQI project will expand previous work done on enhanced outcomes measurement. The I-ADRF is the Illinois component of a broader ADRF ecosystem, administered by New York University (NYU), containing microdata from several Midwestern states. It leverages existing State data infrastructure to provide career outcome information to potential training participants and support the scaling of successful programs. Through Pro Path Illinois, additional State data on education and workforce training programs will be added to I-ADRF. New I-ADRF interagency projects will be supported, and new stakeholder products on workforce outcomes will be generated. Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago will partner with State agencies to develop evaluation frameworks and dashboards that enhance performance information for dissemination. These dashboards will address WIOA

performance accountability requirements and provide learning pathways and career outcomes data for incorporation into various outreach methods.

Activity 6.3: Improve the Integration of Program and Case Management Information Systems

The Illinois Data Team will work with core partners and the Illinois Chief Information Officer, as well as the Illinois Department of Innovation and Technology (DoIT), to improve the integration of program and case management systems as applicable to improve service delivery. This team also will work to improve the integration with state longitudinal data systems to support evaluation and continuous improvement.

Additionally, integration of program design, delivery and case management is occurring through statewide grants, such as the Youth Career Pathways Initiative Grant and previous projects such as EPIC and the Disability Employment Initiative. These initiatives used joint assessment, career planning, referral, communication and scheduling processes through technology that aligned and coordinated case management. As other new initiatives are developed, they will use the same design process.

Strategy 7: Increase Barrier Reduction Services

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the work of Illinois to ensure its workforce system is designed to provide equitable and accessible services to everyone. Starting in 2020 and continuing into the future, the state is increasing its commitment to provide barrier reduction services. Illinois will use state funds combined with WIOA supportive service funding to embed barrier reduction services into existing programs or offer them as additional services in new programs.

Activity 7.1: Leverage barrier reduction resources and WIOA supportive services to increase equitable access to training and employment

The state will braid WIOA supportive services, state funding and other resources to ensure programs are accessible and equitable for all. Examples of barrier reduction services being incorporated into workforce programs include:

- Illinois set aside $50 million in American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 funds to address the economic impact experienced by employers and individuals either under-employed, unemployed, or facing one or more barriers to employment. These funds were invested to retool the Job Training and Economic Development Program (JTED) that had been previously eliminated due to funding cuts. A significant component to the revamped program is a flexible pool of funds (barrier reduction funds) to help increase family stability and job retention by covering accumulated emergency costs for basic needs, such as housing-related expenses (rent, utilities, etc.), transportation, child care, digital technology needs, education needs, mental health services, substance abuse services, income support, and work-related supplies that are not typically covered by programmatic supportive services.

- The Climate and Equitable Jobs Act was signed by Gov. JB Pritzker in 2021. The landmark legislation into law that puts the state on a path toward 100% clean energy includes the establishment of the Energy Transition Barrier Reduction Program, which will provide supportive and financial assistance services to individuals participating in Clean Jobs Workforce Network program and Climate Works Preapprenticeship Program to overcome barriers to engaging and completing in workforce programs.

- Gov. JB Pritzker proposed budget for fiscal year 2023 includes funding for the Pipeline for the Advancement of Healthcare Workforce program, or PATH. PATH would provide financial assistance community college students pursuing certificates in high-need health care areas, such as certified nursing assistants and respiratory therapist. In

addition to helping pay for school, the program would provide assistance with barriers like transportation and child care.

- The Governor's Healthcare Workforce Initiative directs the Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) to reinvest $180 million to preserve and grow the healthcare workforce, with a focus on Medicaid providers and providers in underserved areas of the State, including rural areas. This significant infusion of revenue will provide funding for staff bonuses, continuing education trainings for providers and other vital investments in staff retention and recruitment that result in expanded healthcare access. Funding will be available to a broad range of healthcare providers, including hospitals, clinics, behavioral health providers, home health workers and more.This new workforce initiative is in addition to the almost $1 billion the State has invested through appropriations to healthcare providers from federal COVID-19 response and recovery funds. It is also in addition to the significant investment that was made in safety net hospitals through over $80 million in new funding beginning in fiscal year 2020 and approximately $800 million provided through rate increases to medical providers such as hospitals, nursing homes, physicians and other providers in the last two years.

B. ALIGNMENT WITH ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE PLAN

B. Alignment with Activities outside the Plan

The core program activities identified in (A) will be aligned with programs and activities provided by the required partners and optional partners by engaging representatives from all programs at both the state and local levels. Engagement activities include ongoing work groups, working subgroups, regional meetings and weekly webinars, all in an effort to establish and maintain consistent, and clear communication. Putting into place joint policies will not only support the communication strategy but will also coordinate services and avoid duplication.

As described in the response under Section III.a.1., the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) in partnership with state agencies and stakeholders, provides strategic leadership to ensure the alignment of the workforce development system with employment, training, education, human services and other programs. This alignment will result in increased partnership opportunities with career and technical education, work-based learning, including Registered Apprenticeships, and leveraging funds of various programs for the necessary supports customers need. IWIB Policy workgroups provide policy recommendations that promote integration of the workforce system with education and other partners. The composition of these workgroups includes local board members, local workforce staff, education, community-based organizations and other partners. These stakeholders will work to revise current IWIB policy, such as One-Stop Certification, Service Integration and ETPL as part of continuous improvement, as well as develop new policies that will strengthen the system. The WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team provides operational leadership and alignment across these programs, as well. This team has built on and integrated current state and regional planning initiatives and resources of the state agency partners that administer the required WIOA programs.

The IWIB's Policy Workgroups will work with key stakeholders to expand the strategies outlined in Section III.a.2.A, as well as the key initiatives listed below to drive the coordination of program activity, improve the level of service to business and job seekers, increase efficiencies and eliminate duplication. The WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team will provide the operational support to ensure MOUs, Regional/Local Plans and budgets/infrastructure costs as described within the Governor's Guidelines align with statewide system policy and practice.

Regional planning meetings have been a key strategy for connecting the workforce system to economic development and will continue to be part of professional development and other

efforts to strengthen relationships and increase business engagement. Previous regional planning meetings, which included partner program staff from each Economic Development Region (EDR), served as a way to understand each partner's program, review regional demographics and program data and learn to use a data-driven planning approach. These meetings served as the basis of Illinois' ten WIOA regional plans. The core program partners are all actively engaged in these regional planning meetings as part of their leadership role in the development of guidelines and the coordinated review process of the regional/local plans, MOUs and budgets outlining the local infrastructure and shared costs.

Alignment with Employment and Training

The Economic Information and Analysis (EI&A) Division of Employment Security will continue to work closely with workforce, education and economic development partners to provide labor market information to inform employment and training decisions. Illinois will implement the best practices from pilot projects, such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Talent Pipeline Management with Vermilion Advantage, to measure talent pipelines in local areas and determine which of the sector partnerships and career pathways are more effective in their local areas. Illinois will also measure workforce outcomes using Illinois' Longitudinal Data System (ILDS). The ILDS will also be an important mechanism for aligning plan activities with a number of partner activities outside of this WIOA Unified State Plan. Using lessons learned from the WIOA planning process, Illinois intends to develop an ILDS agency plan regarding occupational supply/demand data. While Illinois has often produced occupational supply and demand data in conjunction with IWIB workforce development task forces and committees, we recognize the opportunity to develop a sustainable, repeatable occupational supply and demand reporting process for all regions and public, secondary and post-secondary institutions in Illinois.

The IWIB and program partners will continue to work on establishing outcome performance measures that allow partners to see the benefits of certificate and post-secondary degree programs on job stability, as well as earnings, which can be compared to other Illinois workers by comparing the reference group to all Illinois workers by using the Longitudinal Employment Dynamics program (U.S. Census). IDES's EI&A Division is unique in the nation in having established enhanced measures of workforce outcomes that utilize career earnings from the UI Wage Records apart from secondary earnings when employees have wages coming from more than one job. This provides a more accurate reflection of the specific benefits of job training programs.

In 2017, the Illinois Task Force on Employment and Economic Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities (EEOPD) submitted a plan to the Governor and the State Legislature that recommended actionable steps to address barriers to competitive employment and economic opportunity for persons with disabilities. The EEOPD was given the responsibility for promoting "Employment First" principles in the state with the objective of ensuring that integrated, competitive employment at or above minimum wage is considered the first option for people with disabilities. Since 2019, EEOPD has been given additional responsibilities through state laws focusing on employment for people with disabilities. This includes reporting on implementation of a training program for state employees with disabilities (PA 100-0533), assisting in development of a customized employment system (PA 101-0368) and assuming the responsibilities of the Interagency Coordinating Council for transition of youth with disabilities (PA 100-0866).

One recommendation is to align the mandated requirements under WIOA with Employment First principles. Implementation of this strategy will occur by linking the EEOPD with the IWIB to embed strategies for creating inclusiveness in the workforce system and the placement of people with disabilities into competitive employment settings across the state. This linkage not only emphasizes the priority of persons with disabilities within WIOA, but it also addresses an issue highlighted within the EEOPD plan by aligning plans and breaking down silos across

programs. Illinois Title I and Title IV core partners are represented on the Task Force along with representatives of employers, educators, disability advocates and service provider agencies. The plan is included in Attachment E, formerly Attachment K in the 2020 Unified State Plan. (https://www.illinoisworknet.com/WIOA/Resources/Documents/Attachment percent20AA percent20-- percent20Employment percent20and percent20Economic percent20Opportunity percent20for percent20Persons percent20with percent20Disabilities percent20Recommedations percent20Report.pdf).

The state continues to implement WIOA in conjunction with the ApprenticeshipUSA State Accelerator Grants. This initiative will help Illinois build upon existing strategies to expand and diversify Registered Apprenticeship opportunities. These strategies will include convening key industry representatives, state agency leaders and other stakeholders to form strategic partnerships and emphasize work-based learning (including apprenticeship) as a workforce solution in both traditional and non-traditional industries including IT, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, cyber-security, business services and transportation.

The Illinois Works Jobs Program Act was created as a result of Governor Pritzker's $45 billion capital plan and his commitment to expanding equity in Illinois' construction workforce. Unfortunately, diverse communities have not been adequately represented in the construction industry and the trades and fewer than 10% of apprentices are women or people of color. With this new capital funding set to pave the way for tens of thousands of jobs over the next decade, Illinois Works was intentionally designed to increase equity and opportunity in capital construction jobs.

The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) Office of Illinois Works, with the support of community partners as well as the building trades and construction industry, will deliver three key programs:

- Illinois Works Apprenticeship Initiative: This program opens the doors of opportunity into the construction industry and the trades. It applies to public works projects with an estimated cost of $500,000 or more, including both capital grants and direct capital contracts and awards. For applicable projects, the goal is for apprentices attending apprenticeship programs approved and registered by the U.S. Department of Labor to perform 10 percent of the total labor hours actually worked in each prevailing wage category OR 10 percent of the estimated labor hours in each prevailing wage category, whichever is less.
- Illinois Works Construction Pre-apprenticeship Program: This grant program creates, throughout the state, a qualified talent pipeline to fill job opportunities with diverse candidates. This program will deliver pre-apprenticeship skills training through a network of non-profit, community-based organizations, including community colleges, faith-based organizations, and business associations. Applications will be accepted starting the summer of 2021, and grant proposals that provide training for underrepresented populations in the construction and building trades and prepare them for jobs on public works projects are strongly encouraged. Participants of the program will attend tuition-free and receive a stipend and other supportive services to help overcome systemic barriers to entering the construction industry.
- Illinois Works Bid Credit Program: This program incentivizes contractors to increase the diversity of their workforce. The Bid Credit program allows contractors and subcontractors to earn bid credits by employing and retaining apprentices who have completed the IL Works Pre-apprenticeship Program. Bid credits can be used toward future bids for public works projects contracted by an agency of the State.

An expansion of apprenticeship opportunities will not only help boost employment and wages for more Illinois residents but will also yield significant benefits for our economy at large.

According to the Illinois Department of Employment Security, the construction sector is projected to grow 12 percent in the next ten years. On average, jobs in this sector pay $18 per hour to apprentices enrolled in DOL registered apprenticeship programs, and $32 per hour to those that successfully graduate and achieve journeyworker status. Investments in job training in the construction industry also result in significant long-term economic impact for the state totaling $1.2 billion. In fact, for every dollar invested in construction job training, Illinois obtains $11 in social and economic returns.

Through successfully partnering with community stakeholders, the Illinois Works Office will achieve the following goals:

- Provide a career pathway for members of historically underrepresented communities.
- Provide eligible apprentices with the skills for lifelong job security.
- Promote construction as a viable job industry for women, veterans, and people of color.
- Provide the construction industry with a consistent skilled workforce for generations to come.
- Create new partnerships between state agencies and community organizations.

Alignment with Education

Fundamental to the regional planning process is the promotion of employer-driven regional sector partnerships that reinforce and customize career pathways best practices. As a part of this strategy, Illinois will leverage the WIOA Title I (Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs), Trade and Statewide Activities funds to further develop work-based learning opportunities across the education and workforce system. In administering the Title IB statewide activities, the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) is working with local boards to ensure that the new WIOA innovation initiatives are 1) data-driven by the needs of business and labor market information, 2) regionally based, and 3) inclusive of staff of the core, required and optional one-stop program partners. The state will make further investment in innovation and technical assistance projects based on the needs identified through this review process. An example of this is WIOA training that was funded by a Statewide Activities grant and coordinated by the Illinois Workforce Partnership. The project provided business outreach and case management training that was made available to all core partners.

The state's educational partners (including Title II Adult Education and Postsecondary Perkins/Career and Technical Education) are part of the team that will coordinate these efforts at the state, regional and local levels. These identified practices will come from other efforts currently occurring in the state, such as those mentioned in 3.1 above, as well as the implementation of select recommendations made by relevant groups and plans that have a specific focus on career pathways (e.g., ICCB Workforce and Adult Education Strategic Plans and the Community College Presidents Council). Significantly, the State's Perkins V Plan, as developed by ISBE, ICCB, and a broad range of stakeholders, calls for increased alignment with employer needs, priorities of the State Workforce Board, and goals and initiatives of the WIOA Unified Plan. It is anticipated that broader state policy beyond WIOA for the workforce and education systems will be impacted by these approaches:

- The coordination of the Career Pathway Definition among education and core and required partners;
- Illinois Essential Skill framework led by Adult Education in partnership with core and required partners;
- Strategic Plans developed by the ICCB in partnership with core and required partners;

- Statewide Workforce Summit held that included all partners;
- Transitions Summit provided by ICCB Adult Education and Career Technical Education for development of Bridge and Integrated Education and Training Programs;
- The ICCB will develop strategies for community colleges to use to strengthen their CTE Business Advisory Councils to be more proactive and employer-led, thereby ensuring that community colleges are aligning training to key industry sectors in each of the ten Economic Development Regions; and
- The ICCB will utilize the DOL Scaling Apprenticeships through Sector-Based Strategies grant to promote and expand apprenticeships across the state in the information technology sector leading to models that can be utilized in many sectors.
- The ICCB will submit and implement a state-wide plan for utilizing Ability to Benefit, enabling adult learners to access Federal Financial Aid to access post-secondary training and further reinforce the state's focus on equity and reducing barriers for participation in training.

New State-Funded Job Training for Economic Development Workforce Program

- The Illinois SFY2022 Budget includes over $110 million in new funding for critical workforce development services and resources. Most notably, the budget includes new money for workforce development primarily using American Rescue Plan dollars from the State Coronavirus Urgent Remediation Emergency (CURE) Fund. The funding includes $50 million for The Job Training and Economic Development (JTED) Grant Program to include workforce training, a barrier reduction fund, and subsidized employment; and $60 million for grants to community providers and local governments for youth employment programs. WIOA partners are working to integrate and align their efforts to maximize the impact of this new funding.
    - For the $50 million JTED component, grants will be issued by DCEO to eligible employers, private nonprofit organizations (which may include faith-based organizations), local workforce areas, Community Action Agencies, industry associations, and public or private educational institutions. Outcome metrics include but are not limited to the following elements designed to align with established WIOA strategies:
        - Number of businesses engaged;
        - Number of individuals placed and number acquiring an Industry-Linked Credential, Certification, or License;
        - Number of individuals placed and number completing a Pre-Apprenticeship, Registered Apprenticeship, or a Non-Registered Apprenticeship Program;
        - Number of individuals placed and number completing an OJT ·Number of individuals placed and number completing a paid work experience or internship;
        - Number of individuals continuing a Pre-Apprenticeship, Registered Apprenticeship, or a Non-Registered Apprenticeship Program at case closure;
        - Number of individuals employed in the sector; and
        - Number of individuals promoted in the sector.

Alignment with Human Services and Other Programs

The IWIB Service Integration Policy provided the framework to strengthen the alignment with human services and other programs. Using the Service Integration Self-Assessment Process, Illinois will continue building in professional development opportunities to improve the outcomes of the one-stop system through processes such as coordinated intake, assessment, referral, and career planning. As mentioned in the professional development section Activity 4.3, Illinois will rely heavily on various forms of training and technical assistance to achieve this outcome.

Additionally, Governor Pritzker's Executive Order 3 established a strong emphasis on alignment and called for strategies that focus on leveraging education and workforce resources to serve disenfranchised populations in communities throughout Illinois. To that end, Illinois will expand or develop strategies in response to the following Action Areas under the Executive Order Report:

- Action Area 2: Prepare Illinois workers for a career, not just their next job Strategies/Activities.
- Action Area 3: Integrate Workforce Services for Job Seekers

These two action areas address implementing approaches, such as (also described elsewhere in this plan):

- Connecting Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients with career preparation and training. Participants will receive personal career development and team counseling to develop customized accelerated training plans that include job skills training and work-based learning opportunities with local employers that lead to credentials in high-demand fields and employment. The goal is to help participants get good career pathway jobs, increase earnings and reduce reliance on public assistance. This is particularly critical given the expiration of a Federal waiver in 2019 and change in a work requirement for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents to participate in an employment or training program at least 20 hours per week to keep their SNAP benefits.
- Expanding models to increase opportunities to provide career training and apprenticeship opportunities to inmates re-entering the workforce.
- Scale the use of Integrated Education and Training models to help adults get their High School Equivalency (HSE) and work on other basic skills while getting credentials to in-demand occupations.

The Governor's Rural Affairs Council (GRAC) addresses issues that particularly impact rural Illinois. The GRAC will continue to focus on the lack of adequate bandwidth in rural areas and the lack of mobility. This deficit impacts the ability to deliver diverse educational opportunities and can be a deterrent to companies relocating and remaining in rural Illinois. The GRAC is aligned with major elements of the EO3 and with the WIOA Unified State Plan by focusing on three areas this fiscal year:

- Education and Workforce Development;
- Health and Healthcare; and
- Economic Development and Infrastructure

Governor's Transition to Clean Energy Initiative - Climate & Equitable Jobs Act

The Governor of Illinois announced in 2020 and signed into law in late 2021 a clean energy initiative called the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, which establishes a strategic framework for transitioning Illinois to a clean energy economy. The goal is to have energy production be 100

percent carbon-free by 2050. This far-ranging plan includes funding for workforce development activities to help workers and communities adapt as the state moves toward clean energy jobs. Key elements of the initiative related to workforce include:

- Create a displaced worker bill of rights to provide State support to transitioning energy sector workers. A bill of rights would include advanced notice of plant closure, financial planning services, and reporting requirements for plant owners.
- Achieve equitable decarbonization, provide additional transition planning support to communities expecting closures, and direct a portion of carbon pricing revenue to transitioning communities. Communities anticipating a plant closure should have the opportunity to apply to IEPA for a "just transition" grant, and community-based organizations in these areas should also have access to funding to support their job training and workforce development efforts.
- Partner with labor organizations, local communities, local businesses, the Department of Labor, Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Illinois' institutions of higher education and others to map the skills of transitioning workers to clean energy and alternative employment.

C. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS

C. Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Individuals

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic had an immediate, profound, and sustained impact on coordination, alignment and provision of services to individuals. American Job Centers across the state had to simultaneously react to mandated office closures, an unemployment rate that increased from four to fifteen percent in one month and the introduction of new emergency federal assistance programs that required new systems and processes to be developed immediately.

The quickly evolving health-related guidance on dealing with the pandemic led to public confusion, which created ongoing challenges for all programs. Illinois is like many states, with some regions embracing calls for masking and social distancing more readily than others. Concerns about customer and staff safety were paramount, both in terms of general public health and the physical safety of staff dealing with increased numbers of customers.

Illinois faced the additional complexity related to how American Job Centers are operated in the state. Some centers are in private office space leased by a WIOA Core Partner State agency, others are leased by the local workforce area, and others are on the campus of a community college. While this arrangement typically works fine, responding to the pandemic raised a myriad of operational questions for which AJCs looked to the State WIOA Core Partners for guidance. Many issues could not be resolved with specific, one-size-fits-all solutions due to the varied nature in how each center is leased.

As emergency closure mandates were issued, the AJCs in offices leased by the State were locked and State employees sent home. This immediately led to questions from local Title IB staff and other required one-stop partners, who are not State employees, on how they could access the office and continue to provide program services when the quarantine mandate was eased. Meanwhile, AJCs not leased by the State dealt with issues of some required partner staff temporarily working off-site due to security concerns.

To address these ongoing challenges, the WIOA State Technical Assistance Team composed of the WIOA Core Partners and required one-stop partner programs administered at a statewide level, began working daily to field and develop guidance for issues raised by AJCs. The team changed its schedule of formal meetings from monthly to weekly and often convened more

frequently on an ad hoc basis to accelerate responses to the field.

The WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team formed a One-Stop Reopening Committee with representatives of State agency executives, state agency legal teams, and local AJCs to develop resources and guidance for a coordinated reopening of centers. Guidance was developed with flexibility that considered the varied types of lease arrangements across the state and the requirements established by the Governor's plan for phased reopening of the state based on Covid-19 trend data in geographic regions defined by the Illinois Department of Public Health.

Issues the WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team addressed or helped resolve include:

- Identifying sources for obtaining personal protective equipment;
- developing a reopening framework that included participation by all one-stop partners, including checklists to prompt local consideration of key issues for reopening;
- Training on best practices for de-escalating confrontations;
- Training on physical security and active shooter situations;
- Sharing best practices for providing virtual services;
- Facilitating communication between AJC partners when staff tested positive for Covid-19;
- Providing guidance on one-stop MOUs and reconciliation of shared costs; and
- Creating a dedicated online resource page that gathered relevant links to a myriad of resources including health guidelines, best practices, and guidance for reopening AJCs in a single location on the Illinois workNet portal (WIOA Implementation During Covid-19).

Going forward, the WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team and its One-Stop Reopening Committee continue to jointly address WIOA implementation issues as the number of Covid-19 cases fluctuates with the evolution of new strains of the virus. The focus for the next two years is ensuring continuity of services and having a process in place for a coordinated response in the event the ongoing pandemic requires AJCs to continuously adapt service delivery methods. This includes considering flexibility for temporarily providing in-person services in alternate locations if necessary to ensure continuity of service and referrals between one-stop partners if the local workforce board deems it appropriate.

Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Individuals

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board's Service Integration Policy Work Group' framework to address the integration of services available to job-seekers emphasizes enhanced local self-assessments to inform priorities and develop actionable plans for coordinated service delivery. This work will be informed by more coordinated assessments of individual participant's skills and needs. The integration of services provided by all core and required program partners will continue to evolve to meet the future educational and employment needs of the job seekers served throughout Illinois.

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.

The WIOA Planning Data Team identified new data sources to support enhanced economic and labor market analyses amid the extreme volatility and rapid evolution of the state's job market since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The data team sought the most current data available from reputable sources beyond the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics in an attempt to quantify what was happening at the local level to the extent possible. The data and analyses are included in the economic update and in data packets prepared to assist local workforce areas with WIOA regional plans.

Governor's Guidelines

The State of Illinois will continue to use the IWIB Policy Workgroup process to develop and recommend policy to the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) regarding system-wide policy (e.g., One-stop Certification, Service Integration, ETPL, etc.). The Governor's Guidelines for State and local partners to negotiate shared costs and service delivery through one-stop centers are 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 Governor's Guidelines, the Local Workforce Innovation Board (LWIB) must collaborate with required program partners to describe the programs and activities that will be made accessible through the American Job Centers, the service delivery methods, and the allocation of shared costs to operate the centers and local service delivery system.

The WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team seeks input annually and collaborates with others to revise the Governor's Guidelines 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 IWIB One-Stop Certification Policy Work Group reviews results of prior certification processes to identify improvements, opportunities for additional guidance and best practices. Additionally, this policy work group ensures that the goals and outcomes from the systemwide policy are incorporated into the one-stop certification applications. The work group will continue to develop recommendations to the IWIB for strengthening this policy and providing technical assistance as further information regarding the needs of the workforce system is gleaned and partners work toward advancing service integration at the state and local levels.

Labor Market Information

Labor market information (LMI) and demand-driven data set the foundation for the WIOA career services in Illinois. The Illinois Department of Employment Security is responsible for LMI and the Illinois Career Information System, a web-based tool that incorporates Illinois-specific actionable data on in-demand occupations and wages that allow students and job seekers to make informed decisions about their career pathways. These services will result in individualized plans addressing how to reach career goals based on career and skill assessments and identified barriers requiring support services. Illinois will leverage the work of statewide, public-private partnerships to better coordinate investments, resources and planning for those programs with the goal of providing more opportunities for targeted individuals.

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

Coordinated Case Management and Supportive Services

Illinois will continue to utilize the regional planning process and updated Governor's Guidelines to drive customer-centered workforce centers that align the available career, education, training and supportive services. Illinois is working to develop case management teams to coordinate and support the delivery of enhanced case management services to participants across the required and optional program partners. Cross-agency training and professional development will be developed through the Workforce Academy to ensure that needs are clearly understood by all partners, both core and required. This includes leveraging the resources of partners, such as ICCB Adult Education to provide professional development to agency partners in the appropriate administration of educational assessment of basic skill deficiencies. Finally, as mentioned earlier, training will be delivered through technological solutions to maximize access and cost-effectiveness.

In an effort to move forward with providing customer-centered services, the state will expand on customer workflow studies such as the Customer Centered Design Challenge. The Customer Centered Design (CCD) Community is a community designed to enable workforce development practitioners who are interested in studying and/or practicing Human Centered Design to share information, learn from each other and foster new knowledge.

The intent of the Customer Centered Design Challenge course is to task all WIOA program partners to rethink how services are administered, with the customer at the center as opposed to laws and regulations driving activities. A successful application of this concept was taken on by a dedicated group of workforce providers that included IDOC, Workforce Development Board (WDB), Rock Island Tri-County Consortium (RITCC), Lake Land College, Black Hawk College, University of Illinois Extension, Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), Illinois Department of Human Services, The Illinois Migrant Council and Project NOW, Inc.

A coordinated Case Management and Supportive Services strategy has been implemented through Life Skills Re-Entry Centers and Local Workforce Areas State-wide Coordination and Innovation Project for Returning Citizens (IPRC). Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center was the first Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) location where a customer-centered workforce center-aligned the available career, education, training and supportive services. The business-driven local workforce development board created an American Job Center (Specialized One-Stop Career Center) inside Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center staffed by workforce professionals. Core, required and optional partner organizations are part of IPRC, using the American Job Center model.

Customers being served are (1) businesses/employers, (2) State of Illinois / IDOC, and (3) incarcerated offenders / returning citizens. Workforce professionals meet routinely with all three types of customers to ensure that focus and programs are customer-driven. Outreach has been improved using digital newsletters and videos produced by incarcerated offenders. Resources are under development and already implemented, including a specialized web portal for workforce practitioners, as well as returning citizens, within Illinois workNet (IwN). The

IwN on-line avenue continues to be collaboratively developed by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, IDOC, WDB, RITCC, and IDES. During this year, WDB and RITCC have extended IPRC implementation to Murphysboro Life Skills Re-Entry Center and Logan Correctional Center.

Incorporation of Required Partner Services to Targeted Populations

The Governor of Illinois formed the Commission on Workforce Equity & Access in 2021. The Commission is charged with creating a vision for an equitable, accessible, and effective state workforce system grounded in an understanding of user and stakeholder experience, including how racial, social, and geographic inequities inform experience and outcomes across Illinois' federally and state-funded workforce programs. Among its top priorities, the Commission will recommend ways to strengthen and diversify existing workforce training programs to address shortages, expand access to talent and to promote equity and inclusion across all industries. The Commission's recommendations will be explored over the next two years and inform Illinois' 2024 WIOA state plan.

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 equity goals across education and workforce. In Illinois' original 2020 WIOA Unified State Plan, DCEO, ICCB, and ISBE decided to convene an equity committee to establish equity goals through the creation of tools that would disaggregate data by race, gender, and target populations to reveal disparities in policies and programs. Policies would be updated and/or developed to reduce equity gaps. This would also serve as a foundational policy for serving priority populations under WIOA Title I. This concept evolved into the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board's Equity Task Force.

- Aligning and implementing the best practices for projects that address employment to people with disabilities. DCEO, ICCB and Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) have worked 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.

- The state recognizes the use of bridge programs as a foundation for career pathway systems and also as a foundation for employment opportunities and other training. ICCB will work closely with core and required partners under WIOA to re-examine the use of bridge programs for those individuals who lack basic skills as a way of connecting with Title I and Title III for training opportunities, and with Title IV to ensure those who are

basic skills deficient and have learning differences have access to tools needed to be successful.

- 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 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

D. Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Employers

Employer engagement strategies and best practices are a hallmark of an efficient and effective workforce system. The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board's (IWIB) Business Engagement Committee is designed to ensure the state workforce system is responsive to current and future needs of businesses. 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 business 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). (Attachment F, formerly Attachment V in the 2020 Unified State Plan) (https://www.illinoisworknet.com/WIOA/Resources/Documents/Attachment percent20V percent20- percent20State percent20of percent20Illinois percent20Framework percent20for percent20Integrated percent20Business percent20Services percent202020.pdf).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Support Employer-Driven Regional Sector Initiatives

Coordination of the core, required, and optional program partners in each region and local area of the state will be required for Illinois to achieve the goal of coordinated business services. The

support of employer-driven sector initiatives is a key WIOA strategy. Illinois will expand business engagement across the workforce system to align training with needed skills and to match companies with qualified workers and workforce needs, which will help point the state towards the creation of a talent pipeline that fuels economic growth and creates career pathways for all citizens of Illinois.

Illinois will continue to focus on the development of employer-based training options that work directly with businesses 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.

Lessons learned from the Workforce Innovation Fund, Unified Business Services Analysis and Talent Pipeline Management proved to be the foundation for Illinois' employer-driven, regional sector initiatives, and continue to inform the development of Integrated Business Services implementation plans.

The Workforce Innovation Fund Round I project (known as Accelerated Training in Manufacturing or ATIM) provided an opportunity to test strategies intended to deliver improved outcomes for participants and businesses. Goals in this plan address providing improved career services and improved business services. Based on the promising performance of this project, U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Region V recommended to the DOL National Office that Illinois be included in its Sector Strategies Technical Assistance initiative. Beginning in late 2014, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), Illinois Department of Employment Security (ISES) and Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) partnered with the support of noted sector strategies expert Lyndsey Woolsey and technical experts at Maher & Maher to create a statewide framework for fostering the development of employer-led sector partnerships. The framework was completed in 2015 and was followed by regional training events for cross-program local staff and education and training provider partners. The framework continues to provide meaningful guidance for stakeholders to understand how to foster the development of employer-led partnerships and how to leverage their work to improve services to both businesses and job seekers.

This effort segued directly into a private-sector initiative administered by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, Talent Pipeline Management. These same partners leveraged the experience of developing the sector strategies framework to support an application and subsequent implementation of a grant to Vermilion Advantage, a local employer-led multi-sector public-private partnership in Vermilion County. The core premise of Talent Pipeline Management is that businesses must apply supply-chain management principles to talent and must organize themselves into regional sector-based partnerships to nudge the public education and workforce systems into being nimbler and more responsive to evolving needs of employers. The following foundational principles of Talent Pipeline Management continue to provide opportunities for the core partner programs to explore methods of improving business services.

- Employers play a new leadership role as the end-customer in closing the skills gap for those jobs most critical to their competitiveness.
- Employers proactively organize and manage flexible and responsive talent pipelines in partnership with their preferred education and workforce providers.
- Employers work collaboratively with their partners to develop measures and incentives designed to reinforce and improve performance across all partners.

Likewise, the following Talent Pipeline Management strategies continue to present opportunities for the core partners to make great use of the new flexibility and emphasis on collaboration and alignment under WIOA.

- Development of employer collaboratives in states or regions;
- Demand planning for critical jobs in key sectors;
- Communication of competency and credentialing requirements;
- Analyze talent flows;
- Build talent supply chains; and
- Continuous improvement.

Working together and with Vermilion Advantage, the WIOA Interagency Data Team conducted groundbreaking work on talent flow analysis. This is used to identify from where employers are sourcing their best candidates and the organizations and programs of study from which those candidates originated. The intent is to raise the performance of all schools and providers to the level of the best performers to create a more robust talent pipeline. In this effort, the state partners contributed the following in support of the project:

- Commerce provided coordination of local and state partners and leadership on implementation of sector strategies, demand planning, and communication of occupational competencies;
- Employment Security provided labor market information (LMI) data and analysis for demand planning and occupational competencies, and information about their Career Information System used by students;
- ICCB provided data on students dual-enrolled in high school and community college and information on how programs of study can become nimbler.

DCEO will host two Illinois Talent Pipeline Management Academies in PY2022. The first academy is a multi-state academy. DCEO, in partnership with ICCB, will identify ten community colleges to participate in the academy focusing on training providers currently serving as apprenticeship intermediaries. Over a six-to-nine-month period, the academy will provide an in-depth view of key talent pipeline strategies and the role training providers play in the process.

The second Illinois TPM Academy will be offered to business champions, navigators, chambers of commerce and economic developers playing a significant role in the development of regional sector partnerships. The training will be offered in a hybrid format with each of the ten economic development regions focusing on a particular sector identified in the unified state plan. The case studies from the training will be used as identified best practices for the continuation of additional sector partnerships in each region.

E. PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

E. Partner Engagement with Educational Institutions

Illinois has an unprecedented education and workforce collaboration due to our common goal to expand career pathway opportunities through accelerated work-based training while aligning and integrating programs of study that lead to industry-recognized credentials and improved employment and earnings. The stakeholders involved include the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB), the Illinois Departments of Commerce (DCEO), Department of Employment Security (IDES), Human Services (DHS), the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) Adult Education and the Perkins Postsecondary Career and Technical Education programs, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), the Illinois State Board of Education

(ISBE), the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) and the Illinois P-20 Council. Additionally, workforce professionals, local level educational institutions and business/industry representatives have significantly engaged in this work.

The state's workforce system has always closely aligned with the community college system—including postsecondary career and technical education and adult education systems and business and industry training/corporate training centers—in the delivery of training that supports the growing demand for trained workers. While the state recognizes the importance of ensuring career and work readiness at all levels, Illinois is moving toward strategies that integrate education and workforce development. This is evident in the ICCB's Workforce Education Strategic Plan, the Adult Education and Literacy Strategic Plan and the Perkins V State Plan. Expanding on the close alignment with postsecondary entities, Illinois is moving to align career readiness efforts beginning at the secondary school level through the university system. This alignment will truly address the P-20 education pipeline by providing necessary career readiness and occupational skills necessary to succeed in the job market. A specific example is the active collaboration across education and workforce systems to collectively define language that will guide development and implementation of aligned initiatives, such as the adoption of a definitional framework for career pathways, along with supporting guidelines.

As Illinois continues the engagement of educational institutions to offer an education and training system that is driven by the labor market, the state will make 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 expanded the reach to integrate meaningful career readiness programs and work-based learning models that focus on high demand occupations for students in high schools offering Career and Technical Education programs and including workers at all levels

Continued work, as well as new initiatives, will be rooted in labor market data that will inform education and workforce systems when establishing programs and training, thereby allocating resources to in-demand occupations and away from those jobs that have declining opportunities because of changing economic conditions. Additionally, employment and wage data will support measuring workforce outcomes of students to demonstrate performance and effectiveness of programs.

ICCB continues to work collaboratively across the state with other partners to address the alignment of workforce development, education and economic development. Through workforce development, postsecondary career and technical education and adult education, the Illinois community college system and ICCB have moved forward in a coordinated way, focusing on the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the ICCB Workforce Education Five Year Strategic Plan as well as the Adult Education Strategic Plan and the development of the Perkins V state plan. Additionally, sector/clusters initiatives such as manufacturing, healthcare and transportation, distribution and logistics with an emphasis on low-skilled and low-income adults through business and industry training, Professional and Continuing Education training, Programs of Study and continued Adult Education initiatives are all focused on meeting the needs of Illinois' employers and workforce. ICCB's ongoing partnerships with other agencies and entities such as the DCEO Office of Employment and Training (OET) are critical to addressing Illinois' economic and workforce needs.

Illinois Innovation Network

The Illinois Innovation Network (IIN) was formed in May 2019 as part of a collaborative effort to ensure Illinois' role in the 21st Century knowledge-based economy. The state appropriated $500 million as a catalyst to establish 15 hubs across the state of Illinois, including one at each public university. These hubs, each unique, will drive innovation and integrated economic

development in the communities they serve. Together they are estimated to have a $19 billion economic impact and create close to 48,000 new economy jobs over their first 10 years.

IIN drives inclusive and integrated research, innovation, and economic development across Illinois. Further, the IIN fosters collaboration, increases capacity, and integrates systems in education, research, and innovation by connecting people, organizations, and resources building equitable, inclusive, and sustainable communities across Illinois. Its 15 hubs include all the state's public universities. Each hub has distinct concentrations, reflecting the individual needs of its communities and students.

Partnering with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to prepare Illinois' talent, IIN members advance education and training transitions from secondary education to certification, accreditation, degree-based, and advanced degree programs offered throughout the state by institutions of higher education and their partner organizations, such as community colleges and system and community-based organizations. These programs complement the college apprenticeships and other work-based learning models offered to respond to employer needs. The equity-based IIN Education and Workforce Development Committee includes subcommittees focusing on: youth entrepreneurship, first college transition, digital learning and training, apprenticeships, experiential learning, work-based immersion, and career exploration. The focus on inclusivity of lived experiences touches students from every community, including inner-city urban, rural, low-income, returning citizens, BIPOC, and other underrepresented, underserved, and under-resourced groups and communities. Hub members provide expert training and education for entry-level and mid-level careers in hundreds of high-demand and emerging industries and fields, including healthcare, tech, environmental, manufacturing, transportation, clean energy, broadband, and finance.

Participating hubs include:

- Chicago State University
- Discovery Partners Institute of the University of Illinois System
- Distillery Labs
- Eastern Illinois University
- Governors State University
- Illinois State University
- Northeastern Illinois University
- Northern Illinois University
- Southern Illinois University Carbondale
- Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
- University of Illinois Champaign Urbana
- University of Illinois Chicago (UIC)
- UIC Health Sciences – Rockford
- University of Illinois Springfield
- University of Illinois Urbana Champaign
- Western Illinois University

- UIC Rockford
- University of Illinois Springfield

House Resolution 371

Pursuant to House Resolution 371 of the 101st Illinois General Assembly, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), and the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) sent a report to the General Assembly and the Illinois P-20 Council in 2018 about how the State's draft versions of the Perkins and WIOA plans address the following recommendations as set forth by the General Assembly:

1. The Perkins Plan includes a funding methodology that incentivizes completion of aligned course sequences, early college credit, and work-based learning as part of college and career pathway systems extending from high school into postsecondary;
2. The Perkins Plan promotes the expansion of equitable access to high-quality career pathway systems to students across Illinois;
3. The Perkins Plan includes secondary program quality indicators that address both dual credit and work-based learning;
4. The Perkins Plan incentivizes innovative regional career pathway models incorporating the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act's College and Career Pathways Endorsements through Perkins Reserve funding;
5. The Perkins Plan includes the alignment of definitions and systems between the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act and the State's career pathways definitions;
6. ISBE, ICCB, and the IWIB shall work collaboratively with each other and with school districts, community colleges, business and industry, and other organizations to ensure alignment among the Perkins and WIOA plans and priority occupational areas; and,
7. The Perkins and WIOA Plans incorporate funding or structural mechanisms to support the following:

- Improvements to the allocation of Perkins and WIOA funding,
- Appropriate administrative capacity to effectively support local programs,
- Maintenance of accurate and accessible data, and
- Modernization of course coding frameworks and other administrative structures to better enable local innovation.

Coordination with Core Programs

The ICCB, along with the core partners, developed the Essential Employability Framework to address issues identified by employers relative to their needs. In addition, Adult Education developed a strategic plan in partnership with core, required and other entities to address the preparation of adult learners for in-demand occupations. Below are specific examples of the core partners' engagement with educational institutions across the State.

<u>Coordination with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and Economic Opportunity</u>

ICCB, in partnership with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) and the Illinois Community College Presidents' Council, engaged multiple stakeholders to develop a five-year Workforce Education Strategic Plan. This plan focuses on strengthening

system-wide visibility and impact by aligning workforce, education (community colleges, career technical education, adult education) and training. The development of the Workforce Education Strategic Plan used a braided funding mechanism that utilized resources from multiple sources, including DCEO, Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), Career Technical Education and Adult Education. As part of the plan, ICCB and Commerce held eleven regional forums in the spring of 2015, one in each of the ten Economic Development Regions (EDR) with two in the Northeast region to bring education, workforce and employer partners together to discuss workforce and education issues in their regions and to hear from employers regarding their most pressing concerns. In January of 2017, a taskforce of members including ICCB leaders and staff, community colleges, adult education and CTE providers, state workforce and education partners, and community-based organizations was convened to develop content for the WESP in the four strategic directions. These key areas and strategic directions include an increase in early career-related education and exposure, addressing essential and occupational skill gaps, aligning education and training programs to employer's needs, and strengthening connections among public partners and engagement and alignment with businesses.

The data and information compiled from the regional forums was leveraged to serve as a baseline for the WIOA regional planning process. The Illinois Community College System Strategic Plan for Workforce Education builds upon recent successful efforts and engaged cross-program teams to explore creative solutions to address the challenges of a new economy and the demand for more highly-skilled workers. The plan is also used as a foundation in the development of other strategic plans, including the Adult Education Strategic Plan and the IWIB Strategic Plan. DCEO also collaborates with universities and the K-12 system through participation on groups convened by the IWIB, the Illinois State Board of Education and Board of Higher Education, such as, the Illinois P-20 Council, the 60 X 25 Network, the Illinois Longitudinal Data System and the Workforce Readiness through Apprenticeship and Pathways group. Commerce also makes direct investments in workforce skill training and capacity-building through grants to educational institutions that apply for WIOA Statewide Activities funds.

Coordination with the Illinois Department of Employment Security

Illinois recognizes that labor market information is at the foundation of a job-driven education and training system. Illinois' WIOA Interagency Data Team includes the Economic Information and Analysis (EI&A) Division of the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) that produces industry and occupation projections by Local Workforce Innovation Area (LWIA). These projections allow educational institutions to consider in-demand jobs when establishing educational programs and training by LWIA, as well as the surrounding areas thereby allocating resources to in-demand occupations and away from those occupations that have declining interest because of changing economic conditions. EI&A also works with educational institutions to measure the workforce outcomes of their students. This allows educational institutions to measure the performance and effectiveness of their programs.

IDES is also collaborating with ICCB, the Illinois Board of Higher Education and the Illinois Student Assistance Commission on the web tool "IL College2Career." The tool provides an opportunity for students and parents to review a wide-range of information on Illinois two-year and four-year institutions that includes career outcomes of graduates from a particular academic area of study at a specific post-secondary institution.

Coordination with the Illinois Department of Human Services

The Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) is actively involved in supporting people with disabilities who wish to participate in community college programs in pursuit of a degree or a credential to improve their employment opportunities. In 2019, DRS served 2,464 individuals with disabilities through support for their education and vocational training programs at Illinois community colleges. Since 2011, DRS has operated the

Community College Initiative, which provides financial incentives for individuals with disabilities to enroll in community college programs. Since that time enrollment at community colleges has nearly tripled from a baseline of about 900 students. DRS is working with ICCB to facilitate participation by individuals with disabilities, whether or not those individuals are enrolled in the DRS Vocational Rehabilitation program. The two agencies are working in conjunction with the Institute for Community Inclusion to identify strategies for maximizing participation by people with disabilities across the range of programs offered in community colleges.

F. PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS

F. Partner Engagement with Other Education and Training Providers.

The K-12 system, community colleges, four-year colleges, universities and other training providers in Illinois play important roles in helping residents pursue credentials that will help them access high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand jobs. Partnerships with high schools ensure graduates are career and college-ready. Dual credit opportunities, transfer assistance, recognition for prior learning and other innovative approaches help learners, particularly low-income individuals, move through the P-20 pipeline. The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) plays an instrumental role in working with education councils and boards, such as, the Illinois Community College Board, State Board of Education, the Board of Higher Education, and the P-20 Council to develop policies and activities that include engagement with other educational and training providers.

In addition to the WIOA Unified Plan, Illinois is using the following high-priority strategic planning initiatives to guide the engagement of education and training providers across the system. These initiatives will act as the building blocks for creating a cohesive job-driven education and training system. Furthermore, Illinois is bringing stakeholders together to further align the education and workforce systems by cross-walking respective plans. Illinois has created the Interagency Implementation Team, which is designated to oversee and monitor implementation of plans and related initiatives that address the common threads found in education, economic development and workforce development. The Interagency Implementation Team is a cross-agency team representing education (both secondary and postsecondary), workforce, human services, commerce and other stakeholders.

- *Governor's Executive Order 2019-03:* In January 2019, the Governor directed Illinois state agencies, led by the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, to review current and potential industries targeted for economic growth and recommend how workforce resources can be better aligned to serve disenfranchised populations in communities throughout Illinois. Out of the EO 3, came the Action Agenda for Workforce Development and Job Creation. The Governor's vision along with the goals and strategies of this plan are woven throughout this State Plan.

- *Perkins V:* This statewide and local planning process is required by the US Department of Education and is developed jointly by staff at ICCB and ISBE. These individuals also serve on the WIOA Unified State Plan development team. The purpose of the CTE State Plan is to guide the strategic partnership and alignment between ICCB and ISBE in order to strengthen career and technical education (CTE) in Illinois. The plan describes the processes and policies that will be carried out by ISBE, ICCB, and the local education agencies and community colleges, who are responsible for local administration of Perkins dollars. Activities within the State Plan aim to achieve the State's Vision and Goals for creating an educated and skilled workforce, in partnership with many state and local partners.

- *5-Year Economic Development Plan:* This plan lays out the Governor's vision to reinvigorate the economy and spur equitable growth. Three priorities guide the plan:

Laying the Foundation for Long-Term Growth, Reduce the Equity Gap, and Attract More Workers and Businesses to Illinois. Seven Industry Clusters are highlighted for emphasis over the next five years. These include agriculture/agriculture tech, energy, information technology, life sciences/health care, manufacturing, transportation/logistics and small business.

- *Every Student Succeeds Act State Plan*: A result of federal legislation and lead by ISBE, the ESSA State plan outlines ISBE's goals to implement a holistic, comprehensive, and coordinated system of support that prepares every student for academic excellence and postsecondary success. Most relevant to this project is the College and Career Readiness Indicator (CCRI) that is embedded in the plan's school quality framework, which the United States Department of Education highlighted as an example of a unique and progressive indicator. The CCRI will measure and incentivize Illinois high schools' efforts to ensure that students identify career areas of interest and engage in career readiness activities, such as the attainment of industry credentials and completion of internships.
- *Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR) Act*: The Illinois PWR ACT specifies implementation strategies to better align the transition from high school into college and careers. This act includes a framework for Postsecondary and Career Expectations (PaCE), College and Career Pathway Endorsements, Transitional Math Instruction, and pilots of Competency-based high school graduation requirements. The high school graduating class of 2021 will include the second round of high school graduates obtaining College and Career Pathway Endorsements. More than 100 high schools across the State are in various phases of implementation of Pathway Endorsements. Transitional Math instruction is scaling across the State, with full statewide implementation to occur in the 2021-22 school year. State agencies are in the process of launching the statewide approach to Transitional English.
- *ICCB Workforce Education Strategic Plan*: Led by ICCB, the Workforce Education Strategic Plan outlines the goals and objectives for four priority areas that will achieve alignment of the community college system and the state's workforce development system with economic development directions and workforce needs, thereby creating a talent pipeline that fuels economic growth and creates career pathways for all Illinoisans.
- *ICCB Adult Education Strategic Plan*: Led by ICCB, the Adult Education Strategic Plan outlines four strategic goals and multiple objectives that will be "Expanding Career Pathway Opportunities in Adult Education" and aligning with the directions set forth under the state workforce system.
- The ICCB Career and Technical Education in partnership with the Education Systems Center at Northern Illinois University developed Model Programs of Study Guides. These Guides offer a "model" example of how colleges can structure their programs of study within a larger career pathway. Programs of Study are an integral component of a career pathway and strengthening one enhances the other.
- *Career Outcomes for Illinois High School Seniors*: Lead by IDES in partnership with ISU, ISAC, and ISBE, the first of two phases identify intergenerational mobility pathways for high school seniors and evaluates the impact of learning pathways on career job profiles and career job earnings for high school seniors. Additionally, this partnership includes ICCB and IBHE as they work to produce workforce outcomes, life-long learning, and intergenerational mobility metrics for high school seniors and postsecondary community college and higher education completers.

- *Common Pathway Program Information Initiative*: Utilizing the interagency career pathway definition, DCEO, ICCB, and IBHE are partnering to collect common career pathway program information across WIOA-funded programs, apprenticeships, community college certification and adult education programs, and private business and vocational schools. This project will result in consistent processes for the collection and broad dissemination of career pathway program information for potential participants, state agencies, local pathway system administrators and other stakeholders.

Lessons learned from these initiatives will inform the certification of eligible training providers and the collection of their performance outcomes. An IWIB Policy Workgroup will build on these lessons to enhance the current policy, strengthen training policy definitions and inform continuous improvement related to the minimum training expenditure requirement. The IWIB, along with the education and workforce partners and other stakeholder groups, will also use what is learned to develop and implement best practice strategies. These will support education and training providers in using labor market information to be demand-driven and encourage the use of work-based learning best practices.

Though Talent Pipeline Management is an employer-led movement, it is by no means employer alone. Provider partners—those who offer education, training, and other support services—play a critical role in developing effective talent supply chains that benefit learners. As employers collect and aggregate data related to their most critical jobs and most pressing pain points, TPM suggests that preferred providers are informed prior to engaging in a co-design process for optimal talent supply chains. This results in not only more clear communication from one or more employers, but more engaged and committed employer partnerships that are bought into the concept of shared value for all partners. DCEO will host two Illinois Talent Pipeline Management Academies in PY2022. The first academy is a multi-state academy. DCEO in partnership with ICCB will identify ten community colleges to participate in the academy focusing on training providers currently serving as apprenticeship intermediaries. Over a six-to-nine-month period, the academy will provide an in-depth view of key talent pipeline strategies and the role training providers play in the process.

G. LEVERAGING RESOURCES TO INCREASE EDUCATIONAL ACCESS

G. Leveraging Resources to Increase Educational Access

Illinois has developed partnerships to leverage resources in order to increase educational and training opportunities for individuals with barriers to employment. Illinois will leverage partnerships with high schools and other educational institutions to ensure that more students are provided with dual credit opportunities, transfer assistance, recognition for prior learning, and other innovative approaches to help learners, particularly low-income individuals, move through the P-20 pipeline.

Under the leadership of Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), Illinois has put more of a focus on work-based learning and career exploration. Grants were awarded to 53 grantees to serve between one and five school districts to offer career exploration activities. ISBE developed a work-based learning guidance to improve work-based learning opportunities for high school students.

Under the leadership of the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), Illinois has expanded policies that require all adult education providers to offer a bridge program connecting adult learners to the education required to enter high demand occupations. Bridge programs offer students cluster level knowledge and skills while building basic literacy skills, career exploration and awareness, as well as support services that assist the student accessing post-secondary education and pathway employment. Through this policy, bridge program delivery has expanded to all ICCB funded programs. Comprehensive professional development activities

have been developed to increase the knowledge of adult educators in the development of contextualized bridge career pathway programs.

ICCB administers over $30 million annually in state and federal post-secondary Career and Technical Education (CTE) grants to community colleges in support of postsecondary CTE programs and students across the state. The intent is to provide students with the academic and technical skills necessary to succeed in a knowledge and skills-based economy, and to gain employment in a high-skill, high-wage and in-demand occupation. It focuses on certain themes, such as increasing state and local accountability standards, integrating academic and technical education, strengthening the connections between secondary and post-secondary education, and restructuring the way stakeholders - high schools, community colleges, universities, business and parents - work together. ICCB will continue to support community colleges in the implementation of CTE-related programs and activities including academic and career guidance services.

Illinois will continue to invest in adult education initiatives that provide the opportunity for adult education students to earn industry-recognized credentials, college certificates and college credit while studying to obtain a high school equivalency certificate or learn the English language. Through the Integrated Education and Training (IET) program in Illinois, Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System (ICAPS), many students will be connected to Title I programs to ensure they are able to gain access to resources for training and employment opportunities upon completion.

Illinois Workforce Innovation Fund

Illinois will implement the best practices from the Illinois Workforce Innovation Fund initiative, Accelerated Training in Manufacturing, that demonstrated the feasibility of providing accelerated training for industry credentials that incorporated lean principles and multiple modes of work-based learning. Several community colleges (Harper College, Lake Land College, Richland Community College and Danville Area Community College, among others) and private training providers such as Symbol Training Institute, have each found innovative ways to improve responsiveness to businesses and job seekers. The core partners each have access to funding that can be used to incent colleges and trainers to adopt these best practices and/or help reduce the out-of-pocket cost to job seekers in need of education and technical skill upgrades.

Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training Grant Program

In Illinois, Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grants include regional teams made up of various partners led by community colleges. Through this strategy, specific regional sector needs have been addressed, such as advanced manufacturing. Additionally, Illinois received awards in the green economy, bio-energy and a multi-state initiative along the Mississippi River. Known as MRTL, the Mississippi River Transportation, Logistics and Distribution Consortium is committed to advancing economic development in the Mississippi River region, from the headwaters to the Gulf and are dedicated to the placement of dislocated and other workers in high wage, high skill occupations in Transportation and Distribution Logistics and related industry sectors. Illinois has been very successful with TAACCCT both in terms of the ability to address specific sector needs and in terms of generating grant dollars and in bringing diverse partners together to address economic and workforce needs in the state and in partnership across state borders.

Illinois Apprenticeship Plus

Illinois will continue to use ApprenticeshipUSA and WIOA Statewide Activities funds to support the expansion of apprenticeships and work-based learning through the Talent Pipeline and Youth Career Pathway Programs. Both funding opportunities are focused on providing opportunities to the targeted populations outlined in Illinois' Unified Plan.

H. Improving Access to Postsecondary Credentials

A key to robust career pathways is portable, stackable credentials that are incorporated fully into the system, particularly at the post-secondary level. Fortunately, in Illinois, the commitment of the postsecondary CTE system to portable, stackable credentials is longstanding and is now rapidly expanding to better connect to the K-12 system through the strategic initiatives mentioned under subsection F "Partner Engagement with other Education and Training Providers" – in particular, the implementation of the PWR Act. These key accomplishments that came to fruition in 2017 incentivize cross-system engagement, leveraging resources and improving access to post-secondary credentials.

ESSA College and Career Readiness

The Illinois State Board of Education's work over the past year has centered on the development and implementation of Illinois' Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Plan. The principle of equity undergirds the entire plan: every child receives the supports she or he requires to be successful in school and life. ISBE engaged in a 16-month collaborative process to create the plan, which, among other requirements, sets forth a new accountability system for all Illinois schools. The United States Department of Education approved the plan on August 30, 2017.

The plan introduces a new statewide system of support for schools and districts, called IL-EMPOWER, to improve student outcomes by leveraging schools' strengths and building school staff capacity. ISBE believes the educators closest to students have the most valuable insight into their strengths, challenges, context and history. This belief is a pillar upon which differentiated supports are developed. ISBE launched a pilot program with several dozen districts over the 2017-18 school year to further determine the specifics of the IL-EMPOWER structure for the statewide launch that occurred in the 2018-19 school year.

The Illinois ESSA Plan identifies three areas within its school quality framework for which stakeholders have provided recommendations to ISBE on the Indicators and definitions for the College and Career Readiness Indicator. The working committees are composed of practicing educators, regional superintendents, individuals from other educational advocacy groups, and in the case of the College and Career Readiness group, members of the business and civic communities. All the committees are also utilizing the support of outside experts. The committees shared their recommendations with ISBE by December 31, 2017 and presented them to the State Board of Education on January 17, 2018. In addition, the Technical Advisory Council is developing recommendations for the performance levels and growth indicators in the accountability system. The Illinois ESSA plan amendment #1 was approved by the U. S. Department of Education on September 10, 2019.

Competency-Based High School Pilots & College and Career Pathway Endorsements (PWR Act)

Public Act 99-0674 (the "Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act") contains four components:

- It establishes a Postsecondary and Career Expectations framework (PaCE),
- It develops a competency-based high school graduation requirements pilot program,
- It defines high school coursework and criteria that will place students into college credit-bearing work – transitional mathematics instruction, and
- It creates a framework for college and career pathway endorsements on high school diplomas.

ISBE, ICCB, IBHE, and ISAC have all adopted the same PaCE framework that outlines what students should know about college and career each year from 8th to 12th grade. The framework outlines in an integrated way career exploration and development; college exploration, preparation and selection; and financial literacy and how to access financial aid opportunities. ISAC is leading professional development for community teams across the State that are adapting the PaCE framework for their local context.

The Act established the Competency-Based High School Graduation Requirements Pilot Program as one strategy to prepare more students for meaningful college and career opportunities. This pilot enables participating districts to utilize a framework based on assessment of the skills and knowledge students have mastered rather than how much time they have spent in class as high school graduation requirements. In April 2017, ISBE announced 10 school districts as participants in the first cohort of the program. Participating districts convened in September 2017 to study national best practices, build relationships, find points of connection, and begin moving their pilots from vision to action. In November 2017, ISBE released the request for applications for the second cohort of the Competency Pilot Program. ISBE has been working with national experts to support districts in their redesign of the high school experience around what students know and where they want to go. Competency-based learning recognizes students' individual starting points and allows them to pave a personalized pathway with no ceiling. Most of the first cohort programs have a strong emphasis on career pathways and the integration of work-based learning into their competency-based models. ISBE is currently undergoing an evaluation of this pilot.

The third component of the PWR Act defines transitional math courses to provide a mathematical foundation that will provide high school students with the opportunity to gain mathematical knowledge and skills that reduce the need for remediation and will, therefore, help them to meet their individualized college and career goals and to be successful in college-level math courses. Aligned with the Illinois Learning Standards, these courses will reduce remediation rates for students who successfully complete the transitional math course approved for statewide portability and will receive guaranteed placement at any Illinois community college. A statewide panel established by ISBE, ICCB and IBHE has been drafting policies and competencies intended to guide community colleges and high schools as they jointly create transitional math courses and instructional approaches. According to the Act, by no later than June 30, 2019, ISBE and ICCB must have jointly established a phased implementation plan and benchmarks leading to full statewide implementation of transitional mathematics instruction in all school districts, with timeframes that account for State and local resources and capacity (scaling occurring over the next 4-5 years). Approximately 30 percent of Illinois high schools planned to implement transitional math or launch a program during the 2018-19 school year. ISBE and ICCB are assessing the impact of this effort.

The fourth component of the PWR Act establishes a voluntary system for school districts to award college and career pathways endorsements on high school diplomas. This is a voluntary program for public high schools to recognize graduates who complete a career-focused instructional sequence, as well as requirements including an individualized plan, professional learning and readiness for non-remedial coursework. This endorsement validates students' completion of instruction and professional learning experiences in a selected career interest area. ISBE, ICCB, IBHE, ISAC, DCEO and IDES adopted a comprehensive interagency plan in June 2017 to support the development of the College and Career Pathway Endorsement programs, which includes a commitment to incorporate endorsements into planning and programs of study as part of Perkins reauthorization. ISBE's College and Career Readiness Indicator incentivizes endorsements as a method for a student to demonstrate college and career readiness. In addition, the agencies, working with the P-20 Council and Jobs for the Future, launched public-private sector-based committees that recommended a sequence of minimum career competencies for pathways in Finance and Business Services, Health Sciences, IT, Manufacturing/Engineering, Arts & Communication, and Education. These competencies can be

used to inform pathways course sequencing, course content and the focus of work-based learning experiences.

Pro Path Illinois

Illinois' systems currently collect inadequate information about career pathway programs and outcomes for Illinois residents pursuing nontraditional postsecondary education and workforce training. Without this information, under- and unemployed youth and adults make sub-optimal selections of education, training, and employment. Lacking awareness of diverse postsecondary options, guides for youth and adults (such as counselors, career navigators, and advisors at community-based organizations) are unable to effectively and comprehensively advise and support these individuals as they seek education and employment. Finally, funders and State entities cannot adequately evaluate the efficacy and connectivity of the system at large to drive continuous improvement and funding decisions. To address these challenges, DCEO sought, and was awarded, a $1 million Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) grant in Spring 2019, proposing "Pro Path Illinois". Pro Path Illinois is comprised of two aligned components to enhance programmatic data collected in administrative data across agencies and generate greater analytic capacity to report on program efficacy and outcomes.

The Common Program Information (CPI) of Pro Path Illinois will establish greater cohesion across state administrative systems for sub-associate credential program data to capture CPI most important for career pathway decision-making. Further, the project will empower under- and unemployed youth and adults with comprehensive and actionable information on sub-associate career pathway programs to make optimal decisions about their educational and career pathways, as well as with improved guidance to navigate the information and decision-making process.

The Illinois Administrative Data Research Facility (I-ADRF) Expansion project will expand the I-ADRF to significantly grow State capacity to evaluate program impact and report on career outcomes. This information will support decision-making for potential participants and enable State agencies and the philanthropic community to direct scarce resources to scale successful programs. At its core, this portion of the project involves (1) incorporating additional agency datasets into the I-ADRF; (2) creating new career pathway program evaluation frameworks and conducting analyses of system/program efficacy; and, (3) generating new reports and dashboards to provide accessible information to a range of stakeholders.

Early College Credit

Dual Credit is an instructional arrangement where an academically qualified high school student enrolls in a college-level course and, upon successful course completion, concurrently earns both college credit and high school credit. There are three major models of delivery: 1) at the high school taught by a qualified high school instructor; 2) at the high school taught by a college instructor; and 3) at the college taught by a college instructor. The most common model, and the one that most think of when considering dual credit is the first. Dual credit courses may range from transfer courses, such as English 101 to career and technical education courses, such as Medical Terminology.

According to the most recent ICCB data (FY2020), 69,299 students participated, taking a total of 133,394 dual credit classes. This represents an increase of 8.1% in student headcount and a 7.0% increase in dual credit classes over the prior fiscal year.

The newly amended Dual Credit Quality Act (PA-100-1049) took effect January 1, 2019. As a part of the newly amended Dual Credit Quality Act and to advance dual credit in Illinois, ICCB and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) established a committee and developed a Model Partnership Agreement (MPA) addressing the parameters of local school district-community college partnerships to offer dual credit (should the stakeholders not be able to reach agreement). The Agreement guides local partnerships between school districts and community

colleges necessary for the successful implementation of quality dual credit courses and related student supports.

The instructors for dual credit courses shall be selected, employed and evaluated by the postsecondary institution. Qualified instructors must hold the appropriate credentials and demonstrate teaching competencies. The ICCB Administrative Rules [Section 1501.507 (11)] outlines these minimally acceptable standards. Dual credit instructors must be able to participate in all activities available to adjunct faculty [(110 ILCS 27/) Dual Credit Quality Act]. ICCB, ISBE, and IBHE also collaborated to create a new endorsement for nine dual credit disciplines. A Dual Credit Endorsement, as designated by the newly amended Dual Credit Quality Act, is an endorsement valid for educators in grades 11-12 to be placed on the Professional Educator License (PEL) at the request of an instructor who meets the appropriate credential standards. Also taking effect on January 1, 2019, PA-100-0792 amends the Illinois School Code by prohibiting a school board from capping the number of courses or credits a student can earn via dual credit if the courses are taught by an Illinois Instructor.

Dual credit also maximizes state and local resources and promotes collaboration between secondary and post-secondary education institutions. As a leader in dual credit, the ICCB works collaboratively with secondary and post-secondary stakeholders to expand student access to higher education while simultaneously maintaining the high academic standards expected of the Illinois Community College System. In an effort to support and augment dual credit programs around the state, the ICCB has supported the dual credit enhancement grant. This grant encourages the creation and implementation of innovative strategies in the areas of: dual credit offerings, curriculum alignment, instructional models, faculty recruitment efforts and professional development.

Higher Education Commission on the Future of Workforce

Illinois' higher education system is an essential partner with the state's businesses and industries, government agencies, elected officials and economic development policymakers to ensure that the state has an educated workforce to meet the needs of Illinois' employers. These key stakeholders are working towards the same goal: to increase the number of Illinoisans with high-quality postsecondary credentials and degrees to meet the demands of the Illinois economy. Through a joint resolution issued in 2016, partners across the education and workforce system came together to examine current and projected workforce needs in the economic regions of the state; identify the higher education and business partners to meet regional workforce demands; and recommend effective practices and policies for key stakeholders to scale up efforts to match degree production with needs of the workforce around the state. Recommendations from the study validated the work that Illinois is doing and will continue to do to align with the IWIB's vision for creating a job-driven education system and improve access to the necessary postsecondary credentials that will support these efforts.

Credentialing Initiative

Illinois recognizes that Career and Technical Education (CTE) students at a community college do not always fit the model of transition implied in the Perkins definition. Thus, the state moved early to adopt a more holistic career pathways approach to implementation. For example, the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) CTE division partnered with Adult Education to develop the Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System (ICAPS). The purpose is to provide integrated CTE and Adult Education instruction so adult students can earn at least one "stackable," credit-bearing, post-secondary education credential, as well as industry-recognized credentials that lead to high-wage employment in Illinois. In integrated programs, career and technical educators teach classes alongside adult education instructors, ensuring that students receive not only integrated curricula inclusive of basic skills enhancements, but also curricula tied to the latest in industry standards developed in partnership with employers.

The ICCB will continue to participate in initiatives to promote career pathway programs in Adult Education, including the Integrated Education and Training (IET) models." These initiatives focus on a blending of both Adult Education and CTE instruction to provide an integrated model of instruction using a team-teaching approach. Additionally, the ICAPS model 2 blends adult education instruction with stackable credentials and industry-recognized credentials. Both the Adult Education and CTE Divisions of the ICCB have partnered on this project and have worked to expand the number of colleges from eight to fifty-two. The initiative allows adult learners without a high school diploma the opportunity to gain college-level credit and certificates, including college and industry-recognized credentials around in-demand occupations while working toward learning English, high school equivalency and/or increasing basic skills. Finally, the ICCB will submit an Alternative Ability to Benefit State Plan to the Department of Education to reduce barriers and increase equity of services for adult learners enrolled in ICAPS programs.

The ICCB supports the development of stackable credentials and short-term certificates throughout the implementation of the Illinois Perkins V State Plan to accelerate the education and training necessary to gain meaningful employment. Specifically, the development of seamless transitions and articulation between non-credit and credit CTE programs. Additionally, ICCB supports funding opportunities that promote competency-based education and prior learning assessments that accelerate progression through career pathways.

Illinois will leverage multiple initiatives to further integrate apprenticeship opportunities across the required and optional program partners throughout the state. The Governor has mobilized a broad cross-section of apprenticeship stakeholders to drive this important planning process. Representing a range of perspectives and resources, these individuals are serving on the Illinois Apprenticeship Illinois Committee (a standing committee of the IWIB) and oversee this planning and implementation effort. Members of this Committee include representatives of the IWIB, the four WIOA core state agency partners, business representatives, training providers, Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIB), labor, philanthropies, community colleges, rehabilitation services and employment exchange services.

The use of apprenticeships is being encouraged through demonstration projects, policy guidance and technical assistance. With increased attention given to various forms of work-based learning, it is expected that the number of apprenticeships will expand as WIOA is implemented. Illinois will learn from best practices and expand on programs that are effective. The IWIB Apprenticeship Illinois Committee has been advancing several initiatives: (1) United States Department of Labor (U.S. DOL) State Accelerator grant, (2) U.S. DOL State Apprenticeship Expansion grant, and (3) The Governor's Cabinet on Children and Youth Workforce Readiness through Apprenticeship and Pathways (WRAP) Project.

The ICCB was awarded a U.S. DOL "Scaling Apprenticeships Through Sector-Based Strategies" grant designed to expand pre-apprenticeships and registered and non-registered apprenticeships in the information technology sector. The grant allows for pre-apprenticeships and registered and non-registered apprenticeships. The grant will increase the number of apprentices by 1728 over four years. Ten community colleges will provide apprenticeship opportunities under the U.S. DOL grant, titled Customized Apprenticeship Programming - Information Technology or CAP-IT. Also, ICCB conducts a yearly survey on apprenticeships with the community colleges and will be conducting the next one in the spring of 2020. This survey is designed to capture both non-registered and registered apprenticeships along with other information.

The two grants from the U.S. DOL complement each other. The State Accelerator Grants were given to states to help develop their strategic plan and build partnerships for apprenticeship expansion and diversification with state education, workforce and economic development

systems. The Apprenticeship Illinois Committee decided to take a regional approach by fostering relationships and promoting apprenticeships based on the needs of each of the ten economic development regions. Roundtables are being convened throughout the State with employers, education providers, local workforce area representatives, service providers, community-based organizations and WIOA agencies to discuss needs and barriers to promote the expansion and creation of apprenticeship programs.

The State Apprenticeship Expansion Grants were given to states to help expand Registered Apprenticeship in existing and innovative industries, specifically targeting underserved populations such as women, persons with disabilities, communities of color, opportunity youth, individuals transitioning from incarceration and low-income people. The Apprenticeship Illinois Committee decided to build on the regional approach taken with the State Accelerator Grant by promoting apprenticeship expansion and engaging industries and businesses based on the needs of the different regions. Through discussion, the Committee decided to launch the Illinois Apprenticeship Plus Framework, a comprehensive and integrated apprenticeship system for Illinois, via a competitive grant process. The Apprenticeship Illinois Committee oversaw the development, review and release of a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). Using the funds from the Apprenticeship Expansion grant, this NOFO is now funding three pilot projects that will expand Registered Apprenticeship in construction, manufacturing and transportation, distribution and logistics (TDL).

The Apprenticeship Illinois Committee serves as an advisory body to The Governor's Cabinet on Children and Youth WRAP project. Members of the Apprenticeship Illinois Committee serve along with representatives from IBHE, ICCB, ISBE, DoIT, Employment Security, IDHS, Commerce and the Governor's Office. The focus of this project is to ensure all youth have the opportunity to learn about and the ability to obtain high-quality and stackable industry-recognized credentials or degrees utilizing work-based learning models within a career pathway that will lead to self-sufficiency. Apprenticeship programs are an authentic and proven entry point onto a career pathway and are a key component of a robust broader career pathways system. This project is focused on aligning apprenticeship with Career Pathways and other, ongoing efforts within the K-12 system, such as the Postsecondary Workforce Readiness (PWR) Act, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), P-20 Council, the "60 by 25" Network, Talent Pipeline Management, and Pathways to Results, as well as the NGA Work-Based Learning Policy Academy Illinois.

Prior to releasing the NOFO to expand Registered Apprenticeship, the Apprenticeship Illinois Committee collaborated with industry partners and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to engage hundreds of businesses within the state to promote the Apprenticeship Plus Framework. These businesses, along with local workforce innovation area representatives and service providers, were invited to webinars and regional roundtables held in Southern Cook County, Springfield and Mt. Vernon. At the webinars and roundtables, participants were introduced to the Apprenticeship Plus Framework, available funding opportunities and other resources on how to start or expand apprenticeships in their organization or region and the benefits and costs of doing so.

Similar to the business and industry roundtables, the Apprenticeship Illinois Committee collaborated with The Governor's Cabinet on Children and Youth to hold a series of Youth Roundtables. The Young Invincibles, a community-based organization that works out of Chicago to expand economic opportunity for young adults in Illinois, led the Youth Roundtables aimed at gathering feedback from young adults and supporting staff. They focused on youth apprenticeships and explored what makes youth apprenticeships exciting, what could keep the program from being successful, and how Illinois should facilitate partnerships and market these opportunities. Over 125 youth and staff attended roundtable discussions in Mt. Vernon, Peoria and Hillside. Between 12 and 25 youth attended each roundtable, coming from community colleges, foster care, the juvenile justice system, apprenticeship worksites, workforce development programs and agencies (including Department of Employment Security,

Department of Human Services, Department of Children and Family Services, and the Community College Board). The Young Invincibles produced a report from the research and findings, "Making Youth Apprenticeships Work for Illinois' Young Adults."

To create more interest in Registered Apprenticeship and to increase the talent pipeline, a NOFO to fund up to 10 youth apprenticeship pilot programs in three economic development regions (EDRs) of the state was released. With a funding total of approximately $2.3 million from statewide activity funds, nine youth apprenticeship pilot programs were launched late summer 2017. These will serve up to 304 youth, both in-school and out-of-school, focusing on one of four industries: Construction and building trades, Manufacturing, Healthcare or IT. Participants have the opportunity to earn industry-recognized credentials, such as Certified Medical Assistant, CompTIA A+ certification, Cisco Networking, NCCER Carpentry, and NIMS Manufacturing as part of these apprenticeship programs. All of these credentials are within a career pathway. These pilots have partnerships with over a dozen businesses to provide mentorship and work-based learning opportunities.

Since 2017, each year the Governor has issued a proclamation in support of National Apprenticeship Week. In 2019, Governor Pritzker kicked-off National Apprenticeship Week (Nov. 11 - Nov. 17, 2019) in Illinois with a press event in Springfield at the state capital. Apprentices and their host companies from around the state were on hand with the Governor, Lt. Governor Stratton and Director Erin Guthrie of the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. The apprentices and companies presented a number of sectors and business groups like the Chicago Apprentice Network, Illinois Manufacturers Association, Illinois Workforce Partnership, the Illinois Community College Board and employers representing banking & finances, IT, manufacturing, construction and the trades, insurance, healthcare, automotive, retail, hospitality and service and even the National Corn To Ethanol Research Center – the only center of its kind in the world.

To further the role of apprenticeship as an effective work-based learning model into a career pathway, the Apprenticeship Illinois Committee created three subcommittees: Business Engagement, Marketing Strategy, and Services and Systems. Members of the Apprenticeship Illinois Committee are leading these teams and are beginning the process of identifying objectives, priorities, activities and strategies for each. These three subcommittees are a direct result of feedback given by businesses, local workforce boards, educational institutions and others.

Finally, in 2021, businesses identified a concern that the State's incumbent worker training policy contained language creating an unintended barrier to using WIOA incumbent worker training to support registered apprenticeships. Commerce staff worked with businesses, intermediaries and training providers to quickly update the policy to remove that barrier. This responsiveness led to an immediate increase in IWT projects involving apprenticeship training.

I. COORDINATING WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

I. Coordinating with Economic Development Strategies

Coordination of Regional and Local Planning

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) is the state agency that leads economic development efforts for Illinois and is responsible for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title IB and Trade Training Program activities. DCEO is also responsible for the administration of the required and allowed Governor's Statewide Workforce Activities as outlined in WIOA. It is recognized that supporting innovative workforce programs that connect employers to a highly skilled workforce is central to Illinois' commitment to ensure that businesses thrive in Illinois. Toward that end, 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). The use of the ten EDRs illustrates Illinois' commitment to data-driven economic development in the state. DCEO's 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

DCEO will also connect the core and required partners with the latest economic development initiatives in the state. For example, the State of Illinois, in partnership with Intersect Illinois and the Illinois Economic Development Association is introducing a new statewide business outreach and retention initiative called, CORE: Creating Opportunities for Retention and Expansion. The first step in this process is to conduct in-depth training sessions designed to explain this statewide alliance, instruct communities on specific steps of participation, and to coordinate specific measures aimed at meeting the growth and development needs of local/regional employers. A key goal of this initiative is to better coordinate and communicate with business. These activities are in direct alignment with the regional planning, business coordination and sector strategies outlined in this plan. The reauthorization of the Perkins Act marks a unique opportunity for local workforce boards to partner with secondary and postsecondary Perkins recipients (community colleges) on their local WIOA and Perkins Plans, respectively. Perkins recipients will be required to conduct a Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment, inclusive local workforce boards, WIOA partners and employers. This assessment will inform regional and local planning and may be a tool used to inform local planning for WIOA. This coordination of planning should result in alignment of resources and services in each local area.

Coordination of Economic Development Activities and Business Services

The State of Illinois understands that to give businesses and job seekers the workforce services they need, it must integrate the delivery of services to business. Illinois' Integrated Business Service Framework provides the foundation for workforce, education and economic development partners to better listen to, learn from and respond to Illinois' businesses. This framework was developed by a statewide group of business leaders and workforce partners and is meant to identify the elements and requirements of an integrated business services model for state and regional programs that will best equip them to understand and meet the ongoing workforce needs of Illinois' businesses.

Illinois has embraced the concept of employer-led sector partnerships as a vehicle to become nimbler in meeting the needs of business. DCEO, the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) and the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) have collaborated on sector strategies for years, including the Workforce Innovation Fund manufacturing project, creating

the State Sector Strategy Framework and the Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) Initiative. Illinois is currently working to expand the successful pilot with Vermilion Advantage in the East Central Illinois region to other regions of the state. In late 2019, several cross-agency teams working on apprenticeship expansion grants completed the US Chamber Talent Pipeline Management Academy and are now positioned to start fieldwork in forming regional sector-based employer collaboratives. The next round of grantees will be awarded in early 2020 and they also are expected to receive Talent Pipeline Management training. In addition, over the next four years, DCEO staff intends to increase its staff support of public awareness of sector strategies which includes the TPM initiative. This effort will include engaging with local chambers of commerce, business and industry groups, local chapters of the Society for Human Resources Management, local economic development agencies and local workforce boards.

Orientation to TPM training is provided to the incoming board, committee members, economic developers, and non-profit organizations addressing talent skill gaps. The orientation training is six one-hour sessions over several weeks. Each training session focuses on one of the six TPM strategies and includes voluntary follow-up activities applying lessons learned from each strategy. Orientation to TPM training will continue to be offered as needed or requested throughout the year.

Two Illinois TPM Academies are under development for 2022. Business champions, local chambers, and navigators will be invited to participate in the first Illinois TPM Academy for a full TPM training provided by the U. S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation. Thirty individuals representing the ten economic development regions will be selected to participate. Each region will create a sector partnership based on their region and develop a strategic plan to address the specific skills gaps. The final project will be presented to the Academy as part of the certification process.

The second TPM Academy will be a multi-state Career Readiness Academy approach with a strong focus on the role of the training provider. Illinois and three other states will participate, with four of the six pieces of training occurring virtually. Two of the trainings will be in-person. Each state will identify 20 total slots for the TPM Academy and continue to aim for those community college partners that will have a substantial impact on their adult students of color and connect students with employer-aligned credentials and pathways. Representation from the employer community, including businesses and those employers, look to as trusted partners.

As noted above, DCEO's regional economic development staff actively engaged in the regional workshops and planning meetings and will continue to be key resources in connecting workforce and education professionals with key businesses in targeted industry sectors. DCEO's regional economic development team will take a more active role in working with local workforce and education partners to implement regional sector strategies in key industries.

Provide Career Pathways for Economic Advancement

Throughout the sections on Partner Engagement with Educational Institutions, Partner Engagement with Other Education and Training Providers and Leveraging Resources to Increase Educational Access, this plan describes partnerships to expand career pathway opportunities through accelerated programs and work-based training while aligning and integrating programs of study that lead to industry-recognized credentials. Priorities and strategies developed from this alignment will ensure career and work readiness at all levels. The engagement of educational institutions to create a job-driven education and training system will allow the state to make significant and strategic system improvements to address workforce development needs through flexible, responsive and progressive programs informed by labor market information. Initiatives will be rooted in labor market data that will inform education and workforce systems when establishing programs thereby allocating resources to in-demand occupations and away from those jobs that have declining opportunities due to

changing economic conditions. Additionally, employment and wage data will facilitate the measurement of workforce outcomes of students to demonstrate performance and effectiveness of programs.

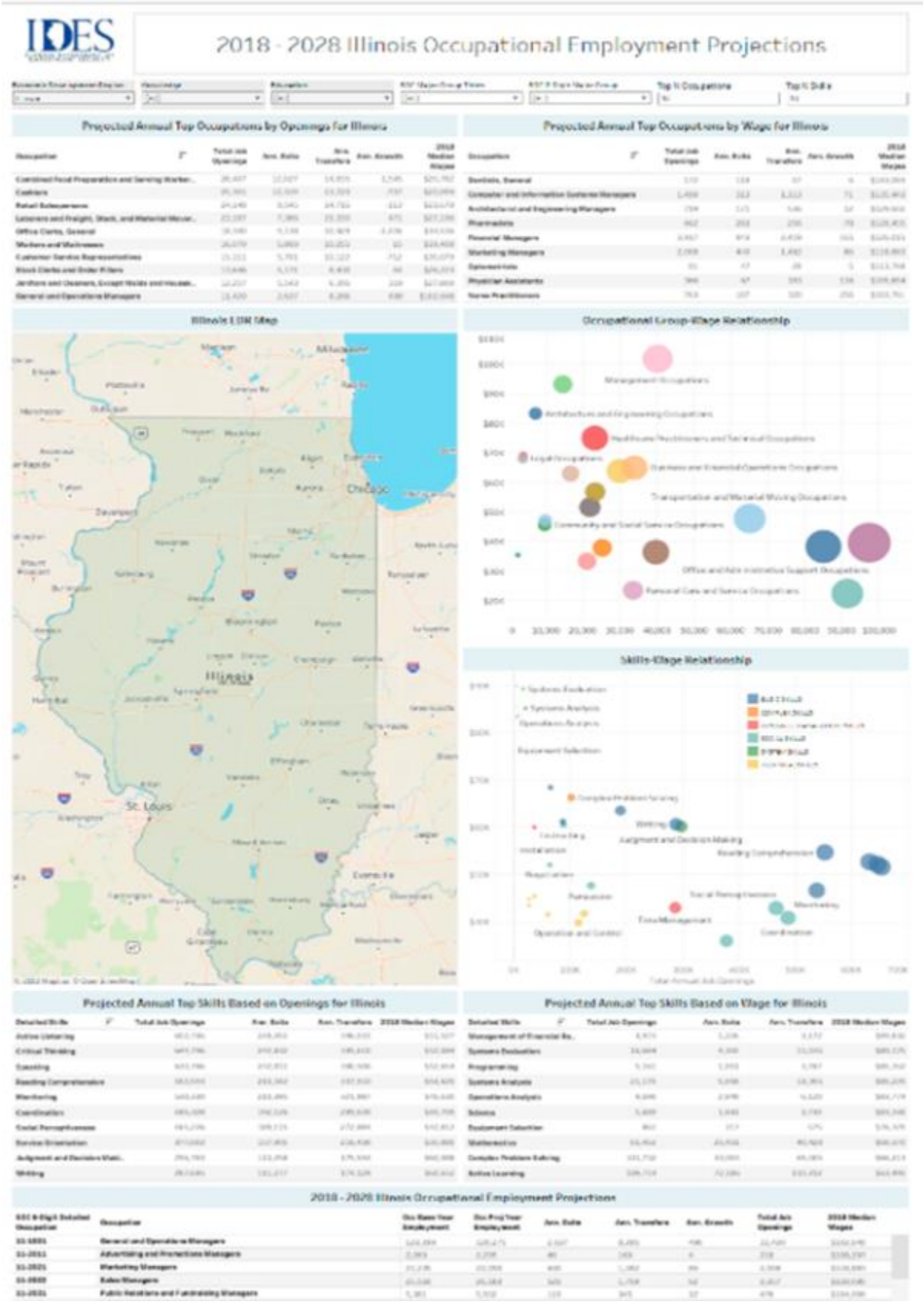
Provide Labor Market Information for Regional Planning

DCEO, Employment Security, ICCB and the Illinois Department of Human Services' Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) Interagency Data Team will continue to provide an analysis of economic and labor market information to the state and local economic development professionals. The Interagency Data Team will play an important coordinating role to foster better intra-regional communication (such as through WIOA regional planning) so that as many communities as possible within a region have a similar vision that can be used to leverage the efforts of all. The state and local economic development professionals play an important role in working with business to validate and refine the labor market information (LMI) based on the current needs of business in the region and local areas.

In 2019, the Interagency Data Team reviewed national best practices to improve data analysis and presentation used for data packets provided to WIOA regional planning teams to make LMI more accessible to a wider audience of stakeholders. The WIOA Planning Data Team identified new data sources to support enhanced economic and labor market analyses amid the extreme volatility and rapid evolution of the state's job market. The data team sought out the most current data available from reputable sources beyond the Bureau of Labor Statistics in an attempt to quantify what was happening to the extent possible. The data and analyses are included in the economic update and in data packets prepared to assist local workforce areas with WIOA regional plans.

New data elements for this planning cycle include:

- regional labor participation rates;
- regional separations and turnover rates for top occupations across nearly a dozen sectors;
- current wage rates for selected demand occupations;
- updated industry and occupational employment projections;
- sector-based employment data since the start of the pandemic; and
- a regional supply and demand gap analysis for selected occupations.

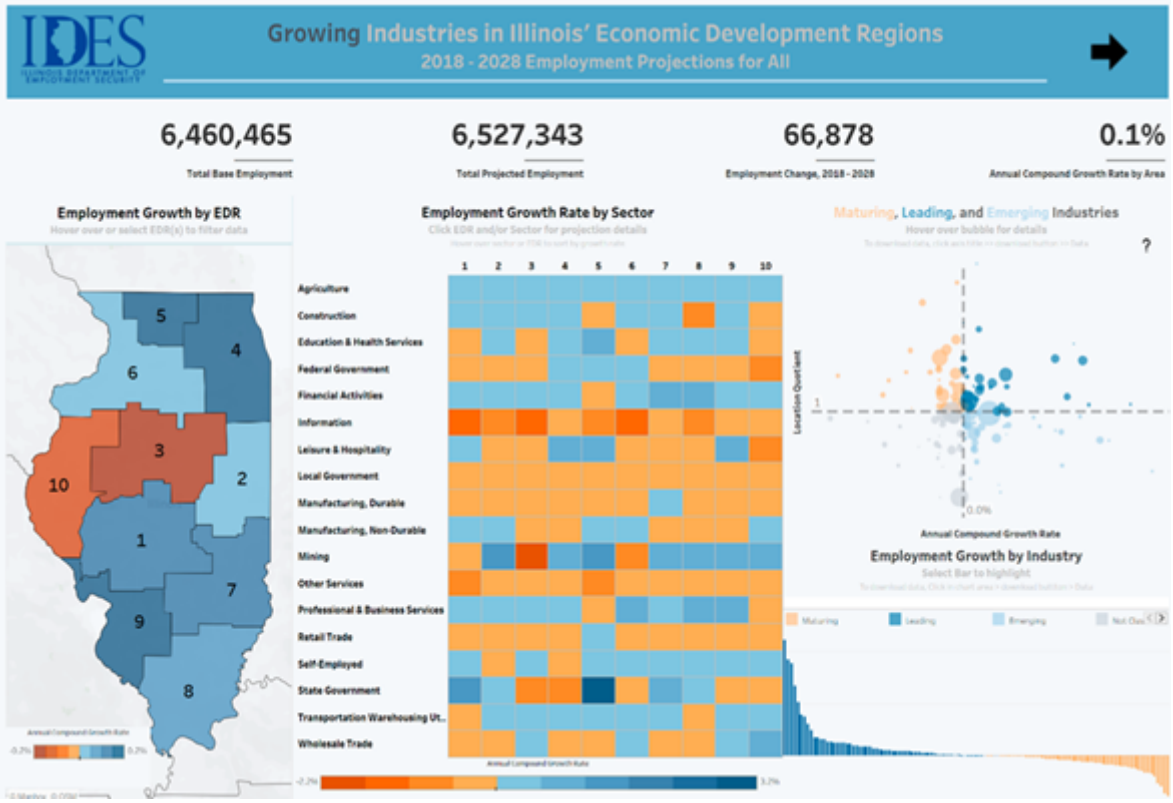


IDES, working with the Interagency Data Team, is developing new opportunities for Core Partner state and local staff and LWIBs to understand forecasted demand for workers and incorporate these insights into WIOA planning. Two such tools under development are data visualizations for industry and occupational 10-year projections. These tools bring together a

variety of BLS data into user-friendly, interactive visualizations that allow users to better understand the scale and relative significance of data specific to WIOA planning regions. Internal design and testing is nearing completion and beta-testing will begin in the spring of 2022 followed by a public roll-out. When ready, these tools will be available online at the IDES LMI page. Direct links to the tools will be added to the Business HUB and WIOA Regional Planning pages in the Illinois workNet online portal.

Expand Employer Access to Labor Market Information

Figure 6: Illinois Department of Employment Security LMI Page



The data visualizations mentioned in the prior subsection, "Provide Labor Market Information for Regional Planning", are also relevant to this section. The Interagency Data Team is developing data visualizations tools for industry and occupational 10-year projections. These tools bring together a variety of BLS data into user-friendly, interactive visualizations that allow better understanding of the scale and relative significance of data specific to WIOA regions in Illinois. Beta-testing will begin in the spring of 2022 followed by a public roll-out. These tools will be available online at the IDES LMI page once ready. Also, direct links to the tools will be added to the Business HUB and WIOA Regional Planning pages in the Illinois workNet online portal.

Other tools under consideration include new tools for employers working together in leading regional partnerships to continuously communicate short-term forecasts of job openings and competency and credentialing requirements for these jobs. This will build the best practices from employer-led national and state initiatives, including the United States Chamber of Commerce Talent Pipeline Management Initiative. The team also will improve employer capacity to easily communicate career opportunities and current job openings to regional partnerships and their broader labor market in Illinois. This will be accomplished through employer tools that can be easily integrated with their current human resource information systems and their own websites that provide information on careers and job openings.

B. STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS AND POLICIES

Illinois has a robust array of operating systems and policies in place to support the implementation of our strategies. Existing systems and policies evolved, and in some cases, new ones were implemented over the course of the PY16 – PY19 Unified State Plan period to support implementation of the strategies included in the plan. Examples include: enhanced cross-agency collaboration; improved business engagement; a wider range of service options, such as expanded use of apprenticeships, OJT and incumbent worker training; continued support of sector strategies; improved use of data for empirical decision-making and greater emphasis on shared support of American Job Center operations. Going forward, systems and policies will continue to evolve to address the updated strategies in this plan. The following sections provide more specific descriptions of how we intend to refine existing and implement new strategies for: improved cross-agency service integration; greater emphasis on data-driven program evaluation and continuous improvement; and ensuring equity of service delivery; among others.

1. THE STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS THAT WILL SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE'S STRATEGIES. THIS MUST INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF–

A. State Operating Systems that Support Coordinated Implementation of State strategies (e.g., labor market information systems, data systems, communication systems, case-management systems, job banks, etc.)

Illinois continues to bring together leadership and subject matter experts to examine existing systems, collaborate on potential interoperability solutions and take steps towards a more integrated WIOA system in Illinois

To that end, in 2021 Illinois completed a feasibility study to explore how to better align the workforce system's service delivery. The study, "Designing a Workforce System to Improve Access and Outcomes," offered an opportunity to reflect and assess how the workforce system could be optimized for better service delivery. The study outlined five scenarios to improve the workforce system. It ultimately led Illinois Governor Pritzker to create the Commission on Workforce Equity & Access. The commission is engaging with job-seekers, advocates, employers, state agency staff and frontline WIOA program workers to explore changes to the workforce system. The commission plans on making its final recommendations in 2022.

Other actions to create a more integrated WIOA system in Illinois include Illinois' Department of Innovation and Technology's (DoIT) creation of a subject matter expert interagency team in 2019. This interagency team was comprised of data, technology, and performance specialists from the four core partner agencies: Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DECE), Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), Illinois Community College Board, (ICCB), and Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS). The interagency team analyzed each of the core partner systems. Process maps were created for each of the major workflows. Upon conclusion of the workflow and process mapping exercises, the group concluded that:

- the systems in use were still viable and functional;
- each system was extremely robust and complex;
- each system contained data and programming not only for the WIOA Title but was also linked to other related agency programs; and
- the systems could be modified in a timely manner to meet the demands of WIOA implementation.

The following are the current Illinois WIOA systems in use. Each of these systems has been modified and updated within their respective agencies independently to meet the DOL/ DOE WIOA mandates pertinent to its respective Title. Illinois has successfully implemented and executed all WIOA requirements thus far.

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

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. IWDS 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 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.

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 78 programs throughout the state. The DAISi (Data and Information System – Illinois) was developed to collect 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 through the DAISi system. Detailed instructions for reporting are provided to all programs prior to these submissions. These instructions assist to identify 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 reviews student files through on-site visits, and also use the system's 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 DAISi 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 DAISI 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. Users can post questions on a discussion forum and view the questions of others. DAISI 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 as 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

The Illinois Department of Employment Security (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

WIOA Title IV is administered by 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. 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 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.

The Division contracts with community-based organizations to provide either work experience or job placement for TANF Employment and Training customers. The Division provides oversight of programs statewide as the Division's goal is to cultivate more career pathway opportunities for our TANF customers. The Department of Human Services' Division of Family & Community Services 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

DHS-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.
- DCEO was awarded a Round VII Workforce Data Quality Initiative Grant in 2019 that allowed it to develop and implement the ProPath Illinois platform. ProPath Illinois is a statewide technological platform that can be utilized by both education and workforce partners throughout the state that integrates existing educational and workforce training provider and program data and allows for the ability of agile enhancement to that data. ProPath Illinois builds on the existing state Educational P20W system, the ILDS, the CDDA, the IL Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI), and the IL Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) systems and partners to advance the state forward into the next generation of transparency and accessibility of educational and workforce training information. Southern Illinois University-Carbondale's Center for Workforce Development (SIUC-CWD) will serve as the technical lead to standardize data formatting and schemas and integrate the combined data into a centralized relational database. This system will have the ability to be augmented in such a way as to capture any Training Provider Common Program Information (CPI) elements not covered through administrative datasets, as well as information from programs outside of the agencies' administrative ecosystems. Pro Path Illinois will also enable the State to combine CPI data with credential transparency data available through the Credential Engine project, whose lead technology partner is SIUC-CWD. Nationally standardized credential, quality assurance, competency and assessment data from Credential Engine can supplement the CPI data.

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.

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity continues to utilize the governmental agreement with Southern Illinois University (SIU) Center for Workforce Development to evolve the agile and cloud technology of the Illinois workNet (IwN) platform. For decades IwN has been the "go to" resource to connect individuals, employers, education & workforce professionals and community partners to career training and development resources and tools. Job seekers, businesses, non-profit organizations or state or local governmental entities seeking guidance can all utilize the portal as a resource. In PY2019 DCEO enhanced the backend customer and pilot program infrastructure to fully develop a case management system capable of fully managing customers from intake, referral, assessment, eligibility, career planning, accountability tracking, performance attainment, and reporting to DOL via PIRL/WIPS. The new Illinois Workforce Integration System (IWIS) is 100 percent integrated with DCEO's IWDS system for WIOA Title I via an API. IWIS was piloted for the Apprenticeship IL grants and proved to be a success and a platform that can be a solution for much of Illinois' integration issues. IwN has also provided the staffing and platform to further improve upon the online WIOA ePolicy site and host webinars to involve and inform state stakeholders. This state asset has continued to be a collaborative portal in which the state workforce and educational institutions can engage and explore new ways to combine efforts and data to create a seamless experience for the customer. The next generation of innovative and integrative intake, client management, resource tracking, services and performance outcomes measurement is currently under development and will be launched in 2022 with the Apprenticeship Expansion project. The IwN next generation integration system will include the ability to access a full-service menu of intuitive system screen design that tracks business and client engagement and outreach efforts throughout the state. Navigators, local governments, 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 for 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. In addition, IEBS was proclaimed to be a national Best Practice in their review of the Rapid Response Dislocated Worker state review in 2021.

B. used for all programs and activities, including those present in one-stop centers

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). WIOA has motivated the agencies to look closely at the long-term agreements and determine if changes need to be made to accommodate new and innovative methods of sharing 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 ILDS continues to use two intergovernmental agreements (IGA) to support inter-agency data governance and sharing. Executed in 2013, an IGA established the governance structure of the ILDS, which now includes eight state agency signatories including the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), ICCB, DCEO, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), IDES, DHS, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), and the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC), as well as the Office of the Governor.

A second ILDS IGA established the role of the CDDA and its inter-agency identity resolution-related work. This IGA supports the establishment of a master client index identifier 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). The eight aforementioned agencies, as well as the Office of the Governor and Northern Illinois University (NIU), are parties to this agreement.

Regarding specific inter-agency research projects, the ILDS has established a standardized data sharing agreement template that aligns legal terms and conditions and security protocols across the eight participating agencies. All prospective ILDS data requestors and users are required to agree to these terms and conditions, with the ability to suggest supplemental legal language via addendum as necessary. The template also includes exhibits describing project scope and reporting. The template has been used for several inter-agency projects in the education and workforce data space.

Since the submittal of the Unified State Plan in 2016, the Office of the Governor established the Department of Innovation and Technology (DoIT) to "lead digital transformation within the

state and increase interagency efficiency and improve delivery of services to residents and businesses." The Illinois Department of Innovation and Technology (DoIT) drafted an inter-agency eMOU to promote data-sharing among state agencies in late 2016. This agreement has been signed by 22 agencies to date, including the core partners. The eMOU agreement established an operational committee that facilitates data-sharing requests among the agency partners. The committee is comprised of the State's Chief Data Officer and Chief Information Officers from signatory agencies. The State of Illinois created and signed this agreement within only seven months due to strong support from the Office of the Governor, DoIT executive leadership and agency directors. This agreement was instrumental in Illinois' IT transformation.

The Illinois Governor's Office is actively assisting the core partners in technology interoperability solutions. Assessments of current systems have begun, and additional research and analysis will be necessary. Further discovery is needed, and attention made to mold the technology plan with the state WIOA plan so that policy drives state technology. This action will ensure long-term success and sustainability of a WIOA Unified State Plan and workforce system.

Although Illinois does not currently have a fully integrated data system, it is nevertheless committed to pursuing alignment and integration of participant and performance data across core programs with the ultimate goal of providing effective and efficient services that lead to the participants' employment as quickly as possible. The Interagency Leadership Team is currently working with the Governor's Office and DoIT leadership to discuss and explore data integration concepts. Core program partner representatives identified existing gaps between the data collected historically and the data collection requirements under WIOA. Core partners have been working to address those gaps through the following actions:

- Core partners have adjusted their own data systems in response to performance accountability requirements under WIOA. Partners have identified data collection methods and standards that are best practices in some core program partners and could be explored for use by other core program partners (e.g., how to account for participants who lack a Social Security number when reporting performance outcomes);
- Core partners have reviewed potential platforms for developing a common framework for use by all required partners under WIOA;
- Core partners have developed prototype dashboards for core program partners to track individual and aggregate performance data across core programs;
- Core partners have researched mechanisms for facilitating smart referrals, and allowing core program partners to share information directly with each other's systems; and
- Core partners have addressed Federal guidance on performance and reporting as it became available and did system modifications to comply with the regulations;
- Core partners have analyzed measurable skills gains for assessing participant skills and the time period over which skills gains are to be measured; and
- Core partners established the methodology for effectiveness of serving employers as 1) Retention with the same employer, and 2) Employer Penetration Rate.

Illinois will continue to use existing web-based interfaces that integrate data via API tools. Real-time access to workforce development resources for individuals, businesses and workforce professionals is available and is 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.

In addition to other state efforts for collaboration and integration, it should also be noted that Illinois has entered into full commitment and execution of the State Wage Interchange System

(SWIS) with ETA. Under the previous Wage Rate Interchange System (WRIS) and WRIS 2 agreements, IL Department of Employment Security was considered a State unemployment insurance Agency (SUIA) and a Performance Accountability and Customer Information Agency (PACIA). The IL Dept. of Commerce and Economic Opportunity was a PACIA. Under the new SWIS agreement, the IL Community College Board and the IL Dept. of Human Services Vocational Rehabilitation have been added as PACIAs also. This will give both the education and workforce partners access to the ETA clearinghouse of wage data to improve reporting of participant and student outcomes data.

2. THE STATE POLICIES THAT WILL SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE'S STRATEGIES (E.G., 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

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

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

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

An important policy work group that has been launched under this policy development process is the IWIB Service Integration Work Group. As a foundational element of Illinois' Unified State Plan and the IWIB's Strategic Plan modifications, service integration is a way to link and leverage scarce resources and improve customer outcomes. This policy work group focused on using service integration to help "optimize the effectiveness of the one-stop system for all customers"—one of the five objectives of the IWIB's Strategic Plan. The content of the policy

was shaped over a 16-month period by the IWIB's Service Integration Policy Work Group representing IWIB members, local workforce areas personnel, state-level WIOA partners, and other workforce stakeholders. The policy describes seven service integration functions, each having a corresponding outcome and one or more associated goals. The Service Integration Policy Work Group adopted a model of service integration that moves through five stages: isolation, communication, coordination, collaboration and integration. The work group organized into committees to develop clear standards of what each stage of integration looks like across the core functions of one-stop centers. These functions include customer-centered design, staff, intake and assessment, services, career pathways, information, and evaluation. Taken together, the goals and outcomes for these functions represent a long-term, high-level vision for one-stop service integration in Illinois. Operationalizing these goals is occurring locally through the WIOA planning, one-stop certification, and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) negotiation processes.

The Service Integration Policy Work Group is modeling how to leverage resources by utilizing the Illinois Department of Human Services Rehabilitation Services Technical Assistance Grant received from the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center, known as WINTAC. WINTAC is funded by the United States Department of Education. A key focus of WINTAC Activity is on service integration. Through WINTAC, the model is using the five stages and seven core functions for service integration. Three sub-workgroups formed around the seven core functions will be exploring policy and practice best practices to put in place to achieve service integration.

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

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

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

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

technical assistance site that deals specifically with service integration https://www.illinoisworknet.com/WIOA/Resources/Pages/Service-Integration.aspx.

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

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

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

- Under a work group structure, Illinois has developed policies and guidance to address the provisions of WIOA. This ensures a seamless transition for customers during intake and the continued provision of career and training services, including the expanded training services described in WIOA.

- Membership, certification, and subsequent certifications of LWIBs under WIOA is governed under policies that are consistent with the provisions - including the assurance of more streamlined boards with a majority of business members, and minimum percentage of labor and community service organizations represented. Emphasis was placed on ensuring that business representatives reflect regional industry sectors and the diversity of the population. An online portal for tracking LWIB composition and compliance has been developed and use began with the LWIB recertifications that were due in October 2021.Changes to the Local Workforce Area Contact System (LWACS) that are identified during this implementation phase will occur over the next several years.

- Policy was implemented to address CEOs in each local area, including an understanding of their required functions as confirmed through a CEO agreement. The agreement addresses those LWIAs that have multiple CEOs. CEOs are given authority, as the local grant recipient, to designate local grant subrecipients and fiscal agents for the Title IB funds of WIOA. It also defines each CEO's liability for WIOA funds determined to have been misspent or used for unallowable purposes.

- Eligibility policies have been written and updated to ensure that all the requirements of WIOA are clearly outlined for the LWIAs and their staff that delivers intake and registration services to customers. All customers of the system, whether served by local one-stop staff, through technology or self-served, are included in the general eligibility policy. Those seeking more than self-service assistance are determined eligible based on the funding stream under which they will be served. Detailed descriptions of the eligibility requirements and allowable documentation sources to confirm such eligibility decisions provide guidance to career planners in their decision-making. Priority of service is emphasized throughout to all populations identified as priority of service within WIOA, taking into account preference to veterans. A stand-alone priority of service policy will be updated as equity goals discussed earlier in the plan are developed.

- WIOA policy has been issued to provide guidance to all training providers (including new providers, those that previously provided transitional eligibility, and the LWIBs and LWIAs) regarding the process for determining eligibility of providers and training programs. The policy covers initial and continued eligibility of all providers, with separate guidance for those Registered Apprenticeships choosing to be added to the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). This list highlights those programs that meet the state's requirements for in-demand occupations. The current procedures are under review by a work group that will address the performance collection requirements for all students, streamline the current approval process for eligibility, and make suggestions for changes to the reporting system. This work group will also incorporate career pathways into the discussions and process of eligibility determination by local workforce innovation boards. The work group has developed new metrics to identify high demand jobs within Illinois. This list has incorporated the most recent data available on average annual job openings and wages, along with required education which were data points identified by the work group.

- The IWIB revised policy on the requirement that local boards expend a minimum of forty percent (40 percent) to fifty percent (50 percent) of their Title IB Adult and Dislocated Worker funds on direct training costs. Through a policy work group, the allowable activities and direct training that can be considered calculable was revised to ensure it reflects the WIOA emphasis on registered apprenticeships and other new training opportunities as well as certain leverage resources such as through grants supported by Statewide Activities funding. This activity will be managed under the priorities of the Continuous Improvement Committee.

- Policy guidance on the process for selecting, certifying and designating one-stop operators in each of the twenty-two workforce areas through a competitive procurement process was developed. Following further guidance by U.S. DOL, this policy was revised to address the information published in a Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL). Key elements related to the Federal Uniform Guidance to be followed in the process, components of a formal procurement process, essential contract elements, and conflicts of interest were included.

Governor's Guidelines for Negotiating Infrastructure and Other Shared Costs

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

- General guidance, direction and requirements for negotiating local MOUs that are required in each LWIA to support the operation of the local one-stop delivery system.

- Guidance related to comprehensive one-stop center infrastructure costs, including guidance for budgeting, allocation, negotiation and reconciliation of these costs using the two funding methods WIOA prescribes.

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

Additionally, the Governor's guidelines include service matrices for career services and other programs and activities, demonstrating how career services and other programs are available through the local Comprehensive One-Stop Centers by required partners. To provide uniformity across the LWIAs, an MOU template is included in the Governor's Guidelines. This template provides the structure and elements of the MOU, providing placeholders for each LWIA to add their respective content. The Governor's Guidelines are included as Attachment G, formerly Attachment J in the 2020 Unified State Plan. (https://www.illinoisworknet.com/DownloadPrint/Governor's percent20Guidelines percent20- percent20Revision percent204 percent20- percent20Final.pdf) and have been revised annually to incorporate the final WIOA regulations, subsequent guidance and submission timelines.

Evaluation & Benchmarks

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

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

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

Additionally, the CIC is currently piloting a new quarterly report on the progress being made on the strategies and activities listed in the Unified State Plan. The new report will highlight strategies and activities that exceed expectations, are falling below expectations or are failing expectations. The CIC plans to then further examine highlighted strategies and activities to

either help determine a course correction, or to share with other programs the exceedingly successful strategies and activities.

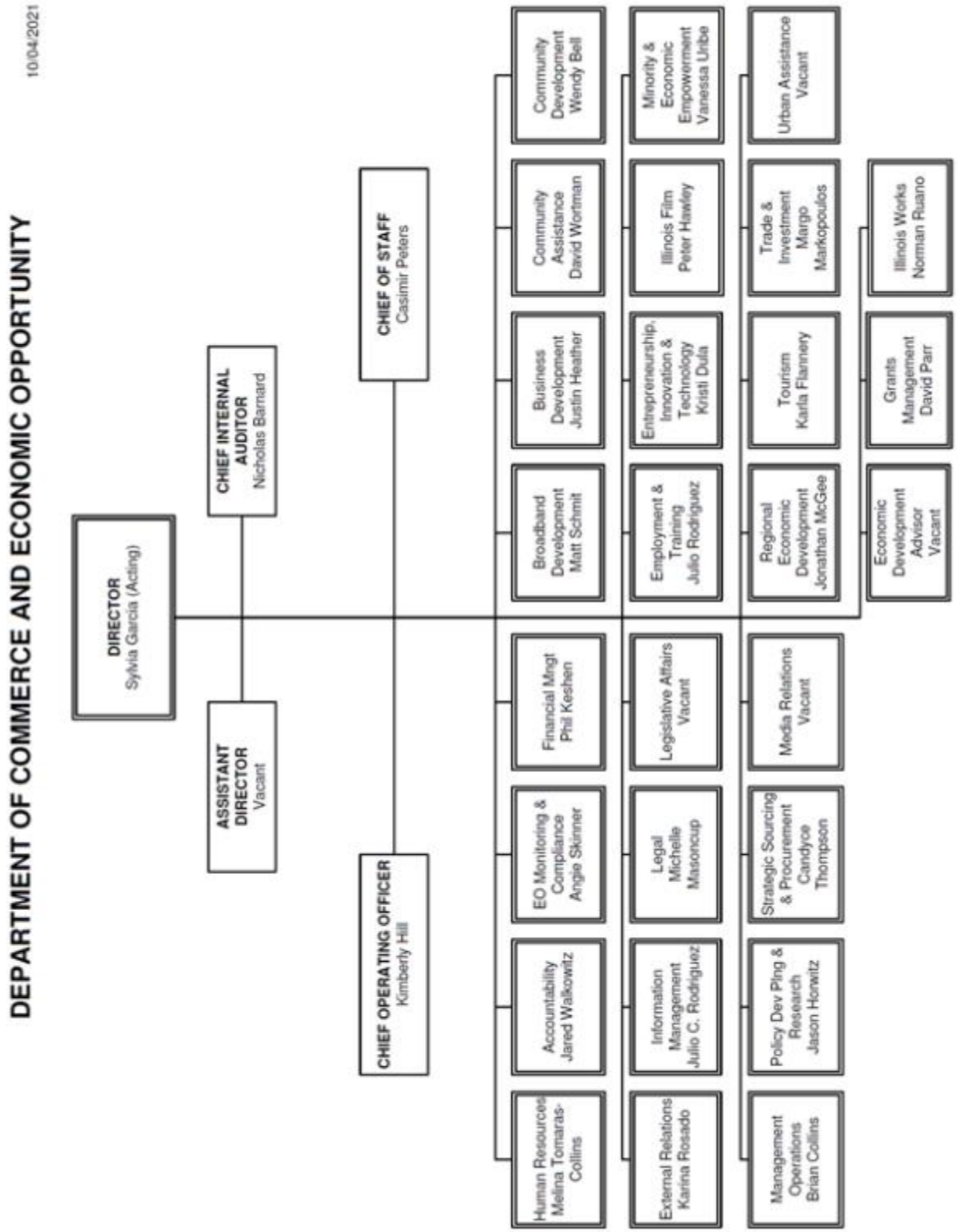
3. STATE PROGRAM AND STATE BOARD OVERVIEW

A. STATE AGENCY ORGANIZATION

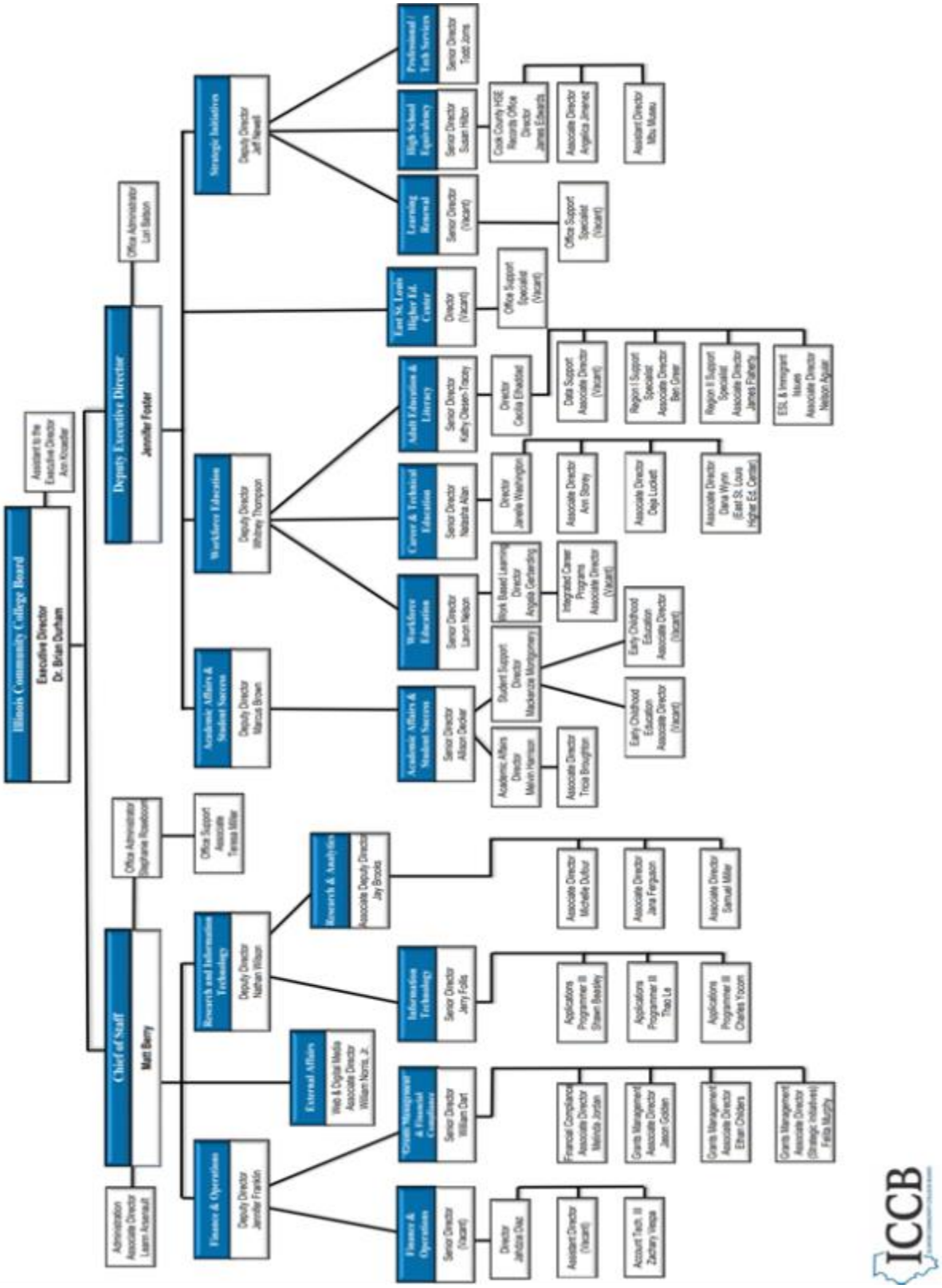
A. State Agency Organization

Images for each organization chart are also shown below:

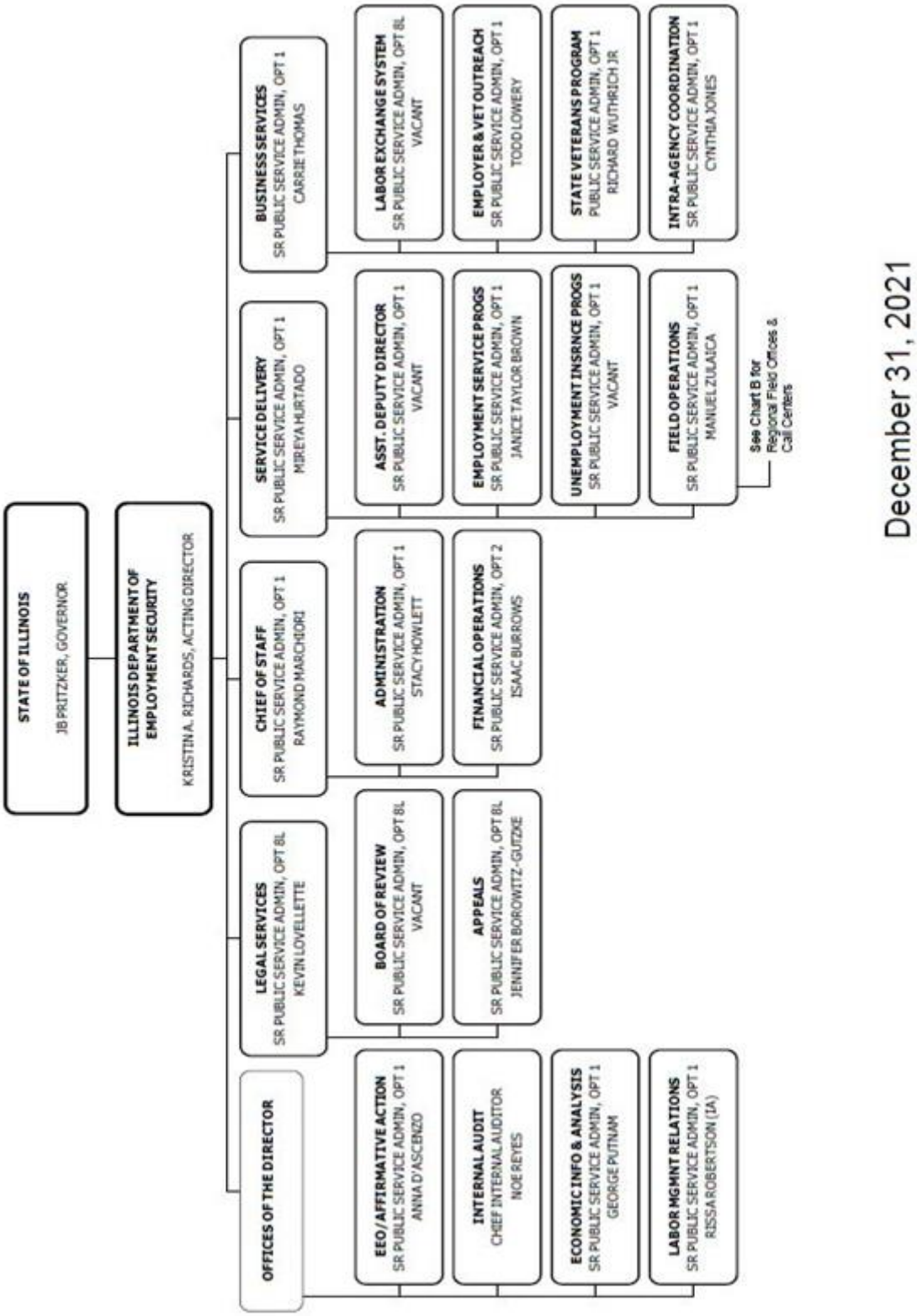
Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity



Illinois Community College Board

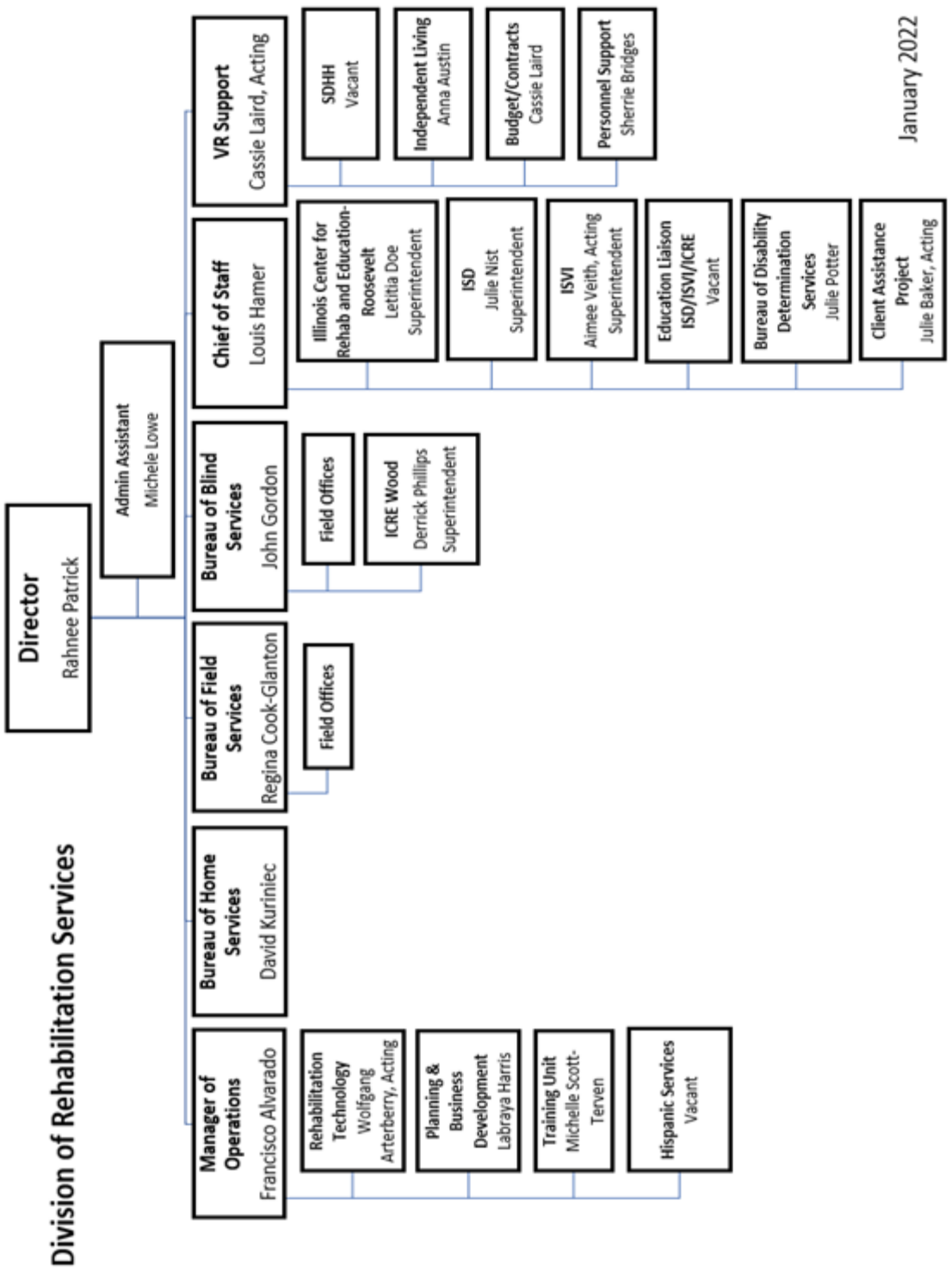


Illinois Department of Employment Security



December 31, 2021

Illinois Department of Human Services



Illinois Department of DCEO and Economic Opportunity

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

- Existing businesses, encouraging them to reinvest and create more jobs for Illinois citizens;
- New businesses, inviting them to relocate, invest and create new jobs;
- International companies, positioning Illinois as a global business destination for Foreign Direct Investment;
- Entrepreneurs and investors, connecting resources to support their startups and ventures; and
- Locally and globally, promoting Illinois as a world-class tourism and film destination.

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

- Business Development: Administers job creation/retention grants, loans and tax credit programs;
- Community Assistance: helps low-income households in Illinois maintain utility services and reduce energy costs through improved energy efficiency, and helps individuals and families move toward stabilization;
- Community Development: Utilizes federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding to administer community infrastructure, housing and disaster recovery funding programs;
- Employment and Training: Oversees statewide workforce training system and promotes and coordinates initiatives to bridge skills gaps;
- Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Technology: Catalyzes local, national and global partnerships including the Small Business Development Center network and the Advantage Illinois program that strengthen Illinois' competitive advantage;
- Film: Promotes the state's film and theatre industry through tax incentives, including the Illinois Film Tax Credit;
- Minority Economic Empowerment: promote opportunities for all minority communities across the state through targeted programs, resources and advocates. The goal is to ensure minority enterprises have an equal opportunity to contribute to the growth of the Illinois economy;
- Regional Economic Development: Integrates economic development activities and outreach across the state, connecting communities and businesses to programs and assistance;
- Tourism: Markets state travel opportunities domestically and internationally, contributing to over $2 billion in state and local tax revenues annually;
- Trade and Investment: Promotes Illinois' economy through outreach events and trade missions, and provides financial and technical exporting assistance to Illinois companies; and
- Urban Assistance: Manages the Urban Weatherization Initiative, targeting homes in disadvantaged communities and training home energy technicians, and the Employment Opportunities Grant program, which trains participants in the construction trade industry.

Office of Employment and Training

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

Coordination with Economic Development

DCEO is responsible for ensuring that economic development activities are integrated with the workforce strategies outlined in 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, Regional Economic Development Offices and the Office of Employment and Training collaborate to respond to the needs of business and industry in Illinois. This collaboration has accelerated over the last year under the leadership of the Governor and DCEO Director. There have been multiple informational briefings between offices and a marked increase in the use of cross-cutting teams to bring additional perspective and resources to bear on efforts of business retention, layoff aversion and business expansion. Establishing, maintaining and expanding these relationships is critical to the successful implementation of workforce strategies and activities.

Coordination with Community Development

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

Guaranteeing Accessibility

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

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

Illinois Talent Pipeline Program

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

- Projects that connect talent strategies with business needs;
- Layoff aversion projects that support businesses and workers that are impacted or at risk of being impacted by company closures or layoffs; or
- Projects that expand work-based learning opportunities including apprenticeships for targeted populations.

Youth Career Pathways Program

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

Illinois Community College Board

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

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

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

The purpose of Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 is to provide adult education and literacy services in order to

1. assist adults in becoming literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency;
2. assist adults who are parents or family members in obtaining education and skills that
    a. are necessary to become full partners in the educational development of their children
    b. lead to sustainable improvements in the economic opportunities for their family;
3. assist adults in attaining a secondary school diploma and in transitioning to postsecondary education and training including through career pathways;
4. assist immigrants and other individuals who are English language learners in
    a. improving their
        i. reading, writing, speaking and comprehension skills in English
        ii. mathematics skills;
    b. 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

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

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

<u>Wagner-Peyser funded services:</u>

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. 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 in addition to participation opportunities within educational programs. IDES takes an active role in linking youth with employers who understand the importance of encouraging career growth.

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

The Re-entry Employment Service Program (RESP): RESP is the other 7b program and offers assistance to Returning Citizens (persons who are residents of a given area that were previously incarcerated) through the administration of the RESP Program, which is designed to assist individuals in overcoming employment hurdles. RESP staff administer direct case management through IllinoisJobLink.com to ex-offenders. 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; market Illinois Job Link and assist with entering job orders; market WorkShare Illinois; refer qualified candidates; provide data and information for workforce planning; and assist with accessing IDES' Fidelity Bonding and Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program (WOTC) programs.

The IDES employer outreach staff are members of the business services teams in the LWIAs through which they coordinate outreach with local partners.

Economic Information and Analysis (EI&A): In cooperation with the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and Employment and Training Administration (ETA), EI&A collects, analyzes, and disseminates data and related information, such as current employment statistics, average wages, job trends, and demographic characteristics that is useful in planning and evaluating economic and workforce development strategies. EI&A augments Title III funded activities with a range of independently-funded projects to meet a wide range of needs among government and business audiences. Through these innovative applications, the Division assists human service and economic development agencies in achieving program goals by expanding the usage of data 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 career service and referral to job training opportunities to eligible veterans and other eligible persons ensuring them a smooth transition to the civilian workforce. The mission of the JVSG program is to assist those eligible veterans and other eligible persons who self-attest to having one or more Significant Barriers to Employment to obtain meaningful employment and connect employers with qualified veterans and other eligible persons candidates. Eligible veterans are those that have served more than 180 days on Active Duty and discharge other than dishonorable. If the DD form 214 states "Dishonorable Discharge", "Discharge under Dishonorable Conditions", or "Entry-Level / Unconditional Discharge" then the individual is not considered an eligible veteran for employment services from a Veteran Representative. All veterans, regardless of the type of military discharge, can receive staff-assisted Basic/Individualized Career Services from an Employment Services (ES) staff as well as any AJC Partners. Veterans and other eligible persons self-attesting to one or more Significant Barriers to Employment (SBEs) must be referred to the Veterans Career Coach - Disabled Veterans Outreach Program specialist (VCC-DVOP) for Individualized Career Services. Veterans Career Coach - DVOP specialists (VCC-DVOP) provide Individualized Career Services (Assessment Interview and / or Individual Employment Plan) to veterans and other eligible persons who have self-attested to having one or more SBEs. In addition to Individualized Career Services, the VCC-DVOP specialists facilitate the Case Management process to guide and monitor the progress of these veterans and other eligible persons. They work collectively with all AJC and Community Partners to assist veterans and other eligible persons to mitigate their SBEs so they can concentrate on obtaining & retaining meaningful careers. Veterans Business Specialist - LVER (VBS-LVER) reach out to the employer community, including employers, employer associations, and business groups, to

promote the advantages of hiring veterans and other eligible persons. VBS-LVERs advocate for the hiring of veterans and other eligible persons served by the AJC with business, industry, and other community-based organizations. Activities include, but are not limited to, participating in hiring events, conducting employer outreach, facilitating job search workshops in conjunction with employers, developing job opportunities, and informing Federal Contractors of the process to hire qualified veterans and other eligible persons. VBS-LVERs are also responsible for conducting training to all staff and partners within the state's employment service delivery system to ensure easier access to the appropriate employment and training services for job seeking veterans and other eligible persons.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Fidelity Bonding 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 FBP is a unique hiring incentive tool and targets individuals whose backgrounds can pose significant barriers to securing or retaining employment, including:

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

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

Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Rehabilitation Services

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

- Job Placement - DRS VR counselors work with customers to identify job opportunities in the community, develop a resume and prepare for interviews. Other customers receive more intensive job placement and preparation services through community rehabilitation program agencies under contract to DRS.
- On-the-Job Training and Evaluations - Many VR customers receive on-the-job training and evaluation services arranged by DRS counselors in conjunction with local employers. These services provide an opportunity to demonstrate job skills and learn the requirements of a specific job.
- College and University Training - DRS assists many customers in pursuing a degree at a community college or at a university, based on the needs and abilities of the individual. Each year DRS assists about 3,500 individuals in attending college training.
- Treatment and Restoration Services - VR funds may be used to purchase medical, surgical, or psychological services, as well as other therapeutic services, to help customers achieve greater functioning and reduce barriers to employment.
- Supported Employment - Individuals with most significant disabilities often require a high level of support, both in preparation and on-the-job assistance, in order to achieve and maintain employment. Supported employment provides a variety of supports, such as job coaching, to assist customers in meeting employment goals.
- Assistive Technology - Many people with disabilities utilize a variety of technological devices to function in the world of work and increase their employment potential. The DRS VR program can assist customers with evaluation services and purchase of technology equipment that will meet their individual needs.

- Transition Services - Students with disabilities benefit from work-based learning experiences and other pre-employment services designed to prepare them for post-school employment or additional training.
- DRS counselors establish program eligibility based on an evaluation of functional limitations, then work with customers to develop an individualized plan for employment. Many services are provided through a network of community partners with the capacity to assist customers in obtaining employment consistent with their needs. These include:
- Around 150 school districts which provide pre-employment transition services, including work-based learning experiences, to over 10,000 students with disabilities;
- About 135 community rehabilitation providers who provide job development, job placement and supported employment services to around 4,000 individuals; and,
- Community colleges and universities that provide training services to about 3,500 individuals pursuing degrees or credentials to enhance employment skills.

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

Employment First Initiative

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

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

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

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

B. STATE BOARD

B. State Board

Overseeing the entire workforce 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 Governor also appoints the two co-chairs for the IWIB. Currently, John Rico, President and CEO of Rico Enterprises, serves as the private sector co-chair with Sylvia Garcia, Director of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. Table 17 outlines the membership roster for the State Board, including members' organizational affiliations.

Members of the IWIB represent organizations, agencies or other entities and require optimum policymaking authority within those organizations. They must also represent diverse regions of the state, including urban, rural and suburban areas. Over 50 percent of the IWIB must be made up of business representatives. Other membership categories include: Governor and General Assembly appointments; state agencies; chief elected officials from cities and counties; labor organizations; 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 business leaders whose companies are also users of the workforce system. Requiring engaged business leaders provides the IWIB with better insight for setting policy 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. Business members of the board expressed their concerns during the strategic planning process that the publicly available general data does not always reflect the current conditions in their regions and local areas. Ensuring the active engagement of business allows for real-time information and data that might otherwise not be available in instances where system-generated information might have a data lag. The composition of the IWIB membership is under review to reflect the desire of all of its members to be more active and engaged in the functions and activities of the board. While ensuring its membership is in compliance with the requirements under WIOA, they will ensure accountability and authenticity of each appointed member. Members will be recognized for their efforts and support will be provided to those members that may need assistance in finding a suitable and effective means for participation.

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

The IWP is composed of local workforce leaders from across the state that are dedicated to the enhancement of the Illinois workforce system. Through effective partnerships with business, economic development, education and training partners, the IWP collaborates to achieve its vision for Illinois as a "high quality, employer-driven, innovative, proactive workforce development system that supports economic development." The IWIB recognizes the importance of having a local program administration voice in their discussions and invites representatives of the IWP to participate on their committees, task forces and work groups. Many of these individuals are staff to local workforce boards and represent their board's interests at IWP functions. IWIB staff has been assigned as a liaison to the IWP in an effort to

ensure ongoing two-way communication, including participation in each of their monthly meetings.

In addition to the IWP representative, Illinois law requires two additional members of the state legislature be appointed representing each chamber and party affiliation. Under the Workforce and Labor category, the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board Act requires that the IWIB shall include individuals representing community-based organizations that provide or support competitive, integrated employment for individuals with disabilities. These 2 representatives shall be individuals who self-identify as persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities, and who are engaged in advocacy for the rights of individuals with disabilities.

The individual appointed by the governor to serve as the apprenticeship representative was not confirmed by the State Senate during its 2019 review cycle. Director Erin Guthrie, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and Co-Chair to the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board and her office have held discussions with Illinois Governor JB Pritzker's office regarding board membership, but as of this writing have not received such appointments. Nominations for IWIB positions are currently being solicited for the 2020 nomination cycle.

I. MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

Table 21: IWIB Membership Roster

Last Name	First Name	Entity
		State of Illinois Elected Officials
Pritzker	Governor JB	Governor of Illinois
Bush	Melinda	Illinois Senate, 31st District
Hammond	Norine	Illinois House of Representatives, 94th District
Evans	Marcus	Illinois House of Representatives, 33rd District
		Appointed Business Members
Ashby	Tom	Coordinated Transportation Development, Inc
Beards	Henry	United Parcel Service
Conley	Mike	Trenton Sun
Davidsmeyer	Christopher "C.D."	Illinois Road Contractors, Inc.; Illinois House of Representatives, 100th District
Ferrari	Daniele	ITC, Inc
Friedman	David	AutonomyWorks
Gadberry	Kirk	North American Lighting, Inc.
Hacker	Thomas	C&L Supreme
Jones	Grailing	Schneider National, Inc.

Last Name	First Name	Entity
Mason	Angela	Chicago Botanic Garden
Massie	Michael	Massie & Quick, LLC
McClinton	Marlon	Utilivate Technologies, LLC
Nain	Sandeep	Sntial Technologies, Inc.
Rico	John	John Rico Enterprises
Schiemann	Margi	Nicor Gas
Tennant	Aaron	Simplex Leasing, Inc.
Warrington	Andrew	United Conveyer Corporation
		Appointed Workforce & Labor Members
Aranda-Suh	Elba	National Latino Education Institute
Dickson	Victor	Safer Foundation
Oilschlager	Barbara	Lake County Vocational System
Payne	Terri	AFL-CIO
Perry	Michael	AFSCME Council 31
Wendorf	Thomas	Career Connect Metro West
Wilkerson	Terry	Rend Lake College
		Appointed Representatives of Government
Richard	Kristen	Illinois Department of Employment Security
Garcia	Sylvia	Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
Foster	Jennifer	Illinois Community College Board
Patrick	Rahnee	Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Rehabilitation Services
		Ex-Officio, Non-Voting Members
Ayala	Dr. Carmen	Illinois State Board of Education
Fuhrmann	Anthony	Illinois Workforce Partnership
Durham	Dr. Brian	Illinois Community College Board
Hou	Grace	Illinois Department of Human Services

Last Name	First Name	Entity
Ostro	Ginger	Illinois Board of Higher Education
Thompson	Whitney	Illinois Community College Board

II. BOARD ACTIVITIES

ii. Board Activities

The State Board meets four times per year – typically in the Chicagoland area twice a year, Springfield once per year, and in the central/southern region once per year. However, because of public health concerns due to the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual meetings have been utilized and will continue to be utilized as long as necessary. Special meetings may be convened as deemed appropriate by the co-chairs to address special issues. The co-chairs are responsible for presiding over all IWIB meetings, establishing committees and their structures, as well as serving as custodians of IWIB records. All meetings of the IWIB, including committees, are subject to the Open Meetings Act (OMA). The IWIB operates and addresses its required functions and responsibilities through a structure consisting of standing committees, task forces and work groups. Additionally, the IWIB collaborates with the Governor's Office, the core and required partners, other state agencies and other stakeholders of the system. Their organizational chart is visualized in Attachment H, formerly Attachment T in the 2020 Unified State Plan. (https://www.illinoisworknet.com/DownloadPrint/Visio-IWIB percent20Organizational percent20Chart percent2001-01-20.pdf)

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) has State staff from the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity designated to coordinate the functions of the board, act as a liaison and provide overall operational support. In addition, the Executive Committee is responsible for the day-to-day board functions. Assisting the state staff in support of the IWIB's functions and ensuring efficient and effective operations are state university partners that provide research and facilitation to the board and its operational structure through the convening of standing committees, task forces and work groups.

Standing Committee Structure

The IWIB utilizes standing committees to assist with carrying out its responsibilities and functions and to coordinate discussions around larger-scale initiatives, targeted populations or key sectors. The committees are structured in one of two ways. Those that address the board's responsibilities and functions are composed of only IWIB members. For those focused on strategic planning topics, the rosters include local representatives of boards, the chief elected officials or partner agencies, businesses and stakeholders with expertise on the subject matter, training and service providers, and other interested parties. Staff to the board and other supporting entities facilitate standing committees.

Executive Committee: To ensure that adequate business representation and alignment of workforce, economic development and education occurs throughout the system, the IWIB created an Executive Committee that must have a majority of business members and include representation from the education system. The Executive Committee has the authority to take action on functional requirements on behalf of the IWIB when time does not allow for an issue to be addressed at a regularly scheduled board meeting. A majority vote of the Executive Committee is required for all such actions, which must be reviewed by the full board at the next regularly scheduled meeting. In addition to the review and issuance of policy and processes related to the mandated board functions, the Executive Committee also is responsible to the full board with regard to:

- Leading the IWIB's strategic planning efforts;

- Making recommendations to the Legislature regarding state workforce legislation, as appropriate;
- Education and outreach to congressional members and state legislators;
- Coordination and collaboration with local workforce innovation boards;
- Outreach and recruitment of new board members;
- Education and outreach to congressional members and state legislators;
- Ensuring state education initiatives are aligned and connected to the state workforce system;
- Periodically reviewing the IWIB by-laws and making recommendations for amendments as appropriate; and
- Development and coordination of all regularly scheduled meetings of the full board.

Any interim or new policies for WIOA that are developed and presented to the Executive Committee go through a policy advisory process that will involve its members, WIOA partners and stakeholders. The intention is to make WIOA policy development in Illinois more collaborative and to ensure that it yields cost-effective and efficient guidance to the field. Occurring parallel to policy development is an implementation plan involving WIOA partners and stakeholders to discuss and develop reporting requirements, ensure performance, identify and implement systems changes and develop a monitoring plan.

A new professional development program is being developed by and for the Board that will address all of the above listed activities, an effort that will formalize and provide a consistent vehicle to ensure accountability in meeting their statutorily required function. Implementation began with approval of the plan in 2019 and formal implementation in 2020.

IWIB Committee Chairs Work Group: The Committee Chairs workgroup is a work group of the Executive Committee and meets monthly to discuss collaboration opportunities, IWIB priorities, and identify areas of commonality and overlap.

The Committee Chairs Work Group also guides professional development for the full board including the development of an IWIB manual to better inform members regarding their functions and operational expectations, orientation and mentoring for all new members, outreach to local workforce boards, and an online board training program.

Continuous Improvement Committee (CIC): The CIC represents the board regarding oversight of current policies and strategic initiatives, and to make recommendations on appropriate assessments and evaluation measures.

The charges of the CIC include the following

- Charge 1: Evaluation Design. Review evaluation elements of policies, programs, and processes created or overseen by the IWIB to determine the appropriateness of their relationship to their expected outcomes. Provide feedback and recommendations.
- Charge 2: Evaluation Outcomes. Review outcomes of evaluation to determine if results conformed to the intended outcome. Provide feedback and recommendations.
- Charge 3: Continuous Improvement at Local Level. Review local performance related to the six federal performance measures for the WIOA core partners and make recommendations about strategies for continuous improvement at local levels.
- Charge 4: Benchmarks. Examine and evaluate workforce quality and earning benchmarks and recommend changes.

- Charge 5: Data Recommendations. Provide Recommendations for Readily Accessible Data and technical assistance recommendations for an intended audience.
- Charge 6: Priority Activities. Manage priority activities as assigned by the IWIB Strategic plan.

These recommendations are intended to ensure that the IWIB, its members, and the system are meeting all the statutorily required functions and commitments regarding policy guidance, as well as the performance measures outlined under WIOA.

The CIC has two workgroups: the Performance Work Group and the Evaluation Work Group. The Performance Work Group is made up of representatives from each of the core partners data and accountability teams. The Evaluation Work Group consists of members of each of the core partner agencies working to develop an evaluation tool that builds upon the foundation of the DOL evaluation tool kit. The Evaluation Work Group was developed from lessons learned through the U.S. Department of Labor-facilitated Evaluation Peer Learning Cohort.

If additional measures of performance are identified, the CIC will provide oversight of those through the work of the Performance Work Group. The directive of the CIC is not to conduct monitoring of the regional and local workforce systems, rather the mission of the CIC is to identify best practices and recommend continuous improvement opportunities. This committee is led by a business member and includes only board members representing businesses and the education system. They are supported by a team that conducts all necessary research, assists with research of available data and information, facilitates all meetings of the committee, and prepares documents for the full board that outline their recommendations for continuous improvement.

The development of continuous improvement systems will be led by the CIC. The IWIB will also continue to work with the Professional Development Team, composed of representatives of the WIOA core partners and business, to identify and disseminate best practice information. A key continuous improvement activity is the Workforce Wednesday Webinars that are open to all IWIB members, core partners, required partners and local areas that cover best practices and coordination opportunities.

Career Pathways for Targeted Populations: The At-Risk Youth/Adults Standing Committee (Youth Committee) was reconstituted as a Career Pathways for Targeted Populations Committee. This committee will now focus on the targeted populations identified within the Unified State Plan to develop strategies and initiatives that provide career pathways for Illinois' most vulnerable individuals. Working with businesses, the education system, local workforce agencies and other interested stakeholders, business-driven talent solutions will be developed that build off previous years of success, such as Illinois Pathways and the Illinois 60 by 25 Network, which served to pursue scaling of career pathways.

An example of the work of the reconstituted committee is a cross-agency project in Kewanee, Illinois where the Department of Corrections is partnering with multiple entities to develop a training program for current residents of the Illinois Correctional system. The focus of the training is skill training coupled with life skills learning provided by the community college system to prepare the individuals for return to the general public. Job skills training is provided within the walls of the Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center or at nearby participating businesses. Preparing the individuals for careers and reducing the high level of recidivism are key objectives of the program. The committee will evaluate the activities and outcomes to refine and potentially expand this model to other areas of the state.

Apprenticeship Illinois Committee: The IWIB has identified the design of a comprehensive system of apprenticeships (traditional and non-traditional) as a major strategy for providing career pathways for economic advancement. To support this implementation, a standing Apprenticeship Illinois Committee was created which includes leaders representing all key state

apprenticeship stakeholders: business and industry, training providers, Local Workforce Innovation Boards, labor, philanthropies, community colleges, vocational rehabilitation services and community-based organizations. The Apprenticeship Illinois Committee created a plan that establishes a comprehensive and integrated apprenticeship system in Illinois and oversees its implementation, performance and continuous improvement. Initial strategies developed by the Apprenticeship Illinois Committee include:

- Aligning apprenticeship supply and demand;
- Organizing and engaging employers and industry partners;
- Fostering apprenticeship program innovation and expansion;
- Expanding access to under-represented populations, including women, minorities, and people with disabilities; and
- Promotion and branding.

Much of the progress towards implementing the work plan activities is overseen by the Marketing Work Group and the Systems and Supports Work Group. Through the work groups' efforts, the Committee has rebranded Apprenticeship Plus to Apprenticeship Illinois and created a website with apprenticeship resources for all audiences, under ApprenticeshipIllinois.com. The Committee has also defined and refined the roles of Regional Apprenticeship Navigators and Apprenticeship Intermediaries to better meet the needs of businesses and to better expand new and existing apprenticeship programs.

Business *Engagement Committee* - In December 2019, the IWIB approved the creation of a business-led Business Engagement Committee (BEC), to be Co-Chaired by members who had been involved with the Integrated Business Services Workgroup. This decision was in recognition of the need to hear employer needs directly from them and their associates and colleagues and have them participate in the policy and legislative decision-making process. The committee was initially provided with three objectives to initiate their discussions and activity development: Identify Industry Sector Partnerships engaged in the workforce needs of the State of Illinois; Convene employers and WIOA service providers to better align business needs with training, services, and program design; and 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.

Additionally, the groundwork was laid in the IWIB Leadership Team discussions where the committee concept originated for additional considerations, including the committee structure and membership composition, staffing, and compliance with existing Federal, State and board requirements.

Task Force Structure

The IWIB uses a Task Force structure to convene businesses and other interested partners to discuss topic-specific issues based on the established priorities of the IWIB. These groups are responsible for developing recommendations to present to the full IWIB for consideration.

Charges of the Equity Task Force

This Task Force will develop recommendations for Illinois' workforce system that align with the education system and establish goals that will reduce inequity for the populations we serve. These recommendations will be presented to the IWIB in June, 2022 and will focus on strategies and tools the IWIB can use to lead the Illinois workforce system towards more equitable practices.

Priorities of the Equity Task Force:

- Charge 1: Examining programs, policies, and practices to infuse issues of equity and inclusion into these programs, policies, and practices as authorized by law
- Charge 2: Assessing and recommending education and workforce tools that can track program access and outcomes and disaggregate data to reveal disparities in policies and program delivery
- Charge 3: Making recommendations regarding inclusive and diverse approaches, including professional development of staff, to ensure use of an equity lens in serving their diverse populations
- Charge 4: Creating shared definitions for a set of key terms
- Charge 5: Establishing equity goals for the system

While the Task Force's recommendations have not yet been presented to the IWIB, work to-date points to six key needs/opportunities.

1. Fully integrating an equity lens into the work of the IWIB
2. Building a culture of equity in the Illinois workforce system
3. Conducting and sharing data analysis, tracking disaggregated outcomes, and identifying disparities and the contributing factors to those disparities.
4. Diversifying workforce leadership and staff and providing system-wide training on equity, cultural competence, and cultural awareness and sensitivity for those served by the system.
5. Providing funding to and partnering with culturally competent organizations
6. Prioritizing workforce services that include wraparound supports

Work Groups

The development of policies that are critical to the implementation of WIOA provisions occurs through organized work groups under the direction of the assigned Standing Committee and the IWIB Executive Committee. These work groups are led by business members of the IWIB and follow a policy process that ensures the full collaboration and consultation of local boards, chief elected officials, core partner agencies and other stakeholders. Policies may be based on identified needs for WIOA guidance, or on recommendations of the board to ensure minimum levels of compliance in such areas as governance, planning, performance accountability & reporting and service delivery.

Unified State Plan and Annual Performance Report Narrative Development

The IWIB is supported by the Executive Committee, Interagency Technical Assistance Team, the Interagency Data Team and board staff with the development and review of the technical requirements of the Unified State Plan. The vision, goal and strategic elements are developed in partnership with the IWIB, Governor and Interagency Leadership Team. The IWIB is supported by the agencies responsible for administering the core and required program to implement the Unified State Plan.

The annual report narrative is developed using the same approach and activities, reviewed and approved by the IWIB, and submitted in accordance with DOL and DOE guidance. The narrative reports on Illinois' ability to meet expectations outlined within the Unified State Plan. Successes are recognized, while challenges are outlined to inform the system of opportunities for continuous improvement.

The Annual Performance Report Narrative is expanded to include individual and business success stories, the annual performance report submission and issued to the Governor of Illinois and the General Assembly in accordance with the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board Act.

Certification of One-Stop Centers

The IWIB issued a policy in early 2017 that required all comprehensive one-stop centers be certified by the local workforce board by June 30, 2017. This policy describes the requirements and procedures for evaluating and certifying one-stop centers in Illinois under WIOA. Illinois' one-stop certification policy requires an evidence-based system of effective service delivery, physical and programmatic accessibility, and pursuit of continuous improvement opportunities.

The certification process ensures that local workforce innovation boards (LWIBs) oversee the delivery of employment and training programs in their communities and support high levels of effectiveness and sustainability. This process also requires assurance that implementation of the non-discrimination and Equal Opportunity provisions of WIOA Section 188 has been met through compliance with the Methods of Administration (MoA) and completion of an Accessibility Report at least once every three years.

In 2018, the policy work group convened again to review the past certification process and identified best practices that local boards utilized, as well as expand the policy to require that all affiliate and specialized centers be certified. The policy workgroup will continue to meet, review and revise the certification process as needed based on the ongoing certifications and feedback.

To ensure all necessary one-stop centers in Illinois achieve the required level of certification described in WIOA, Illinois convened a work group to define affiliate and specialized centers. The importance of knowing which locations providing WIOA services are considered "affiliates" or "specialized" centers is critical in ensuring several required state and local board functions are met. In addition to the certification of one-stop centers, infrastructure funding decisions, the need to enter into necessary memorandums of understanding (MOU), and effective provision of services to customers entering the local system whether at a physical location or direct linkage may be dependent on the appropriate identification of centers.

Eligible Training Providers

Illinois has a current policy on Eligible Training Provider Lists (ETPL) and their Eligible Training Programs, which includes an allowable demand occupational training list, which was most recently updated in 2011. A policy work group was convened in 2019 to address recent State policy changes and interagency initiatives. The work group has identified six primary goals for it to address in new or revised policy:

- Improve the scope of information collected from providers;
- Improve the processes for information collection and management;
- Increase the transparency of quality performance data;
- Update the criteria and listing of demand occupations;
- Enhance articulation of training programs to career pathway and bridge programs; and
- Ensure out-of-state training providers meet equivalent criteria to in-state.

The first four goals were the work group's focus beginning in 2019. The focus for goal #1, improving the scope of information, is alignment to the interagency Common Program Information (CPI) initiative that seeks to obtain more comprehensive and higher quality information on career pathway programs across multiple agency funding streams. At its core, this effort is to align data collection and program approval processes to the unified Career Pathways definition to support mandated reporting for WIOA and Eligible Training Providers,

as well as enhance systemic research capabilities and improve information available to potential program participants. In the future, the system will also serve as the basis for connecting data in support of participant outcomes data reporting as required by WIOA. The ETPL work group provided feedback on the CPI elements through a series of meetings.

In April 2019, DCEO sought and was awarded a $1 million Workforce Data Quality Initiative for the "Pro Path Illinois" project. Pro Path Illinois was major focus for Illinois in 2020 and continues to be developed and implemented. It is comprised of two aligned components to enhance programmatic data collected in administrative data across agencies (through implementing the CPI elements) and to generate greater analytic capacity to report on program efficacy and outcomes (through expanding the Illinois Administrative Data Research Facility – I-ADRF). Southern Illinois University-Carbondale's Center for Workforce Development (SIUC-CWD) is serving as the technical lead for the first project component to standardize data formatting and schemas and to integrate the combined CPI data into a centralized relational database. This system will have the ability to be augmented in such a way as to capture any CPI elements not covered through administrative datasets, as well as information from programs outside of the agencies' administrative ecosystems. Pro Path Illinois will also enable the State to combine CPI data with credential transparency data available through the Credential Engine project, whose lead technology partner is SIUC-CWD. Nationally standardized credential, quality assurance, competency, and assessment data from Credential Engine can supplement the CPI data.

Minimum Training Expenditure Requirement

The board continues to review its policy requiring a minimum level of combined Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker funds be expended on direct training activities as defined within the policy. In addition to increasing the minimum level from 40 to 50 percent, the board further defined what it would consider as direct training by considering leveraged funds as calculable. Primary consideration was to eliminate a disincentive for local boards to seek and apply for additional funding sources that otherwise might affect their ability to meet the minimum expenditure rate.

The work group supported continuation of the Hold Harmless Clause, implemented in 2018, to be considered by the IWIB in instances where a local workforce innovation board was unable to meet the minimum expenditure rate, but could provide justification that this was as a result of unplanned and unavoidable circumstances. In 2019, the IWIB moved to deactivate this work group and shift evaluation and assessment responsibility for the policy to the Continuous Improvement Committee. If, through an effective evaluation and identification of needed changes, policy changes are necessary, the work group would reconvene to address them. Also, through the Illinois Workforce Partnership, local boards and Title I administrators have been instructed through current policy to continue assessing the system and providing recommendations for changes to the policy.

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

A. ASSESSMENT OF CORE PROGRAMS

A. Assessment of Core Programs

Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic

Efforts to contain the spread of the coronavirus at the beginning of the pandemic required American Job Centers to temporarily close their doors. AJCs reopened as quickly as possible given mandates and directives that covered local staff, starting with seeing customers virtually and on an appointment-only basis to meet social distancing guidelines. Over time each AJC moved toward a full reopening based on evolving guidance and directives from health experts

and government leaders. This impacted the number of clients that could be seen in a given day and the breadth of services available WIOA program participants.

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

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

The IWIB's Continuous Improvement Committee applies three priorities to WIOA policies, programs and additional performance measures beyond core performance. These are: 1) evaluation of current and new WIOA policies issued by the board, 2) develop an understanding of how WIOA programs are evaluated, what continuous improvement processes are included, and what Technical Assistance is provided to address potential challenges, and 3) define the process that all IWIB committees, task forces and work groups, as well as WIOA partners, must utilize when conducting evaluations.

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

The Illinois Community College Board's review process details the criteria for success established by ICCB to each Local Workforce Innovation Board's (LWIB's) appointed designee. Completed reviews are submitted to ICCB. ICCB staff identify areas under the provisions of WIOA Title II – Adult Education and Literacy in which each of the 22 Local LWIBs is required to review, not approve, the Adult Education competitive applications for Adult Education and Literacy federal and state funding through the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB). The LWIBs reviewed applications submitted through the competitive process. The review process determines if there is alignment between the submitted Adult Education application and the local plan in each local workforce innovation area. The information gathered from the review will be used to evaluate alignment and develop ways to improve alignment between Adult Education and other core and required partners.

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

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

The IWIB charged the IWIB One-Stop Certification Policy Work Group to establish 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 ensure a minimum level of quality and consistency of services in Comprehensive One-Stop Centers throughout Illinois, regardless of location. As local boards review and update the criteria and processes for certifying Comprehensive One-Stop Centers biannually, insights are gained on establishing standards and assessing 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 the efficiency and effectiveness of the workforce development system. Outcomes from assessments of core program partners and other required partners will be reported annually and made public. The latest version of the certification application has been updated to reflect the goals included in the IWIB's service integration policy adopted in early 2019. These goals also shaped service integration action plans and outcomes developed by each LWIA in September 2019. These plans will be used to inform WIOA local and regional planning and assessment of progress in addressing service integration priorities.

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

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

improvement of all local workforce areas and ensure one-stop centers are providing the most effective and efficient services to customers.

B. ASSESSMENT OF ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS

B. Assessment of One-Stop Program Partner Programs

The Governor, the General Assembly, the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) and state agency partners continuously assess the performance outcomes of the workforce system in annual performance and benchmark reports. The state agency responsible for each of the core programs outlined in program-specific areas regularly assesses performance accountability measures at the state, regional and local levels as required by each core program. To ensure that one-stop program partners are well-positioned to meet the performance accountability requirements of WIOA, a working group on performance accountability focused on coordinating core partners to ensure systems have the capacity to collect and report required new and updated data elements under WIOA, as well as capacity to track aggregate data for performance indicators applicable to all four core partners was established. The core programs will continue to collaborate with the IWIB working groups to establish updated procedures to negotiate performance benchmarks as applicable. The state will develop strategies for aligning technology and data systems across one-stop program partners and to evaluate common performance outcomes, including the quality, effectiveness, and improvement of programs by local areas. One potential tool to support that assessment is a dashboard to aggregate data for all core programs. A performance working group is exploring such a dashboard that, if practicable, will provide a high-level view of each one-stop program partner'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 the data collected by each one-stop program partner fully conforms to WIOA and accurately reflects the outcomes for each one-stop program partner on a local level and in aggregate. The state will apply the same measures and methodologies to other one-stop partner programs that it does to core programs, in addition to any program-specific measures that are required by federal or state regulations.

The WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team reviews WIOA regional and local plans and one-stop MOUs. The state level review of these documents provides each of the core partner agencies an opportunity to assess each of the regions and workforce areas in Illinois. The team works with other IWIB Committees and workgroups to update the planning guidelines as needed to include information for assessing the quality, effectiveness, and improvement of the one-stop program partners. The most recent example of this is the requirement that all local LWIA partners collaborate in conducting service integration self-assessments. The results of these self-assessments, completed in September 2019, were used to develop and implement action plans to address service integration priorities. The CIC assists in identifying best practices and recommendations for continuous improvement. They will also be considering opportunities to highlight Illinois' workforce programs and outcomes by identifying additional benchmark performance measures that can be compared to other States in U.S. DOL Region 5 and throughout the nation.

The IWIB, in cooperation with the WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team, established objective criteria and procedures for use by local boards in assessing and certifying Comprehensive One-Stop Centers, per Section 121(g)(1) of WIOA. The state standard certification criteria will help ensure a minimum level of quality and consistency of services in Comprehensive One-Stop Centers throughout Illinois, regardless of location. As local boards review and update the criteria and processes for certifying Comprehensive One-Stop Centers biannually, insights will be gained on assessing and establishing standards on effectiveness, physical accessibility, programmatic accessibility and continuous improvement. These review processes will help identify best practices in assessing and improving local one-stop partner programs, both core and required programs, to promote efficiency and effectiveness of the

workforce development system. Outcomes of the assessments of one-stop program partners will be reported annually and made public. The State will use the performance data, expanded benchmark report, plan/MOU submission and certification process to assess the quality effectiveness and improvement of programs in each local area.

DHS-TANF staff has increased 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 has been implemented and continues to be revised based on observation and demonstration of how the referrals are being used and monitored. DHS-TANF staff actively participates in the monthly partners meetings and cross-training sessions held at the one-stop centers in order to continue to promote the definition of partner collaboration and service integration per the Governor's Guidelines. A key factor for TANF assessment measures is evaluation 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 improvement.

C. PREVIOUS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

C. Previous Assessment Results

The following assessments and evaluations were conducted:

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board established the policy and procedures for the local certification of one-stop centers in 2017. The results included a report from local workforce board teams indicating whether they had achieved full certification or provisional certification. Those centers receiving only provisional certification were required to indicate to the local board a plan for corrective action. The details of these surveys were evaluated to determine necessary revisions to the current policy. In coordination with implementation of the Service Integration policy, discussions are being held to revise the Application for One-Stop Certification of all designated centers. These new criteria will be optional for certifications conducted prior to July 1, 2020, which reflects continued initial service integration implementation, but will be a mandatory requirement for an application submitted after June 30, 2020.

In PY21, the Illinois Community College board is negotiating goals for the Illinois Adult Education system for the performance measures: Employment Second and Fourth Quarter after Exit, Median Earnings Second quarter after exit, Credential Attainment, and Measurable Skill Gains which include gains in Education Functioning Levels. Prior to COVID-19, Illinois achieved the targeted performance measure established. To achieve the target, the Adult Education system must meet <u>and</u> exceed 100 percent of the negotiated target. The same targets established at the state level are also the levels established at the local level.

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board approved new and revised policy elements for WIOA Policy 8.4 Training Expenditure Requirement in 2020. These were a follow-up to prior changes when the minimum training expenditure (MTE) rate increased from 40 percent (40%) to 50 percent (50%) and additional calculable training and training-related expenditures were allowed. In order to account for unforeseen circumstances that a Local Workforce Innovation Board (LWIB) and WIOA Title I program may not have been able to plan for that would adversely affect their ability to meet the MTE, the policy workgroup convened by the IWIB discussed a hold harmless provision.

With the onset of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID19) in March 2020, there was a heightened concern around the ability of local programs to meet the MTE and so the hold harmless provision was further discussed and a formal Request to Approve was presented to the full IWIB and approved. The impact of COVID19 requires states to give maximum flexibility to LWIBs to ensure customers receive the education, training, and supports necessary to gain or retain employment. Institutionalizing the hold harmless provision allows the local systems in

Illinois to focus their service strategies and funding in areas of most need as it continues to manage COVID19 response within the workforce system.

The IWIB and its Continuous Improvement Committee will continue to monitor program activity and expenditures to determine if further revisions are warranted. Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) staff regularly updates plan vs. actual data on participant enrollment into training and work-based learning and expenditure rates and provides this information to various interested workgroups.

DCEO analyzed the enrollment and services provided to basic skill deficient customers and identified several local areas that reported less than 25 percent of individuals as basic skills deficient. In response to these findings, DCEO held a corrective action webinar with LWIA leaders and emphasized the application of priority of service for Adult customers, and the impact on performance. Follow up review and analysis continue to ensure this population is being served in all LWIAs.

Commercial Driver License Training Outcomes & Licensure Rates

The IWIB Transportation / Distribution / Logistics Task Force report issued in 2017 recommended continued, regular tracking of enrollment in WIOA-funded truck driver training programs and the number of licenses issued by the state. Commerce staff reviews enrollment and outcomes data quarterly and licensure rates annually.

CDL Table 1 and CDL Chart 1 below indicate annual truck driver training activity and outcomes from PY14 - PY18. *The progression toward employment includes all those that reached that status during the program year; the table does not track the progress of a single cohort of individuals. Depending on when a person enters training, they may reach one or more of the various milestones in the following year.*

The number Entered Training is the count of WIOA-funded individuals enrolled. The data on completers, credentials / CDLs and entered employment is drawn from program exiters. The analysis of activity over this five-year period highlights some interesting trends.

Table 22: WIOA Funded CDL Training

CDL Table 1 WIOA / WIA Funded Commercial Driver's License Training Volume & Outcomes							
PY July-June	PY14	PY15	PY16	PY17	PY18	PY19	PY20
Active WIOA Training Providers	95	94	90	81	81	88	48
Entered Training	1,493	1,445	1,243	869	899	683	1,003
Exiters Completed Training	1,263	1,382	1,035	741	597	416	419
Exiters Earned CDL	464	636	598	504	453	262	306
Exiters Entered Training Related Employment	610	606	563	375	397	273	310

Key takeaways shown in CDL Table 1 include, since PY14:

1. The number of training providers used by WIOA participants across the LWIAs dropped nearly 50 percent from 95 to 48, with most of this change occurring in PY20.

2. People going into training, completing training and earning a CDL, and entering employment dropped almost 33 percent, over 66 percent and 50 percent, respectively. The decrease in the number going into training could be driven by a steadily improving economy until the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2014, the economy was still in the long, slow recovery following the Great Recession. The number of people entering CDL training may have been temporarily inflated and the decrease since then is a return to normalcy. The number going into training rebounded strongly in PY20, up nearly 50 percent over

the prior year. Most attribute this to the large number of layoffs occurring in other sectors and occupations due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

3. The gap between the number of people completing training and the number of people earning a CDL significantly narrowed. The most likely explanations are either the number of completers who take or who pass the CDL test have increased dramatically. This implies either the individuals going into training are more serious about entering the workforce or the quality of training has improved leading to higher pass rates.

The following CDL Chart 1, based on data provided by the Illinois Secretary of State, indicates the number of active CDLs in Illinois increased by nearly 19,000 or 4 percent from 2016 to 2020. The increase includes a significant number of WIOA-funded trainees, nearly 2,000 that contributed over 11 percent of the growth.

Chart 51: Active Commercial Driver's Licenses

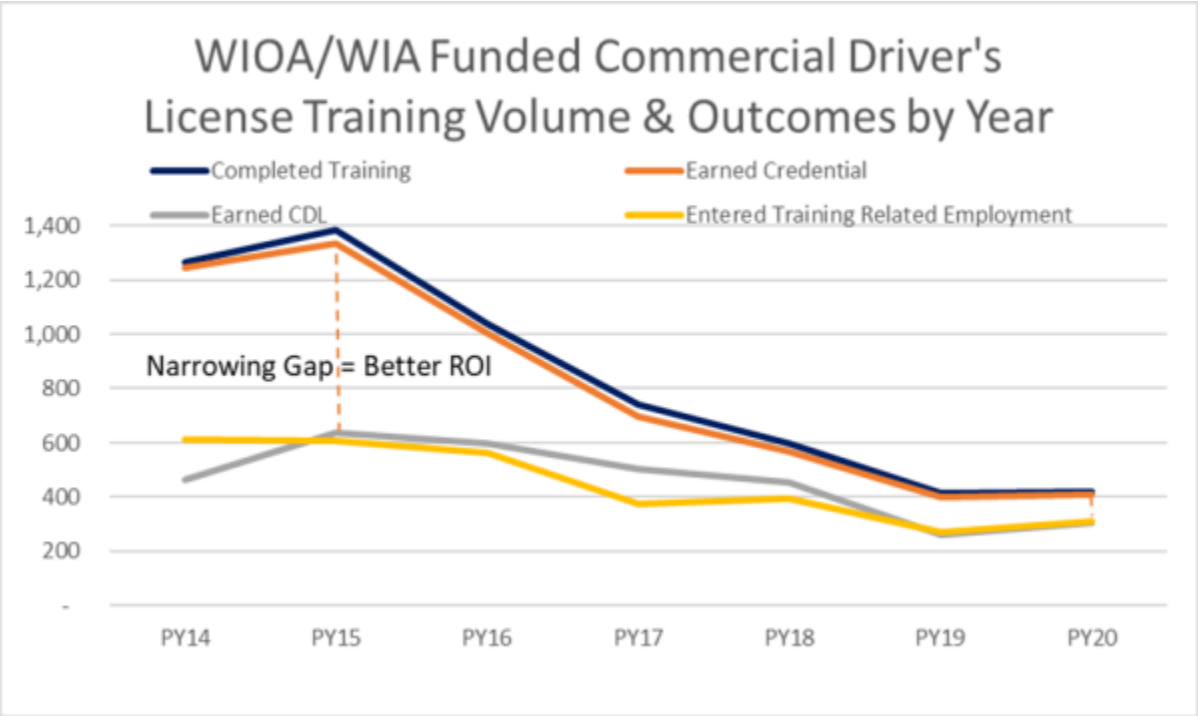
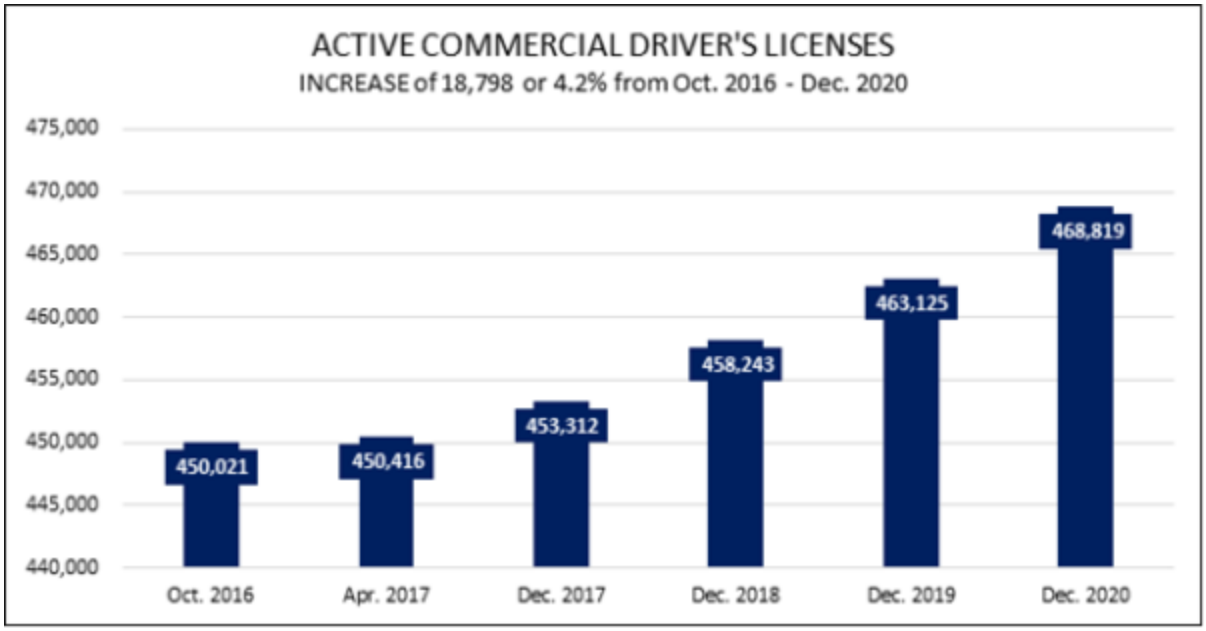


Chart 52: Increase in active Commercial Driver's Licenses



Work-Based Learning

DCEO staff tracks enrollment in work-based learning to determine the effectiveness of efforts to increase the use of these training models. The table below indicates the degree to which most types of work-based learning enrollment experienced tremendous growth between PY15 and PY18. WIOA-funded pre-apprenticeships were non-existent in Illinois and over 200 individuals are enrolled. Likewise, apprenticeship enrollment increased significantly every year since PY15. Enrollment in all types saw decreases in PY19 and PY20, most likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. By its very definition, work-based learning requires businesses to create placement opportunities. The large number of layoffs and economic volatility across most sectors in PY 19-20 had a dramatic effect on placements. It will be interesting to see how the post-pandemic employment dynamic that continues to evolve will impact business interest in work-based learning. We will continue to track and incorporate this data into business engagement efforts and career services to WIOA customers.

Table 23: Work-Based Learning Enrollment

Title IB Work-Based Learning Enrollment PY15 - PY20

	PY15	PY16	PY17	PY18	PY19	PY20
Apprenticeship	19	34	105	161	124	99
Pre-Apprenticeship Training	0	13	48	271	158	56
Internship	200	188	247	225	160	90
Job Shadowing	26	36	63	70	58	43
On-The-Job Training	789	632	622	801	533	426
Paid Work Experience	2,646	2,207	2,024	2,002	1,696	1,457
Unpaid Work Experience	51	57	60	87	115	62
Transitional Jobs	-	-	-	-	-	23
Total	**3,731**	**3,167**	**3,169**	**3,617**	**2,844**	**2,256**

Source: Illinois Workforce Development System

ICCB conducted a survey in the spring of 2019 regarding the number of apprenticeships at community colleges. Over 2,000 students were in some type of apprenticeship training ranging from traditional trades to finance and insurance.

Incumbent Worker Training

DCEO staff also conducts a regular analysis of incumbent worker training activity. This review includes the number of projects, employers and workers trained, and analysis of company sector, location, size, whether companies return for additional training, and project funding source. Over the same PY15 - PY20 time frame used for the work-based learning analysis, locally funded incumbent worker training has seen dramatic increases in nearly every way to measure activity - the number of employers, projects and WIOA funds invested were all up.

This is largely due to IWT being considered an allowable activity under WIOA and the removal of the layoff aversion requirement under WIA waivers that proved to be a significant barrier to employer participation.

In PY19 and PY20 we saw numbers drop significantly due social distancing requirements from the Covid-19 pandemic halted nearly all training. Local workforce areas reported 44 projects were directly impacted by the pandemic. Of those, 33 were postponed or delayed and 7 were canceled outright. Dozens of projects that were in the development stage were also postponed or canceled due to economic uncertainty. Early indicators in PY21 show IWT activity has resumed at a robust pace, but it remains to be seen how quickly the state returns to PY18 levels.

Table 24: IWT Activity and Project Cost

Program Year	Total Employers	Total Projects	Employees Enrolled	Project Cost
PY15	204	287	10,137	$6,588,381
PY16	291	386	7,480	$6,981,010
PY17	272	361	8,717	$6,416,102
PY18	372	477	6,655	$9,323,093
* PY19	302	368	5,325	$5,986,959
* PY20	180	219	1,446	$3,145,132

* Indicates data impacted by Covid-19

Source: IWTS Employer Summary Reports

Commerce refined incumbent worker project tracking to specifically identify projects involving apprenticeship training. Prior to this change, apprenticeship IWT projects were counted with other projects leading to an industry-recognized credential. The number of IWT apprenticeship projects has significantly increased over the last three program years, from 2 to 19, with registered apprenticeships being the vast majority. Each project was with a unique employer, thus the number of participating companies is the same as the number of projects.

Table 25: Incumbent Worker Apprenticeship Training – Active Projects

Incumbent Worker Apprenticeship Training Active Projects

	PY19	PY20	PY21
Registered Apprenticeship Certificate	2	13	17
Other Apprenticeship Certificate	-	2	2
Total	**2**	**15**	**19**
% Change from Prior Year		650%	27%

Source: IWTS

D. Evaluation

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

The CIC's Evaluation Work Group developed an Evaluation Toolkit in 2021 using an equity lens that is available for program use. Under the guidance of the CIC, the Evaluation Work Group continues to meet on a regular basis to ensure the toolkit remains relevant and reflects WIOA priorities and best practices for evaluation. Current policies that provide immediate opportunities to assess results are the minimum training expenditure requirement, the one-stop center certification, and the service integration self-assessment. This new information and best practices learned from the cohort project was incorporated within the CIC evaluation process in 2020 and will be applied to these policies and others identified through future discussions.

Other examples of how the state is conducting or plans to conduct evaluations and research projects include:

- The Reemployment Service and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program is administered by the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) and is intended to address individual employment needs for unemployment insurance (UI) customers who have been determined most likely to exhaust benefits and transitioning veterans receiving unemployment compensation for ex-service members (UCX). IDES Economic Information and Analysis Division will begin using evidence-based strategies to conduct evaluations on the intervention and service delivery models used to administer the RESEA program. The goal is to ensure the service delivery strategies used are reducing the benefit duration and improving the employment outcomes for those UI customers and transitioning veterans. As the program evaluations begin and continue throughout the upcoming fiscal years, IDES will add to the evidence base; increase the workforce system's understanding of what interventions are successful, for which population of customers and in what context; and expand the use of those service delivery models with strong evidence of success. As part of the evidence-based evaluation, IDES currently does a quarterly narrative (ETA 9178) highlighting the success stories and interventions that have led to reemployment.

- Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) submitted to U.S. DOL/ETA a proposal for multi-year UIPL 23-21 UI Equity grant. In the grant, the Economic Information and Analysis Division identifies three approaches representing key junctures in the unemployment pipeline and address underrepresented groups in the filing of an unemployment insurance (UI) claim, the time lapse from filing to certification and payment, and, finally, the mitigation of benefit exhaustion. First, the "likelihood of UI filing" portal offers critical information to identify target worker demographic populations who historically have been underrepresented in UI services and payments,

formulate data-driven response planning to actual job separation events, and conduct proactive outreach activity to increase benefit take-up by those eligible. Second, the "time-lapse" portal includes two sets of reports to improve equity in timeliness to certification and timeliness to payment. Moreover, we propose measures for claimant financial distress to inform service allocation. Third, the "proximity to benefit-exhaustion" portal recognizes that actionable information on mitigation strategies for UI benefit exhaustion requires timely data that is geographically relevant. These portals will be fully integrated into the already developed "Unemployment to Reemployment" website that is funded, in part, by a Workforce Data Quality Initiative Grant (WDQI) awarded to Illinois by U.S. DOL/ETA.

- In collaboration with the Cook County Court, IDES is participating in an Alternative to Incarceration initiative. This initiative provides workforce assistance to delinquent parents of the domestic court division in the Markham Courthouse. As a final opportunity for job placement or retention assistance before punishment (and possible incarceration is imposed), delinquent parents are referred to IDES for assistance in finding employment or employment with a larger wage. Staff are on-site weekly to ease transportation concerns and provide regular follow-up and communication with referring judges. Methods used to evaluate the service delivery model were number of job seekers assisted, services and referrals provided, and whether the person's job search effort satisfied the court.

- Beginning in FY2020, IDES, in collaboration with the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership and representatives from the City of Chicago, deliver pre-release and post-release workforce services to returning citizens being released from Cook County Jail. The population of returning citizens will fall into three categories to include Sheriff's Anti-Violence Efforts (SAVE) – young males (18-24) with a high likelihood of recidivism; County Sentenced- adult males with short sentences; and Boot Camp – adult males generally under 20, paramilitary. Prior to implementing, the team will evaluate the pros and cons of serving the populations identified and the service delivery strategies that will be used. This initiative was postponed due to the pandemic. IDES is working with the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership on a plan to provide virtual pre-release services.

- DCEO issued Notices of Funding Opportunity for Workforce Innovation projects in 2017 and 2018. One of this initiative's target activities includes research and evaluation projects designed to provide insight into the use of best practices and to determine the effectiveness of current workforce efforts. These efforts were limited to evaluating Title IB activities, and thus can be used for a wide range of research topics relevant to improving the state's workforce. Potential research projects are checked for alignment and coordination with DOL / DOE evaluations. Project concepts can originate from the IWIB, the WIOA core partners, an LWIA or group of LWIAs, or other interested organizations or partnerships, such as sector partnerships, regional and local chambers of commerce, etc. All grants funded under these NOFOs include a requirement for the grantee to conduct a formal evaluation of grant activities, with an assessment of planned vs. actual outcomes, potential best practices and lessons learned. An evaluation template was developed and implemented in. These evaluations are shared with the system as they are completed to help inform and refine future investments and workforce strategies.

- Under the ICCB Adult Education Competitive Grant process, core and some required partners will be used to evaluate grant applications based on established criteria as listed in the Request for Application. Local Workforce Boards were invited to review applications in their LWIA for alignment of services. Each person participated as part of

a team led by ICCB staff. All reviewers were provided training, signed a confidentiality agreement, and attended meetings to reach consensus on application scoring.

- All core partners are participated in a multi-state DOL study on Effectiveness in Serving Employers Performance Indicators. Researchers from the Urban Institute, George Washington University and Capital Research Corporation plan site visits with key state-level staff from Titles I - IV and at least two local workforce areas in the spring of 2020. In addition to engaging with state administrators and local WIOA staff as part of the scan of the states, the research team also will work with key national associations to request help with survey outreach to their members, including the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA), Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), National Association of State Directors of Adult Education (NASDAE), and DirectEmployers. CSAVR and NASDAE members include state administrators of adult and vocational rehabilitation agencies. DirectEmployers members include 875 employers of Fortune 1000 companies that are mostly federal contractors. NASWA members include administrators of adult, dislocated worker and youth programs, and, in many cases, other core programs. The study team is also engaging a federal workgroup at key points in the study to leverage the rich expertise of DOL and Ed agency staff and convening a subject matter expert (SME) panel at critical junctures over the life of the study. A final report was released April 2021.

5. DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

A. FOR TITLE I PROGRAMS

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

i. Youth Activities

Illinois will distribute Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth funds according to Section 128(b)(2)(A). Illinois does not intend to distribute WIOA Youth Program funds to local areas based on the youth discretionary allocation formula contained in Section 128(b)(3)(B). Utilizing the additional factors contained in Section 128(b)(3)(B) would, in our estimation, undermine decisions by the Governor and the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board regarding the local area boundaries within which WIOA should operate locally. In many instances, local areas would likely be left without the amount of funding necessary to allow them to operate viable youth programs.

II. ADULT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) OR (B)(3)

ii. Adult and training activities in accordance with WIOA section 133(b)(2) or (b)(3)

Distribution of Funds-Title I (Adult)

Illinois will distribute WIOA Adult funds according to Section 133(b)(2)(A). Illinois also does not intend to distribute funds to local areas for adults based on the adult discretionary allocation formula contained in Section 133(b)(3)(B). As with the discretionary youth allocation described above, utilizing the additional factors contained in Section 133(b)(3)(B) would likely undermine the decisions by the Governor and the Illinois Workforce Board regarding the local workforce area boundaries. In many instances, local areas would likely be left without the amount of funding necessary to allow them to operate viable adult programs (Attachment I, formerly Attachment Q in the 2020 Unified State Plan - https://www.illinoisworknet.com/WIOA/Resources/Documents/Attachment percent20Q percent20- percent20 percent20Methods percent20in percent20Distributing percent20Funds percent202020.pdf).

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

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 HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL AWARD MULTI-YEAR GRANTS OR CONTRACTS ON A COMPETITIVE BASIS TO ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS IN THE STATE, INCLUDING HOW ELIGIBLE AGENCIES WILL ESTABLISH THAT ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS ARE ORGANIZATIONS OF DEMONSTRATED EFFECTIVENESS

i. 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 program/performance oversight to grantees.

Adult education and literacy eligible providers responded to a Notice of Funding Opportunity in the Spring of 2021. Funded programs approved under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) will continue to receive funding through, June 30, 2024. The ICCB awarded three-year grants or contracts to all eligible applicants who meet the required criteria. To receive funding through continuation years, programs must adhere to state and federal grant expectations as measured through annual application, financial reports and program performance reports. The grant contract will reflect a number of variables, including availability of funding, demonstrated effectiveness from year to year, and other factors.

Illinois will use a three-year grant or contract process that will be subject to renewal or continuation annually. Applicants may apply as a single entity or as part of a consortium. 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. Continuation of a grant or contract from year to year is contingent on sufficient funding and submittal and approval of an official application that includes demonstration of adequate and effective performance in the prior year.

The competitive process for grants in Illinois is subject to the Illinois Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA), which is based on EDGAR, the Education Department General Administrative Regulations and FFATA, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act. 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 of the eligibility requirements will be able to access and participate in the application process of a competitive grant cycle.

In the Spring of 2021, the ICCB implemented a new competitive application process for all federal and state Adult Education and Literacy Act (AELA) funding that determined the eligible providers that were awarded funds starting July 1, 2022. Applicants were eligible to apply for funding in the following categories: Adult Education and Literacy, Integrated English Language and Civics Education, and Corrections Education. The review of proposals included rating responses of the 13 considerations in Title II of WIOA, as well as one state consideration of making certain the applicant's proposed budget is consistent with the eligible provider's activities, is cost-efficient within administrative guidelines and places emphasis on serving the target populations. The next competitive application process will be in the Spring of 2024 for FY2025.

The considerations that were used in the competitive process are listed below.

- 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.).
- The program is of sufficient intensity and duration for individuals, including those with learning disabilities, to achieve substantial learning gains.
- 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.
- The demonstrated alignment to the requirements of the adult education services and activities, as well as alignment to the local plans.

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- The program activities are coordinated with other available resources in the community, such as establishing strong links with elementary schools and secondary schools, post-secondary institutions, Comprehensive One-Stop Centers, job training programs, business, and social service agencies.
- 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.
- 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.
- The local communities have a demonstrated need for additional English Literacy programs and civic education programs.
- 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 competition:

Table 26: AEFLA Competition Timeline

Competition Timeline	Activities
January - February	ICCB publishes three-year federal AEFLA Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) aligned with the priorities in the approved Unified State Plan and in compliance with state GATA and federal EDGAR and FFATA rules.
February - March	• An open bidder's conference will be held to provide an overview of the

Competition Timeline	Activities
	competitive NOFO. • ICCB provides technical assistance to inquiries from potential eligible providers. • ICCB recruits candidates to review and score AEFLA grant applications.
February - April	FAQs are posted to the ICCB website to distribute broadly the questions asked during the bidders conference, as well as during the entire process.
March - April	Due date for AELA grant applications.
April - May	Reviewers evaluate and score AELA grant applications. This review process includes review from all local workforce boards to ensure alignment with proposed grant activities.
April	ICCB conducts review of budgets and other grant requirements and develops a rank-ordered slate based on applicant scores.
May - June	ICCB announces AEFLA grant applicants that will receive funding, contingent upon the release of state and federal funding.
July 1	AEFLA grant providers begin grant cycle, programming and funding.

The ICCB will provide funding to eligible local entities for the provision of adult education services through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). Through this process, the ICCB will identify, assess and award three -year grants to eligible providers throughout the state. 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, demonstrated effectiveness will be evaluated based on past performance in achieving state negotiated performance measures, as well as achieving the prescribed requirements of the grant, including the attainment of educational functional level increases/measurable skills gains, and successful programs that transition students to post-secondary education, training and employment.

Funding Distribution

Title II Adult Education and Literacy funding will be used to provide prescribed instructional and supportive services in all of 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 through the use of 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.

In Fiscal Years 2021 and 2022, the ICCB will continue to examine a new distribution of funding methodology. . Currently, within an APC, the funds are then distributed proportionately among approved eligible providers based on a variety of elements including but not limited demonstrated performance, previous data, instruction and enrollments. During continuation years in a multi-year grant cycle, the funding formula will also take into account the most recent 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

ii. Ensure direct and equitable access

All grants awarded through the State of Illinois are subject to the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA), based on EDGAR, the Education Department General Administrative Regulations and FFATA, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act. Under GATA, all grant applications and awards are subject to uniform processes to ensure transparency, fairness and equitable access to all eligible participants and providers. Grant notifications are performed through the posting of a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) to a public web portal, Grants.Illinois.gov, where all of the eligibility criteria, application and grant requirements, and an explanation of the application and approval process are posted. The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), state eligible agency, will also provide notification and access to the public portal through the use of 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 detailed below. The ICCB will use the same application, process, and rubric/grading process for all applicants submitting an application. 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 DUNS 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 through 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 announcement and application and submission procedures for all eligible applicants under WIOA Sections 225, 231, and 243. Each application will be reviewed and evaluated using the same criteria as indicated in the grant or contract application. Each applicant must address the areas that are applicable. Eligible applicants will be asked to address applicable activities listed below:

- 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 Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) published and distributed broadly a Competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) in the Spring of FY 2021, which was aligned with the Unified State Plan, WIOA Title II; Adult Education and Literacy and other education and workforce plans. During a competitive year, to be considered for funding an applicant of demonstrated effectiveness must:

1. Be an Eligible Applicant (Provider), which means an organization that has demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education and literacy activities that may include:

    a. Local educational agencies (LEAs)

    b. Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) or Faith-Based Organization (FBO)

    c. Volunteer Literacy Organizations

    d. Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs)

    e. Public or Private nonprofit agencies

    f. Libraries

    g. Public-housing authorities

h. Non-profit institutions that are described previously and have the ability to provide adult education and literacy services to eligible individuals

i. Consortium or coalition of agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities as described previously

j. Partnership between an employer and an entity as described above

2. Respond to the Request for Proposal by the due date
3. Complete all required portions of the application, including registration through the State of Illinois Grants Accountability and Transparency Act portal.
4. Meet all deadlines and other elements as specified in the Request for Proposal
5. Meet all eligibility requirements

The past effectiveness of an eligible applicant in improving the literacy skills of adults is a strong factor in the delivery of adult education instruction and supportive services. In addition, the alignment of local adult education activities with the local area plans and services, as well as, local regional workforce plans are essential.

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

C. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

C. Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation

This is not applicable to the State of Illinois.

6. PROGRAM DATA

A. DATA ALIGNMENT AND INTEGRATION

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. ii Describe the State's plans to integrate data system to facilitate streamlined intake and service delivery to track participation across all programs included in this plan.

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

The agreements facilitate cross-program access to data about common participants while minimizing duplicative systems costs. In addition to one-on-one data access, the Illinois Longitudinal Data System (ILDS) and the Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) fully

executed a multiple agency data sharing agreement with all the State of Illinois educational and workforce agencies. This data sharing agreement allows for the sharing of agency data via the newly established Centralized Demographic Dataset Administrator (CDDA). The interagency agreements and the CDDA arrangement establish a master client index number for all clients and facilitates integrated and streamlined service delivery, common reporting and measurement of interagency longitudinal performance outcomes as required under WIOA Section 116(d)(2).

Illinois will continue to use existing web-based interfaces that integrate data via Application Program Interface (API) tools. Real-time access to workforce development resources for individuals, businesses and workforce professionals is available, shareable and viewable in user-friendly dashboards for better customer service. Ongoing discussions include how to further integrate the Internet-based data systems to enhance program alignment and service delivery.

- The DCEO - Illinois workNet portal connects individuals and businesses to workforce services and data. The portal serves as a hub for WIOA implementation resources and guidance for all WIOA programs and partners. The open-source and widget technology available in the new version allow for maximum agility in on-demand program development and implementation needs. The Illinois Workforce Information System (IWIS) launched in 2020 piloted the first fully case managed and DOL integrated reporting system - built in the cloud with agile development capabilities, IWIS is proving to be a system that can adapt and evolve quickly to add and integrate both state and Federal programs. It has robust client referral, tracking, and reporting capabilities, as well, among other innovative tools and enhanced data tracking features. Built in responsive design, IWIS can safely and securely be available on any device to accommodate the virtual workforce and virtual client needs.

- Employment Security administers the IllinoisJobLink (IJL) system to collect data on job seeker and employer customers. IllinoisJobLink.com is an internet-based system with a centralized job search engine and resume service that integrates workforce customer information to facilitate coordination of services across partner programs.

- The Illinois Community College Board—Adult Education administers the Illinois Data and Information System (DAIS-i), which is a web-based system that collects relevant student-level record data on education, attendance, courses and employment data needed for reporting to WIOA.

- The Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Rehabilitation Services. The Web Case Management System (WebCM) is the primary case management system for the Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation program, providing electronic storage of customer case records, as well as links to other systems that display information related to case requirements. WebCM is an internet-based system that can be accessed from any location with appropriate security and was developed internally by DHS information systems staff.

The IWIB and the Continuous Improvement Committee (CIC) is working to align the state's evaluation and reporting strategies to ensure that they will be supported by the improved data systems.

The Governor's Office has embarked on ILDS 2.0. The ILDS 2.0 target operating model consists of five pillars: Governance, Systems Architecture, Data, Program Management and Organizational Capability. The Governance body consists of two standing committees the Executive Committee which meets once or twice a year consisting of agency leads and the Managing Committee that meets every other month that includes appointees from each agency

that support research, data management, and technology. These roles differ at the different agencies.

- The core of the Systems Architecture uses an IBM tool called CloudPak for Data supported by the Department of Innovation and Technology (DoIT). Other technologies will be leveraged to create an ecosystem of data management and portal applications.
- The core of the system architecture will be made up of two standing datasets: the Early Childhood Participation Dataset and a dataset bringing together K-12, Higher Ed, and Workforce data. These datasets are still being defined.
- ILDS will provide program management services that help manage projects using this data including a process for a unified data request process across ILDS agencies and a process to develop a common analytics agenda. There is currently a working group in progress to define the data request process.
- ILDS Governance is working on the concept of "Data as a Function". This means that data analysis and management is a function similar to legal, finance, and IT, where it is infused within each agency based on defined roles and responsibilities but supported across state government with common processes and guidelines.

This initiative provides a technical record matching, identity resolution procedure and software to securely and confidentially match records across seven different agencies that include the four core partners:

- Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
- Illinois Community College Board
- Illinois Board of Higher Education
- Illinois State Board of Education
- Illinois Department of Employment Security
- Illinois Student Assistance Commission
- Illinois Department of Human Services

ii. Describe the State's plans to integrate data systems to facilitate streamlined intake and service delivery to track participation across all programs included in this plan.

Illinois is working to align and integrate participant and performance data across WIOA programs with the ultimate goal of providing effective and efficient services that lead to the participants' employment as quickly as possible. The Illinois Department of Innovation and Technology (DoIT) has conducted two phases of an independent *WIOA Technical Assessment* of the core partners' applications supporting the WIOA programs. The goal of the *WIOA Technical Assessment* is to identify technical solutions to better integrate the WIOA system in Illinois. The state Chief Information Officer contracted with technical experts to lead the assessment team that included technical leads from each of the WIOA core partners. The team identified that the WIOA data integration strategy should include:

- Functional and technical assessment of external and internal systems that can act as the common intake solution;
- Generation of unique customer identification;
- An automated initial assessment based on intake questions;
- Automated referral to partner agencies;

- Common dashboard for participant information;
- Identification and execution of the appropriate procurement plan;
- Execution of an inter-governmental agreement among partner agencies to fund and use a common intake system;
- Upgrading of agency solutions where needed to integrate to common intake solution; and
- Definition of detail plans by working with HHi2 program and state data practice for data warehouse and Master Data Management solutions.

The scope of the WIOA technical assessment included a review of business, information and system architecture and current applications supporting WIOA programs for the core partner businesses. This assessment is a key step in developing the capacity for common intake and improving service delivery. The WIOA technical assessment team's approach was to view the WIOA core partners collectively as an enterprise or program that is responsible for providing job seekers with a technology offering *Single Sign-On* (SSO) access, *Integrated Workforce Registration* (IWR), real-time triage and coordinated service provisioning for the portfolio of WIOA programs. The WIOA technical assessment team approached the assessment of each of the core partner's systems from a customer-centric, job seeker user experience. The WIOA technical assessment team's approach aligned with the employment Training Administration's national vision for states to provide "a system that is driven by a single Workforce System Registration as the entry point to the nation's *reemployment system* and offers a coordinated customer-centric focus with full partner access." DoIT and the agency partners have developed the following strategic recommendations as a result of the assessments:

- Create a configurable, web-based intake solution capable of conducting initial assessment and referral to appropriate partner systems;
- Allow partners to maintain and enhance their existing solutions to effectively manage eligibility, enrollment and cases;
- Develop a WIOA hub system capable of integrating with any number of existing and new agency systems to coordinate and update data needed for processing;
- Leverage the state's Health and Human Services Innovation Incubator (HHi2) Master Data Management solution to generate unique participant identification numbers based on attributes collectively defined by the state; and
- Migrate data to the state's proposed data warehouse environment for business intelligence and analytics.

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board identified its Service Integration Policy Workgroup as the lead party for implementing the strategies towards its priority activity to provide a uniformly positive customer experience for job-seekers at all Illinois one-stop centers. These strategies include making the system easy to navigate and promoting a "no wrong door" approach that will adopt, adapt, or create one or more models of streamlined intake and referral that one-stop centers throughout the state can utilize to improve service delivery.

iii. Explain how the State board will assist the governor in aligning technology and data systems across required one-stop partner programs (including design and implementation of common intake, data collection, etc.) and how such alignment will improve service delivery to individuals, including unemployed individuals

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) monitors the state's data infrastructure, including strategic coordination between core partners. This ensures the data systems across

the required one-stop partner programs lead to improved service delivery and evaluation of common performance outcomes. The IWIB Continuous Improvement Committee's (CIC) Performance Workgroup, with active participation from each core WIOA partner, was established and meets regularly to ensure the system has the tools and capacity necessary to collect and report all required data elements. This ongoing, unified, and collaborative leadership process strengthens the performance outcomes.

Under CIC's direction the Performance Workgroup created a public facing dashboard which aggregates data for all core programs. This dashboard will enable a process for ongoing and streamlined sharing, monitoring, and evaluating of data throughout each program year to help identify potential needs for technical assistance or adjustment in program services. This process will improve service delivery to all individuals as potential gaps in service can be identified and action steps to remedy concerns can be put into place.

In addition to the ongoing data analysis, the CIC has created an evaluation tool kit to provide a framework and tools for effective evaluation for statewide workforce programs, policies, and processes across the various Titles. This toolkit uses an equity lens as its foundation based on the IWIB Equity Task Force's concept of an equity lens an equitable workforce system is one where diversity, equity, and inclusion are foundational – in which race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, health, ability, and other demographic or geographic characteristics no longer predict one's outcomes in the labor market. When program outcomes are not met, the core partners and local one-stop partner programs have access to the toolkit to evaluate their services to identify evidence-based strategies for improvement.

Early work on evaluation will address questions of service delivery and potential approaches to improve the system, including exploring how data and technology can be better leveraged to ensure a successful system.

The CIC is developing a state and regional cross-agency benchmark report for stakeholders and the public. The WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team will build on the findings to provide additional regional planning data and tools to further support regional planning to align education, workforce and economic development. Furthermore, the WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team will build upon existing agency initiatives to develop and use strategic indicators and benchmarks as part of comprehensive data resources for state and regional planning.

iv. Describe the State's plans to develop and 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.

B. ASSESSMENT OF PARTICIPANTS' POST-PROGRAM SUCCESS

B. Assessment of Participants' Post-program Success

Performance experts from the WIOA core and required partners continue to work with the Illinois Department of Innovation Technology to connect data systems that will allow the state

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The portal will display timely reemployment metrics for diverse claimant subgroups. State agencies faced an immediate need in March of 2020 to provide an effective, data-based, response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to an unprecedented workload, the occupational composition of the unemployed changed drastically to a population unused to job

loss. Within some industries, new occupational strata of unemployed emerged, in others the concentration of layoff activity intensified in traditional occupational groups, and, as well, there was greater concentration and geographic dispersion of some occupations than others. The Midwest Collaborative moved swiftly to develop an unemployment-to-reemployment portal (a UI portal) to inform policy makers. The structure of the portal highlights weekly (timely), county-based (local), and actionable information on Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimant composition and transitions.

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

- create Tableau visualizations on local unemployment spell behavior for equity groups, such as low income, by claimant education/training categories; and
- establish the Directory of New Hires in the ADRF environment for the purpose of developing timely, local measures on reemployment activity. The data lag for the Directory of New Hires is only 1-2 months and the Quarterly UI Wage records (the only alternative employment data source) is 7-9 months.

The primary outcomes of the project are:

- Visualizations of local unemployment spell behavior by claimant education/training categories. Tableau visualizations and code on unemployment spell behavior for claimants by local area have already been developed and implemented in the "Unemployment to Reemployment" portal (see below). We will develop summary tabulations from administrative data and add a filter to display local spell trends by education/training categories for claimant cohorts. This will require 2-3 months.
- Timely measures for reemployment activity.
- The Coleridge ADRF already hosts seven Illinois administrative data sets covering employers, workers, claimants, and training participants. This project adds the Directory of New Hires to the ADRF environment for the purpose of developing timely measures on reemployment activity. Task 2 will require 4-5 months.
- Task 3- National Applied Data Analytics Training
- Illinois will partner with the Coleridge Initiative to offer a national data-analytic training on education/training and the reemployment of UI claimants. This training will be structured similarly to the successful effort sponsored by U.S. DOL/ETA in Spring 2021 on the Unemployment to Reemployment portal. Task 3 will require 3 months to prepare training materials and 3 months to deliver the training.

The IWIB's Continuous Improvement Committee (formerly the Evaluation and Accountability Committee) continues to implement certain provisions of the IWIB's Strategic Plan related to evaluations, assessments, performance, and accountability, they will be looking at opportunities for continuous improvement throughout the workforce and education systems. One measure they may consider after further discussion is the long-term employment of participants exiting the program. While current common performance measures track customers up to four quarters after exit, the IWIB is exploring utilizing available and new data to determine

employment outcomes beyond one year. These might include employment within the same company, within the field of study or the wages of the customer for as many as five years after employment.

C. USE OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) WAGE RECORD DATA

C. Use of Unemployment Insurance (UI) and State Wage Interchange System (SWIS) Wage Record Data

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

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

D. PRIVACY SAFEGUARDS

D. Privacy Safeguards

Privacy Safeguards are incorporated into the Workforce Development System. Continuing to comply with federal and state laws governing protection of personally identifiable information is a priority during WIOA implementation. Existing privacy safeguards in administering the core programs in Illinois pose opportunities for additional collaboration and interoperability, while efforts also exist to ensure security systems and procedures do not inhibit service integration.

For instance, the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) maintains student data related to high school equivalency exams. Any entities outside of the community college board system submit forms to ICCB staff focused on data accountability to ensure compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 USC § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99), which protects the privacy of student education records. Future considerations include how data integration between required programs can facilitate a smooth transition from high school to the workforce or to post-secondary education while preserving the privacy of their records throughout the workforce system.

The Department of Employment Security's (IDES) existing system could also serve as a model for cross-agency collaboration. The Labor Exchange Program is a password-protected program backed by a user agreement, including an explanation of how individual data will be used throughout service delivery. Internal communications through the program use a unique

participant identification number rather than a Social Security number. The unique identification number could be used across required programs to help preserve privacy and facilitate tracking of that participant by core program partners.

7. PRIORITY OF SERVICE FOR VETERANS

Illinois places a priority in serving veterans and other eligible persons located throughout the state. Veterans and other eligible persons will receive priority of service in accordance with the Title 38 United States Code 4215, 20 CFR 1010, TEGL 10-09, TEN 15-10, and VPL 07-09. The Comprehensive American Job Centers are committed to helping veterans and other eligible persons find a job. Illinois veterans and other eligible persons have been served over the years through targeted programs administered through the Department of Employment Security (IDES) and the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs in cooperation with other education and workforce agencies.

In Illinois, Employment Security serves as the lead agency for veterans' employment and employer services. The Illinois Department of Employment Security's JVSG Four-Year Stand-Alone State Plan incorporates and aligns with the Illinois Unified State Plan. All veterans, regardless of their characterization of discharge, are provided employment services by Wagner-Peyser staff, using the veterans eligibility triage process in accordance with Veterans Program Letters (VPL) 03-14 with Changes 1 & 2, 07-14, and 03-19. All veterans and other eligible persons coming into the American Job Centers must receive an Initial Assessment from either an Employment Specialist or WIOA staff. If during this Initial Assessment, a veteran or other eligible person self-attests to one or more Significant Barrier(s) to Employment (per Veterans Program Letter 03-14 with changes 1, 2, and 3), then they must be referred to the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist for Individualized Career Services and possible case management. While receiving services from the DVOP specialist, a veteran and other eligible person may continue to receive services from all AJC partners. Once their significant barriers to employment (SBE) have been mitigated and are job-ready, the DVOP specialist will work to place them in active IJL Job Orders, make referrals and provide resumes to the Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) for placement assistance. As a member of the agency's Business Services Team, the LVER advocates for all veterans and other eligible persons with businesses and business groups within the American Job Center's operational area. Any American Job Center staff member can refer a qualified veteran / covered person to the LVER for job development.

Table 27: Veteran's Performance Goals Baseline

JVGS Staff Performance Measures	Negotiated Baseline
Employment Rate – 2nd Quarter after Exit	55.5%
Employment Rate – 4th Quarter after Exit	57.2%
Median Earnings – 2nd Quarter after Exit	$6,800
Wager-Peyser Staff Services to Veterans Measures	**Negotiated Baseline**
Employment Rate – 2nd Quarter after Exit	59.0%
Employment Rate – 4th Quarter after Exit	59.5%
Median Earnings – 2nd Quarter after Exit	$7,400

DVOP specialists provide employment assistance to all Chapter 31 Referred Veterans - U.S. Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment to include Labor Market Information and Individualized Career Services. For those veterans that are not eligible for VA-VR&E services or may need more specific state-level assistance, the DVOP specialist may refer veterans and other eligible persons to the IDHS-Division of Rehabilitation Services to assess and assist the veteran with mitigating his or her disability in order to meet their employment goal. DVOPs also work closely with other core and required partners, as well as community supportive service organizations, to help veterans and othere eligible persons receive various supportive assistance, training and certification credentials. Some of the highlighted programs serving veterans and other eligible persons in Illinois include:

- IllinoisJobLink.com - Illinois Labor Exchange, an online tool used by veterans and other eligible persons searching for jobs in Illinois, provides Veteran Preference by notifying the veteran job seeker of a job opening 24-48 hours before a non-veteran. This system also signifies the person is being a veteran by placing an American flag next to their name.
- Illinois Joining Forces Foundation - Statewide public and private organizational network that works to identify, collaborate and marshal available resources and services to create efficient access and delivery of these programs to the state's military and veteran communities. One of the main objectives is to provide a network of organizations with improved capacity, awareness and intra-network referrals.
- Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) - RESEA targets any recipient of regular UI or UCX (Unemployment Compensation for Ex-service Members) benefits. The foundational element of the RESEA program is a one-on-one meeting between the claimant and an appropriately trained American Job Center (AJC) staff member to assess the claimant's continuing UI eligibility, employment status, and work search activities. RESEA services must provide participants with: 1) support in the development of an individual reemployment plan; 2) customized career and labor market information; 2) enrollment in the Wagner-Peyser Employment Service program;

and 4) information and access to other AJC services and resources the support the claimant's return to work.

- Incarcerated Veterans Transition Program (IVTP) - IVTP offers Illinois' eligible incarcerated veterans employment services during and post confinement at selected Illinois Department of Correction locations.

Nine DVOP specialists comprise the IVTP Team Leads that provide quarterly employment-focused workshops in 15 Illinois Department of Corrections facilities. Employment Security partners with the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) and the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA) to coordinate employment workshops for eligible veterans within 18 months of their maximum release date. Emphasis is placed on job search techniques and resources to help these veterans address the unique significant barriers to employment and other obstacles they may face in order to set them up for successful re-entry into the workforce and communities after their release.

Both DVOP and LVER staff conduct quarterly capacity building workshops to all AJC Partners, focusing on tools and updates to get veterans and other eligible persons hired. These quarterly capacity building workshops provide a platform for all AJC partners to train and educate each other on what they do to support/promote the provision of services or training programs to qualified veterans and other eligible persons.

The State of Illinois has issued policy addressing the priority of services requirement in serving eligible veterans and other eligible persons at the AJC. It requires that AJC staff appropriately identify customers at the point of entry who meet the priority in accordance with state and locally developed and implemented policies and processes. These policies address the provision of services regardless of the method of receipt, whether it be in a physical location or through technology. In compliance with Federal guidance, state policy details the appropriate priority decision-making that considers the eligibility criteria for enrolling and serving participants.

8. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

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 (Attachment J, formerly Attachment P in the 2020 Unified State Plan) (https://www.illinoisworknet.com/WIOA/Resources/Documents/Attachment percent20P percent20- percent20One-stop percent20Center percent20Accessibility percent20Compliance percent20Checklist percent202020.pdf). 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.

Illinois is a designated "Employment First" state, demonstrating its commitment to ensuring employment in the general workforce is the first and preferred option for people with disabilities. Physical and programmatic accessibility in the one-stop delivery system is essential to achieving this vision. To that end, Illinois places a high priority on creating strategies that provide seamless access to employment and training services within a universal environment.

In 2017, the Illinois Task Force on Employment and Economic Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities **(**EEOPD) completed its final recommendations in the areas of workforce development, employment, transition services to youth and provider transformation. In February 2018 the task force co-chairs provided testimony to a joint House-Senate committee

charged with reviewing the recommendations in consideration of possible future legislation. Since 2019, EEOPD has been given additional responsibilities through state laws focusing on employment for people with disabilities. This includes reporting on implementation of a training program for state employees with disabilities (PA 100-0533), assisting in development of a customized employment system (PA 101-0368) and assuming the responsibilities of the Interagency Coordinating Council for transition of youth with disabilities (PA 100-0866).

Illinois has also developed an Employment First Interagency Council coordinated by the Department of Human Services and which includes representatives of state agencies serving people with disabilities. A key focus is coordinating joint efforts and promoting training and development for staff of state agencies, as well as community providers.

Beginning in January of 2019, each recipient must record the limited English proficiency (LEP) and the preferred language of each applicant, registrant, participant and exiter (29 CFR 38.41-38.45). To that end, the Department of Commerce Office of Equal Opportunity Monitoring and Compliance (EOMC) continues to clarify which documents are "vital" and thus require translation into languages spoken by a significant number or portion of the population eligible to be served or likely to be encountered. The rule requires recipients to record the limited English proficiency and preferred language of applicants who seek to participate in the workforce development system to help ensure they have the necessary information to serve individuals with LEP effectively. Each recipient must also maintain, and submit to U.S. DOL CRC upon request, a log of complaints filed with the recipient that alleges discrimination. Factors for discrimination are on the basis(es) of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions, transgender status, and gender identity), national origin (including limited English proficiency), age, disability, political affiliation or belief, citizenship, and/or participation in a WIOA Title I–financially assisted program or activity. To achieve this objective, EOMC continues to educate LWIAs during continuous training seminars on 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 increased provisions to provide universal access throughout the workforce system, annual monitoring of all recipients has been enacted to give assurances that recipients are complying with all nondiscriminatory requirements of the law. Nondiscrimination Plans must now include copies of monitoring reviews for submission to U.S. DOL CRC during their review schedule. These reports will consist of findings, as well as corrective actions taken to ensure recipients of WIOA funding adhere to the assurance clauses of their contracts. Due to this yearly mandate, EOMC has recently hired a new, Spanish- speaking employee to work out of the James R. Thompson Center in Chicago, Illinois. This new position will help to monitor the largest recipient in Illinois and to provide a more visible structure to EOMC's monitoring role.

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

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 programs provide instruction designed to assist immigrants and other individuals who are English language learners to acquire an understanding of the American System of Government, individual freedom, and the responsibility of citizenship. In addition, Adult Education English language programs provide instruction in civics education, workforce readiness, bridge programs, and Integrated Education and Training to English Language Learners at varying educational functioning levels. Adult Education has recently expanded online instructional efforts to connect more students to English language activities. In addition, the Integrated Education Literacy and Civics Education (IEL/CE) activities are being expanded

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

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

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

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

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

Each recipient must also record the limited English proficiency and preferred language of each applicant, registrant, participant, and terminee. To that end, EOMC continues to clarify which documents are "vital" and thus must be translated into languages spoken by a significant number or portion of the population eligible to be served or likely to be encountered. U.S. DOL CRC has identified and required vital information be offered in the most prevalent languages spoken by a significant number or portion of the population eligible to be served and/or likely to be encountered. EOMC reserves the right to add additional languages as appropriate and has adopted the following list of specific languages as follows: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, French Creole, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

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

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

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

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

The Office of Equal Opportunity Monitoring and Compliance (EO) Compliance Reporting Unit conducts an analysis and completes various reports which review the agency's LEP services and needs. These reports are the Illinois Bilingual Needs and Bilingual Pay Survey, the Affirmative Action Plan Report, the Illinois State Services Assurances Act Report and the Employment Plan Surveys. The Compliance Unit also reviews all hires and promotions to assess whether IDES employs sufficient bilingual staff to meet the LEP communities' needs. Also, EO's Monitoring Unit reviews Local Offices annually to determine the nature of LEP services that are sufficient to meet the needs of the LEP communities. Additionally, IDES' language line vendor compiles a report regarding the number of calls to the language line, what languages are being requested and the minutes being used on each call. This data is used on a continual basis to ensure IDES is staffed appropriately according to geographic location.

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

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

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

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

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

IV. COORDINATION WITH STATE PLAN PROGRAMS

The plan development process has evolved in Illinois. When the original WIOA Unified State Plan was submitted, few of the currently existing cross-program groups existed. The plan was jointly drafted by representatives from each core partner and sent to the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) for approval. In 2020, Illinois had the advantage of using well-established cross-program groups created by the IWIB and State agency directors to provide and review plan content and serve as sounding boards to ensure the IWIB's vision is faithfully rendered in the plan. For the 2020 Unified State Plan, the IWIB established a team of over twenty individuals that includes: the IWIB business co-chair, members of the IWIB Executive Committee, IWIB staff, and staff from the core partners and representatives from other related agencies, such as the State Board of Education, and the Illinois Workforce Partnership, a group comprised of local workforce area leaders. The team used an online collaborative editing process involving all partners. This method of plan development allows for more robust and coordinated drafting and editing of new content while also being much more efficient. An identical approach was taken for the 2022 WIOA Unified State Plan modification.

With regard to cross-agency planning for program implementation, the 2018 release of the IWIB Strategic Plan established multiple working groups comprised of IWIB members and program partner staff. These subject matter expert groups provide board-level leadership on WIOA implementation issues such as: 1) system evaluation; 2) training provider eligibility; 3) one-stop certification; and 4) cross-agency service integration. These groups continue to provide system leadership coordinated through the IWIB and its standing committees, task forces and work groups.

In addition, the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), in partnership with the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, completed the development of the Workforce Education Strategic Plan. This work included a collaboration of state partners, stakeholders and businesses. This partnership continues and the plan aligns with the IWIB Strategic Plan, the Unified Plan, and the Governor's Economic Development Plan respectively. The plan addresses early career-related education and exposure, essential and occupational skills gaps, alignment

of education and training programs that meet employer needs and strengthening connections and alignment among public partners and engagement with business.

V. COMMON ASSURANCES (FOR ALL CORE PROGRAMS)

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 programs (if included in the State Plan), other primary stakeholders, including other organizations that provide services to individuals with barriers to employment, and the general public, and that the Unified or Combined State Plan is available and accessible to the general public; (b) The State provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by the State Board, including State agency official(s) for the Unemployment Insurance Agency if such official(s) is a member of the State Board;	Yes
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	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
made for the core programs to carry out workforce development activities;	
6. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with uniform administrative requirements in this Act, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA section 184(a)(3);	Yes
7. The State has taken the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA section 188, Nondiscrimination, as applicable;	Yes
8. The Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program;	Yes
9. The State will pay an appropriate share (as defined by the State board) of the costs of carrying out section 116, from funds made available through each of the core programs;	Yes
10. The State has a one-stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all one-stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA);	Yes
11. Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate; and	Yes
12. Priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses is provided in accordance with 38 USC 4215 in all workforce preparation, development or delivery of programs or services funded directly, in whole or in part, by the Department of Labor.	Yes

VI. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

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

A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

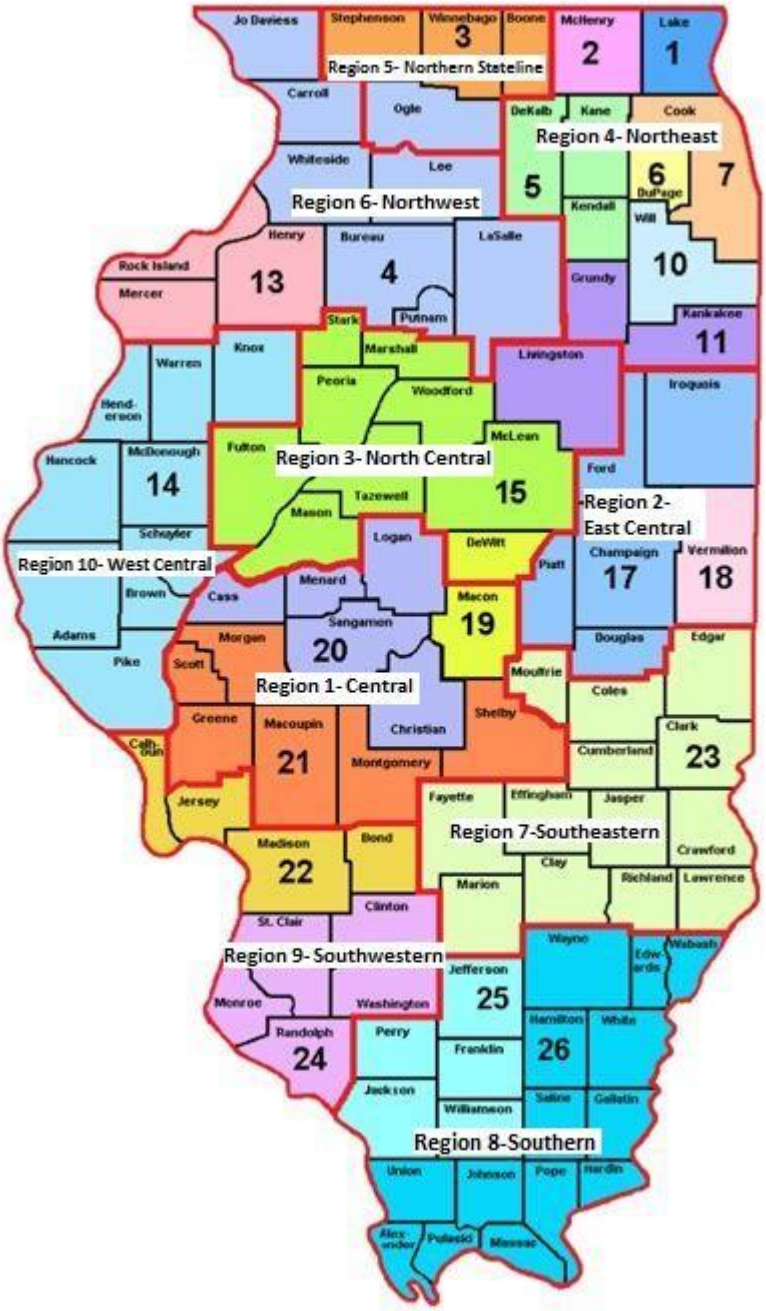
1. REGIONS AND LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS

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.

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 ***(see Attachment L at*** https://www.illinoisworknet.com/WIOA/Resources/Documents/Attachment%20L%20-%20Local%20Workforce%20Area%20Designation.pdf***).*** 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 ***(See Attachment O at*** http://www.illinoisworknet.com/WIOA/Resources/Documents/Attachment%20O%20-%20Regional%20Planning%20Data%202020.pdf***).*** To promote continuity from the ICCB planning, these data packets were also being used by WIOA regional planning teams. Updated data packets were prepared by the State Interagency Data Team in tandem with the research for the 2020 Unified State Plan and distributed to regional planning teams.

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.

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 2020 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

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

- Data Management and Reporting
- Fiscal Reporting and Accountability
- General Administration
- Governance
- Performance Management
- Planning
- Program Eligibility
- Training

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

- Guidance was issued to provide the Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIB), Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIA), core partner programs, service and training providers, sub-grantees and other interested parties with an overview of the implementation steps Commerce, primarily through OET, has taken to implement the provisions of WIOA. This insured a seamless transition for the customers during intake and the continued provision of career and training services, including the expanded

training services described in WIOA. This guidance also addressed reporting requirements during and after the transition period as changes to the workforce data reporting system, Illinois Workforce Development System (IWDS), is being updated

- Membership and certification of LWIBs under WIOA is governed under policies that are consistent with the new provisions including the assurance of more streamlined boards, but with a majority of business members and minimum percentage of labor and community service organizations represented. Emphasis was placed on ensuring the business representatives reflect the regional industry sectors, labor market information (LMI) and the diversity among populations. This policy provided new forms for completion for nominated applicants to the board, as well as reiterated the process for appointees with fixed and staggered terms. Certification (and recertification) of the boards is conducted by OET only after a review of the requisite information on each local board member to ensure appropriate composition is maintained. This process further includes reviews of LWIB bylaws, and compliance with the Sunshine Provision and parliamentary procedures.

- Policy was implemented to address chief elected officials (CEO) in each LWIA to include an understanding of their required functions, which is confirmed through a CEO agreement signed by each CEO in the LWIA. The agreement further addresses those LWIAs that have multiple CEOs when there is more than one unit of general local government residing within the boundaries of the area. CEOs are given the authority as the local grant recipient, including the authority to designate local grant sub-recipients and fiscal agents for the Title IB funds of WIOA. It also defines each CEO's liability for WIOA funds determined to be misspent or used for unallowable purposes.

- Eligibility policies have been written to ensure all the requirements of WIOA are clearly outlined for the local areas and their staff providing the intake and registration of customers. ALL customers of the system, whether served by local one-stop staff, through technology, or self-served, are included in the general eligibility policy. Those seeking more than self-service assistance are then determined eligible based on the funding stream they will be served under including the youth, adult and dislocated worker populations. Detailed descriptions of the eligibility requirements and documentation sources allowed confirming such eligibility decisions provide guidance to the career planner in their decision making. The documentation is further outlined to determine low-income status, veteran or qualified spouse of a veteran status, and identity and employment eligibility. Priority of service is emphasized throughout to all population identified as priority of service within WIOA taking into account preference to veterans. A stand-alone priority of service policy will be created as equity goals discussed earlier in the plan are developed. Priority of service is also given for individualized career services and training services for adults who are either recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and 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. A comprehensive list of all WIOA policies and guidance issued is provided in Attachment O, formerly Attachment U in the 2020 Unified State Plan, at https://www.illinoisworknet.com/WIOA/Resources/Documents/Attachment%20U%20-%20Policy%20Documents%202020.pdf.

- 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.

Commerce works with the IWIB and 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 and other needs of in-demand industries. 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, 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.

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 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.

To that end, OET staff developed and delivered a full-day workforce system training to the Department of Commerce Office of Business Development (BD). The training leverages BD front office and regional field staff connections and interactions with businesses to identify opportunities for early intervention of WIOA services. OET and BD staff concur that helping companies remain competitive is a high return-on-investment activity that directly impacts the ability of WIOA participants to obtain sustainable employment with options for upward mobility. To that end, our mutual goal is to help businesses access WIOA services and skilled workers so that they improve their competitive position and avoid the need for layoffs.

The specific goals met by this training are for Business Development staff to have a solid understanding of:

- workforce system core principles and key goals in the WIOA Unified State Plan
- basic WIOA program organizational structure
- career pathways
- sector strategies
- the relevance of business engagement with the workforce/education system
- WIOA core and required partner services and their relevance to businesses, especially work-based learning options
- regional data on leading, emerging and maturing industries
- gathering and using workforce intelligence
- communication strategies
- the importance of integrated, cross-program business services.

OET staff also briefed Business Development staff that operate the Department's First Stop business assistance hotline on WIOA services and how to connect businesses with the closest One-Stop. Over a dozen businesses were connected with their local One-Stop in the first month following that briefing.

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. The programs funded previously were called Talent Pipeline Program grants. New funding opportunities will be available in 2020 and the new program name will be announced at that time (The state of Illinois also participates in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Talent Pipeline Management program and the label Talent Pipeline can be confusing to companies, job seekers and community-based organizations).
Programs generally address one or more of the activities listed below:

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

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

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

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

- Declining Sales
- 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

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. 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.

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. The Benefits, Rights and Obligations, along with Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Trade Readjustment Assistance (TRA) and RTAA/ATAA benefits are covered at length with the affected workers. 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.

Response Reserve funds are dedicated to layoff aversion strategies and to assist businesses and laid-off workers. Layoff aversion strategies include the 2018 Talent Pipeline NOFO (will be renamed in 2020) through the Department of Commerce. The Talent Pipeline (Layoff Aversion) projects are designed to award grants for demonstration projects providing Rapid Response services to businesses. 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.

B. ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKERS PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

1. WORK-BASED TRAINING MODELS

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.

Efforts to promote and support work-based learning led to the following WIOA enrollment trends between PY15 and PY20:

Title IB Work-Based Learning Enrollment PY15 - PY20

Year	PY15	PY16	PY17	PY18	PY19	PY20
Apprenticeship	19	34	105	161	124	99
Pre-Apprenticeship Training	0	13	48	271	158	56
Internship	200	188	247	225	160	90
Job Shadowing	26	36	63	70	58	43
On-The-Job Training	789	632	622	801	533	426
Paid Work Experience	2,646	2,207	2,024	2,002	1,696	1,457
Unpaid Work Experience	51	57	60	87	115	62
Transitional Jobs	-	-	-	-	-	23
Total	**3,731**	**3,167**	**3,169**	**3,617**	**2,844**	**2,256**

Source: Illinois Workforce Development System

The recent emphasis on pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeships initially led to dramatic Title IB enrollment increases for these activities. Since PY18, work-based enrollment has seen reductions across all types. Certainly, the Covid-19 pandemic affected the number of work-based placement opportunities starting in PY19. Illinois remains committed to supporting all types of work-based learning. Over the next two 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. With the elimination of the layoff aversion requirement for local incumbent worker projects, that anticipated increase in incumbent worker training was realized.

Program Year	Total Employers	Total Projects	Employees Enrolled	Project Cost
PY15	204	287	10,137	$6,588,381
PY16	291	386	7,480	$6,981,010
PY17	272	361	8,717	$6,416,102
PY18	372	477	6,655	$9,323,093
* PY19	302	368	5,325	$5,986,959
* PY20	180	219	1,446	$3,145,132

* Indicates data impacted by Covid-19

Source: IWTS Employer Summary Reports

The state continues to strongly support incumbent worker training. In 2021, responding to requests from registered apprenticeship training providers and employers, Commerce modified State policy to eliminate a barrier for using IWT for certain models of registered apprenticeship training. (Additional information on this is provided in the following section on Registered Apprenticeships.) In PY2020, 100% of the state's 22 local workforce areas conducted WIOA-funded incumbent worker training. The number of projects and employers utilizing IWT generally have trended upward since IWT was allowed without a waiver starting in PY15; that is until the social distancing requirements of the Covid-19 pandemic temporarily halted most training in the spring of 2020.

Overall, local workforce areas reported 44 projects were impacted by Covid-19. Of those, 33 were postponed and 7 were canceled. Dozens of projects that were in the development stage were also postponed or canceled due to economic uncertainty. Early indicators in PY21 show IWT activity has resumed at a robust pace. At the outset of the pandemic, we refined our tracking system to capture information on the impact to IWT projects. Having this data enabled us to identify projects with challenges and provide technical assistance to local workforce areas on options to minimize the impact and continue training. This technical assistance allowed 85% of affected projects to continue.

2. REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

The State is embedding Registered Apprenticeship on multiple levels and aligning it within career pathways as part of all workforce development efforts. The use of Registered

Apprenticeships will be encouraged through demonstration projects, policy guidance and technical assistance. With increased attention on various forms of work-based learning, we expect all types of apprenticeship (pre-apprenticeship, youth, non-registered and registered) to become more common as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is implemented. Encouraging participants to simultaneously earn and learn higher technical skills through an apprenticeship will set them up to succeed in the workplace. The ultimate solution to incorporating Registered Apprenticeships into WIOA will depend on the final form of Title IB performance requirements, the planned duration of the training and the occupational demand.

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) is moving toward a comprehensive, cross-program, public-private approach to fostering the use of Registered Apprenticeships. On June 16, 2016, the IWIB created an Apprenticeship Standing Committee to recommend a plan for establishing a comprehensive and integrated apprenticeship system in Illinois, oversee its implementation and performance and recommend improvements. This committee represents employers, business associations, organized labor, education, community-based organizations, philanthropies, local workforce innovation areas, national non-profits, and the four core state agency partners.

The committee's planning efforts started in June 2016 and was supported by an ApprenticeshipUSA State Accelerator Grant. Since then, the Committee, through the Department of Commerce, has applied for and received three Apprenticeship Expansion grants from the U.S. Department of Labor.

Through its planning and implementation responsibilities, this committee plays a lead role in integrating Registered Apprenticeships throughout Illinois' workforce development system. Four areas of activity are included in the Apprenticeship Standing Committee's charge:

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

There is an expectation that Apprenticeship Illinois Committee members:

- Provide leadership and guidance to the apprenticeship field.
- Be knowledgeable about apprenticeship – nationally, statewide, and regionally.
- Be ambassadors and champions for Apprenticeship Illinois.
- Be a strategic partner for growth plans for apprenticeship.
- Actively address inequities in apprenticeships – both on the employer and participant sides.

The IWIB Apprenticeship Committee recognizes that apprenticeship is an effective work-based learning strategy into a career pathway. To further integrate apprenticeship and advance the use of this strategy, the Committee created two work groups: Marketing and Systems and Supports. These work groups were created to identify and implement specific activities to reach Illinois' goals of expanding and diversifying Registered Apprenticeship throughout the State. They formed and have refined a strategic plan that identifies priority activities to reach the

overarching workforce goals for the IWIB Apprenticeship Committee and to ensure it is aligned with the State's strategic plan.

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) Apprenticeship Committee's Marketing Work Group was formed in part to help determine short-term and long-term outreach goals to expand awareness of apprenticeship programs and opportunities for businesses and individuals in Illinois. They have rebranded apprenticeship in Illinois to "Apprenticeship Illinois" with a new URL, www.ApprenticeshipIllinois.com, and a new logo. This website is the official apprenticeship-landing page for the State and is a repository of resources for potential employers, sponsors, apprentices, etc.

The Marketing Work Group has started creating outreach strategies to employers and potential apprentices. On a continuum of work-based learning and the level of employer engagement, Registered Apprenticeship requires the highest level of employer engagement. Due to the lack of interest, awareness, and understanding of apprenticeship, the Marketing Work Group decided to first focus on outreach to employers. Expanding apprenticeships helps businesses with their current and future workforce needs as well as individuals with a career pathway, which includes work-based learning.

The work group completed a state-by-state analysis of apprenticeship websites and best practices for (a) apprenticeship listings and searches, (b) identifying content gaps in the state's apprenticeship website – ApprenticeshipIllinois.com, and (c) marketing and outreach resources by audience. The work group also completed a series of detailed one-on-one personal interviews with business managers and owners throughout Illinois with different: industries, sizes, locations in Illinois, and familiarity with apprenticeship programs. These business interviews revealed the following:

- They mostly hire internally and use some type of on-the-job training.
- Important factors for training programs included seeking out candidates with appropriate soft skills, diverse skills, and the ability to process information.
- Most are experiencing high turnover.
- Most had misconceptions about what apprenticeship programs provide and how they function.
- Many are aware of apprenticeship programs in the trades but are generally unfamiliar with any within their own industry.

The interviews also revealed that businesses consider cost and time as barriers to implementing Registered Apprenticeship programs.

The Marketing Work Group will also focus on outreach to individuals, specifically those from disenfranchised populations. Most apprentices in Illinois are white males between the ages of 25 and 54. The Marketing Work Group has identified multiple organizations to support outreach to other populations.

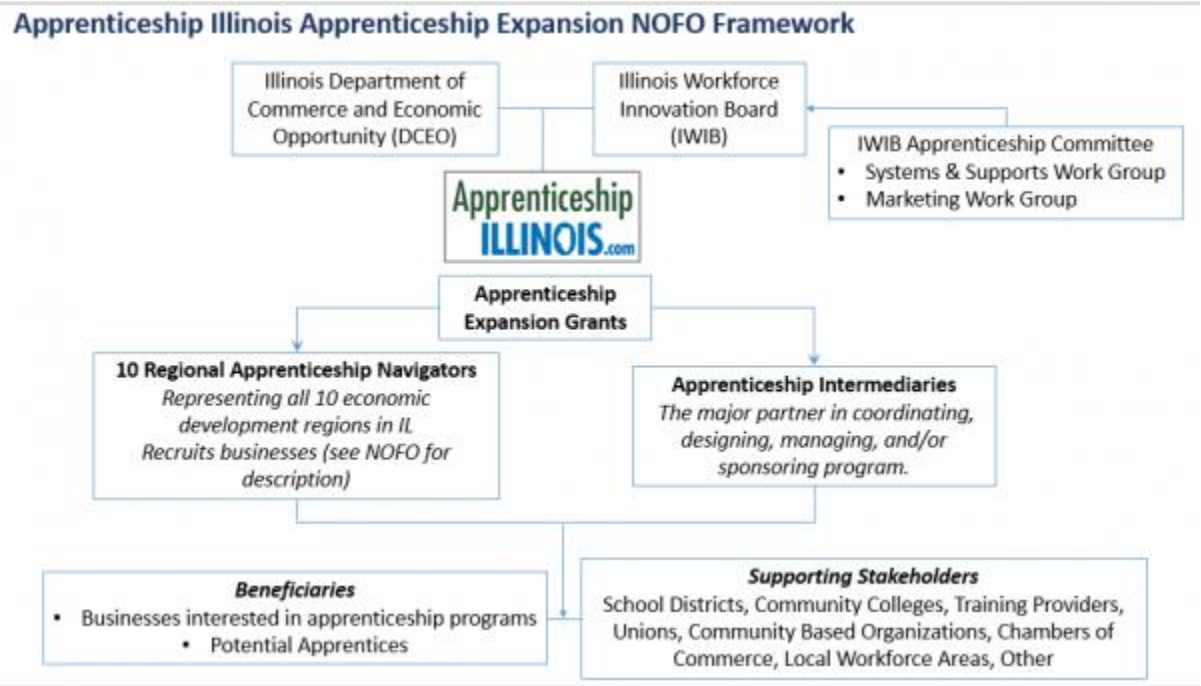
Next steps for the Marketing Work Group's current research indicates the following needs to successfully promote apprenticeships as a way to meet workforce needs with businesses across the state and to attract individuals to a career pathway:

- develop consistent marketing platforms in social media
- identify and secure outreach "ambassadors" or "champions"
- identify and secure organizations and apprentices sharing their success stories

- networking and collaboration
- development of outreach materials
- improving the ApprenticeshipIllinois.com site as a resource
- press releases

Some states, such as Illinois, do not have state apprenticeship offices, where apprenticeship development and programming can be centralized and expanded. Currently, apprenticeship programs cut across four state entities: Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Department of Employment Security, Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services, and the Illinois Community College Board. Commerce has a long-term vision for growing apprenticeships that revolves around funding designated regional navigators to promote expansion and intermediaries to support the apprenticeship experience start to finish.

Because Illinois has a decentralized structure as a state, expanding apprenticeships statewide will need an infrastructure to support development and implementation in the field. The Department and the IWIB Apprenticeship Committee Systems and Supports Work Group determined support for Apprenticeship Intermediaries and Regional Navigators are the best investment to build the foundation for apprenticeship expansion in Illinois. Illinois needs an effective, uniform apprenticeship support system that builds on the state's holistic apprenticeship framework (including pre-apprenticeship, youth apprenticeship, registered apprenticeship and non-registered) and facilitates employers' development and use of quality apprenticeship programs in a variety of sectors and regions. Regional Apprenticeship Navigators and Apprenticeship Intermediaries represent two important sides of a statewide apprenticeship system: Navigators represent the demand side, e.g., businesses who want to host apprenticeships. Intermediaries represent the supply side, e.g., the institutions and/or partnerships that coordinate and/or implement apprenticeship programs, including recruiting potential apprentices and preparing them to enter apprenticeships.



In PY2017 and 2018 Commerce distributed $2.5 M in ten Statewide Activities grants for apprenticeship navigators and intermediaries. The increased enrollment in WIOA-funded pre-

apprenticeship and apprenticeships noted earlier is a direct result of the work undertaken in these grants. A formal Notice of Funding Opportunity to continue the efforts into PY19 and beyond was released in October 2019. . In July 2021, a third Notice of Funding Opportunity efforts was issued in PY22. The Apprenticeship Expansion Program is part of a larger strategy to help Illinois companies develop and increase apprenticeship opportunities. Expanding apprenticeships helps businesses with their current and future workforce needs and individuals with a career pathway, including work-based learning. Proposals may include projects seeking to align public and private partners' efforts better, introduce innovation, increase traditional and non-traditional RAPs, and ensure programmatic design, recruitment, and retention efforts reflect overarching diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goals.

The Systems and Supports Work Group also identified the need to expand people's understanding of apprenticeship. As a direct outcome from the Committee's recommendations for building capacity, Commerce contracted Chicago Jobs Council (CJC) and Young Invincibles (YI) to create and provide Apprenticeship 101 and Apprenticeship 201 workshops in all 10 Economic Development Regions of the State. During this quarter, CJC and YI continued and finished providing Apprenticeship 101 Workshops and Apprenticeship 201 Workshops, for a total of 18 workshops with over 285 participants around the state.

To increase employer involvement and buy-in, the Apprenticeship Committee researched how other states provided incentives to employers, finding several providing tax credits. On May 29, 2019, the Illinois legislature passed SB 1591, which is an apprenticeship education tax credit, allowing employers to receive a tax credit up to $5,000 towards the expenses incurred on Registered Apprentices' related training instruction. Language from the new law is below:

For taxable years beginning on or after January 1, 2020, and beginning on or before January 1, 2025, the employer of one or more qualifying apprentices shall be allowed a credit against the tax imposed by subsections (a) and (b) of Section 201 of the Illinois Income Tax Act for qualified education expenses incurred on behalf of a qualifying apprentice. The credit shall be equal to 100% of the qualified education expenses, but in no event may the total credit amount awarded to a single taxpayer in a single taxable year exceed $3,500 per qualifying apprentice. A taxpayer shall be entitled o an additional $1,500 credit against the tax imposed by subsections (a) and (b) of Section 201 of the Illinois Income Tax Act if (i) the qualifying apprentice resides in an underserved area as defined in Section 5-5 of the Economic Development for a Growing Economy Tax Credit Act during the school year for which a credit is sought by an employer or (ii) the employer's principal place of business is located in an underserved area, as defined in Section 5-5 of the Economic Development for a Growing Economy Tax Credit Act.

While implementing the work plan's short- and mid-term activities, the Committee continues to focus on long-term goals, which includes:

- Focusing on data collection and building the data infrastructure to support growth and expansion in Registered Apprenticeships;
- Addressing misperceptions and confusion surrounding apprenticeship;
- Developing an apprenticeship performance framework to measure participant and employer outcomes at the local, regional and state levels through both quantitative and qualitative data;
- Continuing to integrate apprenticeships into state workforce development and economic development policy; and
- Identifying other sources of support for apprenticeships to strengthen the entire apprenticeship pipeline and ensure long-term sustainability for the system.

Each of the public partners is committed to jointly integrating the policy and program recommendations into services. In addition to the efforts of the committee, Illinois has already begun incorporating policy and program enhancements to promote the use of Registered Apprenticeships. In April 2016, WIOA policy letter 15-WIOA-5.3, which pertains to the state's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) was issued. The new policy allows apprenticeship programs registered with the United States Department of Labor (DOL) to bypass certain application requirements and automatically be placed on the ETPL upon notifying a local area of its interest in providing services to Title IB participants.

In 2019, Commerce refined the system used to track incumbent worker projects to better capture when IWT was used in combination with Registered Apprenticeship training. Prior to this change, apprenticeship training was included with training leading to industry-recognized credentials. Program staff can now identify the number of IWT projects used with apprenticeships, where they are located, the companies benefiting from the training and the number of workers trained. The number of projects supporting Registered Apprenticeships has increased from 2 in PY19, to 13 in PY 20, to 17 as of the halfway point of PY21. This rate of increase would be significant in normal circumstances but is even more remarkable given the challenges of conducting IWT training under the social distancing restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic and its related, ongoing economic uncertainty.

Further, in 2021, Commerce responded to requests from registered apprenticeship training providers and employers to modify State WIOA policy to eliminate a barrier to using IWT for certain types of Registered Apprenticeship training. The policy refinement allowed several companies interested in using Registered Apprenticeships but concerned about the cost to start training within a matter of weeks of when the issue was first raised.

3. TRAINING PROVIDER ELIGIBILITY PROCEDURE

On April 20, 2016, Illinois transmitted Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Policy 15-WIOA-5.3 (now WIOA ePolicy Chapter 7.3), which set procedures, criteria and information requirements for determining training provider initial and continued eligibility, including Registered Apprenticeship programs. This policy is included with this plan under **Attachment P**, formerly Attachment U in the 2020 Unified State Plan, at https://www.illinoisworknet.com/WIOA/Resources/Documents/Attachment%20U%20-%20Policy%20Documents%202020.pdf. Below is a summary of the requirements of that policy.

The State acknowledges the required clarifications and corrections to the information provided below from the original plan. State WIOA policy will be updated via the established procedure involving consultation with partners, Local Workforce Areas and the IWIB to address each of the items identified by DOL. Further, the text has been updated to provide clarity on the statewide list of registered apprenticeships.

Criteria for Initial Eligibility
Only eligible training providers and their eligible training programs will be included in the state's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). The initial eligibility requirements apply to all organizations providing training services to WIOA adults and dislocated workers. Providers of on-the-job training, customized training, incumbent worker training, internships, and paid or unpaid work experience opportunities, or transitional employment will not be subject to those requirements. To be eligible to receive funds for the provision of training services, the provider must be:

- an institution of higher education that provides a program that leads to a recognized post-secondary credential; this may include programs receiving approval or accreditation by the U.S. Department of Education, Illinois Board of Higher Education, Illinois Community College Board, or Illinois State Board of Education;

- an entity that carries out programs registered under the Act of August 16, 1937 (commonly known as the ''National Apprenticeship Act''; 50 Stat. 664, chapter 663; 29 U.S.C. 50 et seq.) as recognized in Illinois by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Office of Apprenticeship; or
- another public or private provider of a program of training services, which may include joint labor-management organizations; eligible providers of adult education and literacy activities under Title II if such activities are provided in combination with occupational skills training; or programs that have been recognized by the industry as meeting the standards necessary for approval or accreditation, when such standards exist.

All Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs registered with DOL, Office of Apprenticeship or a recognized state apprenticeship agency are automatically eligible to be included as an eligible training provider. The following process should be followed:

- Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIBs) must inform all RAPs in their local area via mass email, phone call or other method of the requirements of both the Eligible Training Provider List and WIOA regarding their inclusion on the Statewide ETPL as a training provider and training program.
- A RAP may also contact its LWIA or State of Illinois, Office of Employment and Training, to request inclusion on the Statewide ETPL.
- LWIAs must notify the Illinois Department of Commerce, Office of Employment and Training in writing of all Registered Apprenticeship programs that are requesting to be included on the Statewide ETPL.

Procedure for Initial Eligibility

Except for Registered Apprenticeships (see above), new training providers must apply for Initial Eligibility in accordance with the following guidance: Applications for Initial Eligibility of Training Providers and Training Programs. Applications for initial eligibility must be submitted according to the geographical location of the training program. A training provider is prohibited from applying for training program eligibility in LWIAs where the program site is not geographically located, unless the LWIA in which the program is located denies eligibility or fails to act on the application within 30 days of the date of application. The LWIA should instruct the training provider as to where they should apply for each training program, as follows:

- Training programs located in a single LWIA must initially apply with the LWIA where its program is geographically located.
- Training programs offered in multiple LWIAs that are identical across each of the LWIAs must initially apply to the LWIA in which the training provider has identified as its headquarters and/or primary location.
- Training programs offered in multiple LWIAs - but the program is not substantially the same across the various LWIAs - must initially apply to each LWIA in which the training program is offered.
- Training programs located out-of-state or not offered at a physical location (e.g., distance learning) must initially apply to the LWIA from which it anticipates receiving the most students. A training provider is prohibited from applying for training program eligibility in LWIAs where the program site is not geographically located, unless the LWIA in which the program is located denies eligibility or fails to act on the application within 30 days of the date of application.

Information Requirements:

- Program Name (should match the name found in a course catalog for the training provider, if published);
- Program Description;
- 6-digit CIP code;
- O*Net code(s) that identifies the occupation of the eligible training program;
- Website link to additional program information;
- How many weeks it typically takes to complete the program;
- The total hours of instruction/classroom/lab time;
- Other than employment, the primary goal of the program (i.e., Associates Degree, Bachelor's Degree, etc.);
- If Certification, License, or Registration, the name of the certifying, licensing, or registering body;
- Identify up to three occupations for which the individual will be qualified to immediately hold after completing this program;
- The program offerings;
- The entry-level requirements of the program;
- The total cost of this program;
- Types of financial aid available; and
- Year the program was established.

All job seekers and program partners will have ready access to the provider list on the Illinois workNet web portal. The information provided on the list will allow local career services staff under the LWIBs and the Illinois Departments of Employment Security and Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services to better coordinate services and allow job seekers to make better-informed decisions when selecting programs of study.

Procedure for Continuing Eligibility

The continued eligibility policy requires that all training providers (other than Registered Apprenticeships) apply at least every two years for approval, as well as for all training programs, to remain on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). Eligibility is determined based on state and local performance and eligibility criteria, and any other conditions the local board considers necessary. Timelines for applying for continued eligibility as well as approval or denial are outlined within the policy.

Below are the requirements for continued eligibility and continued inclusion on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) for training providers and programs previously approved for initial eligibility and those training providers and programs that were approved for transitional eligibility (as provided under WIOA Transition Policy Letter 7).

- LWIAs must ensure all training providers have their eligible training programs determined for continued eligibility on at least a biennial (at least every two years) basis to maintain their status as an eligible training program.

    - LWIAs may want to inform each training provider of any upcoming continued eligibility dates (i.e., a notice sent to the training provider 90 days prior to the continued eligibility date).
    - Continued eligibility is based on the date entered during the initial eligibility or most recent continued eligibility determination of the training program (as outlined in Section E.4. of this policy letter).

- The LWIA must receive the training provider's intent to apply for continued eligibility of a training program or programs in sufficient time to meet the following continued eligibility timeline requirements.
    - The training provider expresses intent for continued eligibility of a training program by resubmitting the Training Program Basic Information application in IWDS.
- If a training program has had only changes in information that are not significant information (as outlined in Section F.2.a.), the training provider must make such changes in IWDS and save the Training Program Basic Information record.
- If a training program has had no changes in information, the training provider must still save the Training Program Basic Information record.
- Once the Training Program Basic Information record has been saved, the Initial Criteria Status record will change to "Pending Continued Eligibility (recertification)".
- The change to "Pending Continued Eligibility (recertification)" status will prompt the LWIA that they must send the training program to the LWIB for review and determination.
    - A report will be available for the local area to identify any training programs with a "Pending Continued Eligibility" status.
- The frequency of producing these reports will be a local decision.
- The LWIA should utilize due diligence in producing this report routinely throughout the year keeping in mind training programs may be jeopardized if they are not approved for continued eligibility promptly.
- The report is titled "Training Programs Nearing Continued Eligibility (recertification) Date" in IWDS.
- The LWIA should continue to make available and enroll customers in any training program with a "Pending" status.
- The LWIA has 90 days to submit the application(s) to the LWIB for review and approval. The submission to the LWIB should include the following items:
    - A current copy of the Training Program Basic Information record from IWDS;
    - Identification of items that have changed since the initial eligibility or most recent continued eligibility determination;
    - Performance data (as outlined in Section J of this policy letter) for the training program; and
    - Any additional information the training provider has submitted for review or the LWIB determines pertinent to the review.

- The LWIB should grant continued eligibility to a training program based on the following:
    - State and local eligibility criteria are still being met;
    - State and local performance criteria have been met;
    - One or more O*Net codes associated with the training program remain on the current Demand Occupation Training List;
    - The training provider has maintained timely updates in the Illinois Workforce Development System of information on the training program; and
    - Other conditions for which the LWIB considers necessary for continued eligibility.
- The LWIB must determine eligibility of the training program within 30 days of receiving the application from the LWIA.
    - An exception to the requirement to approve subsequent eligibility of transitionally eligible providers and programs within 30 days of application was extended through June 30, 2016. This exception provided up to 90 days from the application date for the LWIB to determine a program eligible. This was extended to allow local boards ample time to meet and review the applications as this policy was phased in. After June 30, 2016, this exception expired. The 90-day period did NOT extend past June 30, 2016 as these providers and programs received a determination no later than June 30, 2016 to avoid removal from the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) as their transitional eligibility period expired.
- LWIBs must notify the LWIA within five (5) business days of their decision to approve continued eligibility as a training program.
    - The LWIA must update the Training Program Basic Information record in IWDS within ten (10) business days of notification by the LWIB. The update should include the following:
        - The Status must be changed from "Pending Continued Eligibility (Recertification)"to "Accept" to indicate an accepted continued eligibility application.
        - The Program Status must be listed as "Approved".
        - The Last Elig./Cert. Date must be listed as the date the LWIB approved the continued eligibility, not the date the entry is made into IWDS.
        - The Next Elig./Cert. Date should be listed as the date for which the next continued eligibility should take place (and should take into consideration the same factors for initial eligibility as outlined in Section C.3. of this policy letter).
- Training programs that are not determined eligible by the LWIB within 30 days of receipt of the application from the LWIA will be removed from the approved program list and may reapply after one year.
- Training programs that are not determined eligible within 120 days of their continued eligibility date will be removed from the approved program list in IWDS. *(Note: The intent of this provision is to automatically clear training programs from IWDS when they*

have not been approved for continued eligibility in a timely fashion. Such programs will not be available for selection and thus are removed.)

- LWIAs shall cease to enroll customers in any training program that has been moved to the capture list. Customers who have already been enrolled in training programs that are removed from the capture list shall be allowed to complete such training programs.
- A training provider may reapply for eligibility for any training program that was not determined eligible for any reason other than "for cause" reasons.

Illinois is currently working on two projects centered around the Eligible Training Provider List - an Eligible Training Provider workgroup and ProPath Illinois.

The workgroup is tasked with expanding the scope of information collected from providers, improving the process for information collection and management, increasing the transparency of quality performance data, updating the criteria and listing of demand occupations, enhance the articulation of training programs to career pathway and bridge programs, and ensuring out-of-state training providers meet equivalent criteria to in-state.

ProPath Illinois is a statewide technological platform that can be utilized by both education and workforce partners throughout the state that integrates existing educational and workforce training provider and program data and allows for the ability of agile enhancement to that data. ProPath Illinois builds on the existing state Educational PW20 system, the IL Longitudinal Data System (ILDS), the Centralized Demographic Dataset Administrator (CDDA), the IL Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI), and the IL Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) systems and partners to advance the state forward into the next generation of transparency and accessibility of educational and workforce training information. In addition to creating an interoperable training provider and program data directory, ProPath Illinois will establish a statewide Illinois- Administrative Data Research Facility (I-ADRF) that has the ability to facilitate and accelerate data sharing, exploration, and research into the next generation. The I-ADRF is part of a national data research piloting initiative, the Administrative Data Research Facility (ADRF), which enables secure access to analytical tools, data storage and discovery services, and general computing resources for users to revolutionize evidence-based policymaking and comply with the Evidence-Based Policymaking Commission Act of 2016.

4. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR THE PRIORITY FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS, OTHER LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS, AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF WIOA SEC. 134(C)(3)(E), WHICH APPLIES TO INDIVIDUALIZED CAREER SERVICES AND TRAINING SERVICES FUNDED BY THE ADULT FORMULA PROGRAM

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 (see **Attachment Q**, formerly Attachment U in the 2020 Unified State Plan, at https://www.illinoisworknet.com/WIOA/Resources/Documents/Attachment%20U%20-

%20Policy%20Documents%202020.pdf) 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 is in the process of updating its online monitoring instrument to reflect both 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. In addition, the state's monitoring instrument will verify all local areas have established written policies and procedures to ensure priority for public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals, individuals who are basic skills deficient and veterans. Until updates to Commerce's online monitoring instrument are completed, Commerce continues to use WIOA-specific participant file review worksheets to monitor eligibility for participants served in the WIOA Adult program. Commerce conducts on-site programmatic and fiscal monitoring of all local areas at least once annually.

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

The Annual Funding Notice for the Title 1B funds provides that the local workforce areas can transfer up to fifty percent (50%) of funds between the adult and dislocated worker funding streams without approval from the state. The Department will consider requests exceeding the fifty percent (50%) transfer threshold based on the local data and overall performance. To provide extra flexibility in providing services in reaction to the Covid-19 pandemic, the PY21 annual funding notice allowed LWIAs 100% transferability between programs. The transfer limit will be reassessed at least annually and adjusted as deemed appropriate.

C. WITH RESPECT TO YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES AUTHORIZED IN SECTION 129 OF WIOA—

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 IN AWARDING SUCH GRANTS OR CONTRACTS.[11]

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.

Additionally, during 2017 and 2018, the Disadvantaged Youth Career Pathways Task Force morphed into the Career Pathways for Targeted Populations Committee (CPTP). While the CPTP's overall charge expanded beyond youth, this population remained a primary focus. While the CPTP focused 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 brought 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. Beginning in 2019, all youth related funding opportunities must align with local negotiated performance. 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 will be developed through our established procedure involving consultation with partners, Local Workforce Areas and the IWIB. Work will begin in Spring 2022.

2. DESCRIBE THE STRATEGIES THE STATE WILL USE TO ACHIEVE IMPROVED OUTCOMES FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH AS DESCRIBED IN 129(A)(1)(B), INCLUDING HOW IT WILL LEVERAGE AND 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.

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." Of the estimated 1.8 million youth ages 15-24 living in Illinois in 2013, approximately 18.3% were considered to be in poverty and 19.3% were unemployed - more than twice the rate of the entire labor force. Further, of this 15-24-year-old cohort, an estimated 33.5% were not in school or working. These opportunity youth have much higher poverty (30%) and unemployment (40.2%) rates than the general population that age.

At the state level, the Core Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) partners seek to leverage existing efforts such as the Governor's Cabinet on Children and Youth, which is creating a strategic vision for education and health and human services by bringing together all state

entities that interact with children into a central unit, and the New Skills for Youth Initiative, a national effort funding Illinois' secondary education agency to actualize a robust plan for career pathway curriculum integration and connections to the workforce. In addition to these examples, Illinois currently has additional legislative efforts and policy initiatives that have been and will continue to be tied into the Youth Committee of the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB), formed as a recommendation of the IWIB Disadvantaged Youth Task Force (which met from 2015-2016).

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

Illinois has secured a funding commitment from all core WIOA partners to 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. These funding and relevant criteria were developed into a Request for Application that identified a number of pilot projects. Technical Assistance related to the development of quality programs is being designed for deployment leading up to the release of the Request for Application (RFA).

The State subsequently refined the RFA to incorporate lessons learned from the first application round. The program design is 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 have been included as the pillars of the RFA, 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.

Another project for this population is "Building Futures". Launched in 2016, "Building Futures" is a collaborative initiative between the Departments of Commerce and Children and Family Services that expands state resources to improve employment outcomes for youth transitioning from foster care. Youth and young adults in "Building Futures" have access to approved training programs and employment services through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The program promotes employment and training opportunities for youth in care of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) through an employment and training program with a sector-based career pathway approach to job readiness, career exploration, and work-based learning.

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. By mid-PY21, nearly 70 percent of the local areas have utilized the waiver and there have been strong positive outcomes for exiting students. Additional details are provided in the section on waivers.

Using ITAs also allows youth service provider 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.

3. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THAT ALL 14 PROGRAM ELEMENTS DESCRIBED IN WIOA SECTION 129(C)(2) ARE MADE AVAILABLE AND EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENTED, INCLUDING QUALITY PRE-APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS UNDER THE WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAM ELEMENT. [12]

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. Furthermore, as mentioned, Commerce will put in place policy specific to youth that will include a robust technical assistance plan to ensure the sound implementation of the 14 elements including pre-apprenticeship. Please note the table in section b.1. on work-based training models, which indicates pre-apprenticeship statewide enrollment went from 0 to 205 from PY15 through PY18. This exponential annual growth is a strong indicator of commitment to pre-apprenticeships at the State and the local areas.

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

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

Illinois does not yet have a statewide policy. The Illinois Workforce Investment Board (IWIB) Youth Committee is examining the issue from a statewide policy perspective. The Illinois IWIB created the Disadvantaged Youth Task Force to use the vision of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified State Plan to frame recommendations for creating sustainable career pathways for youth throughout the state. The task force, in turn, created the IWIB Youth Committee to carry on its work. The committee is currently setting an agenda to examine policy issues affecting youth services in the wake of final WIOA regulations. The "Needs Additional Assistance" clauses in both In-School and Out-of-School youth eligibility will be reexamined by the committee for possible statewide policy solutions that are able to fit both our urban and rural dynamics, while leaving the flexibility needed for local areas to design effective local programming. This item presents an opportunity for each of the core partners to help create a cross-program policy definition that will allow their local staff to have consistent definitions. This coordinated policy could be codified through a joint issuance (the preferred method) or could be adopted as policy by each of the core partners. Regardless of the mechanism for issuance, the state partners for Title IB, Title II, Title III and Title IV are committed to improving service delivery through adoption of common policies.

5. INCLUDE THE STATE DEFINITION, AS DEFINED IN LAW, FOR NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL AND ATTENDING SCHOOL AS SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(B)(I) AND SECTION 129(A)(1)(C)(I). IF STATE LAW DOES NOT DEFINE "NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL" OR "ATTENDING SCHOOL," INDICATE THAT IS THE CASE AND PROVIDE THE STATE POLICY FOR DETERMINING WHETHER A YOUTH IS ATTENDING OR NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL.

Illinois State law does not define "not attending school" or "attending school". We continue to work with education entities in the state to create a working definition. For the time being, we place emphasis on the term "School", which under the Illinois School Code (105 ILCS 5) is defined as " School - "The terms "common schools", "free schools" and "public schools" are used interchangeably to apply to any school operated by authority of this Act."

The Illinois School Records Act (105 ILCS 10/2) defines as: "School" means any public preschool, daycare center, kindergarten, nursery, elementary or secondary educational institution, vocational school, special educational facility or any other elementary or secondary educational agency or institution and any person, agency or institution which maintains school student records from more than one school but does not include a private or non-public school.

The Illinois State Board of Education states that "A non-public school is" any non-profit, non-home-based, and non-public elementary or secondary school that is in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and attendance at which satisfies the requirements" of 105 ILCS 5/26-1 of the Code."

The State acknowledges the lack of a policy on "not attending" school. State WIOA policy will be developed via the established procedure involving consultation with partners, Local Workforce Areas and the IWIB to address each of the items identified by DOL. Work on the updates will begin in spring of 2022.

6. IF USING THE BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT DEFINITION CONTAINED IN WIOA SECTION 3(5)(B), INCLUDE THE STATE DEFINITION WHICH MUST FURTHER DEFINE HOW TO DETERMINE IF AN INDIVIDUAL IS UNABLE TO COMPUTE OR SOLVE PROBLEMS, OR READ, WRITE, OR SPEAK ENGLISH, AT A LEVEL NECESSARY TO FUNCTION ON THE JOB, IN THE INDIVIDUAL'S FAMILY, OR IN SOCIETY. IF NOT USING THE PORTION OF THE DEFINITION CONTAINED IN WIOA SECTION 3(5)(B), INDICATE THAT IS THE CASE.

Illinois uses the basic skills deficient definition provided under WIOA Section 3(5)(B). Illinois further defines how to determine if an individual is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family or in society by the individual's ability to respond to the following inquiries:

1. Does the individual have a high school diploma or equivalent if he or she is no longer in school?
2. Does the individual believe he or she can follow basic instructions or diagrams with little or no help?
3. Does the individual believe he or she can fill out medical forms and job applications?
4. Does the individual believe he or she can perform basic mathematic calculations with numbers up to three digits without the aid of a calculator?
5. Does the individual believe he or she can perform basic tasks on a computer?
6. Does the individual believe he or she can read and speak English well enough to get and keep a job?

The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity has adopted a screening tool to help identify if an individual meets the basic skills deficient definition under WIOA Section 3(5)(B).

The Basic Skills Deficiency Assessment Requirements policy at WIOA Policy (illinoisworknet.com) outlines the use of the Basic Skills Screening Tool to identify if a youth or adult is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or society.

The Basic Skills Screening Tool is a questionnaire that assists a career planner in determining basic skills deficiency that meets the definition at WIOA Section 3(5)(B). The Tool is not a test and is required to be completed for all WIOA applicants prior to administering a WIOA Title I and II approved assessment, unless they meet one of the exceptions listed in the policy.

This screening tool is not to be used as an assessment tool to help determine a participant's educational needs. If the screening tool identifies an individual as basic skills deficient, that individual must be further assessed to determine their educational needs through the use of the assessment tools identified in the policy.

Anyone unable to complete the screening tool without assistance must automatically be determined as basic skills deficient. Adult Program participants who are determined to be basic skills deficient must receive priority of service whether or not they are also low-income or public assistance recipients.

D. SINGLE-AREA STATE REQUIREMENTS

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).)

Illinois is not a single-area state.

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

Illinois is not a single-area state.

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

Illinois is not a single-area state.

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.

Illinois is not a single-area state.

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.

Illinois is not a single-area state.

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.

Illinois is not a single-area state.

E. WAIVER REQUESTS (OPTIONAL)

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

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

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

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

Specifically, Illinois is requesting to waive the following requirements for program years 2022 and 2023, which includes the entire time period for which states are authorized to spend those funds:

- 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 the estimated 1.8 million youth ages 15-24 living in Illinois in 2013 and particularly focus on those within that number of which approximately 18.3% were in poverty and 19.3% were unemployed - more than twice the rate of the entire labor force.

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 supports 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 which strengthens career pathway systems that will improve youth college and career readiness; create employment opportunities; address equity in underserved communities as well as 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 assessments, 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 implementation of the waiver

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

As a result of this waiver, Illinois expects that:

1. The number of in-school youth (ISY) served will increase; and
2. Performance accountability outcomes for overall WIOA Youth (including both in- and out-of-school youth) will remain steady or increase for the majority of the WIOA Youth performance indicators.

Note at this time, the effects of the pandemic on registrant numbers and performance have yet to be realized; therefore, the projected outcomes listed above may not be achieved.

Alignment with 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 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 system will be able to provide the benefits of this waiver to our youth with barriers. This includes at-risk youth population, educational entities, American Job Centers (AJC) and 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 the 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 reviewing reports and evaluations to ensure 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. Outcomes of the waiver will be reported in the WIOA Annual Report.

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

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

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

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

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

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 will increase.

- PY 18 – The state served 222 ISY.
- PY 19 – The state served 304 ISY.
- PY 20* – The state served 244 ISY.
- PY 21 YTD – The state has served 502 ISY.
- *PY 20 is lower due to COVID-19 when many in-school you were attending school virtually for a good part of the year.

Performance accountability outcomes for overall WIOA Youth (including both ISY and OSY) will remain steady or increase for the majority of the WIOA Youth performance indicators.

Employment/Education Rate 2nd Quarter	Employment/Education Rate 4th Quarter	Measurable Skill Gains
72.47%	67.52%	31.96%
74.13%	71.05%	46.18%
73.43%	73.07%	44.25%

Evidence that the state and/or local areas are in jeopardy of missing 75 percent or information on past years' attempts to reach 75 percent:

- PY 18 (4/1/18 – 6/30/20) – Three local workforce innovation areas did not meet the 75% expenditure requirement. LWIA 15 – 50.64%; LWIA 19 – 59.81%; and LWIA 21 – 68.24.
- PY 19 (4/1/19 – 6/30/21) – Five local workforce innovation areas did not meet the 75% expenditure requirement. LWIA 15 – 58.21%; LWIA 17 – 73.78%; LWIA 19 – 55.22%; LWIA 21 – 67.94%; and LWIA 26 – 50.00%.
- PY 20 (4/1/20 – 6/30/22) – To date six local areas may be in jeopardy of not meeting the 75% expenditure requirement. LWIA 11 – 70.65%; LWIA 15 – 74.34%; LWIA 17 – 68.74%; LWIA 19 – 53.56%; LWIA 21 – 57.42%; and LWIA 23 – 66.96%.

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WAIVER REQUEST – PROVIDING ITAS TO WIOA IN-SCHOOL YOUTH

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

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

The State of Illinois is seeking a waiver for program years 2022 and 2023, which includes the entire time period for which states are authorized to spend those funds 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 for 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 that 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 implementation of the waiver
The state must provide an estimate of how the waiver will improve outcomes or provide other tangible benefits for jobseekers or employers. States have the discretion to determine how to measure a waiver's success and the specific data sources it intends to use to evaluate its impact.

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

- Increase in the number of local workforce innovation areas that offer ITAs to in-school youth.
- Increase in the number of youth that utilize an ITA to receive an industry recognized and/or some other post-secondary credential.
- Increase in performance accountability measures for youth as found in section 116(b)(2)(A)(ii) of WIOA (e.g., increases in credential attainment and measurable skills gains).

Alignment with 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. Through 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 wider variety of providers for youth in pursuit of post-secondary education and training opportunities and the flexibility of services offered by those providers. Current eligible training providers will have the opportunity 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 oversite as it relates to the appropriateness and the 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 reviewing reports and evaluations to ensure 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. 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 posted on our website for comment and review by required parties and the public.

Local Boards via Board members and/or Board staff as well as WIOA partners and other interested stakeholders participate in policy development. Additionally, LWIBs receive the opportunity to participate in 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.
    - Three local workforce innovation areas (LWIAs) utilized the waiver authority in PY 18. To date in PY 21 a total of 15 LWIAs have provided ITAs to in-school youth.
- Increase in the number of youth that utilize an ITA to receive an industry recognized and/or some other post-secondary credential.
    - The number of in-school youth receiving ITA has increased from 3 in PY 18 to 59 year to date in PY 21.
- 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 that received an ITA from the beginning of the waiver authority up to this point in PY21 are 55 have received a measurable skills gain, 42 have successfully completed training, 52 have received a credential, and thirty-eight have entered employment with an average wage of $16.08/hr..

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

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

The State of Illinois is seeking a waiver from 20 CFR 680.780 to amend the definition of "incumbent worker" by either reducing or, preferably, eliminating the 6-month employment requirement for program years 2022 and 2023, which includes the entire time period for which states are authorized to spend those funds. 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 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
- Promote increased use of work-based learning that allows workers to learn and earn at the same time.

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.

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

Based on actual outcomes in PY20 and 21 and the formula fund reduction to Illinois in PY22, specific programmatic outcomes projections through the end of PY23 include:

- Minimum of 50 employers conducting projects under the waiver
- Minimum of 50 projects under the waiver
- Minimum of 100 workers trained under the waiver.

The number of employers is the key measure which drives all outcomes. The more companies that participate the more projects are undertaken and workers trained. While interest in IWT remains strong, the PY23 reduction in formula funds reduces the pool of available funds to support IWT. We believe the projections provided here are realistic given the circumstances.

Alignment with 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 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 6-month requirement is an arbitrary barrier to using incumbent worker training to support Registered Apprenticeships, upskilling workers and keeping companies competitive.

A recent 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 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 that 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 State will use the following approach for monitoring progress in implementation:

- State staff will provide ongoing technical assistance and oversite as it relates to the appropriateness and the 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 reviewing reports and evaluations to ensure 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. Outcomes of the waiver will be reported in the WIOA Annual Report.

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

Assurance of state posting of the request for public comment and notification to affected local workforce development boards
WIOA does not prescribe a specific amount of time for states to post a potential waiver for

comment, but it does require the state to demonstrate a reasonable opportunity for public review and comment by all stakeholders, including businesses and organized labor. Submit any comments or concerns collected in this manner and the outcome of the state's review of the public comments received. The state must also provide affected local boards with notice and opportunity to comment on the proposed waiver.

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

Local boards, working through their statewide organization, the Illinois Workforce Partnership, collectively approached the State to pursue this waiver request. The State's waiver request includes direct input provided by the local boards and employers in their respective local area.

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

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

Overall, 100% of LWIAs were successful in utilizing this waiver to help their employees gain valuable skills through IWT. Participating companies are in sectors such as healthcare, manufacturing, transportation & distribution, and hospitality.

LWIAs report:

- 4 companies conducted their first IWT projects under the waiver.
- 56 businesses conducted 61 projects that provided training to 158 workers under the waiver. This represents a significant portion of all IWT activity in the state since the waiver went into effect.
- Waiver projects account for 19 percent of all IWT projects, 22 percent of all employers, and 7 percent of workers trained.
- An investment of approximately $1.4 million in projects under the waiver make up nearly 30% of the statewide total for all projects in this period.

This activity occurred during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic which caused many companies to suspend or cancel active projects and defer starting new projects. We believe that while IWT activity under the waiver was significant, it is also far less than would have occurred in the absence of the pandemic. Considering the positive impact of the waiver thus far in spite of challenges to employers, we request the waiver be extended for the duration of the Unified State Plan.

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WAIVER REQUEST – 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." for program years 2022 and 2023, which includes the entire time period for which states are authorized to spend those funds.

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 2-year period. All twenty-two of Illinois' Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIA) met the requirements for initial designation based on 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) that 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 meet in the summer of 2017 to review 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.

In spring of 2018, 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. As of August 15, 2018, two of the impacted counties have expressly objected to the realignment requirement.

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

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

The strategies and activities listed below are part of six policy priorities within the Illinois WIOA Unified Plan and speak specifically to regional alignment as identified in this waiver request and provide the support for planning and sector partnerships.

- Strategy 1: Coordinate Demand-Driven Strategic Planning at the State and Regional Levels.
    - Activity 1.1: Develop Strategic Indicators, Benchmarks and Related Planning Data Resources
    - Activity 1.2: Establish Regional Planning Areas
    - Activity 1.3: Conduct Integrated Regional Planning
- Strategy 2: Support Employer-Driven Regional Sector Initiatives

- Activity 2.1: Promote Employer-Driven Regional Sector Partnerships
- Activity 2.2: Promote Sector-Based Business Services and Employer Initiatives

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

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

The intent of the waiver is to not impose an unviable mandate on local Chief Elected Officials (CEOs) and workforce boards not able to restructure their county alignment at this time. The projected outcome of the waiver is to avoid creating a dysfunctional and disorganized environment that ultimately would have a negative impact on service delivery and customer outcomes if realignment were forced on local CEOs.

Alignment with 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 for 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.

<u>Individuals, groups, or populations affected by the waiver</u>
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 oversite as it relates to the appropriateness and the 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 evaluation review of the impact the waivers have on programmatic goals and outcomes. Outcomes of the waiver will be reported in the WIOA Annual Report.
- Additionally, the IWIB Evaluation and Accountability Committee will have the responsibility of reviewing reports and evaluations to ensure 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 2020 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 a modification to its Unified State Plan, which is subject to the requirements outlined in the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.130(d) for public review and comment. As such, Illinois's waiver request posted on our website for comment and review by required parties and the public.

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

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WAIVER REQUEST – INCREASE ON-THE-JOB TRAINING REIMBURSEMENT

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

Illinois currently has the authority under WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(H)(i) 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) for program years 2022 and 2023, which includes the entire time period for which states are authorized to spend those funds.

Illinois is proposing a sliding reimbursement scale to the employer based on its size and capability. Under this waiver, employers with fifty (50) or less 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 will develop 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 Worker, 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 is 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, the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board's Strategic Plan, and the preliminary priorities of a new IWIB standing committee of business engagement.

Illinois seeks to address and enhance critical business and workforce needs in the state through an incentivized industry sector-based approach to workforce training. On-the-job training is a proven, reliable method to instill work-based training in an effective and efficient way that meets the immediate workforce needs of the state, especially in times of recovery from natural or other disasters. Employers need a durable and trained workforce, but when one is not readily available, quick and effective turnaround training is critical for the state's economy.

With the impact of COVID-19, Illinois needs the ability of such workforce training activities that provide immediate and effective relief to workforce shortages, especially in Illinois' industry sectors: health care and medical services; construction; manufacturing; and transportation, distribution, and logistics. While general academic knowledge is important, learning skills through hands-on training allows for a quick ramp-up of the state's workforce. It allows employers to meet their immediate and long-term objectives, while providing jobseekers learning opportunities in an actual work environment that leads to a career pathway. For smaller businesses and employers who do not typically have a large workforce on standby, this waiver will allow them opportunities to employ individuals who are dislocated from other employment due to the disaster, while still being able to utilize their limited resources for other critical aspects of business. The waiver will provide them the necessary resources for on-the-job training that will enable them to redirect other business resources to critical business needs. On-the-job training strategies prioritized by the state match the USDOL's priority of work-based learning activities. It connects education and training and fulfills the workforce gaps in industry sector-driven demand areas.

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 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 quarter following exit.
- Increase in the number of unique employer work sites using OJT.

Alignment with 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. Increasing the reimbursement rate up to 90% will encourage business participation and support the recovery as we come out of COVID-19.

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 the 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 changing landscape by improving capacity and remain competitive that are designed to meet their specific goals. For 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 seek 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 will provide ongoing technical assistance and oversite as it relates to the appropriateness and the 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 reviewing reports and evaluations to ensure 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. Outcomes of the waiver will be reported in the WIOA Annual Report.

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

Assurance of state posting of the request for public comment and notification to affected local workforce development boards
WIOA does not prescribe a specific amount of time for states to post a potential waiver for comment, but it does require the state to demonstrate a reasonable opportunity for public review and comment by all stakeholders, including businesses and organized labor. Submit any comments

or concerns collected in this manner and the outcome of the state's review of the public comments received. The state must also provide affected local boards with notice and opportunity to comment on the proposed waiver.

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

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

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 OJT placements.

- OJT placements increased from 343 in PY 19 to 355 in PY 20. PY 21 will not see an increase in number of placements. We believe this is in large part due to uncertainty employers are facing with the COVID pandemic, particularly the manufacturing sector.
- Increase in the number of OJT placements in targeted sectors and occupations.
    - OJT placements have been mainly in the transportation/distribution/logistics, information technology, healthcare, and manufacturing sectors with the overwhelming majority of the OJT placements in the manufacturing sector.
- Increase in the employment retention rates in the OJT-related industry 2nd and 4th quarter following exit.
    - During the first year of the waiver authority, the state saw an increase of nearly 9% in employment retention rates in the OJT-related industry 2nd and 4th quarter following exit. Unfortunately, that was not the case for PY 20.
- Increase in the number of unique employer work sites using OJT.
    - There were a total of 172 unique work sites using OJT in PY 18 and 194 in PY 19. There was a decline in the number of unique work sites in PY 20. Again, the state feels this is due to the uncertainty employers are facing with the COVID pandemic

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WAIVER REQUEST – INCREASE IN TRANSITIONAL JOBS EXPENDITURE THRESHOLD

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)so that local areas may use up to 20 percent of WIOA Title 1 Adult and Dislocated Worker formula funds for the provision

of transitional jobs for program years 2022 and 2023, which includes the entire time period for which states are authorized to spend those funds:

WIOA 134 (d)(5) which allows Local Boards to reserve up to 10% funds allocated to the local area involved, under section 133 (b), to provide transitional jobs.

- 20 CFR § 680. 195 states "The local area may use up to 10 percent of their combined total of adult and dislocated worker allocations for transitional jobs as described in § 680.190. Transitional jobs must be combined with comprehensive career services (see § 680.150) and supportive services (see § 680.900)."

Across the nation governors are issuing Executive Orders to combat the COVID-19 crisis. Illinois is no exception and has taken an aggressive approach to curbing the progression of the virus across the state to lessen health impacts and deaths across the state. However, the unfortunate repercussion caused business closures and employment loss statewide.

Illinois must prioritize services to individuals most impacted by the crisis, including low wage and traditionally lower skilled individuals who have been let go or furloughed from their current employers.

Every tool to provide services must be available and additionally, the state will need maximum flexibility to provide those services. Transitional Jobs are an important employment strategy best used when there is higher than normal unemployment or during an economic shock, such as COVID-19, especially for hardest-hit chronically unemployed individuals. Transitional Jobs can provide employment, earned income, and connections to future unsubsidized employment to help stabilize individuals and families. Increasing the allowable amount local areas can allocate toward transitional jobs will support these efforts and offer maximum local flexibility to meet locally determined demand for using transitional jobs as an employment strategy. Transitional Jobs have proven to be successful in Illinois with WIOA required partners to serve TANF and SNAP participants under previous initiatives including Illinois *EPIC Program* and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The *EPIC Program* was part of a larger national study to develop and test methods for employment & training programs and services that will increase the number of SNAP work registrants who obtain unsubsidized employment, increase the earned income of work registrants, and reduce the reliance of work registrants on public assistance. This waiver would provide additional flexibility to leverage funding locally for the most vulnerable individuals, including recently released incarcerated individuals. Furthermore, Illinois is concerned that there may be severe undercounting and transitional jobs could be an important strategy in the reemployment toolbox.

Using a transitional job strategy will also help employers as they recover from the negative economic impact experienced because of the virus in two important ways. First, Transitional Jobs programs have been shown to stimulate the local economy as participants tend to spend their earned income in the communities in which they live. Second, these programs have shown that they provide employers with candidates who are work ready, with in-demand skill sets, and help reduce turnover costs.

Approval of this waiver would contribute to the economic recovery and provide an essential avenue for participants that are traditionally long-term unemployed or underemployed with the support they need to secure employment.

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. In the past in Illinois, Transitional Jobs has not been fully utilized under WIOA; however, using lessons from sister agencies coupled with robust technical assistance, Illinois feels this is an employment strategy to offer local areas during this crisis. Illinois will support local areas' assessments of demand for transitional jobs. Illinois will provide robust technical assistance and professional development to local areas through existing infrastructure. For instance, Illinois already has a WIOA Wednesday webinar series and several slots could be dedicated to best practices for implementing a transitional jobs program, including performance measurement.

This is a ready-made vehicle for offering rapid and high-quality technical assistance.

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 January 2019, two days after his inauguration, Governor Pritzker issued Executive Order #3 (EO 3) and directed the State to prioritize revitalizing economic growth and creating economic opportunity in communities across the state using a data-informed, demand-driven framework for improving the quality of the State's workforce. Building upon that direction, the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) guided the development of the WIOA Unified State Plan.

One of the tenants of the Governor's Executive Order is serving underrepresented persons in disenfranchised communities. Often these individuals face multiple challenges to self-sustaining employment. Ramping up transitional job programs will support the Governor's goals and will assist Illinois in in achieving the following goals related to the Unified State Plan:

- Prepare Illinois' workers for a career, not just their next job: Regardless of background, life circumstances, or education level, Illinois workers can be prepared for high-demand careers by developing core academic, technical, and essential employability skills throughout their lifetimes.
- Connect job seekers with employers: Assist Illinois businesses to find the productive workers they need, through more efficient training and better services for job seekers and employers.

<u>Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from implementation of the waiver</u>

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

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

Increase in the number of employers that use transitional jobs as a tool to find skilled workers.

- Increase in the number of participants using transitional jobs programs as tools to gain employment and address barriers to employment.
- Increase in the number of local workforce innovation boards using transitional jobs as a strategy to serve Adults with barriers to employment.

- Increase in reported costs for transitional jobs.

Alignment with 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 Unified State Plan are examples of initiatives proving the importance of addressing employment barriers of our hardest to serve populations, while addressing the need for a pipeline of skilled workers for businesses. Specifically, increasing the funding toward transitional jobs supports DOL's priority for work-based learning and employer engagement strategies. Transitional jobs are a career service/work-based learning opportunity that can increase business usage of the workforce system by providing incentives to hire and train new workers. In addition, Illinois' use of transitional jobs will support improved job and career results by providing individuals with work experience as well as the opportunity to develop essential workplace skills within the context of an employee-employer relationship.

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 both employers and jobseekers. For employers this waiver will provide an incentive to hire and train new workers, who have recently proven their hard and soft skills through the transitional job. Jobseekers who experience chronic unemployment will have greater access to employment opportunities and have the supports needed to stay employed after successfully completing a transitional job

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 WIOA programming will provide ongoing technical assistance and oversight as it relates to the appropriateness and the 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 reviewing reports and evaluations to ensure 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. 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 submitted 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. Accordingly, Illinois will post this waiver request on our website for comment and review by required parties and the public.

Local Boards via Board members and/or Board staff as well as WIOA partners can comment during the public period, this includes participation in information webinars. Additionally, LWIB members/staff, WIOA partners, as well as other interested stakeholders take part in policy development.

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 number of employers that use transitional jobs as a tool to find skilled workers.

- The first year of the waiver authority saw two employers provide transitional jobs whereas, PY 20 only had one employer.
- Increase in number of participants using transitional jobs program as tool to gain employment and address barriers to employment.
- The initial year of implementation only two participants were placed into transitional jobs. As it has grown, there were 23 in PY 19.
- Increase in the number of local workforce innovation boards using transitional jobs as a strategy to serve Adults with barriers to employment.
- Two of the state's workforce innovation boards which cover two of the largest metropolitan areas in the state (LWIAs 3 which includes Rockford and 7 which is the entirety of Cook County) have begun to use transitional jobs as a strategy to serve their customers.
- Increase in reported costs for transitional jobs.
- As a state approximately $15,500 was spent on transitional jobs the first year of implementation, whereas as in PY 19 a little over $12,600 was expended.

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WAIVER REQUEST – USE OF STATEWIDE FUNDS FOR QUALIFYING EVENTS

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

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

Specifically, the State of Illinois is requesting from Employment and Training Administration (ETA) a waiver of 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) for program years 2022 and 2023, which includes the entire time period for which states are authorized to spend those funds. The state may continue to apply for applicable grants as they may be made available.

The State is also requesting to waive WIOA Section 194(10) which bans public service employment for program years 2022 and 2023, which includes the entire time period for which states are authorized to spend those funds. 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 this needed to respond and recover from the disaster. (add the time frame – governor declared emergency and recovery period)

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, 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.

- 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 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).

- 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 marshalled 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 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 of eligible grant participant's employment and training activities will lead towards 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 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 for 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 at 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 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, summary of the event, preliminary assessment of the clean-up, 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 service in 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 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 the 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 reviewing reports and evaluations to ensure 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 a modification to its Unified State Plan, which is subject to the requirements outlined in the WIOA Regulations at 20 CFR 676.130(d) for public review and comment. As such, Illinois's waiver request posted on our website for comment and review by required parties and the public.

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

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. To date, three local workforce innovation boards have received an award under this waiver and provided disaster recovery employment to 21 participants at five disaster worksites.

TITLE I-B ASSURANCES

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 Development Board help to determine the methods and factors of distribution, and how the State consults with chief elected officials in local areas throughout the State in determining the distributions;	Yes
7. The State will not use funds received under WIOA Title I to assist, promote, or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA section 181(b)(7);	Yes
8. The State distributes adult and youth funds received under WIOA equitably throughout the State, and no local area suffers significant shifts in funding from year-to-year during the period	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
covered by this plan;	
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 Indicators	PY 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	76.5%	76.5%	76.5%	76.5%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	74.0%	74.0%	74.0%	74.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$6,200	$7,500	$6,200	$7,500
Credential Attainment Rate	66.0%	74.0%	66.0%	74.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	36.0%	54.0%	36.0%	54.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]

1

"Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being developed and this data will not be entered in the 2022 State Plan modifications.

DISLOCATED PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	81.0%	81.0%	81.0%	81.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	79.0%	79.0%	79.0%	79.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$8,950	$10,500	$8,950	$10,500
Credential Attainment Rate	67.0%	74.0%	67.0%	74.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	36.0%	54.0%	36.0%	54.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]

1

"Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being developed and this data will not be entered in the 2022 State Plan modifications.

YOUTH PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	73.5%	73.5%	73.5%	73.5%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	65.0%	72.5%	65.0%	72.5%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$3,275	$3,900	$3,275	$4,000
Credential Attainment Rate	65.0%	70.0%	65.0%	70.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	28.0%	48.0%	28.0%	48.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]

1

"Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being developed and this data will not be entered in the 2022 State Plan modifications.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR WAGNER-PEYSER PROGRAM (EMPLOYMENT SERVICES)

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.

In response to the Wagner-Peyser Act Staffing Flexibility Final Rule provisions governing the Wagner-Peyser Act at 20 CFR 651, 652, 653, and 658, effective February 5, 2020: The State of Illinois will continue to staff the provision of labor exchange services under the Wagner-Peyser Act through state employees, including but not limited to, state merit-staff 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

To ensure Wagner Peyser Employment Service staff perform in the most efficient and effective manner to deliver high-quality services to both job seekers and employers, continuous participation in professional staff development courses is one of the most significant objectives outlined for staff. Employment Service staff participate in both state and federal sponsored professional development opportunities offered by Employment and Training Administration Workforce GPS which involves webinars, training resources and promising practices for workforce professionals, educators and business leaders. Diversity Partners through Cornell University provides an online toolbox for frontline staff, technical assistance, training, resources and tools for agency leaders. Staff also take advantage of training and coaching opportunities offered by AARP through our Title 1 partners, in addition to weekly Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) webinars and trainings. Professional development opportunities are also made available through the Department of Human Services (DHS). Internal educational opportunities will continue to be provided to Employment Service staff as it relates to workshop presentations, public speaking, resume writing and critiquing, interviewing skills, networking, career exploration, the use of related assessment instruments, and the use of social media for job seeking and outreach purposes. Future internal certification based on industry standards and Agency policies and procedures is currently under discussion and development.

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

To ensure our customers receive quality employment services, access to education, training, supportive services, job placement and to assist the business community with hiring and retaining skilled workers, collaboration among the core and required partners is critical. Service integration and professional staff development are essential to the success of this workforce initiative. Developing a comprehensive and effective training curriculum is the key component to service integration within the American Job Centers. The development and delivery of the training curriculum will be a collaborative effort by representatives from each core and required program and will include a general overview of each related to services offered in the comprehensive one-stop centers or at other locations. Effective methods of communication will be established to provide all staff with updates to programs and services offered by the core and required partners. Employment Service staff are currently trained to identify and resolve UI eligibility issues or when required refer those issues to UI staff for investigation. Training the Employment Services staff on identifying and resolving UI issues, and the referral process has been provided in person and the training modules are maintained and accessible on the

agency's internal website. Refresher training sessions will be provided to staff performing employment services, and updates to the UI program will be shared as they occur. Similar methods of training will be provided for other required partners under WIOA, through live and pre-recorded webinars, job aids, and in-person training sessions as needed.

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 the comprehensive one-stop center will be provided by the Employment Service staff located in the American Job Centers. These staff members have existing knowledge of the UI program and claim-filing process. Direct linkage which provides on-demand, real-time access to additional agency staff is also available in American Job Centers that lack full-time UI staff. The direct linkage line is available to assist with specific UI inquiries. Information about the UI program will be provided to customers that visit the job center individually and during group informational workshops and supplemented via brochures (or other forms of written communication,) in addition to messaging on a common system that will be utilized by all core program partners.

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 for benefits. Immediately after filing a claim for benefits and registering with the employment service system, outreach is conducted to assess the individual's reemployment needs and offer the appropriate assistance necessary to meet his/her reemployment needs. Making available and easily accessible online training, educational, labor market and career information resources for individuals who are job-ready and seeking to explore new career options is the strategy for providing reemployment assistance. 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 report in-person, receive an orientation to the American Job Center, participate in the development of an individual employment plan and participate in employment services that will result in the claimant securing and maintaining suitable employment. Following up on the claimant's progress on items outlined in the individual employment plan is also beneficial in successfully securing employment. Collaborating with core, required and local partner agencies, targeting special populations within underserved communities, conducting outreach campaigns to provide information and referrals to existing employment opportunities, and training and educational services are also a strategy used to reemploy individuals who are not receiving unemployment benefits. Strategically increasing and improving messaging/communications related to employment service opportunities and all services available in the American Job Centers will also assist in our efforts to expand our delivery of reemployment services Establishing and improving our relationship with the employer community will provide the agencies with a better understanding of the employers' recruiting needs. This will result in making proper referrals to available job openings, and training. During the pandemic IDES has conducted the RESEA program via one-on-one phone appointments.

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:

Coordination between Wagner-Peyser and Unemployment Insurance programs begins with the requirement that all UI claimants register with the employment service system to fulfill the UI eligibility requirement. 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 the UI claimants being registered in the employment services system, the employment services staff will be able to target this population, conduct outreach and provide labor exchange services by requesting the claimant to report in-person to an American Job center or affiliate location to receive reemployment assessments for job placement, training, educational or supportive services. Outreach to UI claimants is conducted via phone call by the employment service staff, messaging through the phone notification systems, e-mail blasts notifications and/or individual and mass mailings.

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.

Section 500 C 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 is 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 the employment service system 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.

Individuals that may require additional assistance with his/her reemployment efforts may be identified through various means including participation in the UI Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment program; agency correspondence; in-person contact at an American Job Center location; 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 an assessment and development of an Individual Reemployment Plan, with assistance from the Wagner-Peyser staff. The 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 plan 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.

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.

Illinois Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP) portion of the State Plan details the plans for providing services to the agricultural community, both for agricultural employers and Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFWs), for the period of July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2023 as described in Wagner-Peyser (W-P) regulations at 20 CFR 653.107, WIOA Sections 102 and 103, and the Unified Planning Guidance. The Illinois Department of Employment Security will provide Wagner-Peyser services to migrant and seasonal farmworkers and employers of migrant and seasonal farmworkers (MSFW) and will ensure that the full range of services provided to MSFWs are qualitatively equivalent and quantitatively proportionate to the services provided to non-MSFWs. The agency will ensure that MSFWs are offered employment services, benefits and protections, including information on jobs, registration assistance, referrals to a qualified job, vocational counseling, testing and job training referral services. To ensure statewide compliance, the agency will make every effort to meet the Migrant Indicators of Compliance as well as the Minimum Service Level Indicators.

There has been a constant movement of MSFWs throughout the state in order to find work which had made it difficult for outreach staff to provide consistent services to MSFWs that could lead them to permanent full-time employment or training opportunities.

In addition to their constant movement, other obstacles such as lack of transportation, limited English-speaking abilities and education, job training, childcare, and access to permanent low-cost housing if they choose to stay in Illinois, also negatively impact their employment and training opportunities.

The Illinois Migrant Council originally projected that the number of domestic MSFWs in the upcoming program years would remain the same as in 2019. However as noted in the previous AOP the number of domestic MSFWs is expected to decline in the future for several reasons, such as, Illinois agricultural employers using H-2A workers and the reluctance to migrate for fear of restrictive government policies and negative community reactions to immigrants.

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

The U.S. Department of Agriculture – National Agricultural Statistics Service lists corn, soybeans, wheat, pumpkins, and hay as Illinois' top 5 major labor-intensive crops. The state's climate and varied soil types enable farmers to grow and raise many other agricultural commodities, including cattle, wheat, oats, sorghum, hay, sheep, poultry, fruits and vegetables. Illinois also

produced several specialty crops, such as buckwheat, horseradish, ostriches, fish and Christmas trees.

As of August 2018, the growth of hemp was legalized in Illinois and in December 2018, Congress passed a farm bill legalizing industrial hemp production in the state. Illinois started accepting applications for hemp growers and processors in May 2019 and applicants were given the options to grow different types of hemp, some of which can be used for fiber in textiles, a variety that generates grains for food, or a CBD-specific strain of hemp. Due to the early stages of the hemp industry in Illinois, statistical information and agricultural activity is not yet available.

The primary industries for employment needs were corn and soybean companies. Other industries with smaller workforces remain in fruit and vegetable farms producing crops such as pumpkins and horseradish.

Illinois' geographic area of prime activity sees cold, fairly dry winters and warm, humid summers with ample rainfall that allows the land to support many kinds of crops and livestock. About 89 percent of the state's cropland is considered prime farmland, ranking the state third nationally in total prime farmland acreage. This environment has made the central three-fourths of the state especially well-suited for growing corn and soybeans, while hilly areas in the northwest and south provide excellent pasture for swine and other livestock.

An overview of Illinois' major crop activity, based on The University of Illinois Extension Service - Summary of Illinois Specialty Growers Association:

- 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)

While much of the agriculture workforce resides in the United States, the demand for labor exceeds supply, and immigrants are important contributors to the agricultural workforce. Food and agriculture jobs in Illinois offer immigrants significant economic opportunities, like the H-2A temporary agricultural program. However, the H-2A program has made it difficult for employers to find, retain, and maintain an adequate, legal and cost-competitive labor supply due

to the costs associated with the program. Today, three-quarters of the hired laborers who do most of the work on U.S. farms were born abroad according to a paper published by the Migration Policy Institute, and nearly half do not have legal authorization to work in the U.S., significantly hindering the ability for IDES and partner agencies to provide the necessary services and resources these MSFWs need. The dependence on H-2A visas continues to grow, as traditional farm labor pools shrink. Migrant workers who used to pass through the Midwest at harvest time have settled down to give their families more stability, and the number of migrant farmworkers from Mexico who used to flow across the border in search of work has been dwindling since the recession. Counties with histories of significant migration gain prior to the recession experienced smaller net gains, or lost migrants during the recession. Meanwhile, immigrant farmworkers already in the country are aging, and their children are seeking different lines of work, just as U.S. farm families have seen their own children do for decades. According to data from the 2017 Census of Agriculture, hired farmworkers make up less than 1 percent of all U.S. wage and salary workers, but they continue to play an essential role in U.S. agriculture. Wages and salaries plus contract labor costs represented 12 percent of production expenses for all farms, but as much as 43 percent on greenhouse and nursery operations, and 39 percent for fruits and tree nuts.

In PY18, the number of Illinois-based employers certified for 2791 H-2A visas were up nearly 54 percent from 2017. Most of the Illinois visas went to labor-intensive fruit and vegetable farms since corn and soybean farms rely more on automation. While swine production itself does not bring in a significant number of workers, the work itself is very labor-intensive, making it difficult to find employees.

In PY19, MSFW outreach staff visited small, medium, and large farming operations, including seasonal and year-round workforces. The goal was to reach as many of the migrant and seasonal farmworkers and H-2A temporary agricultural workers in the state as possible. So far, IDES MSFW staff has performed outreach to a total of 513 MSFWs and 1,649 H-2A temporary agricultural workers in PY19. According to the U.S. Department of Labor's FLC Listing, there were 22 FLC's in Illinois known to have recruited and employed farm labor.

In PY20, and continuing into PY21, agricultural employers experienced a significant domestic labor shortage due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Migrant and seasonal farmworkers that migrated from labor supply states, such as Texas, were hesitant to migrant to Illinois for fear of contracting COVID-19 in their working and living areas. As a result, IDES saw a 50% increase in applications to the H-2A foreign labor program from 122 applications processed in 2019 to 183 applications processed in 2020. So far, as of September 30, 2021, IDES has processed 165 H-2A applications and it is expected that it will meet or exceed the number of applications processed in 2020.

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

Estimates of the number of MSFWs in Illinois is gathered from multiple sources, including the number of outreach contacts recorded in IllinoisJobLink, the number of workers requested on H-2A Temporary Agricultural Labor applications, and information provided from community

partners, including the Illinois NFJP provider. Due to the pandemic's impact on both in-person service delivery and on agricultural work, there are limitations on the most recent data sources as noted below. Peak season activity occurs from June to August, and the low season ranges from January to March.

From June 1, 2020 to August 31, 2020 there were 0 domestic MSFWs contacted through outreach and 2,861 foreign MSFWs present in Illinois. From January 1, 2021 to March 31, 2021 there were 0 MSFWs contacted through outreach and 549 foreign MFSWs present in Illinois.

From June 1, 2021 to August 31, 2021 there were 0 domestic MSFWs contacted through outreach and 2,679 foreign MFSWs present in Illinois. Numbers for the low season from January 1, 2022 to March 31, 2022 are not yet available.

Legal Services Corporation data estimates[1] of domestic migrant and seasonal farmworkers in Illinois from 2021 was 41,116 and this is lower than the 2017 estimate from the National Center for Farmworker Health[2] which was: 55,000 migrant and seasonal farmworkers in Illinois each year that includes approximately 45,000 seasonal workers who live in the area and switch to agriculture in the summertime; about 5,000 H2A workers that are brought to Illinois by farm owners and agribusinesses; and between 3,000 and 5,000 workers that migrate with the growing season from the southern US and Mexico. With both of these estimates, there is limited information about the source data, but IDES will continue to use all estimates from credible sources in order to understand the changes in the MSFW population so that we can adjust outreach strategies. IDES information on H2A requests and migrant labor camp data from the IL Department of Public Health helps to understand the trends regarding the use of temporary foreign labor in the agriculture industry. Nationally, the Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Labor has documented a five-fold increase in the number of H2A positions approved over the past 15 years.[3]

IDES has not received updated data from the UMOS, the current NFJP provider and has reviewed demographic information from about all agricultural workers in the Midwest from the most recent National Agricultural Worker Survey (FY 2017-18) which shows that the average age is 39 years old and 75% of workers are U.S. born and 25% are foreign born. The Illinois Migrant Council (former NFJP Grantee) provided the following demographic information about MSFWs which will be updated as additional information becomes available:

Generally, the age distribution is projected to be: 15% under 21, 59% including ages 22–44, 20% including ages 45–54, and 6% over 55. Male is 71% and female 29%. More than 75% have not finished high school. The primary language for many is Spanish; the majority has Hispanic/Latino roots. In previous years, migrant farmworkers were primarily from Texas, Mexico, Florida, and California. Recently, outreach staff has encountered individuals from other countries in Central and South America and some from West African countries with various languages and dialects. During the "high season," the approximate statewide percentage, by regional area, is approximately 60% Migrant and 40% Seasonal. During the "low season," the approximate statewide percentage, by regional area, is approximately 20% Migrant and 80% Seasonal.

[1] LSC data available here: https://lsc-live.app.box.com/s/ceitktean7ln60ruqy5raumjee4mt0dz

[2] http://www.ncfh.org/

[3] https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/farm-labor/#h2a

4. OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

IDES has a total of seven positions assigned to the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker program: five outreach staff (Chicago, N. Aurora, Champaign, Peoria, and Belleville), an MSFW Program Manager (Springfield) and a State Monitor Advocate (Springfield). Due to turnover and retirement, three of those positions are filled (outreach staff in Champaign and Belleville; and the SMA in Springfield). The hiring process is underway for the Program Manager and all three outreach positions (N. Aurora, Chicago, and Peoria). In order to meet staffing requirements while hiring outreach staff in significant offices, IDES' Employment Services (ES) Program Manager will work to find Spanish-speaking ES staff in local offices to provide assistance.

For the 2019 MSFW Program Year (the most recent pre-pandemic service period), as of September 30, 2019, IDES Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker staff had 513 outreach contacts with MSFWs and 1649 outreach contacts with H- 2A workers. Out of the 513 outreach contacts with MSFWs, 368 MSFWs agreed to register with IDES to receive additional services. 6 workers were referred to H-2A job orders, 368 workers received staff-assisted services, 337 workers were referred to supportive services, and 199 workers received career guidance assistance. IDES expects to have approximately 150 agricultural job orders posted in IllinoisJobLink in connection with an H-2A applications. Approximately 120 interstate clearance orders are expected to be received from neighboring and designated supply states seeking agricultural labor and approximately 45 interstate clearance orders to be approved for interstate clearance in order to fulfill Illinois' agricultural labor demand. Any positions under an H-2A contract not filled by U.S. workers will be allowed to be filled by foreign agricultural workers entering the state under the H-2A program.

In the upcoming years, IDES MSFW staff expect approximately 1,000 domestic migrant and seasonal farmworker contacts, due to the increased cooperation with MSFW organizations, additional outreach staff, and the appointment of a State Monitor Advocate. However, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and initial travel restrictions, MSFW staff were unable to conduct the outreach necessary to reach these numbers during PY20 and PY21.

There is currently no expected reduction in staff positions or outreach activities for the upcoming program years.

Farmworkers who are not reached by normal intake activities by IDES' ES staff are found through the activities of the MSFW outreach staff, with guidance from a new MSFW Outreach Manager, who conduct vigorous outreach throughout Illinois and provide information on services and resources available at one-stop centers to MSFWs. The outreach staff provide written and oral presentations to MSFWS, in both English and Spanish, at worksites, housing locations, and other common gathering areas. The SMA and outreach staff continue to reach out to state agencies and community-based organizations to develop working relationships in order to locate farmworkers that live in remote and often isolated areas.

The following information is presented verbally during outreach and provided in a packet to all MSFWs in English and the language in which the MSFWs are fluent in:

- Illinois Job Link Registration Form
- Statewide Complaint System Information
- IDES Services
- IDES MSFW Staff Contact List
- One-Stop Career Center Services and locations

- Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act
- Federal and State Labor Laws
- U.S. Department of Labor Contact Information
- Farmworker Fact Sheet
- Community Resource Guide
- Locations of Nearby State Agencies and Services/Resources Available

In addition to returning to post-pandemic in-person outreach activities in August 2021 and reconnecting with existing community partners, IDES has adopted the following strategies to improve outreach to MSFWs: first, IDES has aligned the state-level management of the ES program with the MSFW program including regular program manager meetings; a new statewide Employment Services Program Manager (ESPM) was appointed in June 2021, is in the same division, has been trained on all federal MSFW requirements, attends regional and national workshops on the MSFW and FLC programs, and works with ES program managers around the state to make sure that all ES staff are trained. With a deeper understanding of MSFWs across more agency staff, we will be more likely to both identify new opportunities to reach out to MSFWs in communities and provide appropriate services to those that come to American Job Centers; second, IDES is working more closely with key staff at IL Department of Public Health and IL Department of Labor to coordinate outreach activities if possible, share information, and cross-train our staff on each agency's responsibilities with respect to MSFWs. This state-agency level connection is intended to translate into every state program having the ability to get service information (including program contacts) out to MSFWs through as many networks as possible; third, IDES has added a dedicated MSFW Outreach program manager (in addition to an SMA) who will work with the four outreach staff and the ES Program Manager. This will provide dedicated attention to expanding outreach strategies, as well as supporting ES and other WIOA partner programs to ensure that the unique needs of MSFWs are attended to in IL's AJCs; and .

The SMA and outreach staff receive annual trainings and attend conferences presented by federal and state agencies as well as agricultural organizations such as: Monitor Advocate National Training Conference presented by the U.S. Department of Labor – Employment and Training; Annual Pre-Season Meetings presented by the Regional Monitor Advocate; Midwest Association of Farmworkers Organization Conference presented by various federal enforcement agencies, legal firms, and MSFW community support organizations. Topics include but are not limited to: Monitoring of the State Workforce Agency and Significant Local Offices; The Agricultural Recruitment System; Outreach; The Statewide Complaint System; MSFW Organizations; and Federal and State Enforcement Agencies. Additional trainings/conferences are approved as needed.

Initial training for outreach staff consists of:

- The background and history of the MSFW program and the Judge Richey Court Order
- Overview of core programs, services, and resources available in office/region
- UI program and general identification of UI eligibility issues
- Proper informative presentation of services to MSFWs
- Service delivery while conducting outreach
- Observation and documentation of complaints and violations
- Record keeping of outreach activities and complaints

- Federal and State Labor Laws
- The Employment Services Complaint System and enforcement agencies
- Federal code of regulations governing the MSFW and H-2A programs
- The Agricultural Recruitment System
- Housing inspections and OSHA standards
- Field checks and field visits

The State Monitor Advocate performs an annual review of all of the above training with each staff member.

The State Monitor Advocate (SMA) provides technical support, guidance, and training to outreach staff with the goal of providing high quality services to both job seekers and employers. The SMA provides training to managers, complaint coordinators, and office staff. They are trained on the Statewide Complaint System, Service Delivery, the Agricultural Recruitment System, and state and federal regulations pertaining to the MSFW Program. In addition, IDES makes sure that outreach workers have access to training opportunities regarding services for MSFWs as well as program operations. These include training about: procedures for registering MSFWs; Outreach Worker Data Collection Training; Labor Trafficking; Job Orders for Temporary or Seasonal Agricultural Workers; Intake Application Training; and MSFW ES Services Documentation. Outreach staff are also provided with bi-weekly training workshops on the effective use of the Illinois JobLink platform and are encouraged to attend relevant statewide workforce professional development webinars offered to all frontline staff of IL workforce system.

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. With the creation of a new MSFW Program Manager position in addition to the SMA, IDES 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. IDES hopes to establish more MOUs with organizations whose focus is MSFWs. IDES will also coordinate with 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.

5. SERVICES PROVIDED TO FARMWORKERS AND AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS THROUGH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM

Services Provided to MSFWs through the American Job Center Network:

IDES will ensure that MSFWs are offered services that are qualitatively equivalent and quantitatively proportionate to the services provided to non-MSFWs at all One-Stop Career 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 One-Stop Career

Centers are operating in the best interests of MSFWs and ensures that staff can properly identify and service MSFWs.

Primary Services Available at One-Stop Career Centers:

- Assisting job seekers in completing full, quality registrations and resumes in IllinoisJobLink.com
- Technical assistance through IDES staff, including trainings, conferences, comprehensive Q&A workshops, supportive services and career guidance services as well as specific employment opportunities.
- Collaborating with other state agency partners to access the services each one of them provides
- Providing a basic summary of Farmworkers Rights.
- Providing Spanish and English-speaking personnel to assist in awareness across core programs including Unemployment Insurance (UI) and identification of UI eligibility issues as well as assistance in filing a claim for unemployment compensation.
- Providing employer outreach workers and local office job seeker staff with professional development training to ensure they can provide high-quality services to both employers and job seekers.
- Providing outreach efforts with NFJP grantees (UMOS) as well as with public and private community service agencies and MSFW groups.
- Job Development
- Referrals to Partner (State or Federal) Agencies; an example would be the IL Department of Human Services for SNAP Benefits
- Labor Market Information
- Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) Tax Credit Program information and certification of eligible applicants.
- Bi-lingual Spanish Speaking staff and Limited English Proficiency Service
- Information on the Employment Service Complaint System and Assistance in filing a Complaint
- Re Employment Service Program (RESP, ex-offenders services)
- Job Fairs
- Translation Services

Services Provided to Agricultural Employers through the American Job Center Network:

Illinois' internet-based labor exchange system, IllinoisJobLink, 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. IllinoisJobLink 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 IllinoisJobLink 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.

Wagner-Peyser Act Services Provided to Agricultural Employers:

- Agricultural Recruitment System (Local, Intrastate, Interstate)
- Housing Inspections
- Information and assistance on the Foreign Labor Certification process
- Farm Labor Contractor applications and information
- IllinoisJobLink.com self-serve or staff-assisted job orders and recruitment
- Information and Referral to agencies offering programs or services benefiting the business community
- WOTC Tax Credit Program information and certification of applicants
- Informational Meetings on Unemployment Insurance, Wage/Hour, Migrant Law, Worker's Compensation, OSHA and Migrant Camp licensing, etc.
- Labor Market Information
- Referrals of qualified workers to agricultural job openings in Illinois and other states
- Job Fairs
- Local offices offer a Conference room for recruitment purposes
- Field Checks and Visits
- Participate in New Employee Orientation meetings

IDES will improve services to employers in two ways, first filling a dedicated position for foreign labor certification work which we expect to result in improvement to the of agricultural employers in IL and expand our ability to bring necessary information to those employers; and, second, by improving coordination between the new 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.

The 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.

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 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

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. IDES plans to engage with other MFSW organizations, such as

Illinois Migrant Council, 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. IDES hopes to establish more MOUs with partners and it will depend on two factors over the next two years: first, feedback and insights from IDES new SMA and our NFJP partner, UMOS; second, the extent to which a formal MOU is desired by community partners. An approximate timeline for additional MOUs is to determine, with input from SMA, potential partners for MOU by the end of CY 22 and complete an MOU process in the subsequent six months. IDES is also establishing a regular coordination process with the Illinois Department of Health and the Illinois Department of Labor to share information related to MSFWs and to support the outreach efforts of our programs and our community partners. Coordination process will continue over the course of the plan.

B. REVIEW AND PUBLIC COMMENT

The state plan modification process, including the modification of the AOP, included the following opportunities for input from all stakeholders: webinar on Feb. 2, 2022 (recording can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z3sT4rRo_vE) and public comment period from Feb. 1, 2022 to Feb. 29, 2022. No comments specific to the AOP were received to the state plan modification. The IL NFJP provider, UMOS, is a member of the Interagency Technical Assistance Team through which information about the planning process is communicated, including securing members for the State Plan committee. IDES shared the final revised version of the AOP directly with UMOS.

C. DATA ASSESSMENT

Program Year PY 2018 data:

- Number of agricultural job orders and openings received: 132 agricultural job orders and 2507 job openings
- Number of agricultural job orders filled: 132
- Percent filled: 100 %
- Number of interstate clearance orders received: 100
- Number of interstate clearance orders initiated: 35

IDES received a total of 132 job orders in connection with H-2A applications with 2,507 openings available. U.S. workers, specifically MSFWs, were informed of the job opportunities but only 5 U.S. workers applied and ultimately only 1 U.S. worker accepted a position. 100 Interstate clearance orders were received from neighboring and designated supply states seeking agricultural labor and 35 clearance orders were approved for interstate clearance. All available positions were filled with H-2A workers when U.S. workers were not enough to meet the labor demand.

In the 2018 Program Year, from July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019, IDES Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker staff reported 147 outreach contacts with MSFWs and 1,169 outreach contacts with H-2A workers. Out of the 147 outreach contacts with MSFWs, 140 agreed to register with IDES to receive additional services. 5 workers were referred to H-2A job orders, 117 workers received staff-assisted services, 84 workers were referred to supportive services, and 4 workers received career guidance assistance.

Program Year PY 2019 data:

- Number of agricultural job orders and openings received: 122 agricultural job orders and 2573 job openings
- Number of agricultural job orders filled: 122
- Percent filled: 100 %
- Number of interstate clearance orders received: 115
- Number of interstate clearance orders initiated: 122

IDES received a total of 122 job orders in connection with H-2A applications with 2,573 openings available. U.S. workers, specifically MSFWs, were informed of the job opportunities but only 48 U.S. workers applied and ultimately only 3 U.S. workers accepted a position. 115 Interstate clearance orders were received from neighboring and designated supply states seeking agricultural labor and 122 clearance orders were approved for interstate clearance. All available positions were filled with H-2A workers when U.S. workers were not enough to meet the labor demand.

In the 2019 Program Year, from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020, IDES Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker staff reported 661 outreach contacts with MSFWs and 1,528 outreach contacts with H-2A workers. Out of the outreach contacts with MSFWs, 370 agreed to register with IDES to receive additional services. 9 workers were referred to job orders filed in connection with H-2A applications, 370 workers received staff-assisted services, 337 workers were referred to supportive services, and 202 workers received career guidance assistance.

Program Year PY 2020 data:

- Number of agricultural job orders and openings received: 183 agricultural job orders and 3405 job openings
- Number of agricultural job orders filled: 183
- Percent filled: 100 %
- Number of interstate clearance orders received: 167
- Number of interstate clearance orders initiated: 183

IDES received a total of 183 job orders in connection with H-2A applications with 3,405 openings available. U.S. workers, specifically MSFWs, were informed of the job opportunities but only 8 U.S. workers applied and 0 U.S. workers accepted a position. 167 Interstate clearance orders were received from neighboring and designated supply states seeking agricultural labor and 183 clearance orders were approved for interstate clearance. All available positions were filled with H-2A workers when U.S. workers were not enough to meet the labor demand.

In the 2020 Program Year, from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, IDES Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker staff reported 0 outreach contacts with MSFWs and 0 outreach contacts with H-2A workers. Out of the outreach contacts with MSFWs, 0 agreed to register with IDES to receive additional services. 0 workers were referred to job orders filed in connection with H-2A applications, 0 workers received staff-assisted services, 0 workers were referred to supportive services, and 0 workers received career guidance assistance.

Program Year PY 2021 data:

- Number of agricultural job orders and openings received: 221 agricultural job orders and 3244 job openings
- Number of agricultural job orders filled: 221

- Percent filled: 100 %
- Number of interstate clearance orders received: 136
- Number of interstate clearance orders initiated: 221

IDES received a total of 221 job orders in connection with H-2A applications with 3,244 openings available. U.S. workers, specifically MSFWs, were informed of the job opportunities but only 1 U.S. workers applied and 0 U.S. workers accepted a position. 136 Interstate clearance orders were received from neighboring and designated supply states seeking agricultural labor and 221 clearance orders were approved for interstate clearance. All available positions were filled with H-2A workers when U.S. workers were not enough to meet the labor demand.

In the 2021 Program Year, from July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022, IDES Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker staff reported 17 outreach contacts with MSFWs and 588 outreach contacts with H-2A workers. Out of the outreach contacts with MSFWs, 0 agreed to register with IDES to receive additional services. 0 workers were referred to job orders filed in connection with H-2A applications, 0 workers received staff-assisted services, 0 workers were referred to supportive services, and 0 workers received career guidance assistance.

In addition to the reasons outlined in the response to section e.6.D below the program has been understaffed during the past four years, including in the SMA position. To remedy the situation, IDES has prioritized hiring for the program, time, permanent SMA, creating a new MSFW manager position, and four positions. We will strengthen our relationship with community partners, especially the NFJP grantee, UMOS.

D. ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

Over the past two years, the goals of the AOP were not met due to several factors: the State Monitor Advocate position was only filled by a permanent staff person from the period of Dec. 2020 through June 2021; 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 a key outreach position; and a vacancy in a key ES position. At the same time, IDES has worked on several fronts to remedy the situation. First, the person who was the permanent SMA for six months 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 SMA position into two positions to ensure that the SMA activities are separate from other activities and to have an MSFW manager to focus on improving a robust outreach strategy. Third, a new statewide ES Manager started who has been trained on and given the responsibility to ensure the self-monitoring of ES services at the agency. Finally, agency leadership has reinforced that filling all MSFW positions is an agency priority, one result of which is the hiring of a new SMA in April 2022.

E. STATE MONITOR ADVOCATE

The interim State Monitor Advocate, Edgar Revuelta, was involved in the research and composition of the Agricultural Outreach Plan. He has been afforded the opportunity to review and comment on the PY 2020-23 Agricultural Outreach Plan and he approves the plan.

WAGNER-PEYSER ASSURANCES

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	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
(sec 121(e)(3));	
2. If the State has significant MSFW one-stop centers, the State agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111, State Workforce Agency staffing requirements;	Yes
3. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser Act services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and	Yes
4. SWA officials: 1) Initiate the discontinuation of services; 2) Make the determination that services need to be discontinued; 3) Make the determination to reinstate services after the services have been discontinued; 4) Approve corrective action plans; 5) Approve the removal of an employer's clearance orders from interstate or intrastate clearance if the employer was granted conditional access to ARS and did not come into compliance within 5 calendar days; 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

WAGNER PEYSER PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	61.0%	61.0%	61.0%	61.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	65.0%	65.0%	65.0%	65.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$6,700	$6,700	$6,700	$6,700

Performance Indicators	PY 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
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

"Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being developed and this data will not be entered in the 2022 State Plan modifications.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAMS

A. ALIGNING OF CONTENT STANDARDS

a. Aligning of Content Standards

Describe how the eligible agency has aligned its content standards for adult education with State-adopted challenging academic content standards, as adopted under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(1)).

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) is the eligible agency in the State with the responsibility of administering the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 – Title II Adult Education and Literacy Act.

Illinois' strategic plan for implementing standards-aligned curriculum and instruction which began in 2014 with the integration of the Illinois Adult Education ABE/ASE Content Standards with 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) will continue as an integral component of adult education instruction. Ensuring equity in instruction, the Content Standards for English Language Learners (ELL) were updated in Fiscal Year 2017 to align with the Office of Career Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE) English Language Proficiency (ELP) and the Illinois Adult education standards (which are aligned to the state's K-12 Learning Standards). The ELP standards ensure that all adult ELL's can obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency through integrated English Language instruction, workplace preparation activities, mathematics instruction, and digital literacy.

In an ongoing strategy to sustain high-quality curriculum and instruction, the ICCB oversees the development and implementation of Professional Pathways Training. The levels include ABE/ASE Specialist, ABE/ASE Master Teacher, Career Navigator Pathway, Transitions Pathways, Designing for Equity and Access for All Learners, and English as a Second Language Standards Proficient. In FY2020, elements of Universal Design were embedded in all Professional Pathways to further Illinois' focus no equity and inclusion. Standards Proficient Instruction is included in all aspects of adult literacy education with content specialist/master teachers in Language Arts, Math, Reading, and English as Second Language.

Cohorts of instructors who successfully complete and provide applicable evidence of standards–based instruction are invited to mentor and train the next cohort of instructors. These trainings ensure integration of the College and Career Readiness Standards, States' Career Clusters Initiative Essential Knowledge and Skill Statements, and the International Society for

Technology in Education's National Educational Technology Standards for Students with the CCR standards. This holistic and evidence-based training aligns with Goal #3, Strengthen College and Career Readiness, from Expanding Career Pathway Opportunities in Adult Education, Strategic Directions for Illinois, the ICCB's strategic five-year plan.

B. LOCAL ACTIVITIES

ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY ACTIVITIES (SECTION 203 OF WIOA)

b. Local Activities

Describe how the State will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA, 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 2017, the ICCB convened an adult education taskforce to create an Adult Education Strategic Plan. The 25-member taskforce represented critical stakeholders including, legislators; state commerce and economic opportunity agencies; employment security and human services agencies; Adult Education system leaders and practitioners; president of higher education institutions, representatives of workforce development and philanthropy; K-12 educators' and community-based organizations. The vision for the five-year strategic plan, 2018-2023, is as follows:

In partnership with other stakeholders, we will create learning opportunities that align with statewide education, training, and employment strategies to ensure all adult learners have access to and success across services that are cohesive, coordinated, and innovative to promote better economic opportunities, greater equity, and sustainable career pathways.

The Adult Education Strategic Plan is aligned with the Governor's Executive Order 2019-3, the Perkins V Unified plan, Illinois Unified Plan, the Workforce Board's Strategic Plan and the Workforce Education Strategic Plan. Combined, these plans create the framework for achieving adult education and literacy activities under the following four goals:

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Goal 1: Improve Outcomes by Scaling Effective Models and Strategies across the System

- Building, expanding and scaling comprehensive career pathways systems, and create the conditions across every Adult Education program to find breakthrough ways of expanding these proven models.

Goal 2: Increase Postsecondary Transitions and Credential Attainment

- Recognizing that access to postsecondary education is not enough, but also ensures students are accessing postsecondary education and earning credentials that are in demand.

Goal 3: Strengthen College and Career Readiness

- College and career readiness for underprepared adult students is critical to overall success. Increasingly, students entering the workforce are discovering that they need critical knowledge and skills that are used in the workplace.

Goal 4: Develop Life-long Career Pathway Systems & Enabling Technologies

- Strategizing for career and life options while meeting the diverse and context-specific learning needs of various age groups, including the acquisition of basic literacy, and technical skills through both formal education and effective alternative pathways to learning.

In the spring of PY20, the ICCB held a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) soliciting statewide eligible providers to apply for funding to provide Title II Adult Education and Literacy services as aligned with the Unified State Plan and other education and workforce plans. As a part of the review process, Local Workforce Boards reviewed submitted applicants for alignment with local workforce needs.

Programs were funded for the initial year of PY21 with PY22 and PY23 as continuation years. Each provider will be granted continued funding based upon meeting the determined measures of demonstrated effectiveness.

A new competitive NOFO will be published in the Spring of PY2024.
During a competitive year, to be considered for funding an applicant of demonstrated effectiveness must:

1. Be an Eligible Applicant, as listed below:

- Local educational agencies (LEA)
- Community–Based Organizations (CBO) or Faith-Based Organizations (FBO)
- Volunteer Literacy Organizations
- Institutions of Higher Education (IHE)

- Public or Private nonprofit agencies
- Libraries
- Public-housing authorities
- Nonprofit institutions that are described previously and have the ability to provide adult education and literacy services to eligible individuals
- Consortium or coalition of agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries or authorities described previously
- Partnership between an employer and an entity described above
- 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. Grant proposals will be considered based on the following criteria as outlined in WIOA Title II.

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.

In order to accomplish this, 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. (state consideration)

Eligible Instructional Categories: Programs applying for federal and state adult education resources must abide by the policy and procedures set forth. All programs must provide instruction in one or more of the following methods: direct instruction, distance education, or a hybrid or blended education. These instructional activities are important to the success of the program and the students served. The purpose of Adult Education is to create a partnership among the Federal Government, States, and localities to provide, on a voluntary basis, adult education and literacy activities, in order to:

- assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and economic self-sufficiency;
- assist adults who are parents or family members to obtain the education and skills that are necessary to becoming full partners in the educational development of their children; and lead to sustainable improvements in the economic opportunities for their family;
- assist adults in attaining a secondary school diploma and in the transition to postsecondary education and training, including through career pathways; and
- assist immigrants and other individuals who are English language learners in improving their reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension skills in English; and mathematics skills; and -acquiring an understanding of the American system of Government, individual freedom, and the responsibilities of citizenship.

The Adult Education activities below are the approved instructional activities for an ICCB approved adult education program.

Adult Education

- 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, as well as the instruction, must increase a student's ability to read, write, speak 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 eight-grade competency. Each level of courses covers each content area and includes College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) in the curriculum. The curriculum is designed to accommodate the concept of individualized instruction and includes courses in general basic skills; reading literacy and communication skills; computational skills; technology and digital literacy skills; workforce/employability skills; life skills; career exploration/awareness skills;

workplace literacy; family literacy/parenting; bridge instruction and U.S. Citizenship education.

  - Note: Bridge Programs are a required component in Illinois and are considered a vehicle by which to achieve the adult education and literacy activities. Bridge Programs are described below.

- Adult Secondary Education (ASE) curriculum consists of approved courses designed to bring a student from grade nine through the twelfth-grade competency level, as determined by standardized testing. This curriculum, as well as the instruction, must increase a student's ability to read, write and speak 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. The curriculum is designed to prepare a student to achieve a High School Equivalency credential and includes College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) within each curriculum. The curriculum is also designed to accommodate the concept of individualized instruction and includes courses in basic skills; general academic and intellectual skills; reading literacy and communication skills; computational skills; technology and digital literacy skills; workforce/employability skills; life skills and career exploration/awareness skills; workplace literacy; family literacy/parenting; bridge instruction and U.S. Citizenship education.

  - Note: Bridge Programs are a required component in Illinois and are considered a vehicle by which to achieve the adult education and literacy activities. Bridge Programs are described below.

- English Language Acquisition (ELA) curriculum consists of approved courses designed to include instruction in English 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. Beginning, intermediate and advanced courses include a curriculum in listening, speaking, reading and writing using the English language. Technology and Digital Literacy skills, as well as CCRS, are also included in the curriculum. Other courses using the English language may include instruction in life skills, citizenship education, career exploration, employability skills (e.g., the OCTAE's Employability Skills Framework), workplace literacy, family literacy, bridge instruction and Integrated English Literacy/Civics (IEL/Civics). Student levels are based on proficiency as measured by ICCB–approved standardized tests. The curriculum is designed to accommodate the concept of individualized instruction.

  - Note: Bridge Programs are a required component in Illinois and are considered a vehicle by which to achieve the adult education and literacy activities. Bridge Programs are described below.

- Workforce Preparation Activities/Career Exploration/Awareness Skills curriculum may include instruction in workplace language, career readiness/exploration, development of career plans, career awareness job readiness, career development including, the use of career cluster essential knowledge and skills statements, job skills and career interest inventories, soft skills, preparation for college entrance exams and career planning. This also includes instruction related to employment opportunities, access to job information and self-analysis techniques. The instruction is offered at every level of instruction (ABE/ASE/ELA), but each level will only include the most appropriate information for the level of instruction.

- Integrated English Literacy/Civics (IEL/Civics) includes education to immigrants and other limited proficient populations and are 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. 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 IEL/Civics 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.
- Integrated Education and Training (IET) is comprised of three components: adult education and literacy activities, workforce preparation activities and workforce training. Each of these components is offered concurrently for educational and career advancement. Illinois currently has two models of integrated education and training The ICAPS (Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System) Mode1 and Model 2.
    - 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. VOC training leads to an industry-recognized certificate or credential related to a specific career pathway. The training must provide entry–level workforce skills which lead to employment and prepare adults with limited academic or limited English skills to enter and succeed in credit-bearing post-secondary education and training leading to career-path employment in high–demand, middle- and high-

skilled occupations. A program may choose to offer Vocational Skills Training in addition to the required instructional categories listed above. The recommended method to offer VOC training is as a part of either a bridge program or through an Integrated Education and Training (IET)/ and/or Integrated Literacy and Civics Education (IL/CE) programs.

- 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:
    - Adult education as defined above.
    - 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.
    - Child education includes age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences (includes early childhood programs, school programs and/or childcare). Only three components—adult education, parenting education, and parent/child activities—can be funded by ICCB Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) funds. The fourth component—child education—must be funded by an appropriate child education partner.
- 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.
- Workplace Adult Education and Literacy may include coordination of workplace education projects that are designed to meet the unique needs of participating workers and employers. Workplace Adult Education and Literacy refers to an individual's ability to read, write, speak, compute and otherwise solve problems with enough proficiency to meet every day 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).
- **Note: A Bridge Programs is not one of the adult education and literacy activities. However, they are a used as a vehicle to achieve these activities. Bridge Programs are defined below.**

- Bridge Programs/Career Pathways services must be incorporated into the instructional process for all adult learners and at all educational functioning levels. This includes the incorporation of career awareness, career development activities designed to assist learners in making informed decisions regarding making smooth transitions to post-secondary education. The use of bridge programs has been piloted and has shown promise in introducing adult learners to different career options while increasing basic skills. Bridge programs provide adult education learners with contextualized occupation-specific basic skills needed to successfully transition to post-secondary education and employment in high-growth industries. The ICCB and other key state agencies and stakeholders, developed a bridge definition that is used to ensure consistency in use statewide. This group defined a bridge as a program that prepares adults with limited academic or limited English skills to enter and succeed in credit-bearing post-secondary education and training leading to career–path employment in high-demand, middle- and high-skilled occupations. The goal of bridge programs is 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. Three core elements are required to be included as part of a bridge program:
    - Contextualized instruction that integrates basic reading, math and language skills and industry/occupational knowledge. 2. Career development that includes career exploration, career planning within a career area, and understanding the world of work (specific elements depend upon the level of the bridge program and on whether participants are already incumbent workers in the specific field). 3. Transition services that provide students with the information and assistance they need to successfully navigate the process of moving from adult education or remedial coursework to credit or occupational programs. Services may include (as needed and available) academic advising, study skills, coaching, referrals to individual support services, e.g., transportation and childcare.

Allowable Support Services Activities:

- Student transportation services are for students enrolled in Adult Education and Literacy eligible activities. Every effort should be made to coordinate these services with other entities within the community.
- Childcare is the care of children during the time an adult education student is engaged in eligible adult education and literacy instructional activities. The student must be the primary caregiver of the child. Every effort should be made to coordinate these services with other entities within the community.
- Guidance and counseling are activities with students which may include: (1) Learning styles inventories, (2) Evaluating the abilities of students, (3) Assisting students to make their own educational and career pathway choices, including career awareness and development activities, etc. (4) Assisting students in personal and social development, (5) Assisting staff members in planning and conducting guidance programs and (6) Providing transition services that will lead to post-secondary education and training, bridge programs, integrated education and training programs, employment and other activities of statewide significance. Social work activities include: (1) Improvement of students' attendance, (2) Interventions to assist students dealing with the problems involving home, school, and community, (3) Provision of referral assistance and (4) Retention strategies.
- Assistive and adaptive equipment or special printed materials are for adult education and literacy students with special learning needs.

- Assessment and testing are activities to measure skill gains of individual students enrolled in eligible adult education and literacy activities through the use of the approved assessments for Illinois Adult Education and Literacy. However, other diagnostic assessments designed to place students in appropriate and eligible adult education and literacy instruction are allowable.

Special Rule

Each eligible agency awarding a grant or contract under this section shall not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that such agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

C. CORRECTIONS EDUCATION AND OTHER EDUCATION OF INSTITUTIONALIZED INDIVIDUALS

c. Corrections Education and other Education of Institutionalized Individuals

Describe how the State will establish and operate programs under section 225 of WIOA for corrections education and education of other institutionalized individuals, including how it will fund, in accordance with the requirements of Title II, subtitle C, any of the following academic programs for:

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.

Each eligible agency using funds provided under Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution must give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within 5 years of participation in the program.

The state agency allocates funds to eligible correctional institutions using the same grant process criteria as the other eligible providers under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and carries the same provisions for direct and equitable access. The same criterion used to determine an applicant's eligibility under Section 231 also applies to all applicants of demonstrated effectiveness listed under Section 203.5, including Correctional Education Institutions. Each applicant will be evaluated using the same rubric and scoring process. Priority will be given to applicants who provide services to incarcerated individuals

who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of enrolling in the instructional program.

Eligible instructional activities and services are provided in correctional institutions throughout the state. The services provided include an assessment of an individual's educational functioning levels to determine mandated adult education and literacy instructional programming needed in reading, writing, math and speaking to earn a High School Equivalency (HSE) Certificate or High school credit as well as the acquisition of the English language.

The ICCB funds adult education in correctional institutions and is designed to provide 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 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: Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE) and English Language Acquisition (ELA). These services are based on the needs of the institution. Other services that may be offered include: (1) adult education and literacy activities; (2) special needs assessment, as determined by the eligible agency; (3) integrated education and training or bridge programs; (4) career pathways; (5) concurrent enrollment; and (6) peer tutoring. 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 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.

D. INTEGRATED ENGLISH LITERACY AND CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

d. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Program

Describe how the State will establish and operate Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education programs under Section 243 of WIOA, for English language learners who are adults, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, including how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be delivered in combination with integrated education and training activities.

Describe how the State will fund, in accordance with the requirements of title II, subtitle C, an Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program and how the funds will be used for the program.

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.

The State will use Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IEL/CE) funds 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. Adults include professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries. Of the participants enrolled in an Integrated English and Civics Education program, 60% will be enrolled in an integrated education and training program as identified under WIOA Title II. Programs will also be required to integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.

IELCE Competition and Funding

IELCE funding was competed and awarded in the Spring of 2021 for an initial year of funding in FY2022 and Renewal Years in FY2023 and FY2024. The same process used for Section 225 and 243 funds was used. Applicants will be required to submit a non-competitive continuation application annually. Continued funding will be contingent upon the availability and a sufficient appropriation of both federal and state resources, the applicant's demonstrated effectiveness in serving the target population and achieving the required performance and programmatic outcomes; and the ability to meet all grant requirements. This competition was published widely and aligned with the Adult Education and Family Literacy Competition. Potential applicants were provided with technical assistance through a bidder's conference and the ICCB maintained a frequently asked questions resource, developed a thorough rubric and trained grant readers, used the same process to determine demonstrated effectiveness for IELCE grants, and integrated local workforce board reviews. The ICCB Adult Education Staff meets bi-weekly with the Illinois Technical Assistance Team, a collaboration with all core WIOA partners. This collaboration ensured system integration and collaboration in the LWIB review process.

The state evaluated the applications under Section 243 based upon the ability to deliver blended English Language Acquisition (ELA)/Civics as a part of instruction as well as each applicant must address the required competencies and concurrent enrollment in an Integrated Education and Training (including Workforce Preparation Skills) instruction. Programs may offer instruction in partnership with other entities in order to achieve the requirements of the law. For example: A program (community-based organization (CBO)) may decide to deliver contextualized instruction in their literacy program and another program (CBO or community college) may provide the related training activities or workforce preparation activities. Applications were also evaluated on how well instruction is connected to in-demand industries.

Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education activities will be funded in combination with integrated education and training activities. A funding model requiring IEL/CE learners to be co-enrolled in an IET, with progressive numbers of ELL learners in IET programs throughout the continuation years. Additional funding requirements included considerations for the number of eligible individuals enrolled, the number of competencies earned and IET enrollment. IELCE activities were awarded to providers that address how their programs will:

- prepare adults including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that leads to economic self-sufficiency;
- integrate with the local workforce development systems to carry out the activities of the program;

- address the civic competencies; and
- demonstrate the population need in the area; and the integration of Integrated education training and workforce preparation skills within the program.

Demonstrated Effectiveness:

The same criterion used to determine an applicant's eligibility under Section 231 also applied to all applicants of demonstrated effectiveness listed under Section 203.5. Each applicant was evaluated using a rubric and scoring process that is in accordance with the activities established under Section 243 and also included the thirteen considerations under law as well as one consideration under state guidelines. Applicants were required to establish demonstrated effectiveness by providing performance data on its record of the skills of individuals in English language acquisition, credential attainment, and employment after 2nd and 4th quarter exit.

To ensure programmatic alignment and integration with the local workforce system, Local Workforce Board representatives reviewed the submitted applications. The ICCB staff worked collaboratively with each LWIB, providing a rubric and guidance through a technical assistance webinar to prepare individuals for the review process. Additionally, in each grant narrative, applicants were required to address how their proposed activities address with the local workforce system.

Design of IELCE Programs

Integrated English Literacy and civics education, in combination with integrated education and training activities are 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. As a part of this requirement, Illinois Adult Education requires those enrolled in Integrated English Literacy Civics (IEL/Civics) to demonstrate competency in achieving outcomes. As part of the application process, Adult Education Providers addressed Illinois' specific IEL/Civics Competencies in their proposals. Each applicant addressed competencies such as the Democratic Process, Community Resources, U.S. School System, Housing, Employment and Consumer Economics.

Competencies

Illinois Adult Education requires those enrolled in Integrated English Literacy Civics (IEL/Civics) to demonstrate competency in achieving outcomes. The state has developed competencies in the following areas and includes the Democratic Process, Community Resources, U.S. School System, Housing, Employment and Consumer Economics. The goal of IEL/Civics is to provide integrated programs of service that incorporate English literacy and civics education to help immigrants and other Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations to effectively participate in education, work and civic opportunities in this country as well as the rights and responsibilities of citizens.

Each applicant must address programmatic requirements through a submitted and approved Work Plan which provided to ICCB Adult Education Staff. This plan is used throughout the year as a mechanism to ensure programs have the technical assistance needed to develop Integrated Education and Training programs that prepare adults for, and place such adults in unsubsidized employment that is also aligned with local workforce needs. Ongoing technical assistance focusing on workforce training such as Bridge Programming and Integrated Career and Academic System, Illinois' version of IETs, is made available to all IELCE funded programs through Illinois' Professional Development Network.

Special Note: Programs that provide civics education only in conjunction with English Literacy instruction must do so under Section 231 and must use state funding only.

IELCE Integration with Local Workforce Development Systems

Title II staff are represented on the Illinois Workforce Investment Board and engage in bi-weekly 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. In FY22, the Professional Development Network, in partnership with the ICCB data staff, will create a comprehensive training on using data to drive program development. Through this established program, and ongoing supports, IELCE funded programs will have access to the tools needed to fully integrate their workforce training with local and regional demands.

E. STATE LEADERSHIP

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT THE REQUIRED STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA

e. State Leadership

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 provide services that have been identified previously under this plan shall include: the provision of technical assistance to eligible providers of adult education and literacy activities receiving funds under this title, including— (i) the development and dissemination of instructional and programmatic practices based on the most rigorous or scientifically valid research available and appropriate, in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language acquisition programs, distance education, and staff training; (ii) the role of eligible providers as a one-stop partner to provide access to employment, education, and training services; and (iii) assistance in the use of technology, including for staff training, to eligible providers, especially the use of technology to improve system efficiencies.

- The ICCB will assist programs in the coordination and delivery of key services within the one-stop delivery system ensuring integrated service delivery and employment engagement. The ICCB will partner with the National Governors Association, the National Association of State Directors of Adult Education, and all other state agencies to ensure continued alignment with the Illinois Unified Plan, the Illinois Strategic Plan, Perkins V, and other organizations/state agencies as the plans and programs evolve. Services may include instructional, assessment, support and referral services. The ICCB will develop and provide relevant training to assist locals in the development of partnerships within the one-stop system. 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 students. The ICCB will continue to assist local programs in the development of career pathway programs and will identify tools and develop the curriculum needed to support students entering career pathway programs.

- The support of a statewide Professional Development. Utilizing federally allocated State Leadership Funds, Illinois adult education will maintain a Professional Development and

Training Center (PDTC) to provide professional development. The ICCB will continue to work with the PDTC to identify professional development needs of the state, based upon regional assessments and local program data. While the PDTC addresses a host of professional development needs, each also has its own unique priority to address the goals in the state. These goals include: ongoing professional development at the state, local and regional level to improve the quality of adult education instruction; participation in reading research projects; enhancement to the statewide instructional content standards; and the development of bridge programs, which includes the design, curriculum and instruction. The ICCB will continue to evaluate professional development and training that will better align with WIOA and the Adult Education Strategic Plan activities. The ICCB will also explore other ways in which to enhance instructional practices in the classroom. This may include evaluation of classroom activities, student and teacher surveys, development of regional approaches to support classroom implementation of standards and other strategies, and development of advisory and ad-hoc committees to address the education, employment and literacy skills.

- The ICCB will seek opportunities to promote innovation. Examples may include 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. The ICCB will also provide training to local adult education programs in the development of partnerships within the one-stop system. The agency will work with state workforce board and one-stop system to determine appropriate training needed across partner organizations. The ICCB will host a variety of regional planning summits/forums/workshops for all partners to enhance and align partnerships in the delivery of services. In addition to the research activities identified, the ICCB will continue to participate in studies and research projects that are designed to provide a better understanding of how to enhance Illinois adult education. Also, the ICCB will conduct studies that will allow innovation to occur at the state and local levels. Lastly, the ICCB will encourage partnership research across partner agencies to determine how to best serve the student/client.

- The ICCB utilizes a statewide data collection system (DAISI, Data and Information System Illinois) to monitor the performance of all Title II-funded adult education and literacy providers. The data collected in DAISI is then analyzed and used 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. Each provider must complete fiscal/administrative and programmatic risk assessments, which determine whether a program should have increased requirements for reporting and monitoring, as a part of the grant application process. Additional monitoring takes place in the form of desktop monitoring and through regional support visits by ICCB Staff to program sites to determine 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. Information about models and proven or promising

practices are disseminated to providers throughout the state through the use of electronic mailing lists and also at bi-annual Administrators' Meetings held by the ICCB for this purpose as well as to engage providers in statewide efforts. A variety of monitoring activities will be used in order to ensure programs ability to achieve outcomes as well as the use of corrective action plans for those programs who are low performing.

In addition to the DAISi system and monitoring performance of excepted he ICCB will participate in ongoing professional development as it relates to evaluation such as participating in the NRS Evaluation Learning Community and the Evaluation Peer Learning Cohort. The goal of participating in these trainings is to continue to utilize promising practices to improve data collection and evaluation strategies.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT PERMISSIBLE STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA, IF APPLICABLE

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 develop and continue to enhance high-quality professional development to support instruction provided to local adult education programs. Professional development will be developed or will continue in the following areas: Leadership Excellence Academy (LEA) for administrators and state staff in the overall evaluation of program instruction and services provided; Evidence-Based Reading Instruction (STAR) (i.e., enhanced toolkit); Content Standard Development, Enhancement, and Implementation (i.e., Standard Proficient Trainings and Career Navigator Trainings) Curriculum and Lesson Plan Development; ELA; Civic Education; Integrated Literacy and Civics; Competency Development and Implementation; Transitions and Workplace Education; development of Instructional Leaders and Instructor Academies; Increase Technology-based professional development including exploration of hybrid adult education instructional models; Integrated Education and Training; Bridge Programs; Career Awareness; Math, Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening; host conferences, workshops, advisory committees, training and meetings that promote career pathways education, transitions, adult literacy; develop tools and conduct relevant research that show the connection of professional development to instruction; and other activities that support the ongoing enhancement of adult education instruction.

- The development and implementation of technology applications, translation technology, or distance education, including professional development to support the use of instructional technology. ICCB will continue to examine technology use at all levels in order to expand the reach of instruction. This includes technology use by administrators, instructors, students as well as maximized use in the classroom. The ICCB will expand its offering of online professional development. Lastly, the ICCB will expand its use of digital literacy at all levels, but more specifically the English Language Acquisition (ELA) levels of instruction through participation in the Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS) English as a Second Language (ESL) Pro Project and Ed Tech IDEAL Consortium for Distance Education.

- Develop content and models for integrated education and training and career pathways. The ICCB will explore models that link or connect student interests to instruction, including pre-apprenticeship models. This may include but is not limited to a framework that will assist programs in helping students identify career needs and opportunities, development of a process that will place students on a pathway, career awareness and

instruction map designed to illustrate a student's movement from basic instruction through career pathway programs and portfolio development. The ICCB will continue to add additional Integrated Education and Training (IET), Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IEL/CE), 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.

- Development of Toolkits to assist programs in the development and implementation of Programs and Services. This may include support services, work-based learning, pre/apprenticeship, sector/industry-recognized credentials, IEL/CE models, Adult Education, IET, and English language services.
- The development and implementation of a system to assist in the transition from adult education to post-secondary education, including linkages with post-secondary educational institutions or institutions of higher education. Development of a more structured approach for navigators throughout the state. The ICCB will work through its' Area Planning Council process and the Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIB) to develop a streamlined approach to link students to post-secondary education, transitions between and among programs, partnering on bridge programs and integrated programs, employment and other services and activities.
- Activities to promote workplace adult education and literacy activities. The ICCB continues to 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. The ICCB will research workplace programs that will connect students to employment and will work closely with the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) to identify statewide curricula in other career pathway areas to be developed.
- Collaborative and service integration activities that will build upon statewide efforts to align with State Plans. These may include the Unified Plan, Workforce Education, Perkins V State Plan, Workforce Board Strategic Plan, the Governor's Executive Order #3 and Economic Development Plan, P-20 efforts, and the state's completion agenda.
- Developing and piloting of strategies for improving teacher quality and retention. The ICCB will conduct research on the professional development requirements in an effort to enhance the quality of instruction as well as professionalize the field of adult education. Currently, the ICCB requires twelve professional development hours annually for instructors. The ICCB will also conduct research on full–time vs. part–time instructors in programs and the impact on performance outcomes. The ICCB will identify and pilot strategies geared toward teacher quality and also provide curriculum and lesson planning training to increase the knowledge of instructors. The ICCB will develop instructional staff pathways to improve teacher quality and retention. This will include master teachers, transition specialists, content specialists and standard proficient instructors.
- Integration of literacy and English language with occupational skill training, including promoting linkages with employers. The ICCB will conduct research on effective models and pilot the development and implementation of these models.
- 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. The ICCB completed the alignment of ELA standards to CCRS in 2017 but will continue to make modifications as needed. The ICCB has developed an Essential Skills Framework and will work to ensure programs have incorporated the framework into instructional practices. The development and implementation of programs and services to meet the needs of adult learners with learning disabilities or English language learners, which may include new and promising assessment tools and strategies that are based on scientifically valid research, where appropriate and identify the needs and capture the gains of such students at the lowest achievement levels. The ICCB will continue to explore options to identify and assess the instructional needs of students. This can be accomplished by exploring other diagnostic tools that can be used with literacy students, those with learning disabilities and ELA learners. The ICCB will continue to provide Special Learning Need trainings to local programs as well as the American with Disability Coordinator Training to all adult education programs throughout the state. The ICCB will partner with the Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services in the identification of new tools and strategies that can be integrated.

Outreach to Instructors, students and employers. This may include surveys as well as partnering with other partner agencies to understand the needs of employers. The ICCB will continue to identify instructors who have incorporated promising practices into instruction to help develop strategies that can be used in the classroom. Currently, the ICCB uses instructors/coordinators in the development of standards, curriculum and lesson planning activities. ICCB will continue to work with employers in the development of career pathway curriculum development and connecting students to employment. ICCB will also develop a process of getting student input on adult education-related activities. Other activities of statewide significance that promote the purpose of this title. The ICCB will continue to work with CTE, business and industry and the state workforce board to develop and connect workforce activities within the state. Also, the ICCB will continue to identify the areas of need and enhance the system of adult education to promote career pathway and literacy activities, especially for those at the lowest literacy levels.

The ICCB may also fund other permissible activities such as:

- Developing and disseminating curricula, including curricula incorporating the essential components of reading instruction as such components relate to adults;
- The provision of assistance to eligible providers in developing and implementing programs that achieve the objectives of WIOA and Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and in measuring the progress of those programs in achieving such objectives, including meeting the state adjusted levels of performance; or
- The development and implementation of a system to assist in the transition from adult education to post-secondary education, including linkages with post-secondary educational institutions or institutions of higher education.
- Pilot projects and other related projects that show integration and alignment of services by partnering with core and required partners under WIOA.
- The development of activities for the strategies listed under the Unified State Plan.
- The development of activities to embed technology skills and the use of a variety of distance education tools into instruction.
- Using technology to disseminate best practices.
- The integration of English Language Acquisition instruction with the Civics Education Competencies.

- The development of strategic planning activities that align adult education to workforce and post-secondary education, training activities and WIOA related activities.

F. ASSESSING QUALITY

f. Assessing Quality

Describe how the eligible agency will assess the quality of providers of adult education and literacy activities under title II and take actions to improve such quality, including providing the activities described in section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA.

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) will evaluate and has evaluated programs on a continuous basis and through a variety of processes. Programs will be assessed and monitored throughout the year through quarterly report submissions, program visits, the Desktop Monitoring Tool, fiscal and compliance monitoring, and through the Data and Information System – Illinois (DAIS–I). In addition, programs failing to meet set targets for the National Reporting System are subject to being placed on a probation or watch list which is designed to identify and assist struggling programs to improve. Programs placed on probation must submit a corrective action plan. Furthermore, a State Policy and Procedure manual is widely distributed and is posted on the ICCB website,
http://www2.iccb.org/iccb/wp-content/pdfs/adulted/FY22_AEFL_Provider_Manual.pdf

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.

During the course of the fiscal year all programs will be reviewed through a combination of program visits by ICCB staff, the state's Desktop Monitoring Tool and approved data collection system. Staff, on an ongoing basis, will review program data and inform programs where there is a need for improvement. In addition, a probation and watch status was instituted in 2014 that will be continued to ensure a program receives significant technical assistance to improve program outcomes.

Fiscal and compliance monitoring will be conducted throughout the year to determine compliance with federal and state requirements. Programs will be contacted to schedule the review. Reviews may be onsite and or may be handled through online submissions. Specific information on fiscal and compliance monitoring will be provided to programs in advance of the monitoring review

The ICCB will provide data and procedures for funded providers to evaluate their own performance in comparison to statewide performance and in comparison to funded providers with comparable students, goals and/or activities. The providers will use data reports that have been developed through the data collection system. These include:

- Student Error reports that indicate errors on a student record and where to locate/ correct the specific error(s).
- Enrollment Reports that provide information about the number of students served and units generated in each instructional category by a specific funding source.
- Master List Reports generate a list by funding source of students by student name and Social Security number. The Master List Reports also provide a breakdown of the

enrollment hours generated by students in the specific funding source by instructional category.

- Program Status Reports include all students eligible to be served through Adult Education and Financial Literacy (AEFL) funds. It is the most inclusive of the required ICCB reports and provides demographic and testing data that can be used to foster continuous program improvement.
- National Reporting System (NRS) Performance Reports exist in two versions. The first version reflects all activity including all post-testing. The second version applies an attendance hour filter to the testing results. When the second version is generated, the results of any post-testing conducted before the minimum attendance hours were met as established by the test publishers will be excluded from the report. The second version (with AH filter) reflects what programs will be granted credit for in terms of NRS completion rates.
- In addition, several Static reports are available that provide a snapshot of program performance at a more granular level. These include:
    - AEFLA Certification of Units Report represents the total number of students the program will be granted credit for in terms of the ICCB-AEFL funding formula. It represents the total number of students meeting the criteria for inclusion (In Open-Entry classes, have accrued at least 7.5 attendance hours in a single class section, prior to dropping. In Fixed-Entry classes, have been successfully retained through the mid–term date and have accrued at least 7.5 attendance hours in that single class section, prior to dropping) and be served through an approved funding source.
    - Cohort: Follow-up Measure 3–Earned High School Equivalency (HSE) or Secondary Credential report includes all learners who take all HSE tests and exit during the Fiscal Year and all learners who are enrolled in adult high school (HSCR classes) at the high Adult Secondary Education (ASE) High Level and exit during the Fiscal Year.
    - Cohort: Follow-up Measure 4–Entered Post-secondary report includes students from the group that was counted as a success for the Earned HSE/High School Diploma cohort or that entered the program with a Secondary Credential or was enrolled in a course specifically designed to transition them to post-secondary education and exited during the Fiscal Year.
    - IEL/Civics Report provides information about the number of students supported with IEL/ Civics dollars and the competencies completed by these students.
    - High School Equivalency data match report by student, or program record includes all data matched HSE results for all students that provide consent.
    - Generation Reports detail the total number of student enrollments, attendance hours and class/individual persistence rates by funding source, instructional category or other classification.
    - Instructor Individual and Summary Outcomes Reports include students that meet the criteria to be in the Program Status Report. In addition, to be claimed with a specific instructor, the student must meet the usual requirements plus have at least 7.5 attendance hours with that instructor (and have reached the midterm successfully if enrolled in fixed entry classes).

- NRS Core Performance Measures reports provide a detailed breakdown of educational functioning level (EFL) gains and separate students into four distinct categories to illustrate areas where program performance meets targeted levels.
- Professional Development Reports illustrate levels of compliance to minimum professional development requirements by instructors. Tracks quantity, type and cost of professional development hours accrued in a fiscal year.
- Program Outcomes Report (Building) indicates student post-test percentage, percentage of students gaining levels, average attendance hours at specified building by instructional category, persistence rates for students and overall average attendance hours by students at specified building.

The ICCB also assesses the quality of the professional development programs that are designed to improve instruction in all areas. The assessment process is done through evaluations of training sessions and research conducted to determine outcomes and levels of learning. 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. 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. For example, plans are in place to fully examine and assess the existing professional development to determine what to keep, what needs to be developed and added and what needs to be retired. The expansion of integrated education and training and the growing focus on career pathway education and training necessitate the most up-to-date, relevant, and effective training resources and materials. The reports noted above will also be used to determine professional development needs as well as to assess outcomes as it relates to professional development.

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM CERTIFICATIONS

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

The State Plan must include	Include
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	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 requirement);	Yes
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

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**

APPLICANT'S ORGANIZATION	Enter information in this column
First Name	Dr. Brian
Last Name	Durham
Title	Executive Director
Email	Brian Durham <Brian.Durham@illinois.gov>

SECTION 427 OF THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISIONS ACT (GEPA)

Section 427: GEPA -General Education Provisions Act (GEPA):

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) has several provisions under the State of Illinois Grant Agreement and requires, "the grantee, its employees and subcontractors under subcontract made pursuant to this Agreement, shall comply with all applicable provision of State and Federal laws and regulations pertaining to nondiscrimination, sexual harassment and equal employment opportunity including laws and regulations and subsequent amendments, "as well as adding to this agreement Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA). The ICCB will also require each grant recipient to maintain documentation to ensure compliance with Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA).

The following information is included in the grant application for federal and state funding:

- The ICCB shall require the Grantee shall certify that they prohibit and covenant that they will continue to prohibit discrimination and certify that no person, otherwise qualified, is denied employment, services, or other benefits on the basis of: (i) political or religious opinion or affiliation, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identification, race, color, creed, or national origin; (ii) sex or age, except when age or sex constitutes a bona fide occupational qualification; or (iii) the physical or mental disability of a qualified individual with a disability.
- In addition, the ICCB requires the Grantee to specifically agree to comply fully with the non-discrimination and equal opportunity provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 USC 12101 et seq); the Nontraditional Employment for Women Act of 1991; title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended; section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; the Age Discrimination Act of 1967, as amended; title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended; and with all applicable requirements.
- Programs and projects funded in total or in part through this grant will operate in compliance with State and Federal Regulations (CFR) 34, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA), the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Two examples of the GEPA provision:

1. The ICCB endorses the principles of equal opportunity, affirmative action, and diversity. ICCB fully supports affirmative action objectives and strives to achieve a diverse workforce at all levels of the agency which reflects the communities the ICCB serves. The ICCB is committed to equal opportunity without regard to race, religion, color, gender, sexual orientation, age, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, marital status, order of protection status, military status, disability, pregnancy, or any other basis of discrimination prohibited by applicable local, state, or federal law.

2. In addition to compliance with federal EEO statutes, ICCB complies with applicable State and local laws governing nondiscrimination. This policy applies to all terms and conditions of employment, including but not limited to the following.

    a. Recruitment, hiring, placement, transfer, promotion, and demotion

    b. Training, development, and educational assistance

    c. Compensation and benefits

    d. Educational, social, and recreational programs

    e. Discipline

    f. Termination of employment. Employment decisions, subject to the legitimate business requirements of ICCB, are based solely on the individual's qualifications, merit, behavior, and performance.

3. This commitment to diversity is also characterized by an inclusive culture where ICCB and its employees value each employee's contributions and strive to develop the talents of all employees. The development of a diverse workforce enables ICCB and its employees to draw upon a wide spectrum of ideas for achieving and exceeding agency goals.

4. The Illinois Community College Board will ensure that the grantee maintains documentation as to how they will make available to adults with limited English proficiency information that describes the programs and services; and how the grantee will communicate this information clearly and concisely in a manner that is understandable to an individual who is potentially enrolling in the program.

5. The Illinois Community College Board will ensure that all program applicants have an ICCB trained ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) coordinator onsite. The ICCB will further require all grantees to provide evidence of program strategies, keep and maintain written procedures and auditable records for the delivery of support services to individual with disabilities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), and (WIOA Sec. 121(c)(2)(A)(iv). Programs are responsible for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The ICCB requires the following.

    a. Each program must have a designated ADA coordinator.

    b. The designated ADA coordinator must satisfactorily complete the annual online ICCB Adult Education and Literacy ADA Coordinator training.

    c. Each program must provide public notice.

    d. Each program must have an established grievance policy.

    e. Each program must conduct a self-evaluation.

    f. Each program must develop a transition plan regarding accessibility.

    g. Each program must submit to the ICCB an approved annual report in a specified format.

An ADA Coordinator Manual is available to ADA Coordinators who have completed the training. General guidelines for programs serving students with learning disabilities and other special learning needs may be found at: https://www.iccb.org/iccb/wp-content/pdfs/adulted/LD%20Guidelines%20Complete.pdf.

Adult Education and Literacy programs must provide "reasonable accommodations" to qualified persons with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations (sometimes called auxiliary aids and services) are accommodations that make the program accessible to individuals with a disability. Such accommodations must be afforded to a qualified individual with a disability unless the service provider can demonstrate that the accommodation would impose "undue hardship" on the program or constitute a substantial alteration in the nature of the program.

Examples of accommodations that educational programs may provide for adults with learning disabilities, depending on the particular disability and need for accommodation, include, but are not limited tof:

- Extended time for completing tasks.
- Books on tape.
- Reduced visual or auditory distractions, such as a private room for tests.
- Auxiliary aids and assistive technology, such as calculators, highlighters, and computers.
- Large print materials.
- Alternative format for instructions, such as audiotape instructions in addition to printed instructions for taking a test.
- Note takers.

ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	27.7	26.9	27.8	27.0
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	28.4	27.5	28.5	27.6
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	4,651	4,925	4,652	4,926
Credential Attainment Rate	27.1	30.8	27.2	30.9
Measurable Skill Gains	44.8	37.0	44.9	37.1
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]

1

"Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being developed and this data will not be entered in the 2022 State Plan modifications.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL)

A. INPUT OF STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

1. INPUT PROVIDED BY THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, INCLUDING INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN, RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COUNCIL'S REPORT, THE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER SATISFACTION, AND OTHER COUNCIL REPORTS THAT MAY HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED AS PART OF THE COUNCIL'S FUNCTIONS;

SRC Comment: The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is the advisory and oversight body for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. The SRC in collaboration with DRS makes recommendations for the planning and implementation of identified priorities. SRC recommends that the DR's Administrators provide quarterly updates on the status of performance outcomes in a manner that can be measured to establish baselines of realistic goals, identify budget issues that affect DRS, projected staffing levels, and barriers to filling vacancies. SRC continues to recommend regular Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) be conducted every three years. The SRC would like DRS to report to the SRC on the development, and implementation of new technologies to gather data, findings, goals, and action plans at the beginning of each quarter.

DRS Response: DRS agrees and will continue to provide quarterly updates to the Council, on the status of performance, staffing, and budget items that affect DRS funding, the needs assessment activities are extremely central to the success of the VR program. DRS has initiated a request for proposal to external survey research entities to conduct a more substantial process making it possible for DRS to conduct internal assessments regularly. It is expected that this survey would take place in 2022.

2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S RESPONSE TO THE COUNCIL'S INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS; AND

Responses are incorporated in the previous section.

SRC Comment: The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is the advisory and oversight body for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. The SRC in collaboration with DRS makes recommendations for the planning and implementation of identified priorities. SRC recommends that the DR's Administrators provide quarterly updates on the status of performance outcomes in a manner that can be measured to establish baselines of realistic goals, identify budget issues that affect DRS, projected staffing levels, and barriers to filling vacancies. SRC continues to recommend regular Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) be conducted every three years. The SRC would like DRS to report to the SRC on the development, and implementation of new technologies to gather data, findings, goals, and action plans at the beginning of each quarter.

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3. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S EXPLANATIONS FOR REJECTING ANY OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT OR RECOMMENDATIONS.

DRS did not reject any of the input provided by the Council.

SRC Comment: The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is the advisory and oversight body for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. The SRC in collaboration with DRS makes recommendations for the planning and implementation of identified priorities. SRC recommends that the DR's Administrators provide quarterly updates on the status of performance outcomes in a manner that can be measured to establish baselines of realistic goals, identify budget issues that affect DRS, projected staffing levels, and barriers to filling vacancies. SRC continues to recommend regular Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) be conducted every three years. The SRC would like DRS to report to the SRC on the development, and implementation of new technologies to gather data, findings, goals, and action plans at the beginning of each quarter.

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B. REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS

1. A LOCAL PUBLIC AGENCY WILL PROVIDE THE NON-FEDERAL SHARE OF COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WAIVER REQUEST;

The Division of Rehabilitation Services 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. 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.

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. DRS contract monitors are able to verify both federal and non-federal spending throughout the course of the fiscal year.

The following is a list of the third-party cooperative agreements now in place.

1. William Rainey Harper College. The purpose of this agreement is to provide post-secondary training to students in northern Cook County with hearing impairments, learning disabilities, and other disabilities who are eligible for VR program services. The college is a two-year public community college, which serves the northern part of Cook County. It is located in Palatine, Illinois.

2. The Evaluation and Development Center. The purpose of this agreement with the Board of Trustees of Southern Illinois University at Carbondale is to provide a continuing program of rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities in Southern Illinois. This agreement provides evaluation and placement, independent living, residential, information and referral, and rehabilitation engineering services to customers eligible for services from the VR program. This program primarily serves the Illinois counties of Franklin, Jackson, Jefferson, Johnson, Perry, Saline, Williamson, and Union.

3. Secondary Transitional Experience Program (STEP). The purpose of this program is to provide pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities through contractual arrangements with high schools, school districts and cooperatives across the state. In the current fiscal year, DRS has contracts with 149 local education entities. Of that number 133 are third-party cooperative agreements and 16 are some other form of contract.

Collectively, these arrangements result in provision of pre-employment transition services to over 10,000 students each year. As of January 2020, a total of 10,946 students were enrolled in STEP in 643 schools. STEP services include: job exploration counseling; workplace readiness training including social skills and independent living skills; counseling on postsecondary educational opportunities; instruction in self-advocacy; and a variety of work-based learning experiences both in the school and in the community.

Schools with Third-Party STEP Contracts in State Fiscal Year 2020 (July 1 2019 to June 30 2020)

Community Unit School District 95, Lake Zurich; Sangamon Area Special Education District, Springfield; Eastern Illinois Area Special, Charleston; Decatur Public School District 61, Decatur; Quincy Public Schools, Quincy; Jacksonville School District 117, Jacksonville; Livingston County Special Serv, Pontiac; Massac County Unit School District 1, Metropolis; Granite City Com Unit Sch Dst9, Granite City; JAMP Special Education Services, Grand Chain; East Alton Wood River Comm HS, Wood River; Anna Jonesboro Community, Anna; Alton Comm Unit School District, Alton; Geneseo Community Unit School, Geneseo; Belleville Township High, Belleville; Collinsville Community Unit, Collinsville; Williamson County Special, Marion; Mid-State Special Education, Morrisonville; Triad Comm Unit School District 2, Troy; South Eastern Special Educ, Ste Marie; Perandoe Special Education District, Red Bud; O'Fallon Township High School, O'Fallon; Mt Vernon Township High School, Mt Vernon; Frankfort Community Unit, West Frankfort; Mascoutah Community Unit, Mascoutah; County of Jackson, Murphysboro; Bradley Bourbonnais Community, Bradley; Bethalto Unit No 8, Bethalto; West Central Illinois Spec Educ Coop, Macomb; Regional Office of Education, Bloomington; Ball Chatham School District 5, Chatham; Kankakee School District 111, Kankakee; Lasalle-Peru Township High, La Salle; Woodford County Special Ed Assoc, Metamora; Canton Union School, Canton; Hancock-McDonough ROE 26, Macomb; Princeton Township High School, Princeton; Dixon Unit School District 170, Dixon; Rochester Community Unit School, Rochester; Ottawa Township High School, Ottawa; Streator Township High School, Streator; Putnam County Community Unit, Granville; Highland Community School District, Highland; Tri County Special Education, Murphysboro; Galesburg Community Unit School, Galesburg; Springfield School District 186, Springfield; Jersey County CUSD 100, Jerseyville; Tazewell Mason Counties Special Education Assn, Pekin; Vermilion Assoc Of Special Education, Danville; Northwest Special Education District, Elizabeth; Community Unit District No 203, Naperville; Ogle County Educational Coop, Byron; Wabash & Ohio Valley Se District, Norris City; School District U-46, Elgin; Elmhurst Com Unit Sch District 205, Elmhurst; Evanston Township High School, Evanston; Black Hawk Area Special Ed, East Moline; Edwardsville Community Unit, Edwardsville; DuPage High School District 88, Addison; Allendale Association, Lake Villa; Lockport Township High School, Lockport; Board 0f Education City 0f Peoria, Peoria; Community Unit School District 300, Algonquin; Community High School District 155, Crystal Lake; Freeport School District 145, Freeport; Lincoln-Way Com High School, New Lenox; Mid-Valley Spec Ed Joint Agreement, St Charles; Aurora West School District 129, Aurora; Special Education Association, Bartonville; Joliet Township HS District 204, Joliet; Leyden High School District No 212, Northlake; School District 234 Ridgewood High, Norridge; Fenton Community High School, Bensenville; Glenbard Township High School, Glen Ellyn; Cook County High School District, Berwyn; Niles Township District 219, Skokie; Aero Special Educ Coop, Burbank; Marengo High School District 154, Marengo; Southern Will County Coop 22, Joliet; Speed Special Ed Joint Agreement, Chicago Heights; Northwest Suburban Special, Mount Prospect; Southwest Cook Coop Spec Ed, Oak Forest; Proviso Township High School, Maywood; Oak Park & River Forest High School, Oak Park; Community High School District 99, Downers Grove; School Association For Special Educ,

Naperville; Plainfield School District 202, Plainfield; Maine Township High School, Park Ridge; Community Unit School District 200, Wheaton; Valley View Public Schools, Romeoville; LaGrange Area Dept of Special Education, LaGrange; Community High School District 218, Oak Lawn; Thornton Township H S District 205, South Holland; School District 131, Aurora; Northern Suburban Spec Ed District, Highland Park; Special Ed District of Lake County, Gages Lake; Roxana Community Unit School, Roxana; The Hope School, Springfield; West Washington Community, Okawville; Cahokia Comm School District 187, Cahokia; Community Unit School, Woodstock; Johnsburg Community Unit School, Johnsburg; Hinsdale Township High School, Hinsdale; Huntley School District No 158, Algonquin; County of Kankakee 5 Manteno, Manteno; Rural Champaign County Special Education Coop, Champaign; Warren Township High School, Gurnee; Cons High School District 125, Lincolnshire; Mattoon Community School, Mattoon; McHenry Community High School District 156, McHenry; Indian Prairie School District 204, Aurora; Harvard Community Unit, Harvard; Columbia Community Unit, Columbia; Zion Benton Township High School, Zion; Community Unit School District 308, Oswego; Lake Forest Comm H S District 115, Lake Forest; Grayslake Community High School, Grayslake; Plano Area Special Education, Plano; Knox-Warren District #801, Galesburg; Consolidated High School District 120, Mundelein; Yorkville Comm Unit District 115, Yorkville; Community Unit School District, Sterling; New Athens CUSD, New Athens; Antioch Community High School District 117, Lake Villa; North Greene County, White Hall; Community Unit School 220 Barrington, Barrington; Breese Central High School, Breese; County of Christian, Taylorville; Round Lake Area Schools District, Round Lake; Winnebago County District 323, Winnebago; Exceptional Children Have Opportunities, South Holland; South Macoupin Association, Stauton; Franklin Community Unit School, Franklin.

2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL APPROVE EACH PROPOSED SERVICE BEFORE IT IS PUT INTO EFFECT; AND

DRS develops third party agreements through a contractual process that specifies the rehabilitation services to be provided in each case. No services can be provided until the contractor agrees to the terms and conditions established by DRS, including (a) DRS maintains responsibility for establishing program eligibility and development of the IPE, and (b) the contractor must provide periodic reports of expenditures of non-federal funds.

3. REQUIREMENTS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN WILL APPLY TO THE SERVICES APPROVED UNDER THE WAIVER.

All State plan requirements will apply. DRS third party contracts contain the provision that all services provided must be consistent with the Unified State Plan.

C. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH AGENCIES NOT CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES UNDER THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

1. FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS;

General Information on Interagency Cooperation

Illinois DRS maintains cooperative agreements and working relationships with a wide variety of state, local and education entities that provide services to individuals with disabilities. DRS presently has interagency agreements in effect with several other state agencies. DRS has a long-standing agreement with the Illinois State Board of Education regarding the provision of pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities age 14 and older. This agreement was renewed in September 2019. The renewed agreement places greater emphasis on the roles of each party in preparing students for the transition to employment, education and training. Presently DRS provides VR services to around 11,000 students with disabilities each year through contracts with 149 school systems. DRS provides vocational rehabilitation services to another 1,000 high school students with disabilities outside of the contractual system. In 2018 DRS created the Fast Track Transition program operated through contracts

with 22 community providers to provide pre-employment transition services to potentially eligible students with disabilities. As of December 2019 DRS had served over 1,000 students through those contracts.

DRS also has agreements with 12 state universities and 36 community colleges in Illinois regarding funding for services to students who are VR customers. DRS has contracts and working agreements with around 115 not-for-profit community rehabilitation programs, which serve about 3,500 VR customers each year, providing job placement and supported employment services. DRS maintains working relationships with the Statewide Independent Living Council, as well as the Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living, and has contracts with centers for independent living to provide a variety of rehabilitation services.

2. STATE PROGRAMS 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 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 Illinois state government. IATP also provides consultation on specific items of assistive technology and their applicability for VR program purposes. DRS has also worked with IATP on innovative approaches to purchasing assistive technology 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 the Rehab Technology unit and a technology specialist schedules an evaluation as soon as possible. Under the program, counselors do not have to obtain bids and issue authorizations for assistive technology purchases. Those activities are managed by the Rehab Tech unit. Customers can keep technology provided through FTTE as long as they are working toward their VR goal or have obtained employment.

Examples of assistive technology available through FTTE include, but not limited to are the following: JAWS, ZoomText, Dragon Naturally Speaking, Kurzweil, OpenBook, Read and Write Gold, ergonomic chair, ergonomic desk, talking graphing/scientific calculator, portable video magnifier, large monitor, laptop, headphones, digital recorder, large key keyboard, and ergonomic mice.

3. 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. In PY2020 DRS intends 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.

4. NON-EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH; AND

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 community rehabilitation program agencies, although the contracts are not

targeted at that specific age group. Data for the current state fiscal year through December 2019 show that 41 percent of individuals served were under age 25, thus meeting the WIOA definition of youth with disabilities. DRS is exploring options for working with centers for independent living regarding their mandate to serve this population.

5. 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, which awards contracts to state use providers and coordinates purchases on behalf of state agencies. State law requires that state use vendors maintain a 14c certificate from the Department of Labor to pay subminimum wages to their workers. DRS is working with the Employment and Economic Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities Task Force in their efforts to reduce reliance on subminimum wages for state use positions. In 2021, the governor enacted an Executive order for State Use contracts to pay minimum wage.

D. COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

1. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S PLANS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AS WELL AS PROCEDURES FOR THE TIMELY DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL OF INDIVIDUALIZED PLANS FOR EMPLOYMENT FOR THE STUDENTS

The designated State unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of VR services, including pre-employment transition services, as well as procedures for the timely development and approval of individualized plans for employment for the students.

The DRS interagency agreement with the State Board of Education identifies financial roles and responsibilities for transition services. This agreement was renewed in September 2019. The overall responsibility for funding a student’s educational program lies with the local education authority, with support from the State Board of Education. DRS provides funding for vocational rehabilitation services, both through the STEP program and through general VR caseloads. DRS has contracts with 149 school districts, of which 133 involve the use of local school funds as VR matching funds. DRS coordinates and provides support for operational costs of regional Transition Planning Councils. DRS establishes qualifications for personnel it employs, and the State Board establishes qualifications for personnel working for school districts. Services provided to students with disabilities through STEP or through another arrangement focus on the key elements of pre-employment transition services as defined in WIOA: job exploration counseling; work-based learning experiences, counseling on postsecondary education, workplace readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy. While STEP places an emphasis on employer-paid work in the community, each of these aspects of transition services are available to students based on individual need.

Since 2009 DRS has worked with schools that have third-party cooperative agreements to ensure that federal VR requirements are followed in the provision of transition services. This has included a contract addendum as well as specific exhibits that are now incorporated into the contract package itself. DRS believes that these measures have resulted in an environment where all parties understand and are in compliance with these requirements. DRS provides consultation and technical assistance to educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post—school activities. This is accomplished through a number of mechanisms. DRS has assigned qualified rehabilitation counselors to act as liaison to every high school in Illinois. A fundamental part of the liaison role is to provide consultation and technical assistance to educators involved in the transition process. Transition Planning

Councils in each area of the state work with school districts to identify students with disabilities needing transition services. Through the counselor liaison relationships, students with disabilities have ready access to the VR program. DRS counselors provide consultation regarding vocational services and provide general information on disability services available in the community. DRS also provides financial support to the Next Steps parent-training program to assist families in understanding their children's needs regarding transition services.

In 2019 the state legislature assigned responsibility for coordinating transition issues to the Employment and Economic Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities Task Force. This entity is responsible for developing policies and disseminating data on the functioning of the transition services system as a whole. DRS is represented on the task force along with the State Board of Education and other state agencies involved in serving youth with disabilities. DRS also coordinates regional Transition Planning Councils, with school and community rehabilitation programs also participating. State law requires that transition planning begin at age 14 ½ and may extend until the student reaches the age of 22. DRS utilizes the same age range, 14 through 21, for pre-employment transition services.

DRS assists local schools in providing pre-employment transition services throughout the high school years. The Secondary Transitional Experience Program (STEP) is funded by DRS and provides financial support for students with disabilities during the high school years. Participation in DRS services for students in transition services, either through STEP or through another arrangement, is incorporated in the IPE during the time the student is in school. An IPE is developed no later than 90 days after the student has been certified as eligible for the VR program. Development of the IPE is coordinated with the development and of the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) and transition plan.

2. INFORMATION ON THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY WITH RESPECT TO:

A. CONSULTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO ASSIST EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES IN PLANNING FOR THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO POST-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING VR SERVICES;

The agreement provides that DRS shall provide consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for pre-employment transition services 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 to outreach to and identify students with disabilities in need of pre-employment transition services 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 (the Illinois State Board of Education or ISBE) and the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) 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-employment transition services. 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, as well as on materials relating to subminimum wage employment. The NTAC 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 STEP program. The intersection of those two networks is a key focus of the team's activities. In 2019 DRS and ISBE

arranged for the DRS team members to give a presentation to the Special Education Director's conference. A focus of the presentation was on the key points of and differences between STEP and the Fast Track Transition program. While STEP involves working with schools directly, Fast Track works with independent living centers as providers and serves potentially eligible students with disabilities. Another technical assistance effort involved DRS presenting to the 2019 Statewide Transition Conference, focusing on the outcomes achieved by students with disabilities participating in STEP. The annual conference draws both VR staff as well as special education staff from across the state.

B. TRANSITION PLANNING BY PERSONNEL OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCY THAT FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS;

The agreement provides that DRS and the State Board of Education 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.

C. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, OF EACH AGENCY, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR DETERMINING STATE LEAD AGENCIES AND QUALIFIED PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSITION SERVICES;

The agreement describes the role of the State Board of Education 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-employment transition services 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:

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.

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-employment transition services 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-employment transition services 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:

A) 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.

B) 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 supported employment funds under Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.

Service responsibilities of the parties are outlined in the agreement as follows:

A) ISBE shall have responsibility for providing outreach, guidance and coordination to LEAs regarding the provision of transition services, including pre-employment transition services; special education and related services under IDEA.

B) DHS-DRS shall have the responsibility for the provision of pre-employment transition services, transition services and vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to facilitate the transition students with disabilities from the receipt of education services, including pre-employment transition services, 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:

A) 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.

B) Rehabilitation Personnel. DHS-DRS shall be responsible for determining the qualifications of rehabilitation counselors, including school personnel and those providing pre-employment transition services to students, and transition services to students and youth with disabilities.

D. PROCEDURES FOR OUTREACH TO AND IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO NEED TRANSITION SERVICES.

The agreement provides that DRS will collaborate with local Transition Planning Committees to outreach to and identify students with disabilities in need of pre-employment transition services 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 Secondary Transitional Experience Program (STEP) is the primary means through which DRS provides pre-employment transition services. Students with disabilities are identified for participation in STEP through the schools they attend. Referrals are made by the school through the DRS case management system WebCM. Students participating in STEP have either an IPE or a 504 plan in place. Since students are referred to DRS by their schools, promotion of STEP is not so much outreach at the community level as ongoing efforts to school personnel regarding the benefits of the program. STEP schools are provided with parent consent forms and release of information forms for all prospective participants. Parents are also provided with printed materials describing the program, including eligibility requirements and the scope of services.

The Transition Planning Committees are composed primarily of school personnel, including administrators and teachers. DRS works with TPC members to promote understanding of STEP and pre-employment transition services. 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-employment transition services. Most Fast Track vendors are centers for independent living, which have ongoing connections to the communities they serve. While STEP 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. The emphasis in the first two years of the program has been on working with younger students with disabilities aged 14 and 15. 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 competitive integrated employment. 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-employment transition services 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.

E. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

DRS has contractual agreements with non-profit rehabilitation providers to provide services to VR customers. DRS works with the Facilities Advisory Council consisting of provider representatives to discuss issues and identify service needs in an ongoing manner. DRS conducts ongoing reviews of the effectiveness of service contracts with community agencies as part of a larger state-level effort to establish greater consistency in human service contracting. DRS contracts specify the responsibilities of the service providing agency, the performance basis of the contract, and the rates to be paid to the provider. DRS has contracts with around 115 not-for-profit community rehabilitation programs, which serve about 3,500 VR customers each year, providing job placement and supported employment services. DRS maintains working relationships with the Statewide Independent Living Council, as well as the Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living. DRS also has contracts with Centers for Independent Living to provide a variety of rehabilitation services, including pre-employment transition services under the Fast Track Transition program described elsewhere in this plan.

DRS develops community service contracts based on an assessment of need at the local level. Counselors and office supervisors work with regional administrators to identify specific areas of need and potential provider agencies qualified to provide services. To the extent possible, DRS has utilized one-time funding to establish new service contracts with providers. Illinois has developed an emphasis on performance-based or outcome-based funding for human services. DRS has converted over 85 percent of its VR-funded contracts to a performance basis in the last three years. This means that providers earn payment when individuals are working in the community, with the maximum payment based on the individual achieving at least 90 days of successful employment. DRS believes this method aligns the interests of the individual, the provider and the VR program. Since 2017 DRS has utilized a performance-based contract for supported employment in which the provider is paid to maintain employment for individuals with most significant disabilities. DRS has also developed performance-based contracts for five community agencies implementing Project Search efforts across the state.

F. ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.8(b)(4)). Describe the designated State agency's efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services and extended employment services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

For many years DRS has had a number of contracts and cooperative working agreements with community provider agencies to provide both supported employment and extended services to individuals with most significant disabilities. DRS has a standing committee of community rehabilitation programs known as the Facility Advisory Committee which meets regularly to discuss service arrangements, including but not limited to, supported employment. DRS believes that this group is the best mechanism for communicating with provider agencies and maintaining a grasp of the demand for these services. DRS also has an interagency cooperative team that involves the DHS Division of Mental Health to provide ongoing support services to individuals with serious mental illness.

In PY2020 DRS expects to continue the following levels of funding for supported employment activities. Using Title VI-B funds, DRS anticipates providing supported employment services to approximately 125 individuals, with total funding of $0.95 million, utilizing 30 provider agencies. Using Title I funds DRS anticipates providing supported employment to approximately 1,450 individuals, total funding $3.02 million, approximately 55 provider agencies.

DRS does not have a state-funded extended services program at this time. DRS will provide extended services to youth with a most significant disability for up to four years, until such time that the youth reaches the age of 25 and no longer meets the definition of "youth with a disability" using Title I and Title VI funds.

Beginning in PY2020 DRS expects to implement an agreement with the DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities under which individuals can receive long-term extended supports through the DD Medicaid waiver program.

DRS also intends to pursue ongoing changes in its supported employment program. Illinois has seen a trend where the number of individuals participating in supported employment services has declined in recent years. DRS plans to reverse this trend by focusing on youth with disabilities who require additional support to enter and retain employment. DRS also anticipates additional supported employment customers being referred from agencies providing sheltered work.

As noted above, Illinois has not had a system of paid extended services for at least 10 years. This is due to not having an appropriation for general revenue funds to support extended services. DRS has emphasized the need to pursue unpaid services, such as natural supports, to the greatest extent possible. DRS is pursuing an opportunity with the state IDD agency to provide paid extended services for those who have completed 24 months of VR-funded supported employment. It is expected that this agreement will be in place for PY2020. It is expected that community agencies connected to the state IDD agency will provide paid extended services under that agreement.

G. COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

1. VR SERVICES; AND

In 2019 DRS established a workforce development unit to focus on provision of services to businesses in Illinois. This unit employs 10 staff dedicated to business services, including six in the newly created title of business services consultant as well as three staff in the legacy title of

employment resource specialist. Staff have participated in training activities utilizing national and local experts, as well as through structured online training. Members of the team 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, including reasonable accommodations, hiring incentives and the benefits of vocational rehabilitation services. Workforce development staff also communicate with rehabilitation counselors about employment opportunities they identify through contacts with employers and business groups.

DRS has an office supervisor or other manager as member on each local workforce board, participating in regular meetings and developing an annual memorandum of understanding 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.

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 274 individuals hired and 129 successful employment outcomes at the 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.

DRS staff have also 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 most recent summit focused on the theme of service integration, the first such statewide conference in the nation according to WINTAC. Sessions include presentations on collaboration with business partners, economic development and sector partnerships, as well as maximizing local collaboration.

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 for working with large employers, which typically offer full-time employment at higher than average wages.

The Workforce Development Unit has been newly developed within DRS but the members of the Team all had previous State Employment with other agencies. Staff are able to take their previous experiences and build on them through training opportunities offered though DRS including Windmill Training, presentation by Deb Russell and participation in learning modules which cover all aspects of working with persons with disabilities and creating partnerships with businesses to hire persons with disabilities for their open positions. 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 competitive integrated employment opportunities.

Each member of the team has been assigned as a contact between community colleges and four year public universities based on the geographical boundaries they serve. Each team is also responsible for reaching out to community organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Clubs, Centers for Independent Living, Veteran's Group and similar groups to share information about our agency and how we can assist businesses within the community with their hiring needs. Team members also work with the Department of Economic Development representatives throughout the state of Illinois. Team members recently attended training from 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. Recently the unit has taken part in a statewide initiative with the Department of Corrections to start working with returning citizens sooner. Unit members will be participating 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 new opportunity is for unit members to take the lead on reverse job fairs, a method that has gained increasing attention in recent years. Four representatives of our agency attend the Rural Affairs Conference in February to learn more about meeting the unique needs of businesses in rural areas and downstate Illinois. Resources to assist these businesses were also shared and passed along to business customers served by our unit.

2. TRANSITION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, FOR STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES.

As noted elsewhere in the plan, most efforts surrounding provision of pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities are accomplished through third-party contracts with local school districts through the Secondary Transitional Experience Program (STEP). These contracts are performance based and include both paid and unpaid community work experiences for students. The arrangements with employers are developed by school personnel rather than by DRS directly. In the most recent state fiscal year, STEP students were involved in 2,698 full employer-paid work experiences and 1,351 other work experiences with community employers. Employers are actively involved in working with students and typically coordinate support with the STEP contractor. DRS monitors student work experiences through monthly reporting by the contractors, which include hours worked and earnings, if any. STEP contractors also work with employers to provide opportunities for job exploration.

In 2017 DRS established the Fast Track Transition program to provide pre-employment transition services to potentially eligible students with disabilities. In the first two years of the program the emphasis has been on serving 14- and 15-year-old students that have not typically been involved with STEP. In the current year 20 of 22 Fast Track contract agencies are centers for independent living. These contractors utilize local employers to provide opportunities for job exploration and workplace readiness training. As of January 2020 over 1,000 students were enrolled in Fast Track services.

In Illinois the agencies under contract to DRS, whether in STEP or Fast Track Transition, are responsible for identifying employers that will host work-based learning experiences. In STEP there is a tracking system for monitoring the hours each student works, along with contact information for the student's supervisor on the job. 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 students include: food preparation workers, stock clerks, cashiers, sales and related workers and retail salespersons.

H. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

1. THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN UNDER TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT;

In 2018 the Department of Human Services, including DRS, completed a written agreement that the Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS), the State Medicaid agency. This agreement ensures that DHS and HFS will work cooperatively to promote the employment of people with disabilities and operate various Medicaid waiver programs efficiently. In addition, HFS and DRS representatives serve on the Employment and Economic Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities Task Force. This entity was created by state law and executive orders to be the key entity for studying and making policy recommendations that will promote employment of persons with disabilities. In addition, the task force has been designated as the key entity for promoting the concept of Employment First in the state.

The language on employment for persons with disabilities in the agreement is general rather focused on the VR program. It includes DRS but also the services offered by the Division of Mental Health covered under the Medicaid plan and the Division of Developmental Disabilities under various Medicaid waivers. The agreement is part of the Illinois Employment First effort and is generally supportive of employment for persons with disabilities rather than promoting specific strategies.

2. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES; AND

The State agency for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities is the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), which like DRS is part of the Department of Human Services (DHS). The primary operations of DDD involve a set of home and community-based Medicaid waiver programs. In 2019 DDD and DRS drafted an intra-agency agreement that updated policy statements and provided for improved communication between the agencies. A key element of the agreement was an understanding on referrals dealing with supported employment services funded by each agency, as well as funding for ongoing supports once VR funded supported employment has been completed. This is the first formal statement of such a policy and should contribute to more effective use of resources by both agencies. DRS believes that the new agreement will be particularly important due to the impact of a waiting list for DDD funded Medicaid waiver services and the availability of VR-funded supported employment.

A customized employment pilot project was created by state law in 2019, giving DRS primary responsibility for organizing and implementing the project, with the involvement of various state partners including DDD. As of January 2020, an implementation team involving both agencies has been created to develop policies and recruit qualified provider agencies to participate in the pilot project. While various efforts at implementing customized employment have taken place through DRS and DDD in the last five years, no consistent program has been implemented at the state level.

3. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

The state agency for Mental Health Services is the Division of Mental Health (DMH), also part of the Department of Human Services. In late 2018 DMH and DRS updated a written agreement to coordinate services relating to the vocational needs of individuals with a serious mental illness. The two agencies have enjoyed an effective partnership for several years. This partnership is centered on provision of vocational services through the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) service model. DRS and DMH have worked with the IPS Employment Center (formerly the Psychiatric Research Center) to implement a fidelity-based service model that has been shown to be very effective in assisting individuals with serious mental illness in becoming employed.

DRS and DMH have a cooperative funding model in which DMH utilized Medicaid funding to the greatest extent possible and DRS provides VR funds to support the vocational aspects of the IPS model. DRS has worked with DMH to expand IPS services to a 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.

I. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT; DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

1. SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

A. QUALIFIED PERSONNEL NEEDS

I. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL WHO ARE EMPLOYED BY THE STATE AGENCY IN THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES IN RELATION TO THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS SERVED, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY;

DRS Personnel	Current FTE	Positions Needed	Five-Year Projections and Targets (2027)
VR Counselors	175	30	205
Rehabilitation and Mobility Instructors	17	4	21
Assistant Bureau Chiefs	6	0	6
Case Rehabilitation Coordinator	100	34	134
Administrative Assistants	25	5	30
Field Office Supervisors	40	5	45
Bureau Chief- Blind Services	0	1	1
Business Enterprise Program	17	3	20
Central Office/Directors/Managerial and Administrative Support	68	8	76
Total	448	90	538

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Total	448	90	538

Data for 2021 show a total of 27,485 active cases in the DRS VR program. This gives an average of 157 individuals per filled rehabilitation counselor position. The average of cases per counselor is 127. Specialty counselor positions have a slightly higher vacancy rate, but one that still allows DRS to provide services to select populations. DRS has 25 staff positions for counselors certified to communicate in sign language with three vacancies in this category, as well as 29 Spanish-speaking counselor positions. These are counted in a total of 175 counselor positions.

II. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL CURRENTLY NEEDED BY THE STATE AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY; AND

- Please refer to description i.1.A.i

III. PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY, WHO WILL BE NEEDED BY THE STATE 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.

- Please refer to description i.1.A.i

B. PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

I. A LIST OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE THAT ARE PREPARING VR PROFESSIONALS, BY TYPE OF PROGRAM;

There are five nationally accredited rehabilitation counselor education programs in Illinois: Adler University, Chicago; Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago; Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago; Northern Illinois University, DeKalb; and Southern Illinois University, Carbondale

II. THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED AT EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS, BROKEN DOWN BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; AND

Adler University offers a Master of Arts in Counseling degree with a specialization in rehabilitation counseling. For the 2021-2022 school year there were 16 students enrolled.

The Illinois Institute of Technology offers a Master's degree in Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling. For the 2021-2022 school year there were 14 students enrolled.

Northeastern Illinois University offers a Master of Science degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. For the 2021-2022 school year there were 11 students enrolled.

Northern Illinois University offers a Master of Science degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. For the 2021-2022 school year there were 18 students enrolled.

Southern Illinois University at Carbondale offers a Master of Science degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. For the 2021-2022 school year there were 14 students enrolled.

The combined data for the five programs is as follows: 73 students were enrolled. While many of these graduates will choose not to work for DRS, DRS believes that these programs make a significant contribution to its ability to hire new staff and replace staff who leave DRS. If state hiring practices continue to streamline, DRS anticipates a better rate of hiring for students graduating from in-state programs.

III. 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.

Data from the 2018-2019 Illinois Institute of Technology, 10; Northeastern Illinois University, 2; Northern Illinois University, 11; Southern Illinois University, 7; and Adler University 10. plans and adjustments

2. PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL

DRS conducts annual estimates of staff needed to operate the VR program, DRS works with university programs to estimate the number of students graduating from the programs and to understand each university's approach to student placement post-graduation. The intent is to have multiple applicants for each vacant counseling. This is generally true in urban areas, but applications are often limited in rural areas. Based on the information available from the university programs and the number of applications for posted vacancies, DRS faces an ongoing challenge in filling vacancies in rehabilitation counselor positions.

DRS continues to pursue several options to improve the staffing situation in the VR program and make services more available to customers. This includes efforts to simplify and accelerate the hiring process for VR counselors as well as implementing a Rehabilitation Counselor Aide position in areas with high demand for services. These efforts include shortening the process for contacting applicants for counselor positions as well as modifying the process for negotiating a starting salary. DRS continues to explore options for recruitment in geographic areas where it has proven difficult to attract applicants. DRS believes that the collective result of these efforts will be fewer VR counselor vacancies. In addition, the implementation of the counselor aide position will provide a means of engaging VR customers sooner.

DRS has completed modifying the position description for the Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee position. The proposal is to allow DRS to hire individuals for the trainee title before they complete all requirements for a master's degree. This would create what is essentially a paid internship for counselor trainees. Existing policies do not allow DRS to offer paid internships to graduate students. It is uncertain how soon this change could be implemented, but DRS believes this will eliminate a significant barrier to hiring qualified rehabilitation counselors.

DRS has established with the Department of Human Services personnel unit to publicize available positions in DRS, attending numerous job fairs likely focusing on minority students and students with disabilities. The State of Illinois has recruiting policies that assist minority

individuals in obtaining employment in key positions and encourage training and education for current employees. State policy also encourages the hiring of individuals with disabilities, which is utilized by DRS to the greatest extent possible. DRS worked with the state personnel agency to create a position dedicated to monitoring and assisting with the hiring of persons with disabilities in-state jobs. In addition to recruitment, DRS works actively to promote the retention of individuals with disabilities and individuals from minority backgrounds.

These efforts include those sponsored by the Department of Human Services, of which DRS is a part, as well as through other state government organizations and membership associations. The purpose of these activities is to facilitate the training and professional development of staff from these populations, to promote understanding of the need for a diverse workforce, and to encourage the participation of staff in a variety of cooperative efforts aimed at making contributions to the organization.

These efforts include: (a) the Upward Mobility program, which is designed to further the careers of state employees such as those from minority backgrounds as well as individuals with disabilities. This program provides support for a variety of training and educational opportunities for staff during their employment with the state. (b) the Interagency Committee on Employees with Disabilities (ICED), engages state employees with disabilities in activities related to promoting the hiring and career advancement of people with disabilities. DRS administration is closely involved in the operations of the ICED. (c) The Illinois Association of Minorities in Government is a membership organization promoting state employment for individuals from minority backgrounds, which is attended by DRS staff. (d) the Illinois Association of Hispanic State Employees holds an annual conference, which focuses on state employees from Hispanic/Latino backgrounds. DRS supports staff attendance at this conference each year. DRS believes that its sponsorship of attendance at these conferences and encouragement of membership in these organizations is a positive step in promoting a diverse workforce and a means of ensuring a high rate of job retention among its employees with disabilities and employees from minority backgrounds.

Internships. DRS has informal agreements with the four rehabilitation counselor training programs in the state to provide internship and practicum placement options for graduate students. At present, DRS is not able to offer paid internships to counseling students. We continue to provide unpaid internships 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. As noted above DRS is preparing to implement a new hiring policy that will create what is essentially a paid internship for graduate students.

Strategies for Retaining, Recruiting, and Hiring Personnel. 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 DHS personnel unit to conduct outreach activities to individuals who may be interested in state employment. DHS maintains a regular schedule of job fairs, community events, and recruitment initiatives that include a focus on hiring minority individuals. DRS offers unpaid internship and practicum opportunities in its field offices to graduate students from the five 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 vocational rehabilitation 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.

3. PERSONNEL STANDARDS

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

State Degree Standard. 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 vocational rehabilitation counselors 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 vocational rehabilitation counselors. The license requires a Master's degree in counseling, rehabilitation counseling, psychology, or a related field. For purposes of the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD), the requirement of a Master's degree in rehabilitation counseling or a related field will be considered the state standard.

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.

DRS administration reviews the training objectives quarterly. To that end, DRS has emphasized training around changes to the Rehabilitation Act brought forth by the passage of WIOA, as well as changes to the workforce system external to the VR program. DRS has cooperated 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.

All DRS staff participate in training events annually. Annual employee performance evaluations are designed to include training needs and expectations as identified by both the employee and the supervisor. Certain DRS-sponsored training events are mandated for attendance by supervisors, rehabilitation counselors, and rehabilitation case coordinators. The staff development section (SDS) initiates new training activities and responds to specific requests for training from DRS administrators and field office supervisors. SDS coordinates the New Employee Orientation (NEO) training in which each new DRS staff participates in the first months of his or her employment. This includes an overview of agency policies as well as a review of how the VR program operates in Illinois.

To the greatest extent, possible online training methods are currently being utilized due to remote work during the pandemic and provide a more immediate impact on DRS staff. DRS recently hired six staff for new 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.

4. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

A. A SYSTEM OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT FOR PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS WITHIN THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO ASSESSMENT, VOCATIONAL COUNSELING, JOB PLACEMENT, AND REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING TRAINING IMPLEMENTED IN COORDINATION WITH ENTITIES CARRYING OUT STATE PROGRAMS UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998; AND

A system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated State unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and the DRS Staff

Development Section (SDS) oversees the needs assessment, development, implementation, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of all training programs offered within DRS. SDS has three full-time trainers and a program manager in addition to one support staff. SDS 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. Training Provided by the DRS Staff Development Section includes Job Placement and Job Development Strategies; Case Progression and Documentation; Degree and Non-Degree Case Scenarios, Organization Techniques, SEP Training, Case Notes: Styles, Structures, and Time Management. Training Provided by External Training Resources include; Autism Training, Substance Abuse Disorders, and Recovery, Compassion Fatigue, Juvenile Justice, Illinois Student Assistance Commission, and Effective Leadership. Conferences Supported by DRS: Illinois Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired; Illinois Association of Agencies and Community Organizations for Migrant Advocacy; Illinois Association of Hispanic State Employees; Latino Mental Health Conference; Statewide Transition Conference, Illinois Assistive Technology Conference.

DRS conducts periodic surveys of field office staff, including supervisors, counselors, and case coordinators. The most recent staff survey was in the summer of 2019. Staff were asked about their training needs and the format in which they would like to receive the training. Most of the respondents preferred face-to-face training but they also requested webinars, online training, and videos. 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, and certification. DRS is developing a plan to prioritize the training requests, develop training events when possible, and arrange for external training providers if needed. DRS provides ongoing training to staff in all areas of VR counseling, including counseling and guidance.

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.

DRS makes training available in rehabilitation technology to all staff. DRS employs rehabilitation technology specialists who provide onsite consultation to counselors 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 as both a training resource and a service provider for VR customers.

B. PROCEDURES FOR THE ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION OF SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE FROM RESEARCH AND OTHER SOURCES TO DESIGNATED STATE UNIT PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS.

Dissemination of Research Materials to Staff DRS continues to develop additional research resources and has initiated relationships with State universities. The staff development section operates a small library with books and video materials available on numerous topics related to disability and rehabilitation counseling. These materials are distributed to field staff upon request. In the last year, the library has added new materials such as the Disability Handbook,

Ex-Offenders Reentry guide, Customer Service Counts, and Conflicts in the Workplace: Sources and Solutions. DRS makes use of its intranet system to provide linkages to research sources and other new information relating to the field of rehabilitation. DRS supports staff participation in disability-related conferences within the state so that staff can learn about new developments in the rehabilitation field including presentations on research from university professionals as well as rehabilitation practitioners. In addition, key categories of staff such as rehabilitation counselors for the deaf and mental health specialist counselors, participate in regional and statewide groups that share current research relevant to their fields of study. The DRS initiative on Individual Placement and Support (IPS) services for persons with mental illness involves sharing research findings in a structured way with staff.

As noted above, a major emphasis in DRS has been the effort to obtain up-to-date interactive technology to facilitate training events and limit the time and expense associated with traveling to training events. DRS has made use of an RSA quality grant to purchase video equipment, laptop computers, and microphones to establish the capability for a two-way interactive video in all offices across the state. Testing of the technology has been successful and training events will be scheduled soon to use the equipment. DRS has also worked with contractors to develop online training modules in key areas of VR casework. The idea is that counselors will be able to take training on key topics and improve their knowledge of important concepts directly from their office computers. DRS has also worked to implement 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 and DRS anticipates utilizing this format more often in the future. DRS has also started using YouTube videos to provide instructions on VR rules and policies. A new training technology is currently being piloted in cooperation with a company called SIMmersion, LLC. This company provides job interview skills training through simulated interviews. The participant works through three different levels to practice easy, medium, and difficult interview skillsets.

5. PERSONNEL TO ADDRESS INDIVIDUAL COMMUNICATION NEEDS

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. 25 Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCDs) are employed 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 rehabilitation counselors and 17 rehabilitation instructors who are professionally qualified to provide rehabilitation services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired. DRS strongly encourages the use of Braille as part of training for individuals who are blind. In addition, rehabilitation counselors and rehabilitation case coordinators are employed who are qualified to communicate with individuals whose primary language is Spanish. Staff is 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 important to be able to communicate effectively with them about their rehabilitation needs. The Illinois Department of Human Services 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. DRS also uses a telephone-based translation service that can provide instant translations in over 200 languages through a company called Propio which requires only the use of two telephones. This company also provides video interpreting for sign language.

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.

6. COORDINATION OF 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.

Coordination of the CSPD and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Relationship to IDEA: DRS staff provide services annually to thousands of young people with disabilities, most of whom receive services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Approximately, 9958 young people participated in the Secondary Transitional Experience Program (STEP) in 2020, which provides work experience during the high school years. DRS staff who work with high school students participate in training offered by the Illinois State Board of Education and its Transition Annual conference. Approximately, 339 young people participated in the non-STEP transition in 2020, which meant they had an open case with DRS but not currently participating in the program. 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. STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

1. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE REHABILITATION NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING WITHIN THE STATE, PARTICULARLY THE VR SERVICES NEEDS OF THOSE:

A. WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

Needs Assessment Framework. DRS completed its last CSNA in 2018 and has utilized a multiple component model for needs assessment purposes. The general idea is to build on existing information and evaluate any changes in data that reflect changes in customer needs. The premise is that customer needs tend to be fairly consistent from year to year but that trends can be identified which provide information on services needed going forward. The factors utilized by DRS include examining disability statistics, obtaining stakeholder input and conducting surveys. The general finding of these various sources is that the population is shrinking in Illinois, while the population of people with disabilities is growing slowly. The primary growth factors are in the minority population groups, particularly Latinos, as well as the ongoing growth in the number of individuals with autism.

Disability Statistics. There are two recent estimates of disability prevalence for Illinois. The first is from the American Community Survey for 2017, which shows a total of 675,092 working age Illinoisans reporting a disability, or 8.7 percent of the population. ACS respondents reported an average of 1.8 impairments each, meaning that most reported more than one impairment.

The Disability Statistics Compendium 2018 edition shows a total of 691,452 working age persons with disabilities, or 8.7 percent of the population. This represents an increase of 23,810 or 3.6 percent compared to the 2014 figure of 667,643. DRS will utilize the Compendium estimate for the 18-64 population. In addition, an interpolated figure of 25,166 individuals age

16 and 17 were added to create an overall estimate of 716,619 or roughly 716,600 individuals aged 16 to 64 that could potentially benefit from vocational rehabilitation services.

The Compendium data shows the following distribution of prevalence by impairment (or "difficulty" as phrased in the survey): Hearing impairments: 127,941 persons or 18.5 percent of those reporting an impairment; Visual impairments: 131,316 persons or 19.0 percent; Cognitive impairment: 279,394 persons or 40.4 percent; Ambulatory impairments: 328,153 persons or 47.5 percent; Self-care impairments: 125,710 persons or 18.2 percent; and Independent living impairments: 254,706 persons or 36.8 percent. Percentages total more than 100 percent since respondents reported an average of 1.8 impairments each.

Generally speaking, the disability categories used in the ACS and Compendium reports are of limited value for comparison to VR service categories. The vision and hearing categories are the most comparable. In the most recent state fiscal year, customers with vision impairments made up 3.7 percent of those receiving services, and individuals with hearing impairments made up 5.5 percent of the total. Persons with physical disabilities, including ambulatory impairments, made up just 6.2 percent of the DRS service population. In broad terms persons in the category of cognitive impairments, including intellectual disability, autism, mental illness and learning disabilities, made up 61 percent of the total service population. The self-care and independent living impairment categories do not translate well to the VR impairment and cause system of categorizing disabilities.

It should be noted that the working age prevalence value for Illinois at 8.8 percent remains lower than the figure for the US as a whole of 10.3 percent. This difference has been consistent for several years. In 2011 the Illinois prevalence figure was 10.4 percent while the national figure was 12.2 percent. There is no known explanation for the overall reduction in working age disability at the national level or in Illinois, nor is there a convenient explanation for why Illinois remains lower than the national average.

Compendium data show that the employment rate for working age persons with disabilities increased from 34.9 in 2015 to 38.1 in 2017. An additional 30,231 individuals with disabilities were working in 2017 compared to 2015. The employment rate for working age persons without disabilities increased from 76.7 to 77.6 percent, although there was a decrease of 37,941 individuals working from 2015 to 2017. Together these statistics combine to show that the gap between employment for persons with disabilities and those that do not have disabilities declined in Illinois from 41.8 in 2015 to 39.5 in 2017.

There was virtually no change in the poverty rate for individuals with disabilities in Illinois, with 25.7 percent in poverty in 2015 and 25.5 percent in 2017. However, due to the increase in the number of individuals with disabilities, the rate reflects an increase of 4,781 individuals with disabilities living in poverty.

The gap between the median earnings of Illinoisans with disabilities and those without disabilities increased from $12,205 in 2015 to $14,109 in 2017. Between 2015 and 2017 the median earnings for individuals with disabilities increased by just $384 (+1.7%) compared to the median earnings of non-disabled individuals which increased by $2,288 (+6.7%). The median earnings for individuals with disabilities in 2017 was $22,492 compared to those of non-disabled individuals whose median earnings was $36,601.

Rate of health insurance coverage for individuals with disabilities in Illinois declined slightly from 93.2 percent in 2015 to 92.7 percent in 2017, although this remains somewhat higher than the rate for persons that do not have disabilities at 90 percent. About 55 percent of Illinoisans with disabilities continue to receive public health insurance.

The Disability Compendium also includes statistics on usage of Social Security disability benefits. Between 2015 and 2017 there was a decrease of 4,473 individuals receiving SSI disability benefits in Illinois, from 244,229 to 239,756 or 1.9 percent. At the same time there

was a decrease of 2,728 in the number of children receiving SSI as blind or disabled, a reduction of 6.9 percent. Also at that time there was a decrease of 6,707 in the number of disabled workers receiving SSDI, dropping from 288,827 to 282,120 or about 2.3 percent. The cause of these reductions in persons receiving Social Security benefits is unknown.

The 2019 population of Illinois was 12,671,821, a drop of 51,250 or 0.4 percent in one year. Illinois has seen a decline of 187,092 individuals since 2015, a decrease of 1.5 percent in just four years. While population overall is dropping, the state is also aging. The impact is seen in the relative changes for various age groupings from 2014 to 2018 (data from the Disability Statistics Compendium). The population under age five declined by 1.6 percent. The school age population (age 5 to 17) dropped by 2.4 percent. The working age population (age 18 to 64) declined by 1.4 percent, with the number reporting a disability increasing slightly by 0.7 percent. However, the number of working age persons with a disability who were employed increase by 3.6 percent between 2014 and 2018. The population age 65 and older increased by 6.6 percent during that time period, and the number of older individuals reporting a disability increased by 4.4 percent.

Special Education Data. In the period from 2015 to 2017 the number of students receiving special education services (age 6 to 21) in Illinois declined by 2,009 or 0.8 percent, from 258,906 to 256,897. At the same time, the overall school age population declined by 70,876 or 2. 6 percent, from 2,725,494 to 2,654,618. This is consistent with the overall stagnation of population growth in Illinois and declining birth rates. The combined result of these changes is that the percentage of students receiving special education services increased from 9.5 to 9.7 from 2015 to 2017.

Current counts of students by disability category along with number and percent change from 2015 to 2017: Specific Learning Disabilities: 102,266 (-1,268 or -1.2%); Speech or Language Impairment: 35,222 (-2,177 or -5.8%); Intellectual Disabilities: 16,199 (-668 or -4.0%); Emotional Disturbance: 18,623 (-575 or -3.0%); Multiple Disabilities: 2,546 (+88 or +3.6%); Hearing Impairment: 3,142 (-125 or -3.8%); Orthopedic Impairments: 1,048 (-75 or -6.7%); Other Health Impairments: 34,911 (+914 or +2.7%); Visual Impairments: 991 (-20 or -2.0%); Autism: 22,146 (+1,069 or +5.1%); Deaf-Blindness: 22 (-1 or -4.3%); Traumatic Brain Injury: 643 (-8 or -1.2%); and Developmental Delay: 19,138 (+837 or +4.6%).

These results are consistent with ongoing patterns of change. The categories with the largest increases are autism and other health impairment, which have seen continuing growth in the last decade. The number of students with autism in Illinois has increased by 49 percent since 2010 and 176 percent since 2005. The number of students in the other health impaired category has increased by 29 percent since 2010 and 65 percent since 2005. Whether this represents changes in the use of diagnostic categories or actual changes in the population is unknown. The percentage of students with an IEP that spent 40 percent or more time in a regular classroom remained unchanged at 79 percent. In Illinois ongoing efforts have led to a high level of performance in implementing transition plans for students with disabilities. As of 2018 99.2 percent of students age 16 and older had an IEP that met all transition planning requirements, according to the State Board of Education. Approximately 77 percent of students were shown to be employed, enrolled in post-secondary education or some other training program within a year after leaving high school.

2018 Needs Assessment Online Survey. In 2018 DRS conducted a needs assessment survey using an online methodology. Just under 1,000 valid responses were received, about half from transition age youth and half from older individuals. About two-thirds of respondents were individuals with disabilities and the remaining third family members or guardians responding on behalf of a person with a disability. Respondents rated 11 typical VR services on a seven-point scale with end labels where 1 was "Lowest Need" and 7 was "Highest Need". Each service included a brief description of what the service category includes, for example: "Self-Employment: Help planning for and starting your own business" or "Assistive Technology

Services and Support: Special equipment and electronic devices to help with reading, speaking or using a computer". While this approach was intended to make clear what services were being rated, in some instances it might not have worked as intended. For example, the distinction between ordinary job placement services and customized employment might be understood by VR professionals, but to someone reading the survey they seem quite similar: "Job Placement Services: Help in finding a job that matches individual skills" and "Customized Employment: Help getting a job or starting a business based on individual strengths and needs". Indeed, both services had very similar high need ratings.

A key issue with the survey is that respondents tended to make extreme ratings, using the "7" rating on 30 percent of all responses. This is likely an artifact of the presentation of the rating options on the screen when completing the survey. Respondents also utilized the "1" rating 21 percent of the time and used the ratings 2 through 6 just 49 percent of the time. So while there were some differences between the rated services, the degree of variation was limited due to the rating scale issue. This makes the interpretation of survey results less meaningful for planning purposes.

The following need ratings were observed, ranked by the highest rated need, along with the percentage of highest need ratings: job placement: 5.3 need rating, 41.1% percent highest need; customized employment: 5.1 need rating, 38.6% highest needs; vocational training: 4.9 need rating, 32.8% highest need; on-the-job training: 4.7 need rating, 31.3% highest need; college support: 4.7 need rating, 40.3% highest need; supported employment: 4.6 need rating, 30.5% highest need; benefits planning: 4.0 need rating, 21.5% highest need; vocational evaluation: 4.0 need rating, 20.5% highest need; transportation: 3.9 need rating, 26.6% highest need; assistive technology: 3.2 need rating, 17.4% highest need; and self-employment: 3.0 need rating, 15.0% highest need.

The ratings overall indicate that respondents as a whole were interested in assistance with finding a job and with training to gain skills for employment. Interest in benefits planning was limited in that it applies only to individuals receiving Social Security. Self-employment as a VR service is used by only a small number of individuals each year, and consequently it had a very low need rating. And while assistive technology is vitally important for a subset of the VR service population, it is not utilized by the majority of customers and so its low need rating is not surprising. The low rating for transportation may seem surprising since a lack of transportation is mentioned with some frequency is surveys and public forums. Transportation had more "lowest need" than "highest need" responses, which seems to indicate that one's response depends on whether transportation is available or not.

A subset of questions was asked only of transition age youth responding to the survey. A total of 49 youth completed the survey. The same issue with consistently high ratings applies to this data. The following need ratings were observed, ranked by the highest rated need, along with the percentage of highest need ratings: work-based learning experiences (paid): 4.9 need rating, 29.4% highest need; job exploration counseling: 4.8 need rating, 27.6% highest need; workplace readiness training: 4.8 need rating, 31.9% highest need; instruction in self-advocacy: 4.7 need rating, 27.4% highest need; counseling on post-secondary education: 4.4 need rating, 28.0% highest need; and work-based learning experiences (unpaid): 4.4 need rating, 20.7% highest need.

For both the general services ratings and the pre-employment transition services ratings, there was no consistent variation observed when comparing responses by type of disability, gender, race, or age. While there were some specific data points of interest, such as blind respondents having a higher interest in assistive technology and self-employment, much of the variation in responses did not form meaningful patterns.

The current sample size is not sufficient to allow for useful comparisons among categories such as race and ethnicity, gender, age, disability type or economic status. The larger scale study will

need to incorporate a variety of methods to ensure participation by people with disabilities across the state, including those from targeted communities.

Stakeholder Representation DRS has two representative groups of stakeholders: the Facility Advisory Committee, consisting of representatives of community rehabilitation program agencies; and the STEP Advisory Committee, consisting of representatives of school districts that provider pre-employment transition services to students under third-party cooperative agreements with DRS. These groups each meet regularly with DRS senior managers to identify program concerns and express needs that have been identified in their local communities.

In 2019 DRS held a series of seven community forums across the state. The morning session focused on CRP issues and the afternoon session focused on transition issues. Over 300 individuals representing over 200 provider agencies attended the forums. The overall tone of the meetings was positive, in part due to longstanding relationships between DRS staff and provider staff. The CRP sessions identified these key issues: how to improve the referral process to and from DRS so that individuals can receive services in a timely manner; concerns regarding providing services to individuals whose primary language is not English; and how customized employment can be incorporated into the DRS contract structure. Transition issues included: protecting the confidentiality of students and family members while ensuring that students continue to receive services; how best to move students from potentially-eligible status to eligible status without service interruption; and the appropriate process for documenting provision of pre-employment transition services within the DRS system.

Participants in both sessions expressed an interest in creating a more efficient process for moving students from school-based to community partner-based services at the conclusion of high school. A general consensus is that DRS providers are interested in effectively managing the existing service structure rather than identifying new services or programs. This is due, in part, to a feeling that providers are insufficiently staffed and experiencing financial concerns.

Summary: Identifying the needs of individuals with a most significant disability has proven to be a difficult task. External data sources such as the American Community Survey and Disability Statistics Compendium are not designed to provide this level of analysis. The disability categories used are expressed in general terms and it is not possible to identify individuals with multiple types of self-identified disabilities. Also, the data records just the presence or absence of a disability, and not it's level of significance. While these sources present a picture of disability overall across the state, the level of detail is lacking for this purpose.

The online survey conducted by DRS provides limited data on persons with a most significant disability. In that analysis, individuals were classified as having a most significant disability if they identified as having autism, intellectual disability, brain injury or as having multiple disabilities. There were few notable differences between this group and all other respondents in the survey. Individuals in the most significant disability group were more likely to rate customized employment, on-the-job training and benefits planning assistance at the highest level of need compared to other respondents. The groups did not differ on their ratings of the level of need for supported employment. This type of survey is limited due to the small number of questions and lack of sampling controls.

The community forums conducted by DRS in 2019 generally supported the expansion of existing DRS CRP services, including supported employment for individuals with a most significant disability. Several providers indicated that they have the capacity to provide supported employment to additional individuals but have not received sufficient referrals in the last year or so.

The special education data examined above suggests that there may be increased demand for supported employment services in coming years based on increases in the child count data for students with autism and with other health impairments. Again, these are categorical data

rather than data that identifies the significance of disability as such, but there is good reason to believe that this ongoing growth in these populations will impact the VR system down the road.

In 2020, DRS intended to develop a request for proposal to obtain outside expertise to conduct a large-scale, in-depth needs assessment study. that included a specific focus on the needs of individuals with most significant disabilities, so that Illinois will have much more detailed information available for the next needs assessment report. However, the CSNA was not completed during 2020 due to the pandemic. Planning was reinitiated in 2021 and is about 95% complete. Considering the scope of this assessment, and the need to cooperate with our SRC fully, we have used the previous six months to prepare all parties to perform their portion and have an expected launch date for the electronic assessment and focus group work set for June 15, 2022. The CSNA will utilize electronic format surveying, focus groups, expert interviews, town hall meetings, and a comprehensive statistical analysis of the entire population with disabilities by subgroup and demographic. Much of the statistical portion has been completed and informed portions of this plan modification.

B. WHO ARE MINORITIES;

Data from the most recent Disability Statistics Compendium shows that 35.7 percent of all working age persons in Illinois with disabilities are employed. However, there is considerable variability by race in terms of likelihood of employment. Among white working age persons with disabilities 38.5 percent are employed, while 34.7 percent working age Latinos with disabilities are employed and 44.3 percent of working age Asians with disabilities. However, only 24.6 percent of working age African Americans with disabilities report being employed, a clear disparity compared to other groups. As the ongoing DRS needs assessment process unfolds consideration will be given to identifying racial disparities and addressing them through program initiatives.

Survey data relating to needs of minorities with disabilities indicate that an ongoing issue remains services available in the preferred language of the individual. Language access is more available in the highly populated Chicago area, where vendor agencies utilize staff with appropriate language skills. In other areas of the state this continues to be a challenge. The increased availability of telephone language translation services and phone-based apps for translation has improved language accessibility to some degree in all parts of the state.

C. WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM;

DRS maintains an ongoing effort to identify and serve deaf-blind individuals. This effort is coordinated by the DRS deaf services unit with the assistance of the Bureau of Blind Services. DRS works with audiologists and vision professionals to develop referrals for VR services. In recent years the number of deaf-blind individuals served at the Chicago training facility for the blind has grown significantly. While the overall number of deaf-blind individuals remains small, DRS believes that it will continue to increase the proportion of those individuals who receive VR services through its outreach efforts. DRS meets regularly with the Illinois Advisory Board on Deaf Blindness, a group composed primarily of individuals who are deaf-blind. This group offers its assistance to DRS in expanding services to this low incidence population.

DRS is involved in an ongoing effort to implement a system of individual placement services (IPS) programs for individuals with serious mental illness. Based on the success of the IPS model, DRS intends to continue gradual expansion of IPS services as funding allows. In addition, DRS is involved in expanding the scope of IPS services to individuals with developmental disabilities including individuals with autism and autism spectrum disorder. IPS research indicates that the model has great potential in helping individuals with a variety of disabilities. In the last decade, the number of students in special education with these diagnoses has grown significantly, which has led to a gradual increase of autism cases in the DRS VR program. DRS

works with advocacy groups and service providing agencies to identify service options and job placement strategies that will meet the needs of this group.

Survey data most frequently mention the needs of individuals with autism or autism spectrum disorders. The number of cases served by DRS where autism is the primary disability continues to rise each year. Community providers have a good level of success in assisting individuals with autism in obtaining employment, although this is at a somewhat lower rate than for other disabilities. DRS continues to work with community agencies to identify specific service options that will be of greatest benefit to this population.

D. WHO HAVE BEEN SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM; AND

DRS has cooperated extensively with the state Title I agency around disability initiatives from that agency funded by the Dept. of Labor. This involves local area cooperation and in many cases joint enrollment of individuals in Title I and VR services. A major statewide effort regarding service integration has increased the degree of interaction and cooperation between VR staff and other workforce staff at the local level. A specific focus has been on how local workforce partners can move beyond communication to a higher level of collaboration. For VR staff this has involved reaching out to local partners to identify methods of ensuring that individuals with disabilities can receive appropriate services regardless of which element of the workforce system they contact first.

E. WHO ARE YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING, AS APPROPRIATE, THEIR NEED FOR PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES OR OTHER TRANSITION SERVICES.

The 2018 online needs assessment survey referenced above indicated that youth with disabilities express a high level of need for pre-employment transition services. While the survey had limitations, the overall intent of the respondents was clear. DRS identified a need to provide services to younger (14- and 15-year-old) students who were unlikely to participate in other transition programs. DRS initiated contracts with 22 community providers and eventually connected over 1,000 to pre-employment transition services through this mechanism. DRS also identified a need in Chicago where the local school district was unable to provide community work-based learning experiences. DRS developed contracts with community rehabilitation program agencies to provide that element of pre-employment transition services which was otherwise unavailable to a large number of students.

2. IDENTIFY THE NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP, OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE; AND

DRS believes that the system of community rehabilitation programs in the state is well-developed and adequate to meet the needs of vocational rehabilitation program customers. DRS continues to examine the need for CRP services through various mechanisms. DRS meets regularly with a statewide committee of CRP representatives (the Facility Advisory Council) to improve services provided by CRPs in Illinois. DRS also conducted online surveys of CRP agencies in 2017 and 2019 to identify issues and concerns. As noted above, DRS conducted a series of seven community forums with CRPs to provide an opportunity for an in-depth discussion of relevant issues.

3. 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 THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

As discussed elsewhere in the plan, DRS has made several efforts to identify the needs of students and youth with disabilities. DRS believes it is capable of meeting the essential needs of

students with disabilities through ongoing expansion of its existing program options. In the most recent state fiscal year DRS served nearly 12,000 students with disabilities. The goal going forward is to identify specific areas of the state where program expansion is needed most. This will entail the use of a more sophisticated, large-scale needs assessment methodology than has been used in the recent past.

DRS continues to meet four times a year with the STEP Advisory Council, a group representing school districts contracted by DRS to provide pre-employment transition services through the STEP program. This group helps identify issues and concerns about transition services as they are experienced at the local level. DRS believes that this mechanism is very important for managing the program and gaining an understanding of ongoing needs.

K. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

1. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS IN THE STATE WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES

To estimate the number of possibly eligible individuals in the State DRS uses disability data from the U.S. Census Bureau as compiled in the Disability Statistics Compendium. The Census population base data is from the 2020 US Census American Community Survey. Disability prevalence data is taken from the 2021 Disability Statistics Compendium. Using these sources, DRS provides the following estimates for FFY2023.

As of 2022, it is estimated that there are 716,876 individuals with disabilities in the state aged 18 to 64 who are possibly eligible for the VR program.

Of that number, DRS estimates there are 584,254 who would potentially be eligible for services under the DRS order of selection policy.

Of the 584,254 likely to be eligible under the policy, DRS estimates that there are 324,502 who would be in the Most Significant Disability category

211,208 who would be in the Very Significant Disability category, and 48,143 that would be in the significant disability category.

Last, for FFY 2023, DRS estimates that there are 81,500 individuals with significant disabilities who are possibly eligible for VR services under Title VI, Part B.

2. THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL RECEIVE SERVICES UNDER:

A. THE VR PROGRAM;

In the VR program, DRS estimates, 36,810 individuals will be served in FFY2022 and 38,454 individuals will be served in FFY2023.

B. THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM; AND

In the supported employment program utilizing Title IV Part B funds, DRS estimates that 600 individuals, all in the most significant disability category will be served in FFY2023. A further 650 will be served using other funds.

C. EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION.

In the VR program, DRS estimates that 21,363 individuals in the Most Significant Disability category will be served in FFY2023, along with 13,908 individuals in the Very Significant Disability category and 3,183 individuals in the Significant Disability category.

No services will be provided to individuals in the category of an individual with a not significant disability. DRS estimates that there are approximately 132,622 individuals in this category.

3. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR VR SERVICES, BUT ARE NOT RECEIVING SUCH SERVICES DUE TO AN ORDER OF SELECTION; AND

DRS projects no more than five individuals will be placed into this category in FFY2023.

4. THE COST OF SERVICES FOR THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS ESTIMATED TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES. IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION, IDENTIFY THE COST OF SERVICES FOR EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY.

For FFY2023 DRS estimates that $121,479,237 in federal VR funds will be available, along with $32,878,116 in non-federal funds for a total program budget of $154,357,353.

With an estimated 38,454 individuals to be served this equals $4,013 in total funds per person served, with $3,158 in federal funds and $855 in non-federal funds.

For the most significant disability category, the average total cost is expected to be $4,220, with $3,334 in federal funds and $886 in non-federal funds. Total spending for the most significant disability category is estimated to be $90,151,860, where $71,219,969 are federal funds and $18,931,891 are non-federal funds.

For the very significant disability category, the average total cost is expected to be $3,815, with $3,014 in federal funds and $801 in non-federal funds. Total spending for the very significant disability category is estimated to be $53,059,020, where $41,916,626 are federal funds and $11,142,394 are non-federal funds.

For the significant disability category, the average total cost is expected to be $3,501, with $2,767 in federal funds and $733 in non-federal funds. Total spending for the significant disability category is estimated to be $11,143,683, where $8,803,510 are federal funds and $2,340,173 are non-federal funds.

No services will be provided to individuals in the category of an individual with a not significant disability.

DRS projects that all available funds, program income, and carryover, will be expended on individuals in the open categories of the order of selection policy. DRS does not expect to have sufficient funds to serve additional individuals in the closed category of the order of selection

L. STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

1. IDENTIFY IF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES WERE JOINTLY DEVELOPED AND AGREED TO BY THE STATE VR AGENCY AND THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, IF THE STATE HAS A COUNCIL, AND JOINTLY AGREED TO ANY REVISIONS

The goals and priorities in this Plan were jointly developed and agreed to by DRS and the State Rehabilitation Council. Any revisions to the goals and priorities were jointly reviewed and agreed to by DRS and the SRC.

2. IDENTIFY THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IN CARRYING OUT THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

In establishing the goals listed in the plan, DRS utilized the following priorities. First, to extend the reach of the DRS VR program, serve more individuals and establish a presence in communities across the state. A key service trend over the last 10 years has been a gradual reduction in the number of people served by DRS. This trend needs to be reversed while reaching the population as broadly as possible. This includes reaching individuals regardless of their disability, reaching individuals in minority communities, reaching individuals who speak languages other than English, and reaching individuals in low-income or isolated communities.

The second priority area is to ensure that VR services are available to individuals with most significant disabilities, including individuals in need of traditional supported employment services. This priority also addresses individuals currently working in a subminimum wage setting and those in need of long-term extended supports to maintain employment. A third priority is to expand pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities to encompass all students. As the state VR agency, DRS is only able to reach a certain number of students. But expanding our partnership with state and local education authorities we hope to make this a universal program for students with disabilities. A fourth priority is increasing the self-sufficiency of people with disabilities. Employment is an important objective, but full-time employment and higher earnings are also critical in achieving self-sufficiency.

The following goals are established for the Division of Rehabilitation Services:

1. Achieve and exceed 6,000 competitive employment outcomes annually.
DRS believes it is reasonable to establish a consistent metric of 6,000 competitive employment outcomes per year. In the last five years, DRS has averaged 5,251 outcomes with a high of 5,538 and a low of 4,990. To attain the 6,000 outcome level the following draft targets are established: 5,750 competitive employment outcomes in PY2020 (FY2021), 6,000 in PY20201 (FY2022), 6,250 in PY2022 (FY2023) and 6,500 in PY2023 (FY2024). DRS finished the most recent fiscal year with 5,100 outcomes and we can shoot for 5,500 in our current fiscal year.

2. Move at least 100 individuals per year from 14(c) employment into competitive integrated employment.
Our goal is to make consistent progress on creating competitive integrated employment opportunities for individuals working in subminimum wage settings. This will be accomplished using a variety of strategies, including: use of supported employment models; use of customized employment models; and development of new business models for agencies currently acting as 14(c) employers. The numerical targets are modest, but the main focus is on building a successful system for creating employment opportunities. The draft targets are: 100 individuals moving from 14(c) to competitive integrated employment in PY2020 (FY2021), 150 in PY20201 (FY2022), 200 in PY2022 (FY2023) and 250 in PY2023 (FY2024).

3. By the conclusion of PY2023 (state FY2024), DRS, working in partnership with the State Board of Education and local education authorities, will ensure that 100,000 students with disabilities engage in pre-employment transition services during their time in school.
WIOA requires all students with disabilities to receive pre-employment transition services. This requirement does not fall entirely on the VR agency. Rather, State government as a whole is given responsibility, including state and local education authorities as well as the VR agency.

We envision at least three levels of engagement with PTS. The first is participation in the STEP program, which involves individuals determined eligible for VR services and who have an active Individualized Plan for Employment that includes PTS. This program served 11,126 students in the most recent program year. The second mode of engagement is provision of services to potentially eligible students with disabilities through the Fast Track Transition program. This program is operated by vendor agencies under contract to DRS. In FY2019 the Fast Track program served 659 students.

The third mode of engagement will involve an improved level of coordination with local school systems. DRS will work with local schools and the State Board to enhance the understanding of PTS on the part of teachers and school administrators. Our belief is that most students with disabilities receive some form of PTS through participation in the transition plan developed beginning at age 14. The Illinois transition plan requires schools to address goals in the areas of employment, post-secondary education and independent living for all transition age students with an IEP. Many of the activities contained in the transition plans are equivalent to services defined as PTS under WIOA, but there is presently no means to account for provision of these services as PTS. DRS proposes to build upon the existing system to enable schools across

Illinois to validate provision of PTS to students whether or not they participate in VR services through DRS

4. Increase earnings at case closure and at the second quarter follow up for individuals closed as competitive employment outcomes.
It is well known that people with disabilities are less likely to be employed compared to people that don't have disabilities and are also more likely to be employed part time. The typical VR customer closed as successful by DRS works about 26 hours per week, with many working even fewer hours. Regardless of the hourly wage, part time work means lower overall earnings. VR counselors should work with their customers to identify opportunities for full time employment whenever possible.

5. Establish a process for transfer of individuals completing supported employment through DRS to receive support under the DDD waiver program.
DRS and DDD recently completed a new agreement regarding services to mutual customers. A key component is ensuring that individuals who have completed 24 months in VR-funded supported employment can be transferred to receive ongoing support from the DDD waiver program. This is a typical arrangement in many states but has not taken place consistently in Illinois.

6. Increase co-enrollment of VR customers in other WIOA programs.
A basic tenet of the workforce system under WIOA is that an individual experiencing barriers to employment should be able to receive services regardless of which WIOA partner is the main provider. Receiving services from more than one WIOA partner is considered co-enrollment and should be encouraged whenever possible. This has not been a priority for DRS but it is something we should focus on more going forward.

7. Establish a career pathways model for students with disabilities served by DRS.
Various education and workforce programs utilize the concept of career pathways to guide services to individuals seeking employment. The general idea is that it is worthwhile to engage students with career concepts and the understanding that various jobs are available in a given industry with differing credential requirements. Rather than identify a job for an individual, the career pathways approach helps that individual understand how that job can lead to a career based on additional training and education. While DRS has been a leader in serving students with disabilities, we are lagging behind in adopting a career pathways approach for the students we serve. DRS should consider establishing pilot projects in selected locations, partnering with school districts and community colleges in those areas.

8. DRS will become a disability neutral organization, serving any person regardless of his or her disability.
DRS will revisit policies and procedures throughout the agency to ensure that the VR program is capable of serving any individual regardless of disability. The policy review and revisions will be completed by June 20, 2021.

9. Expand the IPS program to reach additional populations likely to benefit from the IPS approach, including youth with disabilities and individuals with intellectual disabilities and autism.
IPS is an evidence-based practice of providing vocational services to persons with disabilities. IPS was initially focused on individuals with serious mental illness, but additional research has shown that IPS principles and methods are of benefit to a wider range of people with disabilities. DRS will continue to expand IPS by reaching out to specific populations of persons with disabilities and identifying qualified providers to initiate services.

10. Establish an aggressive system of information, education and outreach to targeted populations to promote the growth of the customer base in the DRS VR program.
DRS will use an access navigator approach to identifying potential customers who can benefit

from VR services in terms of achieving a competitive integrated employment outcome. DRS intends to contract with a variety of community partner agencies across the state that have connections to individuals in targeted communities that may not be aware of the benefits of the VR program. Referrals to the DRS VR program have declined by 17 percent in the last five years. In order to achieve growth in employment outcomes, that decline must be reversed. In addition to facilitating referrals to the VR program, the access navigator model will ensure that individuals with disabilities are connected to other community supports that might otherwise inhibit their participation in VR services.

11. Work with other WIOA partners to build the capacity to exchange data in a manner to protects confidentiality but which enables efficient cooperation among partners and improves the effectiveness of the workforce system.
The implementation of the workforce system in Illinois has been hampered by a lack of data exchange methodology or framework. While individual partner agencies have useful systems for collecting and managing information on the individuals they serve, the system as a whole is inefficient and duplicative. DRS is committed to ongoing efforts through the State Workforce Board to move toward a solution to the problem. This solution should build on the existing capacities of each agency.

3. ENSURE THAT THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES ARE BASED ON AN ANALYSIS OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

A. THE MOST RECENT COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT, INCLUDING ANY UPDATES;

Goals and priorities contained in this Plan are based on an analysis of DRS performance on program standards and common performance measures, as well as other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including reports from the SRC and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted by RSA under Section 107 of the Act. The goals and priorities are based on the most recently completed statewide needs assessment, consisting of statewide surveys and analysis of statistical information on disability prevalence. No CSNA was completed during 2020 due to the pandemic. Planning was reinitiated in 2021 and is about 95% complete. Considering the scope of this assessment, and the need to cooperate with our SRC fully, we have used the previous six months to prepare all parties to perform their portion and have an expected launch date for the electronic assessment and focus group work set for June 15, 2022. The CSNA will utilize electronic format surveying, focus groups, expert interviews, town hall meetings, and a comprehensive statistical analysis of the entire population with disabilities by subgroup and demographic. Much of the statistical portion has been completed and informed portions of this plan modification.

B. THE STATE'S PERFORMANCE UNDER THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES OF SECTION 116 OF WIOA; AND

Goals and priorities contained in this 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, including reports from the SRC and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted by RSA under Section 107 of the Act. The goals and priorities are based on the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA.

C. OTHER AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON THE OPERATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE VR PROGRAM, INCLUDING ANY REPORTS RECEIVED FROM THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL AND FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MONITORING ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED UNDER SECTION 107.

Goals and priorities contained in this 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, including reports from the SRC and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted by RSA under Section 107 of the Act.

M. ORDER OF SELECTION

1. WHETHER THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL IMPLEMENT AND ORDER OF SELECTION. IF SO, DESCRIBE:

A. THE ORDER TO BE FOLLOWED IN SELECTING ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS TO BE PROVIDED VR SERVICES

The priority of categories to receive VR services under the DRS order of selection policy is consistent with our current analysis 1. Individuals determined to have the most significant disabilities; 2. Individuals determined to have very significant disabilities; 3. Individuals determined to have a significant disability 4. Individuals determined with not a significant disabilities. For FFY2023, the categories of most significant disability, very significant disability, and significant disability will be open to services, unless a determination is made by the DRS Director that circumstances require a change in the categories open to service. The priority categories established under this rule are based solely on the definition of "individual with a significant disability" defined in the Rehabilitation Act (section 7 (21) (A)) and regulations (34CFR361.36(d)(2) and 34CFR361.5(b)(31)). Categories of Eligible Individuals a) Pursuant to the provisions of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 USC 701 et seq.), DHS—DRS has established the following Order of Selection for the priority of provision of services to eligible individuals which counselors must follow when purchasing services for customers: 1) those individuals determined to have the most significant disabilities; 2) those individuals determined to have very significant disabilities; 3) those individuals determined to have significant disabilities; and 4) Individuals with not a significant disability. b) For the purposes of administering services under the order of selection, the Director of DHS—DRS will determine at the beginning of each fiscal year, or more often as necessary, which of the categories under subsection (a) will be open for service. c) Eligible individuals in a closed category under subsection (a) may choose to be placed on a waiting list for services. The determination that an individual has a most significant disability, a very significant disability, a significant disability, or an individual with not a significant disability must be in the individual's VR case file, as well as documentation concerning the evaluation of his or her rehabilitation potential. a) Prior to determining the significance of an individual's disability, it must be determined that he or she: 1) has a disability, or a combination of disabilities, that causes a substantial physical or mental impairment that is similar, but not limited to, the following list of disabilities: A) amputation, B) arthritis, C) autism, D) blindness, E) burn injury, F) cancer, G) cerebral palsy, H) cystic fibrosis, I) deafness, J) head injury, K) heart disease, L) hemiplegia, M) hemophilia, N) respiratory or pulmonary dysfunction, O) intellectual disability, P) mental illness, Q) multiple sclerosis, R) muscular dystrophy, S) musculoskeletal disorders, T) neurological disorders (including stroke and epilepsy), U) paraplegia, V) quadriplegia (and other spinal cord conditions), W) sickle cell anemia, X) specific learning disabilities, or Y) end-stage renal failure disease; 2) has a disability, or a combination of disabilities, that seriously limits his or her functional capacities, as listed in Section 553.150 of this Part; and 3) requires VR services over an extended period. b) If an individual meets the requirements of Section 553.140(a), then the following criteria must be met to determine the significance of his or her disability: i) To be considered an individual with a most significant disability, he or she must be an individual who has a disability that seriously limits three or more of his or her functional capacities and who requires multiple VR services over an extended time. ii) To be considered an individual with a very significant disability, he or she must have a disability that seriously limits two of his or her functional capacities, and must require multiple VR services over an extended period of time. iii) To be considered an individual with a significant disability, he or she must have a disability that seriously limits one of his or her functional capacities and must require multiple VR services over an extended period. iv) To be considered an individual with a disability, he or she must have a disability that results in an

impediment to employment, but which does not seriously limit his or her functional capacities. c) An individual who has been determined eligible for disability benefits pursuant to Title II (SSDI) or Title XVI (SSI) of the Social Security Act is considered to be presumed eligible for VR services and an individual with a significant disability, unless the analysis of his or her functional limitations and service needs, as described above, place the individual into a higher category of the order of selection. Determination of Serious Limitation to Functional Capacities a) For determination of the degree of significance of disability, functional capacities shall include: 1. mobility — the physical ability of an individual to move from place to place and move the body into certain positions. This includes such activities as walking, climbing, kneeling, stooping, sitting, standing, and similar activities; 2. self-care — the ability of an individual to perform activities related to his or her health and hygiene. This includes such activities as grooming, bathing, eating, housekeeping, medical management, and money management; 3. self-direction — the ability of an individual to organize, control and regulate his or her own personal, social, and work life. This includes such activities as maintaining schedules and routines, following directions and established rules, organizing activities for oneself, and adjusting to changing circumstances; 4. work skills — the ability of an individual to demonstrate skills necessary to perform jobs that exist in the current employment market, regardless of demand for the particular occupation or the individual's prior work experience. This includes such activities as learning and maintaining work skills, cooperating with others in a work setting, using adequate decision making and problem-solving skills, and using academic skills commonly required in the workplace; 5. work tolerance — the ability of an individual to consistently and adequately perform a job based on the physical, emotional, environmental, and psychological demands of a specific work environment. This includes such activities as maintaining performance on the job regardless of changes in the environment such as cold and heat, demonstrating the strength and endurance to perform the job in question, and working the schedule typical of other employees in the same job; 6. interpersonal skills — the ability of an individual to establish and maintain appropriate relationships with other individuals in the workplace. This includes such activities as engaging in necessary work-related communications, demonstrating behavior that is appropriate and acceptable in the work environment, cooperating with others in a team setting, showing understanding and tact in dealing with others; and 7. communication — the ability to convey and receive information efficiently and effectively. This includes such activities as: hearing and understanding ordinary spoken language; making oneself understood in ordinary conversation; writing or printing short notes and communications; and reading and correctly interpreting short notes, signs, and instructions. b) A serious limitation to a functional capacity shall exist when the rehabilitation counselor determines that the customer, because of his or her disability, has functional limitations in performing the major components of the activity or activities listed in subsections (a)(1) through (7) or needs an accommodation to perform the activity. c) The rehabilitation counselor shall use the criteria of consistency and substantiality when evaluating the degree of limitation to functional capacity. Consistency means that the individual's disability always or almost always limits the individual's functioning. Substantiality means the individual's disability has a major, significant impact on functioning and that the individual cannot perform the activity or finds it very difficult to perform the activity.

B. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER

Illinois DRS continues to operate under an order of selection since 1979. Illinois last changed its order of selection policy in April 2013. The overall purpose of the policy is to reflect the priorities of the agency and provide for an equitable distribution of resources to individuals with the most significant disabilities. For FFY2023 DRS projects that all available funds, program income, and carryover, will be expended on individuals in the open categories of the order of selection policy. DRS does not expect to have sufficient funds to serve additional individuals in the closed category of the order of selection

C. THE SERVICE AND OUTCOME GOALS

In FFY2023, DRS expects to serve 38,454 individuals. It is expected that the total number will be distributed as follows: individuals with a most significant disability: 21,363; individuals with a very significant disability: 13,908; and individuals with a significant disability: 3,183. Only people with significant disabilities will be served.

For FFY2023, DRS expects to achieve 5,800 rehabilitated closures. It is expected that the total number will be distributed as follows: individuals with a most significant disability - 3,219; individuals with a very significant disability - 2,100; and individuals with a significant disability - 481.

D. TIME WITHIN WHICH THESE GOALS MAY BE ACHIEVED FOR INDIVIDUALS IN EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY WITHIN THE ORDER; AND

For FFY2023 the achievement of outcome goals is projected as follows. For persons with not a most significant disability, 700 are expected to achieve an outcome within 12 months of beginning services; 725 within 18 months; 1,125 within 18 months; and 669 within 30 months.

For persons with not a very significant disability, 585 are expected to achieve an outcome within 12 months of beginning services; 865 within 18 months; 385 within 18 months; and 265 within 30 months.

For persons with not a significant disability, 115 are expected to achieve an outcome within 12 months of beginning services; 185 within 18 months; 120 within 18 months; and 61 within 30 months.

No outcomes are projected for individuals in the person with not significant disability category.

E. HOW INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES ARE SELECTED FOR SERVICES BEFORE ALL OTHER INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

The DRS order of selection policy establishes priority for individuals with a most significant disability. Presently this is one of three categories of the order of selection policy now open for service. Financial estimates allow for services to individuals in all three categories to take place through FFY2023. Consistent with longstanding policy, if financial circumstances change, other categories of the order of selection policy will be closed to services until only the most significant category remains open, at which time all new cases will be individuals in that category. It is not anticipated that such financial circumstances will arise as no similar situation has taken place in more than a decade. However, the policy in place is sufficient to ensure that individuals in the most significant disability category will have priority going forward in such an event.

2. IF THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT HAS ELECTED TO SERVE ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS, REGARDLESS OF ANY ESTABLISHED ORDER OF SELECTION, WHO REQUIRE SPECIFIC SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT

DRS for FFY 2023 does not plan to implement an exemption to the order of selection process based on specific service needs in order to retain employment.

N. GOALS AND PLANS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS

1. SPECIFY THE STATE'S GOALS AND PRIORITIES FOR FUNDS RECEIVED UNDER SECTION 603 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

DRS provides the following projections for use of those funds. For PY2022, the Supported Employment Program (SEP) has set forth the following goals using Title VI, Part B funds.

In establishing the goals listed in the plan, DRS utilized the following priorities. The second and fourth priorities listed are most relevant to the supported employment program.

First, to extend the reach of the DRS VR program, serve more individuals and establish a presence in hard to serve communities across the state. A service trend over the last two years as a result of the pandemic has been a gradual reduction in the number of people served by DRS. This trend needs to be reversed while reaching the population as broadly as possible. This includes reaching individuals regardless of their disability, reaching individuals in minority communities, reaching individuals who speak languages other than English, and reaching individuals in low-income or isolated communities such as the LGBTQ communities. The second priority area is to ensure that VR services are available to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including individuals in need of traditional supported employment services. This priority also addresses individuals currently working in a subminimum wage setting and those in need of long-term extended support to maintain employment. A third priority is to expand pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities to encompass all students. As the state VR agency, DRS is only able to reach a certain number of students. But expanding our partnership with state and local education authorities we hope to make this a universal program for students with disabilities. A fourth priority is increasing the self-sufficiency of people with disabilities. Employment is an important objective, but full-time employment and higher earnings are also critical in achieving self-sufficiency.

1. Serve customers recently placed into supported employment in a manner consistent with federal regulations, with an emphasis on moving as many individuals as possible into natural supports after ongoing support services.

2. Continue to expand the scope of those who receive services to include persons who are deaf-blind, persons with traumatic brain injuries, persons who are mentally ill, persons with significant hearing impairments, and other persons with the most significant disabilities.

3. Develop new mechanisms for funding paid extended services, including cooperative agreements with other state agencies and local units of government.

4. Evaluate the most effective means of achieving employment outcomes for individuals traditionally served in supported employment services.

5. Ensure that no less than 50 percent of the Title VI Part B grant funds are used for long—term support services to youth with disabilities. For PY2022, DRS expects to serve 713 persons in supported employment utilizing Title VI Part B funds. In PY2020, DRS served 618 individuals in supported employment using Title VI Part B funds and an additional 433 using other funds.

2. DESCRIBE THE ACTIVITIES TO BE CONDUCTED, WITH FUNDS RESERVED PURSUANT TO SECTION 603(D), FOR YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING:

A. THE PROVISION OF EXTENDED SERVICES FOR A PERIOD NOT TO EXCEED 4 YEARS; AND

DRS will continue and implement its contract monitoring mechanism in PY2022 to ensure that Title VI Part B funds are available to youth with disabilities and that at least 50 percent of grant funds are available to individuals in that category.n addition, a reporting system has been developed to ensure that a youth with a disability participates in extended services funded with Title VI part B funds for no longer than 48 months. Activities to be carried out for individuals receiving extended services include provisions of ongoing support services at the job site or another location, facilitation of natural supports at the job site, and regular contact with employers and other individuals supporting the worker to reinforce and stabilize the job placement. Other supports will be made available as needed, including assistive technology where appropriate. Extended services will be available to youth with a most significant disability for up to 48 months until such time that the individual reaches age 25 and no longer meets the definition of "youth with a disability".

B. HOW THE STATE WILL LEVERAGE OTHER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDS TO INCREASE RESOURCES FOR EXTENDED SERVICES AND EXPANDED SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES.

DRS work is ongoing in PY2022 with the state developmental disabilities agency and the state mental health agency to explore funding options for youth with the most significant disabilities who may exhaust support services utilizing Title VI Part B funds. It is expected that most individuals in that category will be eligible for services funded through one of the Medicaid waivers operated by those agencies. The Illinois Employment First effort is a mechanism to support additional cooperation between VR-funded and Medicaid waiver-funded employment programs for people with most significant disabilities. DRS and the state agency serving individuals with intellectual disabilities have reached an agreement to facilitate referrals of individuals requiring longer-term paid support. DRS is also committed to continuing the expansion of customized employment services as an option for youth with the most significant disabilities. DRS hopes to be able to build on experience from recent pilot projects for customized employment for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Ongoing discussions with the state developmental disabilities agency include exploring options for customized employment projects

O. STATE'S STRATEGIES

1. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO EXPAND AND IMPROVE SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

The three primary strategies are as follows:

1. Significantly increased outreach and support for potential VR customers to increase referrals to the program. Given the impact of the pandemic, DRS initiated aggressive online webinars and virtual platform events for customers and potential employers. DRS implemented its online referral intake system and has shared the process with our WIOA-mandated partners. DRS will implement the Access Equity project. The purpose of the project is to substantially increase outreach efforts to persons with disabilities in targeted communities, particularly those of minority persons with disabilities and those whose primary language is other than English. DRS plans to establish contracts with multiple vendors that have established roots in these communities, and which have the resources to identify potential VR customers and connect them to DRS. In addition, the vendor agencies will provide ongoing support to VR customers throughout their participation in the program, connecting them to various community resources and government benefits that will enable their ongoing involvement in VR services. The idea is not only to provide information about the DRS VR program but to support individuals who may not otherwise initiate an application to VR.

DRS also plans to continue the Community Partnership Initiative, which was established in 2018 and has proven successful in reaching out to over 7,000 persons with disabilities. While the initiative is only active for part of the year, the relationships established with the partner agencies have proven beneficial in expanding awareness of the VR program.

b. Continued development of a business engagement strategy to meet employer needs and create additional job opportunities for VR customers. In 2019, DRS established a workforce development unit (WDU) to significantly increase the capacity to provide services to businesses. A key step was creating a new job classification for business services consultants. This job was designed to focus more on communication skills and business-related experience than on skills or experience relating to rehabilitation. Of the first six consultants hired, none had backgrounds

in rehabilitation counseling. The WDU also includes three staff classified as employment resource specialists. This is a legacy job classification more closely aligned with a counseling background. All WDU staff have received in-person and online training focused on communicating with businesses, presenting the case for VR services, working with large corporate employers, as well as training in how to promote disability awareness to employers. A centralized database has been developed to track employer contacts and relate those efforts to the hiring of DRS customers. Each staff person has assignments to one or more local workforce development areas and is charged with coordinating with the local business services team.

c. Encourage post-secondary education opportunities to help VR customers obtain full-time work and higher earnings. Completion of a post-secondary degree is an important factor in attaining a self-sufficient level of earnings. In PY2020 VR customers who closed successfully after participating in post-secondary education had average annual earnings of $27,562 compared to other successful closures from the program, who earned $20,128 on average. Customers completing a university program earned an average of $33,540 per year while community college completers earned $25,376 on average. DRS believes that the VR program should do as much as possible to promote post-secondary education to assist customers in achieving better jobs that pay higher wages.

Since 2010 DRS has operated the Community College Initiative, which provides financial incentives to customers wishing to attend a 2-year program. In that time the number of customers attending community college programs has increased by 122 percent. In 2021 and 2022 DRS conducted in-depth internal studies into our rules of financial participation and their impact on post-secondary student success. The results of the study exhibited a complicated and multifaceted situation that will require thorough consideration before changes are implemented. For example will the increased flexibility per the financial eligibility impact DRS by seeing an increase in post-secondary training cases. These findings were subsequently reported to the DRS Director in the Spring of 2022 and a decision on any potential modifications with being reported on future adjustments or the next State plan.

DRS will continue to work with the Talent Acquisition Program (TAP) coordinated by CSAVR. This is a cooperative effort of many state VR agencies to promote professional-level employment for VR customers. While many internet sites serve to connect applicants and employers, TAP is the only site that focuses on employing people with disabilities. Participating employers are aware that the applicant has a disability, but this has proven to be a benefit in establishing communication between the parties. DRS also works with the National Employment Team (The NET). This program helps employers operating on a national or multi-state basis connect with VR programs in each state, facilitating referrals of applicants. While the NET is not focused on professional-level employment, the structure of most large corporate employers involves many such jobs in the states where they operate.

DRS believes that continuing the strategies identified above will contribute to the achievement of the goals and priorities listed in this plan. Expanding the reach of the DRS VR program is a key priority for DRS and will be supported by the continued implementation of these strategies. The ongoing implementation of the business engagement strategy will contribute to an increase in successful employment for VR customers across the state. The business engagement unit is just now entering its second year and its impact will be more widely felt going forward. And continuing the emphasis on post-secondary education and training will have an impact on increasing the average earnings of individuals exiting the VR program.

2. HOW A BROAD RANGE OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES AND DEVICES WILL BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AT EACH STAGE OF THE REHABILITATION PROCESS AND ON A STATEWIDE BASIS

DRS instituted procedures to provide assistive technology services safely during the pandemic virtual meetings and in-person meetings with mitigation protocols in place allowed DRS to continue supporting customer assistive technology needs. DRS established various modes of noncontact delivery and remote installation to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities. As the contact limitations eased during 2021 and 2022, DRS AT contractors and local office staff fully utilized our network of AT providers to reduce wait times from referral to device implementation and training. DRS has increased our investment in both of our in-state partners to enhance their capability to provide newer more innovative AT devices for our customers, and more expediently. DRS understands that the shifting workforce trends provide a significant opportunity for our customers to work remotely and in that effort, we enhanced our cooperation between local offices, the central office, and our providers to fully utilize available options for customers.

DRS also has a central office purchasing specialist that works one-on-one with VR counselors to arrange to purchase of AT equipment and maximize the use of VR funds. DRS also works closely with the Illinois Assistive Technology Project (the state AT grant recipient) to educate

people with disabilities about AT products and services as well as demonstrate products that may be of use to individuals with disabilities. DRS initiated the loan-to-own program for the distribution of assistive technology equipment to provide necessary devices to VR customers in a timely fashion. This effort involves making larger purchases of frequently used assistive technology devices and transferring them to a customer as needed, rather than initiating a separate purchase for each individual. This has significantly reduced the amount of time required to deliver assistive technology equipment to customers, enabling them to move forward with their service plan sooner.

The technology team is also working closely with Blind Services staff to test assisted vision devices known as AIRA that promote safe travel and community integration. This is an exciting new development in assistive technology and DRS will soon be implementing a test of the technology.

3. THE OUTREACH PROCEDURES THAT WILL BE USED TO IDENTIFY AND SERVE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES, INCLUDING THOSE WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, AS WELL AS THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM

DRS Operations wrote a request for proposals intended to explicitly improve our ability to provide meaningful and substantive support to individuals with disabilities that are also from historically disenfranchised or underserved communities. This process is still underway but DRS anticipates this process leading to more individuals from underserved communities entering and succeeding in VR. By contracting providers that can appropriately understand the lived experiences of our customers from these communities, DRS expects that the potential success of these customers will be improved. The proposal is geared to increase DRS collaborations with community-based organizations to provide information and additional access points for underserved communities to access VR services.

DRS has further taken steps to increase understanding among DRS staff about the challenges faced by people with the most severe disabilities, those from historically underserved communities, and those from disenfranchised populations. DRS implemented mandatory division-wide multi-cultural diversity and inclusion training for all staff in Fall 2021 and is currently underway with Hispanic/Latinx outreach training during Spring 2022. DRS has worked closely with our network of prime agencies to adopt the IPS model for our customers with the most severe disabilities. This proven model for successful VR services is expected to provide the much-needed additional support required by these individuals to achieve full community participation. DRS is in the process of determining outreach initiatives that would succeed in aiding individuals with criminal records in achieving employment goals through VR services. These potential initiatives will be reported on in plan adjustments.

4. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO 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, POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES)

DRS implemented strategies to support services to students and youth with disabilities during and post-pandemic stages, building upon its existing strong level of support for that age group DRS provides access to virtual counseling and distant and electronic communication platforms. For example, Although this represents a high level of involvement there By bridging communication gaps brought about by the pandemic and capitalizing on the growing emphasis on virtual interaction exhibited by younger individuals, providing technological support to customers led to an increase in involvement by customers in their VR success. Despite that progress, DRS is still analyzing how we can further improve communication and cooperation between customers and DRS staff.

While a variety of pre-employment transition services are being provided through existing arrangements with third-party providers, DRS initiated the Fast Track Transition program as an option for pre-employment transition services outside the framework of the longstanding STEP effort. This program works with 22 vendor agencies across the state, including 20 centers for independent living. The target population is students aged 14 and 15 that have not typically participated in STEP services. As of January 2021, over 1,200 students were participating in the Fast Track program. DRS anticipates continued expansion of this program in subsequent years depending on provider interest.

DRS intends to work with community rehabilitation programs and local school systems to establish an alternate mode of connecting students exiting high school with CRP services during the pandemic. Both CRP and school personnel report difficulties making referrals and establishing services soon after a student leaves school. The greater the time lapse after leaving school, the less likely that a student will become engaged with a community provider. Recent provider input suggests that individuals likely to benefit from supported employment services are particularly impacted by the need to arrange post-school services quickly. DRS will continue working with community partners to explore virtual and online methods and options relating to this issue.

5. IF APPLICABLE, PLANS FOR ESTABLISHING, DEVELOPING, OR IMPROVING COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE

Illinois has utilized its network of community rehabilitation programs across the state, as well as an active trade association for those organizations to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. The network has been an important resource during the pandemic. DRS does not believe that new community rehabilitation programs need to be developed at this time. DRS remains in

contact with these organizations through ongoing discussions with the Facility Advisory Council, which has a rotating membership of program directors, who meet regularly with DR's administrators. The program manager for contracts as well as the bureau chief for field services attends meetings.

DRS also has specific liaison relationships between VR counselors and community rehabilitation programs in their service area. In addition, DRS has project officers who monitor contracts with community rehabilitation programs and are very knowledgeable regarding the service capacity of the agencies and the needs of their customers. These organizational arrangements provide a high level of communication about service needs as they relate to community rehabilitation programs.

For two years, DRS has added customized employment CRP's and increased utilization of supported employment program services. Rule changes are under consideration to increase provider pool and participation. Through partnership with the Division of Developmental Disabilities, DRS will continue to provide technical assistance to providers who have not yet become CRP's.

DRS believes that community rehabilitation program agencies will continue to play an important part in the overall system of services in Illinois. DRS anticipates that the overall percentage of outcomes associated with CRPs will remain relatively stable and that an increase in employment outcomes overall will mean an increase in employment outcomes associated with CRPs.

6. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE STATE WITH RESPECT TO THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA

DRS will continue to focus on PY2022 to increase median earnings. DRS is following three main strategies to increase median earnings. The first is to increase the number of individuals enrolled in university and community college programs. These individuals have higher earnings than those with less education. A second strategy is to identify individuals with work experience who may benefit from return-to-work services through the VR program. DRS has one community provider contract that focuses on return-to-work and it has higher than average earnings for the individuals it serves. The third strategy is expanded participation in the CSAVR Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP). Each of these approaches is designed to identify individuals with higher expected earnings and gradually increase the proportion of these individuals served by DRS.

Increased employment retention. Employment retention is a function of an appropriate match between the job and the individual, as well as a satisfactory level of earnings. Full-time work is associated with a higher level of employee retention than is part-time work. Consequently, DRS counselors are encouraged to emphasize full-time work to the greatest extent possible for VR customers. Also as noted above, DRS is attempting to increase enrollment in university and community college programs. Individuals with that level of education are much more likely to engage in full-time employment. Increased achievement of postsecondary education credentials. DRS is engaged to expand enrollment in university and community college programs. To improve data quality, DRS has made modifications to its online case management system. These changes will result in improved tracking of measurable skill gains and achievement of degrees and credentials by customers pursuing postsecondary training.

7. STRATEGIES FOR ASSISTING OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM IN ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

DRS implemented strategies for assisting other components of the workforce system in working effectively with persons with disabilities during the pandemic. These efforts included increased involvement in TA team cooperation to reopen One-Stops in a manner that is safe and conducive to the needs of people with disabilities. DRS further supported our partners in the

revamping of our workforce website to make it more interactive, accessible, and informative. DRS continuously shares an equal part in WIOA performance and accountability cooperative work and has shared our innovations with our partners that have proven successful. DRS also continues a high level of participation in state and local efforts to promote service integration within the workforce system by utilizing technology and alternate forms of communication such as virtual meeting platforms. Concerns specifically related to program accessibility were addressed at the local level with support from the DRS central office rehabilitation technology unit, in addition to local staff resources.

DRS will reach out to independent living centers in response to accessibility concerns. DRS will also work with its Title I agency to provide training to both DRS and local workforce staff on disability issues through webinars and other mechanisms. DRS will also pursue a strategy of expanding methods of communication, including electronic and computer connections, between DRS offices and local workforce centers. DRS has been involved with ongoing efforts through the pandemic in support of the state's workforce board to create a system for the electronic exchange of information between workforce partner agencies at the state and local levels.

8. HOW THE AGENCY'S STRATEGIES WILL BE USED TO:

A. ACHIEVE GOALS AND PRIORITIES BY THE STATE, CONSISTENT WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT;

The goals established in this plan are consistent with DRS needs assessment activities described in this plan. The goals are closely aligned to WIOA reporting requirements, focusing on employment retention and earnings, essential objectives of the VR program. The strategies described in this plan are focused on making progress toward those goals. DRS believes that the focus on employment, earnings and educational achievement are consistent with the needs of people with disabilities throughout the state.

B. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES; AND

DRS PY2022 goals established in this plan are consistent with DRS needs assessment activities described in this plan. The goals are closely aligned to WIOA reporting requirements, focusing on employee retention and earnings, essential objectives of the VR program. The strategies described in this plan are focused on making progress toward those goals. DRS believes that the focus on employment, earnings, and educational achievement are consistent with the needs of people with disabilities throughout the state

C. OVERCOME IDENTIFIED BARRIERS RELATING TO EQUITABLE ACCESS TO AND PARTICIPATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM AND THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM.

DRS continues to address the identified primary barrier to participation in the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment program for individuals with disabilities concerning access to services. Because these programs are targeted at individuals with disabilities, there is no general barrier to participation based on disability status. Rather, specific barriers arise when an individual is unable to participate in a program or communicate his or her needs to program staff. DRS provides a variety of access methods to individuals with disabilities, including the use of Braille and large print, sign language, computer-assisted real-time captioning, and other specialized assistive technology. All DRS office locations are physically accessible, as are all program locations and public meeting sites. Individuals who do not speak English are provided with translation services to participate in the vocational rehabilitation program. Every effort is made to eliminate these types of barriers to participation.

The Access Equity project described above is intended to address these concerns directly. The involvement of community-based agencies with substantial ties to the local population has the

potential to greatly reduce communication concerns and improve ongoing program participation for VR applicants.

P. EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS

1. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE VR PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE APPROVED VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:

A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS

Goal 1: Competitive Integrated Employment Outcomes DRS has revised the goals in this section based on current performance levels. DRS plans to increase the number of competitive integrated employment outcomes achieved each year, beginning with 5,600 in PY2017, then 5,950 in PY2018, and 6,300 in PY2019.

Results: This goal was not achieved. The pandemic and resulting disruptions to the workforce resulted in a sharp decline in successful closures. During PY2019, DRS recorded 4,629 successful outcomes. In PY2020 DRS recorded 3,916 successful outcomes. Moderate growth during PY2021 has provided for a promising trajectory and we estimate DRS will have 4,600 successful outcomes in PY21 and 5,400 in PY2022. Goal to be revaluated following completion of CSNA currently underway.

Goal 2: Median Earnings Two Quarters After Program Exit The best estimate of current performance is median quarterly earnings of $2,343. DRS plans to increase the median earnings achieved by individuals exiting the VR program to $2,460 in PY2016, $2,595 in PY2017, $2,750 in PY2018, and $2,930 in PY2019.

- Results: This goal was exceeded. DRS customers recorded a median earning of $3,107 in PY2019 and $3,337 in PY2020. DRS estimates that customers will earn a median income of $3,520 in PY2021 and $3,780 in PY2022. Goal to be revaluated following completion of CSNA currently underway.

- Goal 3: Employment Retention at Two Quarters After Program Exit The best estimate of current performance is 49.1 percent for all persons exiting the VR program. DRS plans to increase the employment retention percentage to 52.5 in PY2016, 55.0 in PY2017, 57.5 in PY2018, and 60.0 in PY2019.

- Results: This goal was achieved in PY2019 and not during PY2020. During PY2019 DRS customers achieved 74.4% retention rates Two Quarters after exit. In PY2020 52.6% were still with the same employer Two Quarters after exit. It is expected that this rate will not see much growth as shifts in societal workforce trends suggest retention with an employer is not a considerable factor for young people entering the workforce. This goal will be amended following CSNA currently underway.

- Goal 4: Employment Retention at Four Quarters After Program Exit The best estimate of current performance is 45.7 percent for all persons exiting the VR program. DRS plans to increase the employment retention percentage to 48.0 in PY2016, 50.0 in PY2017, 52.5 in PY2018, and 55.0 in PY2019.

- Results: Similar to the Second Quarter after exit measure, PY2019 found success, and PY2020 exhibited a strong decline towards this measure. Customers retained with the same employer Four Quarters after exiting in PY2019 at a rate of 68.1% and in PY2020 47.6%. It is expected that this rate will not see much growth as shifts in societal workforce trends suggest retention with an employer is not a considerable factor for young people entering the workforce. This goal will be amended following CSNA currently underway.

- Goal 5: Educational Achievement This measure includes all program participants who earn a secondary diploma, post-secondary degree, or other credentials while participating in the program or within one year after program exit. The best estimate of current performance is 5,050 individuals meeting this criterion, with 4,250 completing a secondary diploma, 600 earning a post-secondary degree, and 200 earning some other type of credential. DRS plans to increase the number of people making educational achievements to 5,260 in PY2016, 5,470 in PY2017, 5,680 in PY2018, and 5,900 in PY2019.

- Results: This goal was not achieved. The estimates used in establishing the goals proved not to be an accurate reflection of program achievement. In the most recent fiscal year (ending June 30, 2020) a total of 4,902 high school students graduated with a diploma and 392 post-secondary education students graduated with a degree (155 university students and 255 community college students). The combined total of 5,294 represents a significant achievement for the students involved but as a total, it is less than the stated goal for the year. This goal will be amended or replaced following the completion of CSNA currently underway. It may be necessary to steer this measure towards a success rate instead of raw counts to show success per customer.

- Goal 6: Post-Secondary Training Skill Gains: This measure includes all program participants who are engaged in post-secondary training leading to a degree or credential and who are making measurable skills gains during the program year. The best estimate of current performance is 2,500 individuals meeting this criterion. DRS plans to increase the number of people achieving measurable skills gains in post-secondary training to 2,650 in PY2016, 2,800 in PY2017, 2,950 in PY2018, and 3,150 in PY2019.

- Results: This goal was not achieved, however, strong growth has been exhibited. Participants achieved 2,316 skills gained in PY2019 and 3,051 in PY2020. DRS expects this growth to continue and for Post-Secondary students in DRS services to achieve 3,350 skills gained in PY2021 and 3,675 in PY2022. Goal to be reaffirmed following completion of CSNA currently underway.

- Goal 7: Students with Disabilities Exiting Into Post-secondary Training: This is a measure of the number of students with disabilities who graduate from high school and enter post-secondary training programs within the first year after leaving school. The best estimate of current performance is that about 4,000 students exit DRS STEP services each year and about 700 enter post-secondary training. DRS plans to increase

the number of students participating in post-secondary training to 750 in PY2016, 825 in PY2017, 900 in PY2018, and 1,000 in PY2019.

- Results: This goal was not achieved, in part due to inaccurate estimates made in establishing the goal. While DRS has around 3,500 VR customers engaged in post-secondary education programs in a typical year, the number going directly from high school to post-secondary training is lower than estimated. This goal will be amended or replaced following the completion of CSNA currently underway.

- Goal 8: Establish a Business Engagement Team within DRS: In PY2016 DRS plans to establish a business engagement team, consisting of employment resource specialists, rehabilitation counselors, and field office supervisors. The team will establish new relationships with at least 20 employers and achieve 50 employment outcomes for VR customers at those businesses. DRS will work in conjunction with the Job Driven VR Technical Assistance Center to develop a business engagement strategy and provide training to participating staff to increase the effectiveness of their engagement with employers. This goal has been extended for the next two program years, with 50 new business engagements and 100 employment outcomes anticipated in PY2018 and 65 new business engagements, and 125 employment outcomes in PY2019.

- Results: This goal was partially achieved, and the unit is currently at near full capacity. Engagements have risen to a previous height of 1,796 in PY2019 before declining to 1,512 in PY2020. DRS Estimates our Business Consultants will engage or follow up with 2,250 businesses in PY2021 and 2,375 in PY2021. Successful closures following consultant/specialist assisted placements totaled 72 PY 2019 and 99 in PY2020. These were slightly below our goals set forth but considering the overall drop in closures for the program as a whole, this should be considered a success. Now that this unit is a full factor in our VR work, this goal will be amended following the completion of CSNA currently underway.

- Goal 9: Continue Expansion of Innovative Program Options in PY2018 and PY2019 DRS plans to continue the expansion of several innovative program options which have been evaluated following a set of pilot projects. These include customized employment services, individual placement, and support (IPS) services for diverse populations and Project Search sites. Evaluation of the pilot projects suggests that the majority of the projects have performed at a level sufficient to justify ongoing support through DRS VR funds.

- Results: The expansion of IPS to serve individuals with the most severe disabilities has proven to be a promising strategy. This program is still building momentum but is expected to double our numbers of class members receiving services by end of PY2023. Customized employment has continued to expand in customers served but will need additional providers for much more growth in this area. Effective data collection and reporting for Customized Employment has been a hurdle but we are confident that should be rectified now.

- Goal 10: Expand Performance Funding DRS has converted many of its community contracts to a performance basis in the last four years. DRS plans to continue to process of converting contracts for job placement and supported employment to a performance basis, achieving a level of 90 percent performance-based contracts with community vendors in PY2018 and 95 percent in PY2019.

- Results: This goal was achieved. DRS stands at 100%. This goal will be replaced or amended following the completion of CSNA currently underway.

B. DESCRIBE THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

The impact of the pandemic to a large degree affected performance in it was limited as we developed our remote virtual capacity in addition to staff vacancies and having new staff. For a time, the hiring capability of the VR program was limited by factors within state government external to the program. In addition, transfers of counselors from the VR program to the expanding DRS home services program created a higher than usual number of VR counselor vacancies

2. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SUPPLEMENT FOR THE MOST RECENT PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:

A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS

The goal for PY2020 was to serve and employ 158 persons in supported employment utilizing Title VI Part B funds. This goal was achieved. In that year DRS served 1,230 individuals in supported employment, with 234 served using Title VI Part B funds and 996 served using other funds. DRS believes that additional outreach efforts will contribute to success in achieving supported employment goals in the coming program years

B. DESCRIBE THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

DRS efforts to ensure that supported employment services were targeted only to those for whom the service is appropriate resulted in a drop in total persons served. A partial cause of the decrease was the impact of the pandemic. The number of individuals receiving supported employment services during the pandemic decreased DRS is looking to build on that increase in the coming program years. The new performance-based contracting system is designed to align the interests of DRS, the provider, and the customer so that individuals begin employment and receive appropriate supports that are gradually decreased until the individual achieves optimal independence. In addition, DRS is working with the state developmental disabilities agency to facilitate referrals of individuals likely to benefit from VR-funded supported employment services. Another major factor is that as Illinois increases its efforts to phase out reliance on subminimum wage the need for supported employment increases.

3. THE VR PROGRAM'S PERFORMANCE ON THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA

Employment Retention: Data for individuals exiting the program (either successfully or unsuccessfully) in PY2020 show that 52.6 percent were employed during the second quarter after program exit. In addition, 47.6 percent of individuals exiting the program were employed during the fourth quarter after program exit.

Median earnings two quarters after program exit: Data for individuals exiting the program in PY2020 showed median earnings of $3,337 two quarters after program exit. This was slightly higher than the $3,107 from PY2019.

Educational Achievement/Credential Attainment Rate: Data for individuals participating in these programs showed that 1,344 of the 4,941 participants attained a recognized credential during PY2020 for a rate of 27.2%. Substantial growth over the PY2019 rate of 5.2%.

Measurable Skill Gains. In PY2020 a total of 3,051 measurable skill gains were reported for 5,102 students enrolled in post-secondary education, for an MSG Rate of 59.8%. Substantial growth over the PY2019 rate of 42.1%.

4. HOW THE FUNDS RESERVED FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION (I&E) ACTIVITIES WERE UTILIZED

DRS has initiated several innovation and expansion activities since the previous plan. The development of the Fast Track Transition program to provide pre-employment transition services to potentially eligible students with disabilities represents a significant service expansion in the area of transition. The focus is on serving younger (14- and 15-year-olds) students that have not typically been served in Illinois. As of March 2022, there were over 1,423 students in the program. DRS also has initiated an arrangement with the National Federation for the Blind to provide pre-employment transition services to students who are blind or visually impaired. DRS believes that the expertise of this national organization will be of great benefit to the students who participate. DRS also implemented the Community Partnership Initiative. This program involved over 120 community-based organizations, including faith-based organizations, fraternal organizations, and community groups. Community partners were engaged to identify potential VR customers in their community and deliver presentations on the DRS VR program and provide information on how to apply. Since September 2018 over 1,000 presentations have been made to over 7,000 individuals with disabilities and family members to provide information and education about DRS services.

Q. QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

1. 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

In the last several years DRS has seen a reduction in the total number of persons served in supported employment, although the current trend is toward increased participation. There was a decrease of 25 percent in the number of persons receiving supported employment services through DRS from 2012 to 2014. The number of persons served has increased by 8 percent from 2015 to 2017 and has remained at roughly the same level since that time at about 1,250 individuals. However, since 2017, the number of individuals receiving supported employment that were subsequently closed as successful employment outcomes dropped from 298 to 187, a decrease of 112 or 37.5 percent. DRS continues to explore options to identify individuals that are likely to benefit from supported employment services to reverse this trend.

In 2017, DRS implemented a new performance-based contracting system for supported employment. This was developed in conjunction with provider representatives, and increased the effective payment rate by 16 percent. The goal is to ensure that individuals become employed and receive necessary supports that are gradually reduced over time to achieve maximum independent functioning on the job. While the new contract format has maintained the overall number of persons served, the lack of effectiveness in achieving successful outcomes for supported employment participants is a concern.

In 2019, DRS completed a new working agreement the state developmental disabilities agency to increase referrals to the DRS supported employment program. This includes outreach to DD

system case management entities in developing referrals to DRS supported employment. DRS is also committed to dedicating substantial resources to provision of supported employment services to youth with disabilities. For many years DRS has supplemented the Title VI Part B grant funds with VR grant funds for supported employment contracts. For most providers there was no distinction between the contracts based on funding. In 2015, DRS began utilization of Title VI Part B funds for supported employment customers younger than age 25, as well as more closely tracking the total number of months of supported employment services. Current data indicates that about 30 percent of individuals participating in supported employment are younger than age 25.

2. THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES

For several years DRS has not had access to state general revenue funds to provide long-term extended services for individuals completing time-limited supported employment services, whether using Title VI Part B funds or Title I funds. DRS has focused on developing natural supports in the workplace as a form of unpaid extended services for individuals completing supported employment services. Completion of the program is defined as reduction of paid on-the-job supports to the minimum possible level. DRS is in the process of completing a new agreement with the state DD agency which provides that individuals completing VR supported employment will be able to receive ongoing support through the DD agency. DRS also expects that many individuals currently on the waiting list for DD waiver services will apply for DRS supported employment services.

For youth with a most significant disability DRS utilizes available funds to provide extended services for a period of up to 48 months until such time as the individual turns age 25 and no longer meets the definition of "youth with a disability".

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL) CERTIFICATIONS

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 WIOA[14], AND ITS SUPPLEMENT UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT[15];

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE

Division of Rehabilitation Services

2. AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES, THE (ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY)[16] AGREES TO OPERATE AND ADMINISTER THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[17] , THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[18] , POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER SECTION 111 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;

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY

Illinois Department of Human 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 AGREES TO OPERATE AND ADMINISTER THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES

PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[19] , THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[20] , 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;

4. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND/OR THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT 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;

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

Grace B. Hou

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

Secretary, Department of Human Services

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

CERTIFICATION SIGNATURE

Signatory information	Enter Signatory information in this column
Name of Signatory	Grace B. Hou
Title of Signatory	Secretary, Department of Human Services
Date Signed	05/13/2022

ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include	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	

The State Plan must include	Include
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 plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.	
3. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan:	
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. The establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable (A or B must be selected):	
3.b.(A) “is an independent State commission” (Yes/No)	No
3.b.(B) “has established a State Rehabilitation Council” (Yes/No)	Yes
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. 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. Select yes or no, as appropriate,	No

The State Plan must include	Include
to identify if the designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds (Yes/No)	
3.f. The shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs (Yes/No)	No
3.g. Statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. Is the designated State agency requesting or maintaining a waiver of statewideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan? (Yes/No) See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan	Yes
3.h. The descriptions 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	
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	

The State Plan must include	Include
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)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.b. Impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.c. Provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act? (Yes/No)	No
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 requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) 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 section 101(a)(14)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,	

The State Plan must include	Include
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.I. Strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and	
4.j.i.II. 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) and 101(a)(25))	
5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement:	
5.a. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act	
5.b. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act	
5.c. The designated state unit will coordinate activities with any other State agency that is functioning as an employment network under the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency program under Section 1148 of the Social Security Act	
6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program:	
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	

The State Plan must include	Include
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)(G) and (H) 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:	Yes
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:	
7.b.i. 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	
7.b.ii. 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)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act	

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	56.0%	56.0%	60.0%	60.0%

Performance Indicators	PY 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	49.0%	49.0%	51.0%	51.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$3,627	$3,627	$3,942	$3,942
Credential Attainment Rate	29.5%	29.5%	31.0%	31.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	72.5%	61.0%	75.0%	63.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]

1

"Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being developed and this data will not be entered in the 2022 State Plan modifications.

VII. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR APPENDIX

ALL WIOA CORE PROGRAMS

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all primary indicators with the exception of the two indicators of performance not applicable to the Title III Wagner-Peyser Act. The Effectiveness in Serving Employers are also not negotiated nor are expected levels required to be provided by State as it remains in a Pilot Program with the Departments of Labor and Education, The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as "baseline." Each state must update its state plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state's plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Table 28 provides the expected level of performance for Program Years 2022 and 2023 for each WIOA core partner program in each of the five primary indicators of performance, where applicable. Upon completion of negotiations with the Departments, the final negotiated levels of performance will be provided in this table as a modification to the State plan.

Title IB

Reflecting the performance negotiation process that occurred in 2020 for Program Years 2020 and 2021 and understanding states are held accountable to adjusted levels of performance, Title IB has identified its expected levels of performance for Program Years 2022 and 2023. At the time of submission of the unified state plan, U.S. DOL has not provided the State with adjusted levels of performance based on application of the Federal Statistical Adjustment Model (SAM).

As a result, Illinois is not able to conduct a complete analysis of PY20 performance measure data using SAM adjustments; nor is it possible to determine the status (Exceed, Meet, Fail) for each of its fifteen indicators of performance across the three Title IB programs for PY20. Therefore, the expected levels of performance provided in this table do not reflect complete data analysis of expected levels based on any adjustments made by the SAM. Upon receipt of the adjusted levels of performance and final status of its outcomes for PY 2020, the Title IB expected levels of performance many be adjusted to better reflect application of the SAM to negotiated levels of performance.

Title II

Title II will negotiate performance indicators for PY21 and PY22 (FY23 and FY24) in the Spring of PY21.

Title III

Reflecting the performance negotiation process that occurred in 2020 for Program Years 2020 and 2021 and understanding states are held accountable to adjusted levels of performance, Title III Wagner-Peyser has identified its expected levels of performance for Program Years 2022 and 2023. At the time of submission of the unified state plan, U.S. DOL has not provided the State with adjusted levels and actual levels of performance based on application of the State Performance Assessment. As a result, Illinois is not able to conduct a complete analysis of PY20 performance measure data using State Performance Assessment adjustments; nor is it possible to determine the status (Exceed, Meet, Fail) for each of its three indicators of performance for Title III Wagner-Peyser programs for PY20. Therefore, the expected levels of performance provided in this table do not reflect complete data analysis of expected levels based on any adjustments made by the State Performance Assessment. Upon receipt of the adjusted levels of performance and final status of its outcomes for PY 2020, the Title III Wagner-Peyser expected levels of performance many be adjusted to better reflect application of the State Performance Assessment to negotiated levels of performance.

Title IV

All Title-IV measures have yet to be negotiated with ED-RSA for Plan Years 2022 and 2023. We hope to have a schedule for this process following our quarterly call in March/April 2022.

Table 28: Program Year 2022 and 2023 Program Goals

	Program Year: 2022	Program Year: 2022	Program Year: 2023	Program Year: 2023
	Expected Level	**Negotiated Level**	**Expected Level**	**Negotiated Level**
Employment Rate – 2nd Quarter After Exit				
Title I – Adult	76.5%		76.5%	
Title I – Dislocated Worker	81.0%		81.0%	
Title I – Youth[1]	73.5%		73.5%	
Title II – Adult Education	27.7%		27.0%	

	Program Year: 2022	Program Year: 2022	Program Year: 2023	Program Year: 2023
Title III- Wagner – Peyser	61.0%		61.0%	
Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation	56.0%		60.0%	
Employment Rate – 4th Quarter After Exit				
Title I – Adult	74.0%		74.0%	
Title I – Dislocated Worker	79.0%		79.0%	
Title I – Youth[1]	65.0%		65.0%	
Title II – Adult Education	28.4%		27.6%	
Title III- Wagner – Peyser	65.0%		65.0%	
Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation	49.0%		51.0%	
Median Earnings – 2nd Quarter After Exit				
Title I – Adult	$6,200.00		$6,200.00	
Title I – Dislocated Worker	$8,950.00		$8,950.00	
Title I – Youth	$3,275.00		$3,275.00	
Title II – Adult Education	$4,651.00		$4,926.00	
Title III- Wagner – Peyser	$5,800.00		$5,800.00	
Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation	$3,627.00		$3,942.00	
Credential Attainment				
Title I – Adult	66.0%		66.0%	
Title I – Dislocated Worker	67.0%		67.0%	
Title I – Youth	65.0%		65.0%	

	Program Year: 2022	Program Year: 2022	Program Year: 2023	Program Year: 2023
Title II – Adult Education	27.1%		31.0%	
Title III- Wagner – Peyser				
Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation	29.5%		31%	
Measurable Skill Gains				
Title I – Adult	36.0%		36.0%	
Title I – Dislocated Worker	36.0%		36.0%	
Title I – Youth	28.0%		28.0%	
Title II – Adult Education	44.8%		37.1%	
Title III- Wagner – Peyser				
Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation	72.5%		75%	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable[2]	Not Applicable[2]	Not Applicable[2]	Not Applicable[2]
Retention with the Same Employer in the 2nd and 4th Quarter After Exit Rate				
Employer Penetration Rate				

[1] Title I Youth Program Measure includes participants in education or training activities, or unsubsidized employment.

[2] "Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being developed and this data will not be entered in the 2022 State Plan modifications.

ADDITIONAL INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE

Additional Indicators of Performance

Additional Indicators of Performance

OTHER APPENDICES

<u>Addendum I</u> ***(Addendum II may be found below Addendum I)***

Compilation of Public Comments: Illinois 2020 Unified State Plan & 2022 Modification

The following list was compiled from stakeholder input received during the 30-day public comment period for the 2020 Unified State Plan. Comments were received via e-mail and during three public awareness forums held across the state (Chicago, Springfield and Ina) in January 2020. In an effort to reach those unable to attend a public forum, a statewide virtual forum was held for all interested stakeholders.

Attendees were briefed on how WIOA is implemented in Illinois, the layout of the 2020 Unified State Plan and the six essential State strategies for the workforce system described in the plan. In addition, the Illinois Community College Board convened three webinars to solicit feedback from Adult Education and Career and Technical Education providers across the state. Comments are grouped together based on the State strategy to which each one most closely aligns. Note that many comments did not address the plan, but rather voiced support of very specific operational strategies.[1] Please note that, per the instructions given for the submission of public comment, only comments submitted via the three below methods were considered for inclusion in the summary:

- Submitted via the WIOA e-mail inbox: CWD-wioaplan@ad.siu.edu
- Submitted via written comment at a public forum
- Submitted verbally at a public forum accompanied by a written comment

The State of Illinois received comments from a variety of WIOA service providers, advocacy groups and nonprofits from across the state providing support and suggestions for the workforce system State strategies included in this Unified State Plan and other WIOA activities. Comments cover a wide range of workforce-related themes relevant to and included throughout this State Plan, including:

- Data-sharing and systems integration among core and required partners at both the State and local levels
- Addressing the needs of populations with multiple barriers to employment, including improving service delivery and program outcomes for racial minority groups, English language learners and individuals with disabilities
- Reducing barriers for the hiring and retention of instructors and training staff, especially for those instructing English language learners and other populations with multiple barriers to employment
- Providing career pathways for economic advancement, utilizing evidence-based approaches and innovative teaching strategies in OJT opportunities and apprenticeships

- Ensuring the State understands the need for business- and job seeker-driven service strategies
- Support for the State's waiver request to amend the definition of "incumbent worker" by either reducing or, preferably, eliminating the 6-month employment requirement, as well as rationale for this support

Formal public comments focusing on these themes and more are included in the compilation below.

[1] Program-specific operational questions are being addressed outside of the mechanism of this public comment addendum through communication between State and local level partner staff.

See Operational Elements – Item 2(A): ***Implementation of State Strategy, Core Program Activities to Implement the State's Strategy*** *to refer to the State Strategies and activities included in the 2020 Unified State Plan.*

Strategy 2 – Support Employer-Driven Regional Sector Initiatives

1. **Illinois Council on Development Disabilities -** The Plan is heavily focused on aligning with regional business workforce need. That's a great strategy, but Illinois needs to also focus on assisting all who desire work, including those who are not a good fit for career paths identified as workforce need areas. Entry level and non-skilled jobs are necessary, too, and can be filled readily by workers who aren't candidates for skilled work.
2. **Illinois Council on Development Disabilities** - Businesses (human resources, managers) benefit by learning how to better accommodate and recruit (ex. hiring practice doesn't include people), then train and supervise non-traditional workers. People tend to shy away from the unfamiliar, and professional development in best practices for including workers who come with any kind of special need broadens the talent pool. Although ICDD has a focus on hiring people with developmental disabilities, our past work found that jointly working with others such as immigrants, people with mental health issues, ex-convicts, and others benefits all special populations in joining the workforce. Changes to business practice is much the same for everyone and mostly involves an openness to look at individuals and what strengths and skills they bring and to clear away barriers to bringing them into the workforce and supporting and accommodating as needed so they can succeed.

Strategy 3 – Provide Economic Advancement for all Populations through Career Pathways

3. **Anonymous** - The State needs a plan to allow for shared outcomes and metric attainment between CBOs/smaller Title II providers and Title II partners that conduct other Integrated Education and Training. This will increase referrals and the ability for the CBO to continue to provide wrap around services.
4. **Anonymous** - Are we going to reconsider how we are funded based on WIOA outcomes? It costs much more money to run an IET and we are being held to different standards without additional funding to support.
5. **Anonymous** - There is a need for a comprehensive assessment tool to capture realistic barriers, employment interest and issues for accurate placement for services.
6. **Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities** - Business (HR, Managers) benefits by learning how to better accommodate and recruit (e.g. hiring practice doesn't exclude

people), then train and supervise non-traditional workers. My group focused on ESL, MI and DD populations. This benefits any special population.

7. **Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities** - Implementation strategies of DRS or other community providers should use proven best practices such as IPS, supported and customized employment, Project SEARCH and others. This opens the barrier that counselors, job coaches, trainers and job developers need professional development and pay that attract people with knowledge and skill. [Pay] rates are sorely insufficient today.

8. **Illinois Council on Development Disabilities** - Activities 3.2 and 3.4 - To best include and train the broadest potential workforce, all training should use Universal Design teaching strategies. That is a proven means to effectively train learners with all types of learning styles, so it benefits everyone, including but not limited to people with developmental disabilities.

9. **Dr. Milka Ramirez, City Colleges of Chicago** - I would like to see a promotion and investment in City Colleges of Chicago to expand and support employer-led partnerships. It is important to address language access for Limited English Learners.

10. **Anonymous** - The Chicago Citywide Literacy Coalition established a Career Pathways Navigator at the Near West American Job Center to collaborate with IDHS, IDES, CHA, WIOA Title I and II partners in transitioning their clients into an appropriate Adult Education program or career pathway. In the past 18 months, the career navigator has established relationships with all WIOA core partners and has assisted adults on state assistance with transitioning into an adult education program (we need professional development for WIOA partners).

11. **Dr. Milka Ramirez, City Colleges of Chicago** - Consider a trauma informed lens that frames[?] systemic oppression to address barriers and increased attraction to equity initiatives.

12. **Greater West Town Training Partnership (GWTP)** - Provide economic advancement for all populations through career pathways.

    a. Focus on trauma informed care – address systemic oppression.

    b. Apprenticeships deal with issues of equity and under-represented populations.

13. **Dr. Milka Ramirez, City Colleges of Chicago** - Increased and sustained attention to underrepresented populations (i.e. ???, LatinX, African American, Veterans, adult ed., foster care youth, and so on).

<u>Strategy 4 – Expand Service Integration</u>

14. **Anonymous** - The biggest barrier during the process of integrating WIOA partners was educating partners about the different Adult Education programs.

15. **Dr. Milka Ramirez, City Colleges of Chicago** - A web-based tool has built-in barriers due to digital literacy; may need more training and project development; add person-to-person pre-employment skills!

16. **GWTP** - Provide coordinated and enhanced career services.

    a. Web based tool (IL Career Information System)

        i. Limited and not user-friendly to participants

b. Digital Literacy

i. Lack digital literacy to use web-based tool

ii. Pre-employment skills

1. Person-to-person to learn digital literacy

17. **GWTP** - Expand professional development offerings

a. Add a course "New to WIOA" to help individuals that may not be as familiar with the contract

b. Partners work closer with CBO and nonprofits to help with homelessness, food shelters and mental illness. It needs to be a better collaboration. We need a reliable database to access resources.

18. **Illinois Council on Development Disabilities** - Activity 4.1 (and Activity 5.2) – One-stop career centers offer a wealth of training and resources for job seekers and staff have had training under past initiatives in working with people with disabilities. Over time and through attrition, job seekers continue to experience barriers. For example, some job seekers are not computer literate, some have overall literacy issues, some are not English speaking, some are blind or unable to manipulate a mouse. So just being directed to computers to use resources is not sufficient.

Activity 4.3 - Continuous staff development is important at 1-stops, in DRD, and at CRPs. I-stop staff can ensure that job seekers are matched to information and tools that truly allow them to access and benefit from resources or get the support they need to do so. Rehabilitation counselors, job coaches, job developers and other service professionals are most effective when trained in researched best practices. To build the rehabilitation workforce itself, Illinois must face the barrier that counselors, job coaches, trainers, job developers receive pay that attracts and keeps people with knowledge and skill. Rates are sorely insufficient today to cover adequate pay for professional, trained staff.

Activity 4.4 – For successful employment of all, other entities must partner in the activity of this Plan beyond the core partners, including high schools and transition staff, CRPs, and Dept. of Human Service Divisions of Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health.

Activity 4.4 – Include the utilization of Community Work Incentive Coordinators who promote and guide potential job seekers on the many SSA work incentives available for those who may see employment as a barrier to retaining benefits. This expands the vision of possibility.

Activity 4.4 - The Div. of Developmental Disabilities has a person-centered planning program through PUNS – the Prioritization of Urgency of Needs list. This is a useful database to know how many people with developmental disabilities are interested in work, but currently unserved. Schools are now mandated to educate teachers and families on the need to sign up for the PUNS process.

Activity 4.4 – Strategies to employment should include proven best practices such as IPS – Individual Placement and Support, supported and customized employment, and Project SEARCH. There are some DRS counselors and CRPs trained in these models, but their use must expand to meet the demand. Self-employment and microboards are other non-traditional strategies to employment.

Strategy 5 - Promote Improved Data-Driven Decision-Making

19. **Pyramid Partnership, Inc.** - How do we serve individuals who do not meet all the WIOA requirements (e.g. Youth-Parents make too much money, but not enough to support the educational/vocational needs of their child)? What is in place to serve them?

State Response: ***Job seekers can still use the doorway of the WIOA system for basic career exploration. There is a wealth of information available at American Job Centers for job seekers to access that is not behind eligibility barriers. The one-stop system in Illinois views itself as a great resource for all seeking gainful employment and promotes apprenticeships, incumbent worker training, use of labor market matching and referrals to non-WIOA programs. The one-stop system also focuses heavily on the integration of career services and promotes program awareness among core and required partners – a focus that encourages high levels of job seeker support from many WIOA programs.***

20. **Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities** - State agencies need to be able to share data and track longitudinally to track impact. For special populations like developmental disabilities, mental health, etc. it would be great to track from school (ISBE too!) into adulthood. Cross data would show what supports and resources are needed and whether they were effective. This, if used for continual analysis, would move us to strategies that are most effective. It also allows for documenting that even for people who may need some support long term, assisting them to be as independent as possible and working at the level best for them does result in cost savings over time from what they otherwise would require.

Strategy 6 - Advance Public-Private Data Infrastructure

21. **Illinois Council on Development Disabilities** - There are databases in construction including ProPath and the Longitudinal Data System. These should be completed and integrated and expanded to link with even more databases. And soon! The promise of better tracking and data has long tantalized but failed to be a reality as a resource within the employment field.

Activity 6.2 - State agencies need to be able to share data and track longitudinally to track impact. For special populations like developmental disabilities, mental health, etc., identification of potential workers should begin with data from schools via the State Board of Education (ISBE) and follow youth into adulthood. Cross data analysis would show what supports and resources are needed and whether they were effective. Used for continual analysis, longitudinal data would move us to strategies that produce and sustain the best long-term outcomes. There is research showing that employment allows people with developmental disabilities (and other disabilities) to become more independent in all life areas, not to mention happier and more connected to their local communities. Having documentation of earning and outcomes, even for people who may need some support long term, demonstrates that provision of supports which allow work results in cost savings over time from the support that a person otherwise would require over a lifetime. This is important information to share for budget forecasting and appropriating purposes.

Adult Education public comments received

22. **Christine Strohl, Lakeland College** - I really think a universal referral system, that is supported by the state, would help with enrollment in all partner programs. LWA 23 continues to work toward a referral process however we are very spread out and not in one location, which makes it very difficult to make referrals, and even more difficult for follow up. Often once we have the referral the student/client/participants become

frustrated with the same paperwork and questions from each agency. If we could make this process more seamless, with directive from the state, enrollment, retention and completion would increase for adult education students and all partner programs.

23. **Christine Strohl, Lakeland College** - I really like the adult education hotline, chat and texting feature to increase awareness and enrollment. We need new marketing ideas and I think this would be helpful. If we could have other programs share their marketing ideas to spur new and innovative practices. Also, if there was regional marketing that included multiple programs sharing the cost.

24. **Christine Strohl, Lakeland College** - I struggle with open enrollment. We switched over to managed enrollment about 4 years ago (or at least that is what I can figure from prior years notes). I would like to hear how programs are doing open enrollment and still providing direct instruction without interruption.

25. **Christine Strohl, Lakeland College** - Would like more information on open enrollment be managed enrollment.

26. **Christine Strohl, Lakeland College -** How about a state supported referral system for all wioa partners?

27. **Kim Marisa, Prairie State College -** Perhaps we need to change our marketing efforts at the local, regional and state levels.

28. **Kim Marisa, Prairie State College -** Particularly for new programs, it would help to have a model for which to follow from an experienced program., Now that I'm immersed in building new career pathways for ICAPS courses, there are so many pieces to the puzzle.

29. **Andrea Fiebig, Harper College** - One of the challenges to using the EL/IET funding is that many second language learners who are ready for IET's are topping off on all the ESL tests. Could we start to use TABE?

30. **Andrea Fiebig, Harper College** - Innovation is challenging to many of our institutions and we need your support. The idea of a complete rebrand of Adult Education is the only way.

31. **Bevan Gibson, SIUE** - If we are providing services to low literacy levels, we could focus on Basic Careers in a pre-bridge and then work to see where they go from there.

32. **Bevan Gibson, SIUE** - What does it take to get an adult education program's ICAPS program on the approved training provider list for Title I? that would be helpful to our existing and future ICAPS programs.

33. **Bevan Gibson, SIUE** - What about the possibility of partnering to share students to get them from point A to Point B? Would this require a change in funding policy?

34. **Anonymous -** New Administrators may benefit from program mentoring and there were discussion and would like guidance on open-enrollment versus managed enrollment.

35. **Anonymous -** Additionally, programs would like guidance on sharing students and what that could look like as it relates to state and federal reporting, MSGs, and credential attainment.

36. **Anonymous -** Additionally, many programs are seeking guidance on qualifying scores for IET/IELCE on initial assessment.

37. **Anonymous -** Programs would like to see statewide leadership in marketing and rebranding adult education from Get your GED to Begin your Education and Find Your Career.

38. **Anonymous -** There is a need for the development of a career plan, or schematic, that helps students move along their pathway with multiple entry and exit points.

<u>Other public comments received</u>

39. **Illinois Council on Development Disabilities** – [The Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities welcomes the opportunity to comment on the 2020 WIOA State Unified Plan.] Employment is consistently at the top of the list when people with developmental disabilities are asked what is most important to them, yet their competitive employment rate remains far below nearly every group, including those with various disabilities. People with developmental disabilities are proven to be reliable, dedicated workers who contribute toward their employer's needs. Past methods of prevocational training and sheltered work failed to move people into actual competitive employment. The more successful models train people in real work settings. In Chicago, a recent ordinance will move all employees into minimum wage work and phase out all remaining sheltered work programs. The Council on Developmental Disabilities is focused on how our resources can assist Chicago community rehabilitation providers (CRPs) to shift their service models and move people with developmental disabilities into the general workforce where they want to be. All Plan strategies used in implementation should be accessible to all job seekers. Employment First is described on page 9 of the Plan under the Department of Human Services. It is Illinois law that employment be the first option for service for ALL state agencies. This philosophy must be embraced by the four core agencies and reflected in their commitments and implementation activities.

Other comments received from the Council related to the Plan's State Strategies are included under the respective strategy section of this public comment summary.

40. **Anonymous** - There is a need to strengthen the marketing strategies for the WIOA services provided across agencies and partners.

Pending Incumbent Worker Training Waiver Request

41. **McHenry County Workforce Network Board** - The McHenry County Workforce Network Board supports the WAIVER related to Incumbent Worker Training. This will allow Local Workforce Innovation Areas to better serve the business community helping employers to upskill newly hired, promising employees without having to deny or delay needed training.

42. **Peter Hall, McHenry County Workforce Network** - I agree with the Incumbent Worker Training Waiver.

43. **Illinois Workforce Partnership -** The Illinois Workforce Partnership (IWP) is in support of the Incumbent Worker Training Waiver.

44. **Local Workforce Innovation Area 14** - LWA 14 would support the waiver to eliminate the length of employment requirement in the incumbent worker program for the following reasons:

It is a pro-active approach to training as opposed to re-active. Train now and not after layoff. In the current economy, with an unemployment rate of less than 4%, companies are hiring candidates who do not have the skills needed for their positions. Incumbent Worker training reduces the chance of these new hires being laid off when there is a change in the economy.

If the length of employment requirement is just reduced, then the minimum amount of time should not be greater than 3 months. Most companies have a 90-day probationary period. If individuals retain employment, then companies have made a commitment to employment thus reducing the chances that the individual will be laid off after training is completed. If an individual is laid-off they will have marketable skills.

The Apprenticeship program should be exempt from any minimum length of employment requirement. Employers willing to use the apprenticeship program have made a commitment to long-term employment.

Please see below to view three additional formal public comments, including comment from:

- ***David Wu, Executive Director of the Pui Tak Center in Chicago, IL,***
- ***The Little Village Education Collaborative Adult Education Committee, and***
- ***Equip for Equality***

- ***Language changes suggested by Equip for Equality in public comments #2, #7 and #9 were made to the 2020 Unified State Plan and are reflected in the official submission.***

培德中心
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Illinois WIOA Unified State Plan
Public Comment from David Wu, Executive Director, Pui Tak Center on 1/15/2020

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on Illinois' WIOA Unified State Plan.

My comments related to the draft is shaped by being the Executive Director of the Pui Tak Center, a long-time provider of adult education through Illinois Community College Board funding and being a member of the Asian American Family Commission, a newly established state commission that has yet to convene.

According to the Census Bureau's Illinois profile based on 2018 American Community Survey data, immigrants are 14.0% of our state's population and Asian Americans are 5.2%. I was curious about other minority groups and found that Hispanic or Latinos are 17.0% and African Americans are 14.2% of our state's population.

While I understand that the Unified State Plan is necessarily high level, I wondered what I could learn through a word search of the plan.

- The word "immigrant" is referenced 7 times in the narrative about ICCB's Adult Education program and 4 times related to agricultural workforce.
- The word "Asian" is referenced 1 time about unemployment rates.
- The word "Hispanic" and "Latino" is referenced 2 times about unemployment rates and farmworkers.
- The word "African American" is referenced 1 time about unemployment rates.

Immigrants, Asian Americans, Latinx and African Americans are sub-populations that need workforce services. In addition, many of our state's small businesses are owned by members of these communities. The plan would benefit from more careful consideration of the needs and the opportunities that these communities offer to the state.

I was pleasantly surprised that there was an entire section titled "Addressing the Accessibility of the One-Stop Delivery System for English Language Learners" (10 paragraphs from pages 234-236 - a noteworthy improvement compared to 1 paragraph in the prior plan). This section describes the Department of Commerce's Equal Opportunity Monitoring and Compliance role in ensuring that services are accessible to limited English speakers. This includes making sure that documents are translated, interpretation services are available and that language preference is noted on client records. In the future, the workforce system can be made more effective by going beyond providing language assistance to those (likely very few) seeking services to also outreaching into immigrant and other minority communities. The workforce system should partner with ethnic community organizations that can inform strategies and approaches on how to best reach and serve their respective communities.

Thank you.

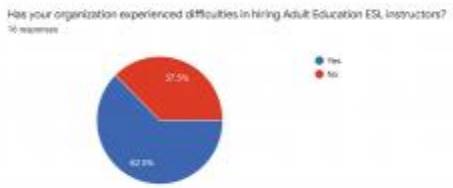
Jennifer Foster
Deputy Executive Director
Illinois Community College Board
401 E. Capitol Avenue
Springfield, IL 62701

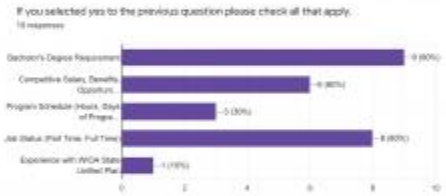
Dear Ms. Foster,

The Little Village Education Collaborative strongly encourages the Illinois Community College Board facilitate and engage in productive dialogue regarding the current requirements for English as a Second Language instructors.

Currently, the Illinois Community College Board requires ESL instructors to have a BA or BS degree in education or a related field as a minimum qualification. Together, we affirm the need for alternative pathways to learning for our instructors and students, including native language learners. This minimum requirement disqualifies potential instructors, restricts job opportunities, and places an unnecessary hiring burden on community based organizations.

We have collected data from 16 Adult Education providers, which include Little Village community based organizations and Area Planning Council core member organizations. Data collected indicates the bachelor's degree requirement is *the* greatest barrier to hiring qualified ESL instructors.





Data collected illustrates a strong urgency to align local community needs to Illinois state goals. This information is compelling in large part because of its impact on the missed opportunity to instruct students. According to data collected by the SIUE Index of Need Project there are 909,544 individuals living in households whose primary language is not English; 66.59% of those individuals' primary language is Spanish. An Adult Education provider survey participant shared the following: " In our organization we have mentored and worked with extremely passionate and talented individuals (some of whom were our former students) who are not eligible for hire due to the B.A. requirement. We would love to see the Professional Pathway available to these committed teachers as they also work on their B.A."

We believe it is time to create alternative solutions to this requirement. Please join us in developing and piloting strategies that will help us to improve teacher quality, availability and retention, in addition to aligning community needs to state goals. We look forward to the opportunity to innovate and create meaningful and impactful strategies to support Adult Education pathways with you.

Sincerely,
The Little Village Education Collaborative Adult Education Committee

The Little Village Education Collaborative (LVEC) was initiated after the release of the Little Village Quality of Life Plan in 2013 and is charged with the implementation of education-related strategies developed in that plan. The Little Village Education Collaborative members represent over 40 organizations and institutions (including schools) providing educational services in Little Village. Working groups of LVEC include early childhood, elementary and middle school, high school and post-secondary, and adult education working groups.

Our Vision

"As we plan our future in Little Village, we value our family, culture and community. Our vision is a community that is educated, peaceful, united, clean and prosperous." (LV Quality of Life Plan)

Our Mission

The mission of the Little Village Education Collaborative (LVEC) is to connect the key players impacting the education system in this community in order to pool their time, talent and expertise. The group works to evaluate the current state of this system, plan strategic improvements for the future, and support legislative changes that expand educational access and opportunity. Its ultimate goal is to enhance educational outcomes in Little Village from birth to old age.

Our Core Values

ORGANIZED: LVEC is intentionally structured to empower its members and move its mission forward. Its subcommittees – which focus on early childhood education, elementary and middle school, high school to post-secondary readiness, and adult education– implement and revise strategies that are outlined in the 2013 Little Village Quality of Life Plan. All members convene quarterly in order to align the work of subcommittees and reinforce broader goals.

INNOVATIVE: LVEC convenes a diverse range of stakeholders and promotes unique methods of collaboration. This encourages the development of innovative and comprehensive ways to address educational issues in Little Village.

PARTICIPATORY: LVEC seeks to be inclusive of all stakeholders. It uses a participatory approach that embodies respect, trust, transparency, "human goodness" and social justice.

Little Village Education Collaborative Framework

In order to strengthen the collaboration that is taking place within subcommittees, LVEC members have engaged in multisector conversations guided by the Little Village Quality of Life plan. These dialogues have helped to bridge silos between public and private educational institutions; parents, students and community leaders; and non-profit organizations by harnessing the skills and contributions of each sector and acknowledging established systems of power. LVEC has created safe spaces that recognize the unique experiences and priorities of each partner. This helps to achieve a deeper level of understanding and commitment, which leads to greater collective impact.
LVEC creates a space for providers, school administrators, parents, and other stakeholders to advocate, inform, and innovate together in order to improve educational outcomes for the residents of Little Village and surrounding areas.

Little Village Education Collaborative is convened by Enlace Chicago with the generous support of the McCormick Foundation Fund.

Summary:

During the January Little Village Education Collaborative (LVEC) Adult Education Committee meeting partners discussed the difficulties in hiring and retaining ESL instructors. A common concern was shared amongst participating partners: the minimum degree requirement is *the* greatest barrier to hiring qualified potential instructors; and a collaborative decision was made to collect data to identify needs beyond our committee. A simple survey was created; and was distributed to members of our committee and to the Area Planning Council 508 core members. Respondents were given 10 days to complete the survey. Data was analyzed so that it could be included in our letter for open public commenting for the WIOA Unified State Plan.

LVEC Adult Education partners affirm the need for alternative pathways to learning for our instructors and students, including native language learners. Alternative pathways create an opportunity to support the Adult Education Pipeline within the Little Village Quality of Life Plan. They also afford community based Adult Education providers the potential to increase community instructors, and the ambition to provide professional development within the Little Village community.

The following is an analysis of data collected from responses to our Adult Education Survey: ESL Instructors.

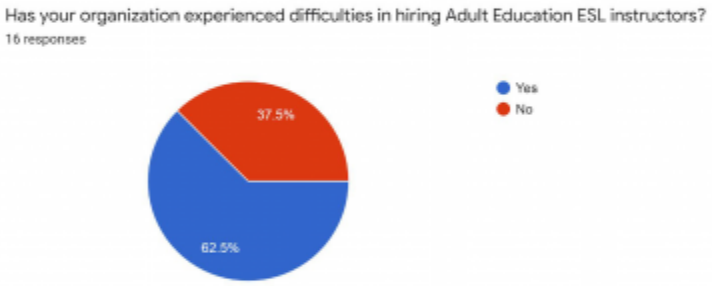


Figure 1. Of the 16 responses provided, ten Adult Education providers indicated their organization experienced difficulties in hiring ESL instructors.

Chart 1. 62.5% of Adult Education providers experienced difficulties in hiring ESL instructors. Those Adult Education providers identified the bachelor's degree requirement as *the* greatest barrier to hiring ESL instructors.

Figure 2. From the Adult Education providers who experienced difficulties in hiring qualified ESL instructors, 60% of respondents identified having missed opportunities to instruct students.

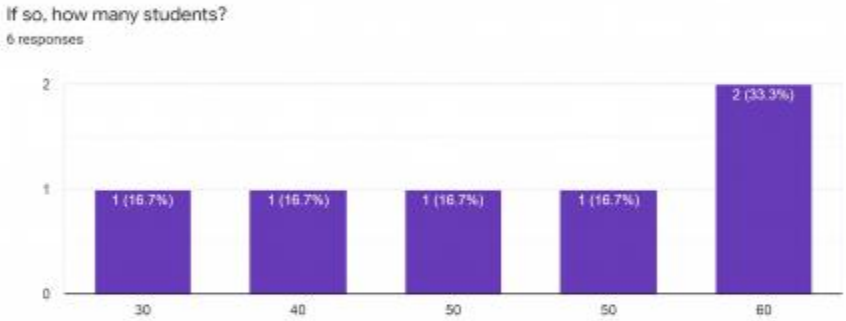


Chart 2. 60% of Adult Education providers identified having missed opportunities to instruct more than 200 potential students combined as a result of hardships in hiring ESL instructors.

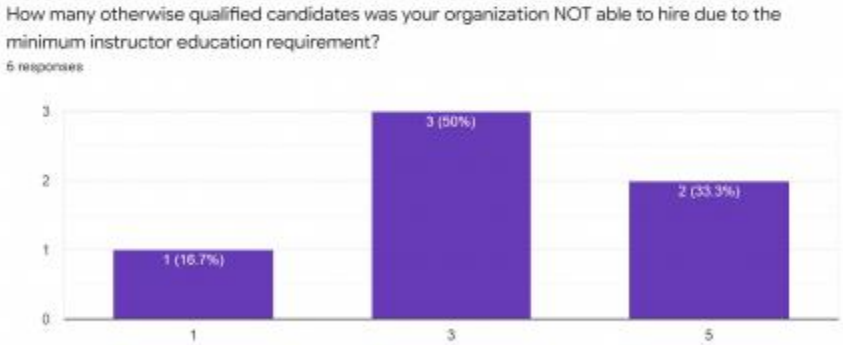


Chart 3. Adult Education providers were unable to hire 20 potential ESL instructors due to the minimum education requirements.

Has your organization experienced any missed opportunities to instruct students because of low native language literacy?
15 responses

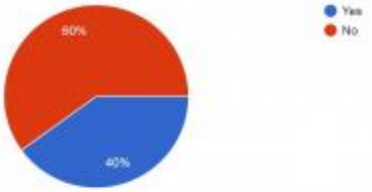


Figure 3. Of the respondents, 6 Adult Education providers indicated missed opportunities to instruct students due to low native language literacy. This data indicates an increased need in our community to provide native language instruction as the foundation to successful completion of ESL courses. Adult Education providers have found some students disengage and eventually disenroll from ESL classes as a result of an inadequate foundation of their native language.

If so, how many students?
6 responses

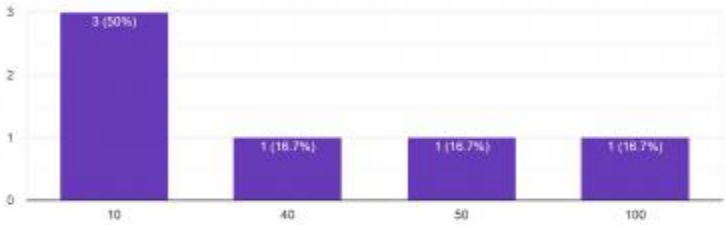


Chart 4. Adult Education providers indicated a missed opportunity to provide native language literacy courses as a foundation to ESL to over 200 students.

Please share any comments or questions. (Contact information has been redacted to protect respondents' privacy.)

1.) "Thank you for highlighting the minimum instructor issue. In our organization we have mentored and worked with extremely passionate and talented individuals (some of whom were our former students) who are not eligible for hire due to the B.A. requirement. We would love to see the Professional Pathway available to these committed teachers as they also work on their B.A."

2.) "I have concerns as the movement in Adult Education is to create one size fits all approaches for all programs. All programs are different with differing resources and student bodies. I would like to discuss minimum teaching requirements because it seems that there are many voices being left out to our detriment."

This data is exceptionally compelling in large part because of its impact on the missed opportunity to instruct students. According to data collected by the SIUE Index of Need Project there are 909,544 individuals living in households whose primary language is not English; 66.59% of those individuals' primary language is Spanish.

Equip for Equality

Advancing the Human & Civil Rights of People with Disabilities in Illinois

Equip for Equality (EFE) is pleased to submit comments on the 2020 WIOA Unified State Plan. By way of background, EFE is an independent, not-for-profit organization designated by the Governor in 1985 to administer the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy system for people with disabilities in Illinois. Historically, the employment of people with disabilities has been a major focus of our organization. EFE has an Employment Rights Helpline that provides people with disabilities with self-advocacy assistance, legal advice and representation on issues related to discrimination in employment. Additionally, after passage of the Illinois Employment First Law, Equip for Equality released its *Employment First Blueprint*, which contained action steps that Illinois could take to make competitive, integrated employment a reality for people with disabilities. (For more information on the *Blueprint*, go to: https://www.equipforequality.org/issues/employmentfirst/) EFE has also been active on the Governor's Task Force on the Employment and Equal Opportunity for People with Disabilities (EEOPD), and has co-chaired the Workforce Development Work Group. One of the major recommendations of the Work Group is to ensure that WIOA implementation in Illinois is consistent with the Illinois Employment First Act. (See http://www.dhs.state.il.us/OneNetLibrary/27897/documents/EEOPD/January_2018_FINAL_EEOPD_Recommendations_Report.pdf page 6) It is with this background that we submit our comments.

- People with disabilities are not referenced in the Executive Summary of the Unified State Plan. Given that 1) the unemployment rate of people with disabilities continues to be extremely high in Illinois and nationwide; 2) Illinois became an Employment First state in 2013; and 3) that WIOA has a significant focus on removing barriers to employment for people with disabilities, we believe that referencing people with disabilities in the Executive Summary is warranted. We would recommend that a Guiding Principle be added to the Executive Summary that states: "Illinois will ensure WIOA is implemented consistently with the principles of Employment First, so that competitive, integrated employment is the first option for people with disabilities."

- EFE is pleased the Unified Plan itself references Employment First and the work of the EEOPD Task Force in several places. However, we recommend that the characterization of Employment First on page 147 be modified. Instead of using the phrase "given the option" when referencing competitive, integrated employment, we would recommend that the Unified Plan use the language from the Illinois

Employment First Act which states that competitive, integrated employment "shall be considered the first option" when serving people with disabilities of working age. This language change is critical because in Illinois, segregated sub-minimum wage employment is the default option for most people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, which is contrary to Employment First concepts generally, and of the law in Illinois specifically. (We note that the Employment First Law's language is correctly referenced on page 232 of the Unified Plan.)

- In 2014, Governor Quinn issued an Executive Order implementing Employment First in Illinois. (see https://www2.illinois.gov/Pages/government/execorders/2014_8.aspx) The Executive Order required that "an Employment First Liaison shall be appointed within the Office of the Governor to implement Illinois' Employment First Policy, in conjunction with the EEOPD and state agencies." One year into the Pritzker administration, this Liaison position remains unfilled. We recommend that the Plan specifically state that this critical position be filled as soon as possible.

- EFE appreciates that the Unified Plan references the EEOPD Task Force and its recommendation that WIOA implementation be consistent with the principles of Employment First. (page 147 of the Unified Plan) However, we would recommend that the Plan go further and make a commitment to actually adopt this recommendation. Doing so ensures greater accountability.

- EFE supports the strategy to increase employer awareness. (see page 35) However, we think this employer awareness should include educating employers about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities and the resources that are available to support those efforts, such as the Job Accommodation Network – www.askjan.org

- The Unified Plan provides a couple of sample job descriptions. (see pages 43-47) However, it is imperative that job descriptions not result in excluding people with disabilities. For instance, both job descriptions indicate that the jobs require that workers "speak clearly so listeners can understand." This requirement could result in excluding people with disabilities who have difficulty speaking. Today, assistive technology has leveled the playing field allowing many people with disabilities to successfully perform the job, such as through the use of augmentative and alternative communication devices. By changing the description to "*communicate* clearly so listeners can understand" it meets the goal of the job without excluding people with speech disabilities.

- Table 11 of the Unified Plan lists Target Population Characteristics. (see pages 63-64) EFE strongly recommends that the language in this table be updated to reflect current

accepted language. "Mental Retardation" and "MR" are used frequently in Table 11. However, those terms are no longer deemed appropriate and the use of "intellectual disability" and "ID" should be substituted.

- EFE is pleased to see that the Unified Plan references the federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit. (see pages 84-85) EFE recommends that the Unified Plan include concrete steps on promoting the WOTC. By doing so, more employers may utilize this resource, which would, in turn, result in more people with disabilities and other qualifying populations being hired.

- EFE is pleased that the Unified Plan references the critical role that technology plays for people with disabilities and the importance that such technology be accessible. (See page 92) And while it is helpful to reference that DHS/DRS has expertise to ensure that all websites and information systems are usable to people with disabilities, it is critical that there be a centralized process to ensure that all state digital information and technology is accessible, including in the acquisition, maintenance and updating of digital information and technology. We would also recommend that the word "usable" be changed to "accessible", which has a more specific meaning.

- The Unified Plan references efforts to support people with disabilities with establishing their own businesses. However, the current Business Enterprise Program (BEP), managed by CMS, has resulted in very few disability-owned businesses being awarded contracts. The BEP statute allows sheltered workshops to qualify as a disability-owned and operated business. Last year, **97.5%** of BEP funds for disability-owned businesses **($90,673,344)** went to sheltered workshops, whereas only **2.5%** of BEP funds for disability-owned businesses **($2,351,048)** were given to businesses actually owned by people with disabilities. Sheltered workshops are the antithesis of Employment First and WIOA, as people with disabilities are in segregated settings and paid sub-minimum wage. Despite the passage of WIOA and an Executive Order issued by Governor Quinn in 2014 that specifically orders CMS to address this issue, nothing has changed. We recommend that the Unified Plan acknowledge this barrier and develop strategies to address it.

- The Unified Plan states that the State is "pursuing innovation in providing employment opportunities to individuals with disabilities by connecting them with businesses that match their skills and helping them overcome any barriers they have to employment." (see page 96) EFE would appreciate more detailed information about this effort including specific activities, target numbers, etc.

- The Unified Plan references that Illinois' service delivery model as a "siloed" approach, but states there have been significant improvements. (page 96) EFE believes these silos continue to serve as a major impediment to the employment with people with disabilities, especially the silos between the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) and the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD). Our understanding is that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DRS and DDD that would promote a more cooperative effort on employment has taken an extremely long time to resolve and no firm completion date has been agreed upon. We recommend that a strategy for the finalization of this MOU (and a similar MOU between DRS and the Division of Mental Health) be added to the Unified Plan.

- EFE is pleased to see that the Unified Plan references the need for greater support services alongside the provision of vocational services. (see page 116) We look forward to learning more details about DRS' efforts on this front.

- EFE appreciates that the Unified Plan states that Illinois is committed to ensuring both programmatic and physical accessibility to the one-stop delivery system. (see page 232) Unfortunately, the web link that appears to provide information about compliance monitoring is not functional.

- EFE was hoping that the Unified Plan would discuss how to address the issue of thousands of people with disabilities continuing to spend their days in sheltered workshops being paid sub-minimum wage. WIOA defines "employment" for people with disabilities as "competitive integrated employment," meaning people with disabilities must be paid the same wages as people without disabilities and interact with and get the same opportunities for career advancement as non-disabled co-workers. WIOA significantly limits the use of sub-minimum wage sheltered workshops, and focuses on preventing the direct placement of students with disabilities leaving high school into these programs. Additionally, the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead* has been interpreted to not only apply to integrated housing, but also to integrated employment. Under the Illinois Employment First Act, competitive integrated employment shall be the first option for people with disabilities, but this continues to be the exception and not the rule. The City of Chicago recently passed an ordinance that will phase out sub-minimum wage in Chicago. We recommend that the Unified Plan explicitly acknowledge that sub-minimum wage and sheltered workshops are significant barriers to competitive, integrated employment and explore concrete ways to address these barriers, including in-person outreach to people currently working in sheltered workshops being paid sub-minimum wage.

- EFE was also hoping that Individual Placement and Support (IPS) services would be highlighted in the Unified Plan. IPS is an evidence-based practice for promoting employment and primarily has been successfully utilized by the Division of Mental Health. EFE would like to see the Unified Plan discuss the successes of this program and how IPS can be expanded to assist more adults with mental illness and other disabilities, as well as assist students with disabilities as they transition from high school.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to provide our comments to the Unified Plans. If you have questions or need any additional information, please contact: Barry C. Taylor, VP for Civil Rights and Systemic Litigation at Equip for Equality, barryt@equipforequality.org or 312-895-7317.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON 2022 MODIFICATION
ATTACHMENT B

COMMENT 1
• Your name: Kraig Kistinger
• Title: Director of Human Resources
• Organization: National Tube Supply, Vice-Chair Will County Workforce Investment Board, Co-Lead Career Pathways for Targeted Populations.

• Street Address: 925 Central Ave
• City: University Park
• State: IL
• E-mail address: kkistinger@nationaltubesupply.com

Comments with regard to Data Driven Decision: Two primary issues to need be addressed; 1) unified collection of data across state workforce systems and; 2) Analysis and use of data across the workforce system. Today the various systems are very disconnected which disables the ability to properly use data to make decisions or the data is not finite enough. Additionally, with unified data, systems such a unemployment where an individual has to be able and available can ensure people are put to work and not just feeding off the system. Give the number of opening nationally and WIOA programs available, unemployment should be much lower.

Comments with regard to Reemployment: There is a lot of inertia around apprenticeships. What business and communities need is more robust OJT, with less restrictions for entry into program and longer duration? Apprenticeships are typically for a 2 year period and require a mix of classroom learning. Many or most positions at lower-level need more hands-on, side by side (OJT) training. Then open up incumbent worker training for in the areas of soft skills, safety, decision making so a person can grow in the organization.

COMMENT 2
• Your name: Victor B. Dickson
• Title: President and CEO
• Organization: Safer Foundation
• Street Address: 571 W. Jackson Blvd.
• City: Chicago
• State: IL
• E-mail address: victor.dickson@saferfoundation.org
Our statewide WIOA plan and our plans to revamp our workforce system must include aggressive efforts and investments to get this segment of our population into the workforce. The state that figures this out will find advantage with employers and with ensuring these residents are not committing survival crimes.

Addendum II

Summary of Unified State Plan Business and Organized Labor Community Surveys

Below please find results of the business and organized labor community surveys conducted in December 2019 and January 2020 respectively. The surveys were developed by the Integrated Business Services Work Group to obtain feedback from business people, workers and labor advocates from around the state to inform the Unified State Plan's state strategies for workforce development and other WIOA activities. The surveys were distributed to hundreds of individuals across Illinois, receiving well over 100 responses. Please note that this summary accompanies the survey data and respondent comments provided through the surveys.

1. The industries of manufacturing, transportation and distribution, educational services and health services were viewed as the most appropriate by the surveyed **business and labor communities** for the targeting of workforce development support, based on relative employment size, growth, job openings, and suitability for sustained intervention due to ongoing workforce concerns, such as the pace of technological change.

- Nearly half of **business community respondents** did not agree or were neutral concerning the utilities industry's appropriateness for the targeting of workforce

development support. **Labor respondents** were similarly lukewarm on the utilities industry's appropriateness, with less than 50% agreeing on its appropriateness.

- **Business and labor respondents** agreed that targeting these industries is responsive to the areas of Illinois' most important workforce needs. Through comments, respondents espoused the importance of the agriculture industry, skilled industrial workers in Southern Illinois, and opportunities for health care training.

2. **Business and labor respondents** agree that the following statements identify trends that will likely affect workforce development in the near to mid-future, in terms of their individual understanding of Illinois' state and local workforce needs.

    a. Many business leaders contend workers must have strong employability skills (i.e., the essential skills, personal qualities and values that enable one to thrive in any workplace) alongside strong technical skills. The workforce system is adapting to this by supporting awareness of the importance of employability skills and encouraging employability skills training embedded into classroom and work-based training models.

    b. Technical skill development in Illinois continues the trend of emphasizing industry-recognized credentials and the use of work-based learning models where businesses have the greatest influence in positioning the training to match their employment needs.

- One respondent commented regarding statement #1 that unprofessional behavior of an applicant is one of the top barriers to filling open positions. Another commented in relation to statement #2 that if businesses support educational career pathways that this leads to meeting workforce needs.

3. **Business community respondents** overwhelmingly agree (92%), at least in part, that companies will have to adopt new methods for just about everything — from recruitment and benefits to training and advancement. This is due to Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, and now Gen Z occupying the same workspace. These four distinct generations have different views, expectations, and priorities. Just 50% of **labor respondents** felt the same way.

4. **Business and labor respondents** at least somewhat agree on the importance of upskilling and digital dexterity, as well as the growing importance of Artificial Intelligence within the work landscape. Respondents are unsure about whether tenure and experience will be outweighed by upskilling and digital dexterity though. One commenter responded that experienced workers are always valuable to helping oversee operations and ensuring newer workers receive proper training. Another respondent mentioned that taking care of smart machines will be part of the upskilling necessary [in the future].

5. Over 41% of **labor respondents** are skeptical about the future use of smart machines as our co-workers and the importance of AI (Artificial Intelligence) within the work landscape.

6. A majority of **business and labor respondents** (at least 92%) agree that the following goals help the state achieve the Unified State Plan vision statement of "fostering a statewide workforce development system that supports the needs of individuals and businesses to ensure Illinois has a skilled workforce to effectively compete in the global economy."

    a. Prepare Illinois' workers for a career, not just their next job: Regardless of background, life circumstances, or education level, Illinois workers can be prepared for high-demand careers by developing core academic, technical, and essential employability skills throughout their lifetimes.

    b. Connect job seekers with employers: Assist Illinois businesses to find the productive workers they need, through more specific business sector-focused training and better services for job seekers and employers.

- In response to these statements, one respondent commented that if we are going to make an impact, all strategies should focus on equity and investment in populations and communities currently lacking in resources and accessibility. Other respondents espoused the importance of digital upskilling, post-secondary education and apprenticeships.

7. **Business and labor respondents** somewhat agree that the goal below helps the state achieve this vision.

    a. Unite workforce development partners around regional cluster strategies: Regional cluster strategies will focus resources on the industries with the highest potential to add jobs and increase prosperity in regions across Illinois. These strategies bring together the public and private sectors in each region to build on their unique strengths.

- Among **business community respondents**, there is concern that regional cluster strategies focusing on the highest potential industries could work to the detriment of other industries with untapped or undiscovered potential.

8. Over 90% of **business and labor respondents** agree that the workforce goals outlined in the Unified State Plan are responsive to state and local workforce development needs. One respondent commented that additional focus on college readiness and career counseling would help ensure individuals are making career decisions that fit their interests and future ambitions.

9. Over 95% of **business and labor respondents** agree that the Unified State Plan should be built upon the judgment that business and government share a responsibility to create and communicate a workforce development system that utilizes available resources to meet the training needs of business and workers in Illinois.

Below, please find a link to raw survey data results from the Business and Organized Labor Community Surveys:

https://www.illinoisworknet.com/WIOA/Resources/Documents/Attachment%20Y%20-%20Business%20and%20Labor%20Survey%20data%202020.pdf