

# Notice of Public Comment-WIOA Local Plan

The Lake County Workforce Development Board is accepting public comment on the four-year local and regional plan required by The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). WIOA is designed to help youth, job seekers and businesses. The comprehensive four-year local and regional plans, in partnership with Chief Elected Officials, serves as a plan to develop, align, and integrate local area service delivery strategies with those that support the State's strategic and operational goals.

The plan can be found online here: <https://www.lakecountyworkforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Draft-2-19-24-LWIA-1-LCWDB-Plan-2024.pdf>

Comments on the plan can be submitted by March 31, 2024 in writing to the attention of:

**Lake County Workforce Development Board**

WIOA Local Plan - Public Comment

1 N. Genesee Street

Waukegan, IL 60085

Or by email to:

[dnewport@lakecountyil.gov](mailto:dnewport@lakecountyil.gov)



# LAKE COUNTY WORKFORCE PLAN 2024-2028



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## LETTER FROM THE LAKE COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD CHAIRWOMAN

We are pleased to present the Lake County Workforce Development WIOA Local Plan for 2024-2028. Our comprehensive plan, the "Lake County Workforce Plan 2024-2028," outlines our commitment to fostering a more inclusive and equitable workforce system in Lake County, Illinois. Through collaboration with our partners and stakeholders, we aim to address the needs of employers and job seekers, promote career pathways, and ensure accessibility and equity in the provision of employment and training services.

The plan encompasses a range of initiatives, including the expansion of priority services, the alignment of workforce skills with high-demand careers, and the enhancement of accessibility and equity in workforce development. We are dedicated to leveraging relationships and partnerships with schools, colleges, local governments, non-profits, and the business community to achieve our shared goals and economic needs.

Our efforts also focus on engaging underserved communities, increasing access to services, and providing resources to support and address equity among different demographic groups. Additionally, we are committed to collaborating with local businesses and employers to establish meaningful relationships, enhance work-based learning activities, and provide occupational skills training to participants.

We invite you to review the "Lake County Workforce Plan 2024-2028" and join us in our mission to create a more dynamic and inclusive workforce in Lake County. Together, we can work towards a future where all individuals can pursue successful employment and contribute to the economic prosperity of our community.

Sincerely,

Kim Wimer, Chairwoman  
Lake County Workforce Development Board

The Lake County Workforce Development Board is a leader in the realm of workforce development, operating at the forefront of efforts not only within Lake County but also at the regional and state levels. Through strategic collaborations with key partners and stakeholders, the Workforce Board has established itself as a pioneer in implementing performance-driven and innovative strategies. These initiatives are designed to develop, align, and integrate the job-driven workforce development system, with a particular emphasis on expanding priority services. The overarching goal is to create a more inclusive workforce that can effectively meet the demands of today's employers and anticipate the future needs of various industries.

One of the key strengths of the Workforce Board lies in its collaborative approach, which extends across multiple levels – from the local County level to the broader Regional and State levels. This collaborative effort is instrumental in driving the development and implementation of innovative strategies that are not only effective but also responsive to the evolving needs of the workforce. By actively engaging with key partners and stakeholders, the Workforce Board is able to stay abreast of emerging trends and best practices in workforce development, ensuring that its strategies remain relevant and impactful.

At the heart of the Workforce Board's efforts is its commitment to expanding priority services. This includes initiatives aimed at preparing Illinois workers for careers through collaboration with regional apprenticeship programs and the exposure of high school students to careers, especially in STEM fields. Additionally, the Workforce Board sponsors workshops on workplace trends, ensuring that workers are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in today's rapidly changing job market.

A key focus of the Workforce Board is on connecting job seekers with employers. This is achieved through leading strategies for transitioning dislocated workers and adults to their next job through short-term training and work-based learning opportunities. By working closely with the One-Stop Operator and investing in workforce development leading service integration, the Workforce Board ensures that job seekers have access to the resources and support they need to secure meaningful employment.

The Workforce Board also places a strong emphasis on serving special populations, including individuals with disabilities, veterans, opportunity youth, and those with basic skills deficiencies. By broadening services for these populations, the Workforce Board aims to expand inclusive employment and training programs, particularly focusing on reaching underserved populations in underserved communities.

The Workforce Board's strategies are guided by its Four-Year WIOA Local Plan, which serves as a framework for incorporating goals, strategies, and priority industry sectors from the Regional WIOA Plan. Lake County is part of the Northeastern Economic Development Region 4 (NEEDR), and the Workforce Board collaborates closely with Workforce Partners of Metropolitan Chicago to develop the NEEDR WIOA Regional Plan. This plan focuses on sectors crucial to the NEEDR economy, including Healthcare and Social Assistance, Manufacturing (Advanced Manufacturing), and Transportation and Warehousing.

In addition to these core sectors, the Workforce Board recognizes the significance of Information Technology (IT) underlying these industries. The economic impact of these industries on the NEEDR region is substantial, and the Workforce Board is committed to supporting their growth and development.

Overall, the Lake County Workforce Development Board is dedicated to creating a more resilient, competitive, and inclusive economy by investing in the skills and talents of its workforce. Through its collaborative efforts and innovative strategies, the Workforce Board is paving the way for a brighter future for workers and employers alike in Lake County and beyond.

## **A. Lake County Workforce Development Board's Strategic Vision and Goals**

The Lake County Workforce Development Board (Workforce Board) has undertaken an ambitious Strategic Plan with the foundational goal of reinforcing Lake County's role as a leader in workforce development. Currently in the process of updating this plan, the Workforce Board is well-prepared, utilizing Board committees and project-based task forces, to spearhead innovative initiatives centered on the principles of connecting, growing, and integrating.

The Board's Strategic Plan expands upon the priorities of the Board:

- Advocate for and promote services and resources across all areas of the County, including suburban and rural areas.
- Offer targeted industries effective strategies and workforce development solutions to either attract or cultivate the skilled workers they require, addressing specific pain points.
- Guarantee that all residents of Lake County have access to information about key industry sectors, career opportunities, high-growth jobs, education and training options, as well as local job openings. Provide information that supports informed decisions regarding career pathways.
- Uphold rigorous performance standards for training providers and credentials.
- Cultivate and retain a dedicated, results-driven membership for the Workforce Board.

### **The Board's Strategic Plan identifies 4 key imperatives:**

1. Demand-led workforce solutions
  - a. Objective: Increase manufacturing and healthcare businesses involvement in creating workforce development solutions
  - b. Objective: Identify industry ambassadors
  - c. Objective: Collaborate with education and economic development to build solutions
2. Create a culture of equitable prosperity
  - a. Objective: Increase access to services for the underserved
  - b. Objective: Facilitate greater collaboration among and between workforce partners
3. Develop solutions through career pathways
  - a. Objective: Deploy framework, resources, and tools to the workforce system
  - b. Objective: Invest in training towards the customer and employer's talent needs
4. The Workforce Development Board will become the workforce innovative leader
  - a. Objective: Increase board engagement in regional, state, and national discussions
  - b. Objective: Emphasize continuous flexibility
  - c. Objective: Increase board engagement in meetings and activities

The State's requirements for developing regional and local plans, as outlined in the State of Illinois WIOA Regional & Local Plan Guide, provide a template for responses containing specific information. The remainder of this document contains information as prescribed in that guidance.

## **B. Lake County Workforce Development Board Equity Task Force**

The Lake County Workforce Development Board has a strong commitment and agenda for ensuring that economic prosperity reaches underserved communities and creates opportunities across the County for residents by working to remove barriers for the economically disadvantaged populations. In 2021 the Lake County Workforce created the Lake County Workforce Development Board's Equity Task Force. Membership includes Lake County Workforce Development Board members, business and community leaders, and Job Center partners. The Task Force assignment is to develop a framework of recommendations within Lake County's workforce network to establish goals and disrupt inequality for the populations served.

The Task Force is Chaired by Workforce Board members Dr. Carlotta Roman, Director of Diversity at the Center for Automotive Diversity, Inclusion and Advancement. The Equity Task Force Action Plan was developed and is the driving force to embody a forward-looking workforce network where all can belong, contribute, and thrive.

The goals include:

**Goal: Strengthen understanding of the interrelationship between diversity, inclusion, and equity through education and training.**

**Actions;**

- Sponsor workshops and forums to educate and promote discussion on topics that impact today's workforce system, such as the business case for diversity and inclusion, applying an equity lens in policy review and generational and cultural differences.
- Partner with organizations such as but not limited to NAWB and IWIB to integrate D&I education and training at the state and national level.
- Strengthen D&I and EEO knowledge, understanding, and awareness by making available tools and resources on the Job Centers of Lake County's web page.

**Goal: Communicate the workforce system's diversity, inclusion, and equitable ideals.**

**Actions;**

- Develop and implement an ongoing, comprehensive D&I communications strategy.
- Evaluate current methods to communication (meetings, print, web, social media, etc...) to make sure they are embracing D&I.

**Goal: Demonstrate leadership commitment and accountability to promote a diverse and inclusive workforce system culture.**

**Actions;**

- Encourage workforce system leaders to routinely discuss the importance of D&I as a core organizational strategy and provide consistent, visible leadership.
- Comply with applicable laws and rules related to EEO and diversity and train all employees regarding legal requirements.
- Attempt to always create inclusive environments. One that values differences, gives everyone a voice and places importance on the whole system.
- Committed to being intentional about having crucial conversations to evaluate and develop programs to continually develop cultural competencies.

**Goal: Use data collection and reporting to assist in assessing workforce system D&I efforts.**

**Action;**

- Leverage both qualitative and quantitative metrics to manage D&I efforts, measure results, and refine strategies based on such data.

The Task Force believed that dialogue around diversity, equity, and inclusion is broad and growing and there is a need for common vocabulary to avoid misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Words often have different meanings; depending on lived experiences words might hold different meanings for different people. With that said, the Task Force created a list of agreed upon definitions to guide the efforts for the terms:

- **EQUITY** - The effort to provide different levels of support based on an individual's or group's needs in order to achieve fairness in outcomes. Consistently striving to meet individuals where they are, while providing them with support and access to services. Working to achieve equity acknowledges unequal starting places and the necessity to correct the imbalance.

- **DIVERSITY** - Understanding that everyone is unique and recognizing our individual differences. These can be along the dimension of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. A focused dedication on meeting the needs of everyone in our community, especially those who have been historically underserved.
- **INCLUSION** - A state of belonging, when persons of different backgrounds and identities are valued, integrated, and welcomed equitably as decision-makers and collaborators. Inclusion involves people being given the opportunity to grow and feel/know they belong. Diversity efforts alone do not create inclusive environments. Inclusion involves a sense of coming as you are and being accepted, rather than feeling the need to assimilate.
- **DISPARITIES** -Disparities identifies the social inequality and advantages that affect different ages, races, income levels, degrees, etc.... within the community. These can also be seen as a result of historic oppression, inequality of inheritance, or overall racism and prejudice, especially against minority groups.
- **ACCESS** - Freedom or ability to obtain or make use of something. Equal access in the workforce system means everyone receives fair treatment and access. When equity exists, people have equal access to opportunities.
- **EQUITY LENS** - A racial equity lens is the set of questions we ask ourselves throughout the decision-making process. The lens interrupts the impact of unintended consequences by taking into consideration the lived experiences and perspectives of the racially diverse communities we intend to serve.

### **Lake County Workforce Development Board's Outreach and Communications Plan**

In early 2021, The Lake County Workforce Development Board (WDB) hired a firm to develop and implement an Outreach and Communications Plan designed to support the strategic goals and action plans of the WDB Strategic Plan – including board member recruitment, improve engagement with community partners, and increase awareness of available services among job seekers and employers.

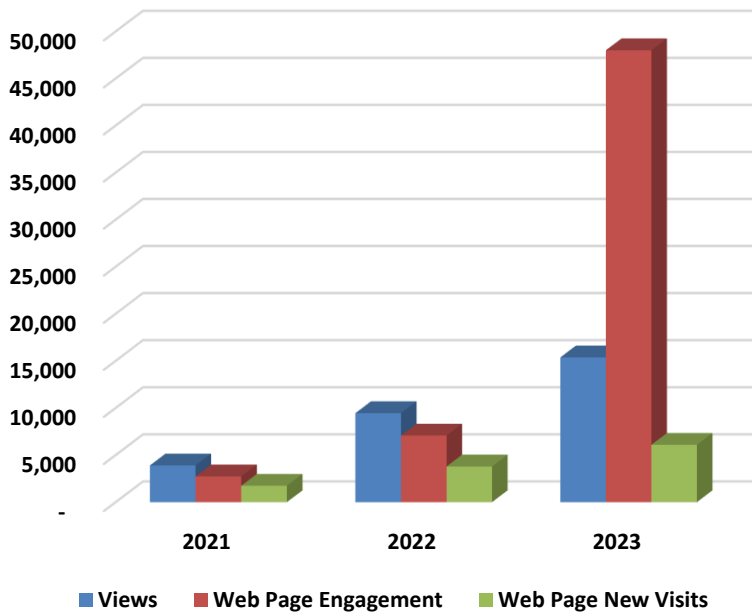
WDB has notably collaborated with key partners and stakeholders to lead performance driven and innovative strategies that develop, align, and integrate the region and local area's job-driven workforce development system. WDB has expanded upon the priority of services to best prepare a more inclusive workforce to meet the employer demands of today and industry talent needs of the future.

During 2023, the Outreach and Communication plan was reviewed to determine the effectiveness and benefits. The review delved into the analytics of the website's performance, showcasing substantial growth in page views, user engagement, and new visitors from 2021 to 2023. The social media platforms, including LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook, demonstrated remarkable increases in impressions and reach, along with a boost in followers. The success of specific initiatives, such as the LinkedIn paid digital "Follower" ad, was emphasized for its impact on generating impressions and directing traffic to the LCWDB website. The monthly e-newsletter also received praise for maintaining consistent engagement and open rates over the years.

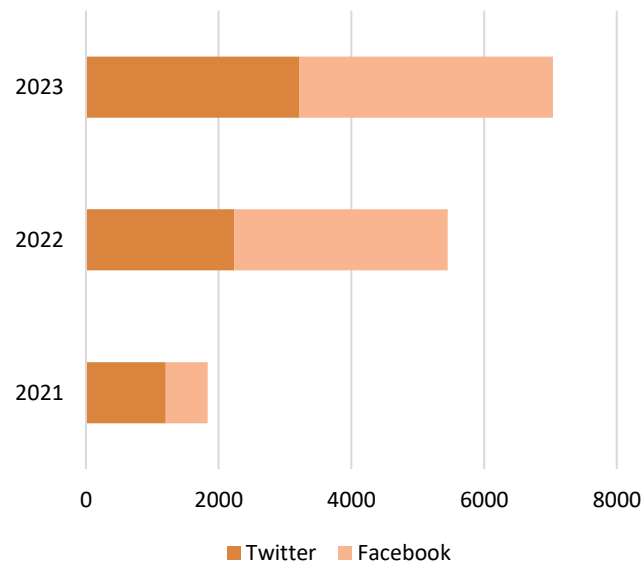
Looking ahead to 2024, the plan involves expanding and refining website content, launching strategic social media campaigns, enhancing e-newsletter content, and developing print collateral to strengthen the Board's brand awareness. Board members will play a pivotal role in driving brand awareness, stressing their active involvement in promoting the Board's activities through official channels and sharing relevant content to boost visibility. The document also underlined the importance of aligning communications with the Board's brand guidelines, utilizing official templates, and maintaining a consistent and professional brand image.



## Web Page Views and Engagements



## Twitter and Facebook Followers



### C. Lake County Data & Trends

Lake County, IL, is a suburban area of 457 square miles located just north of Cook County, IL (including Chicago) and south of Kenosha County, WI. Lake County is situated in the northeastern corner of the U.S. state of Illinois, along the shores of Lake Michigan. As of the 2020 census, it has a population of 714,342, making it the third-most populous county in Illinois. Its county seat is Waukegan, the tenth-largest city in Illinois.

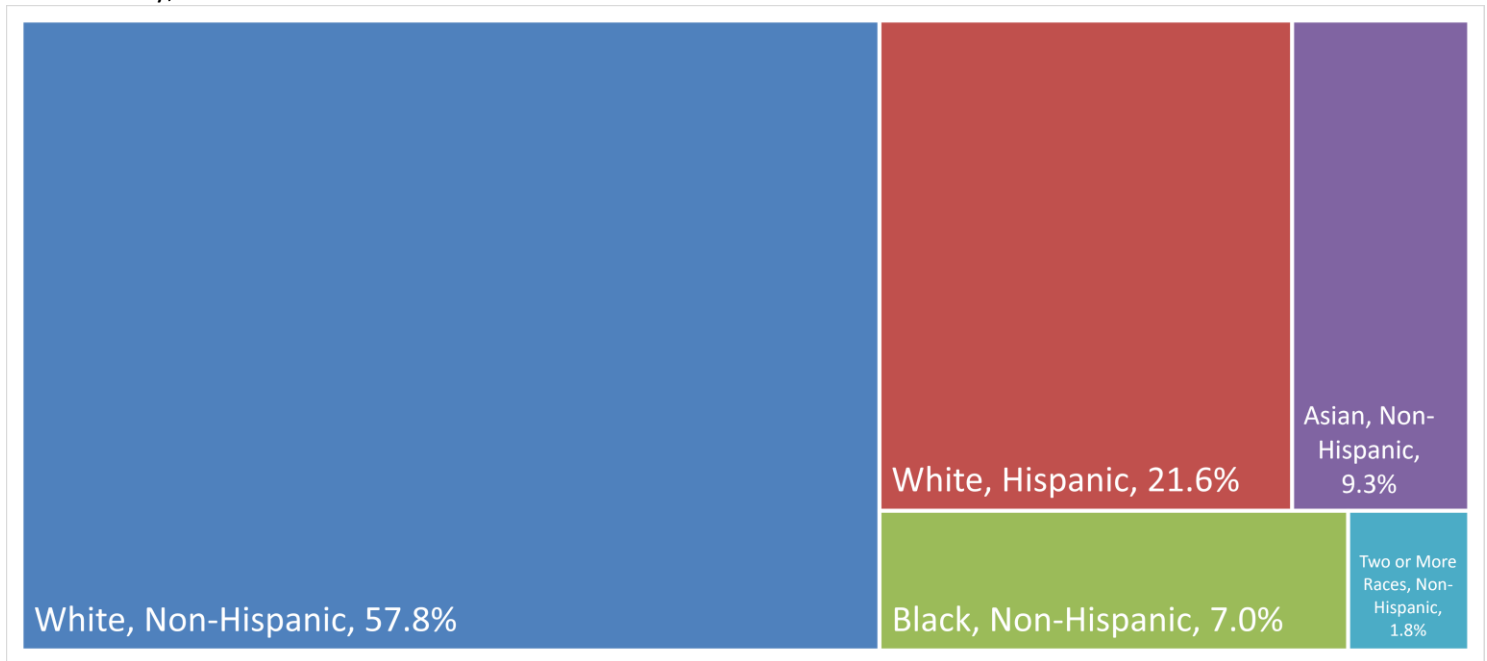
### General Trends

In November 2023, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) reported that the unemployment rate had declined year-over-year in all fourteen metropolitan areas of Illinois for the ninth consecutive month.

	Lake County	EDR#4	Illinois
Population	714,342	8,733,876	12,711,277
Unemployment Rate	4.1%	4.30%	4.20%

## Population Characteristics

In 2024, there are 4.33 times more White (Non-Hispanic) residents (413,397 people) in Lake County, IL than any other race or ethnicity. There were 154,652 White (Hispanic) and 66,393k Asian (Non-Hispanic) residents, the second and third most common ethnic groups. 24% of the people in Lake County, IL are Hispanic (169,143k people). The following chart shows the 5 races representing greater than 1% of the total population in Lake County, IL.



Source: Census Bureau .

In Lake County, Illinois, 70.71% of residents communicate exclusively in English, whereas 29.29% speak languages other than English. Among the non-English speakers, the most prevalent language is Spanish, spoken by 17.45% of the population. 22% of 5-17 year olds in the county speak Spanish, in contrast with 18% of 18-64 year olds and 6.8% of residents over 65. (Source: World Population Review

Lake County, IL has more individuals at the retirement age than the state and less individuals entering the workforce.

	Lake County	EDR#4	Illinois
Millennials (age 25 - 34)	11.1%	7.0%	13.4%
Retiring Soon (55 and	28.6%	29.0%	30.0%
Racially Diverse	39.0%	49.2%	39.0%
Non-English Speakers	30.7%	30.8%	23.9%

US Census Bureau

## Educational Attainment

A larger percentage of Lake County has a high school diploma or higher compared to the region or the state and nearly half of the Lake County population has a bachelor's degree or higher.

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, the number of high school graduates is expected to increase by 5% nation-wide by 2027. In comparison, the number of high school graduates in Illinois is expected to decrease by 2.7% during that same time period.

	Lake	Illin
Less than 9th	4%	5%
9th to 12th grade,	5%	5%
High school	25%	25
Some college, no	20%	19
Associate's degree	8%	8%
Bachelor's degree	22%	23
Graduate or	14%	15

Source U.S. Census Bureau. "Educational Attainment." American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables

## Industries

The largest industries in Lake County, IL are Government, Manufacturing, Retail Trade, Health Care and Social Assistance, Administrative and Support and Waste Remediation and Remediation Services. An overview of the top five industries in Lake County by number of jobs is below along with the employment percentage by industry and the change in jobs from 2001 to 2003.

Occupation	2001 Jobs	2003 Jobs	Change in Jobs (2001-
Government	60,258	59,209	-1,050
Manufacturing	51,583	53,295	1,712
Retail Trade	42,289	39,357	-2,932
Health Care and Social	33,381	31,514	-1,867
Administrative and	28,868	27,956	-912

### Highest Ranked Occupations in Lake County

Highest rank occupations are displayed for Lake County according to employment numbers, earnings, and projected job growth.

Largest Occupations in Lake County

Occupation	2001 Jobs	2023 Jobs	Change in Jobs (2001-2023)	% Change	2022 Median Hourly Earnings
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	48,591	38,615	-9,976	-0.21	21.16
Sales and Related Occupations	39,089	30,379	-8,710	-0.22	19.69
Production Occupations	32,784	30,920	-1,864	-0.06	21.64
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	28,833	29,953	1,120	0.04	19.7
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	20,363	22,934	2,571	0.13	13.83
Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	18,745	19,740	995	0.05	27.01
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	17,384	23,777	6,393	0.37	37.35
Management Occupations	15,981	32,848	16,867	1.06	57.06
Construction and Extraction Occupations	14,565	9,084	-5,481	-0.38	35.86
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	12,745	12,251	-494	-0.04	16.7

Source: EMSI occupation employment data

### Highest Paying Occupations in Lake County

Occupation	2001 Jobs	2023 Jobs	Change in Jobs (2001- 2023)	% Change	2022 Median Hourly Earnings
Management Occupations	15,981	32,848	16,867	106%	\$57.06
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	9,412	11,100	1,688	18%	\$45.87
Architecture and Engineering Occupations	5,416	5,720	304	6%	\$44.70
Legal Occupations	1,552	1,925	373	24%	\$42.78
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	17,384	23,777	6,393	37%	\$37.35
Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	3,092	3,525	433	14%	\$37.10
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	11,651	15,760	4,109	35%	\$36.64
Construction and Extraction Occupations	14,565	9,084	-5,481	-38%	\$35.86
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	3,276	3,596	320	10%	\$27.85
Protective Service Occupations	5,658	5,915	257	5%	\$27.14

Source: EMSI occupation employment data

### Fastest Growing Occupations in Lake County

Occupation	2001 Jobs	2023 Jobs	Change in Jobs (2001- 2023)	% Change	2022 Median Hourly Earnings
Management Occupations	15,981	32,848	16,867	106%	\$57.06
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	17,384	23,777	6,393	37%	\$37.35
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	11,651	15,760	4,109	35%	\$36.64
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	20,363	22,934	2,571	13%	\$13.83
Healthcare Support Occupations	5,889	8,187	2,298	39%	\$18.08
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	9,412	11,100	1,688	18%	\$45.87
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	28,833	29,953	1,120	4%	\$19.70
Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	18,745	19,740	995	5%	\$27.01
Community and Social Service Occupations	2,241	3,110	869	39%	\$23.63
Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	3,092	3,525	433	14%	\$37.10

Source: EMSI occupation employment data

## Staffing Patterns by Key Industries

Staffing Patterns provide data supporting the occupations that staff an industry with data related to employment by industry, % change, median hourly earnings, and typical entry level education.

### Manufacturing Industry

Description	Employed in Industry (2001)	Employed in Industry (2022)	Employed in Industry (2023)	Change (2001 - 2023)	% Change (2001 - 2023)	% of Total Jobs in Industry (2022)	Median Hourly Earnings	Typical Entry Level Education
Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	3,874	3,560	3,555	-318	-8%	6.80%	\$19.66	High school diploma or equivalent
Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and Tenders	1,717	2,640	2,666	949	55%	5.00%	\$19.45	High school diploma or equivalent
Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	1,296	2,600	2,623	1,327	102%	4.90%	\$22.27	High school diploma or equivalent
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	1,799	2,117	2,139	341	19%	4.00%	\$34.07	High school diploma or equivalent
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	1,305	2,087	2,112	807	62%	4.00%	\$18.63	No formal educational credential
General and Operations Managers	522	1,622	1,628	1,106	212%	3.10%	\$51.51	Bachelor's degree
Molding, Coremaking, and Casting Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic	893	1,619	1,664	771	86%	3.10%	\$19.82	High school diploma or equivalent
Industrial Engineers	355	1,343	1,366	1,011	285%	2.50%	\$53.31	Bachelor's degree

Source: EMSI staffing pattern data

## Transportation & Warehousing

Description	Employed in Industry (2001)	Employed in Industry (2022)	Employed in Industry (2023)	Change (2001 - 2023)	% Change (2001 - 2023)	% of Total Jobs in Industry (2022)	Median Hourly Earnings	Typical Entry Level Education
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	477	1,720	1,755	1,278	268%	22.20%	\$18.63	No formal educational credential
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	754	1,198	1,249	494	66%	15.40%	\$27.55	Postsecondary nondegree award
Bus Drivers, School	705	702	702	-2	0%	9.00%	\$21.18	No formal educational credential
Light Truck Drivers	304	577	615	311	102%	7.40%	\$24.35	High school diploma or equivalent
Stockers and Order Fillers	73	460	468	395	543%	5.90%	\$17.45	High school diploma or equivalent
Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	145	397	404	259	179%	5.10%	\$23.87	No formal educational credential
Bus Drivers, Transit and Intercity	137	211	214	77	57%	2.70%	\$27.52	High school diploma or equivalent
School Bus Monitors	<10	187	187	186	38119%	2.40%	\$15.26	High school diploma or equivalent
Packers and Packagers, Hand	104	184	184	80	78%	2.40%	\$19.03	No formal educational credential
General and Operations Managers	34	164	169	135	395%	2.10%	\$51.51	Bachelor's degree
First-Line Supervisors of Transportation and Material Moving Workers, Except Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisors	139	164	170	31	23%	2.10%	\$30.79	High school diploma or equivalent

Source: EMSI staffing pattern data

## Healthcare and Social Assistance

Description	Employed in Industry (2001)	Employed in Industry (2022)	Employed in Industry (2023)	Change (2001 - 2023)	% Change (2001 - 2023)	% of Total Jobs in Industry (2022)	Median Hourly Earnings	Typical Entry Level Education
Registered Nurses	2,800	3,943	3,938	1,138	41%	13.40%	\$38.20	Bachelor's degree
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	617	2,843	2,907	2,289	371%	9.70%	\$17.32	High school diploma or equivalent
Nursing Assistants	1,959	1,939	1,928	-31	-2%	6.60%	\$18.47	Postsecondary nondegree award
Receptionists and Information Clerks	654	803	801	148	23%	2.70%	\$17.56	High school diploma or equivalent
Medical Assistants	498	759	759	261	52%	2.60%	\$19.63	Postsecondary nondegree award
Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	548	720	728	180	33%	2.50%	\$16.76	Associate's degree
Dental Assistants	742	716	721	-21	-3%	2.40%	\$19.99	Postsecondary nondegree award
Childcare Workers	516	690	686	170	33%	2.40%	\$14.03	High school diploma or equivalent

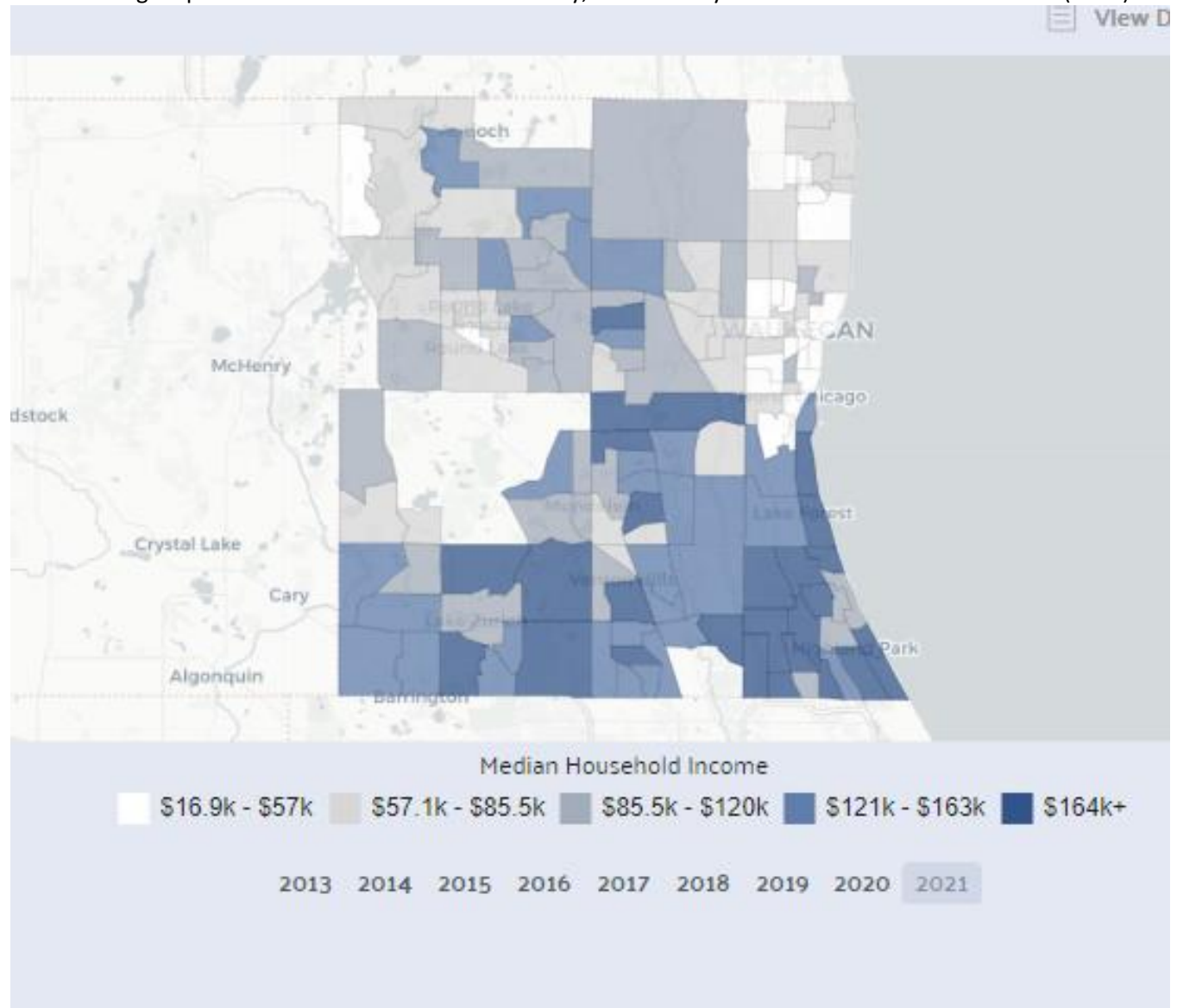
Source: EMSI staffing pattern data



## Income/Poverty Levels

In 2021, the tract with the highest Median Household Income (Total) in Lake County, IL was Census Tract 8650 with a value of \$250,001, followed by Census Tract 8656 and Census Tract 8658.02, with respective values of \$250,001 and \$250,001.

The following map shows all of the tracts in Lake County, IL colored by their Median Household Income (Total).



Source: [Lake County, IL | Data USA](#)

In 2021, the median household income for the 253,000 households in Lake County, IL, increased to \$97,127 compared to the previous year's value of \$92,654. Despite this positive economic trend, there were still challenges in the housing sector, with 15.5% of the population experiencing severe housing problems in Lake County, IL, in 2022. It's noteworthy that this indicator has seen a decline of 1.66% from 2014 to 2022.

Regarding poverty, .56% of the population (52,700 out of 697,000 people) in Lake County, IL, live below the poverty line. While this is lower than the national average of 12.6%, it is a significant concern. The demographic group most affected by poverty is Females aged 25-34, followed by Females aged 35-44 and then Females aged 55-64.

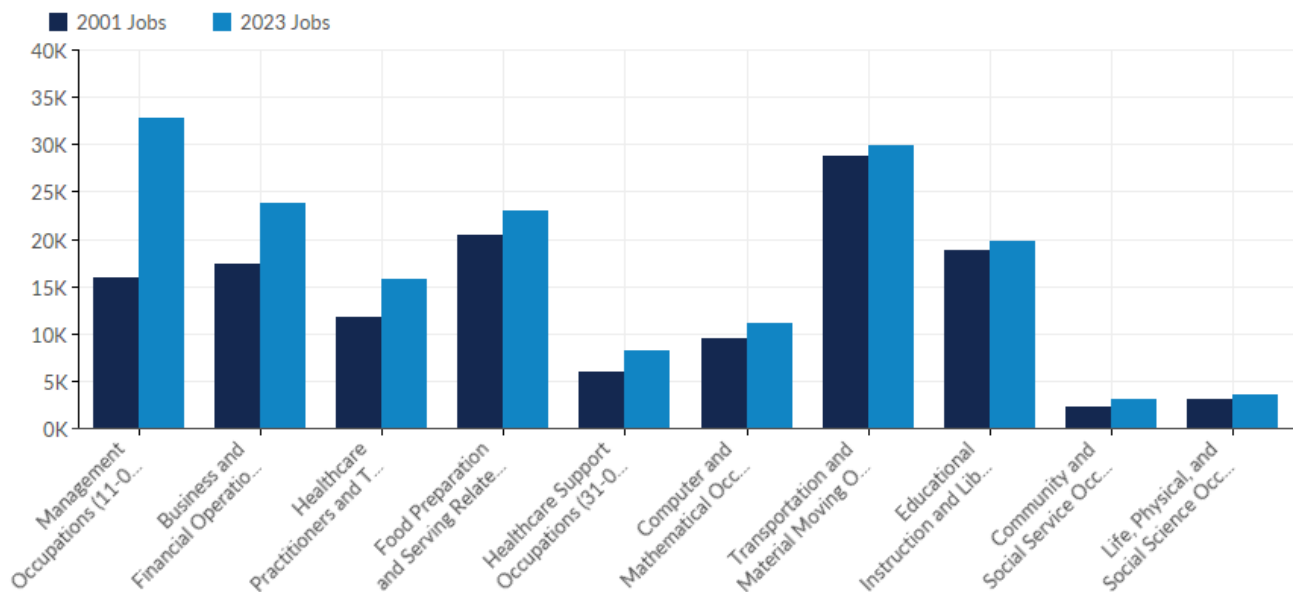
Breaking down poverty by racial or ethnic groups, the most common group living below the poverty line in Lake County, IL, is White, followed by Hispanic and Black populations. Additionally, in 2022, 8.3% of children were living in poverty in Lake County, IL, showing a positive trend with a 5% decline from 2014 to 2022.

## Employment Trends

Between 2020 and 2021, employment in Lake County, IL, demonstrated a growth rate of 1.51%, with the number of employees increasing from 350,000 to 356,000.

The most prevalent employment sectors for residents of Lake County, IL, include Manufacturing, employing 55,764 people, followed by Retail Trade with 41,487 people, and Health Care & Social Assistance with 40,629 people. It's important to note that this breakdown represents the distribution of primary industries for Lake County, IL residents, some of whom may live in the county but work elsewhere. Between 2020 and 2021, employment in Lake County, IL experienced a growth rate of 1.51%, increasing from 350,000 employees to 356,000 employees.

### Fastest Growing Occupations in Lake County

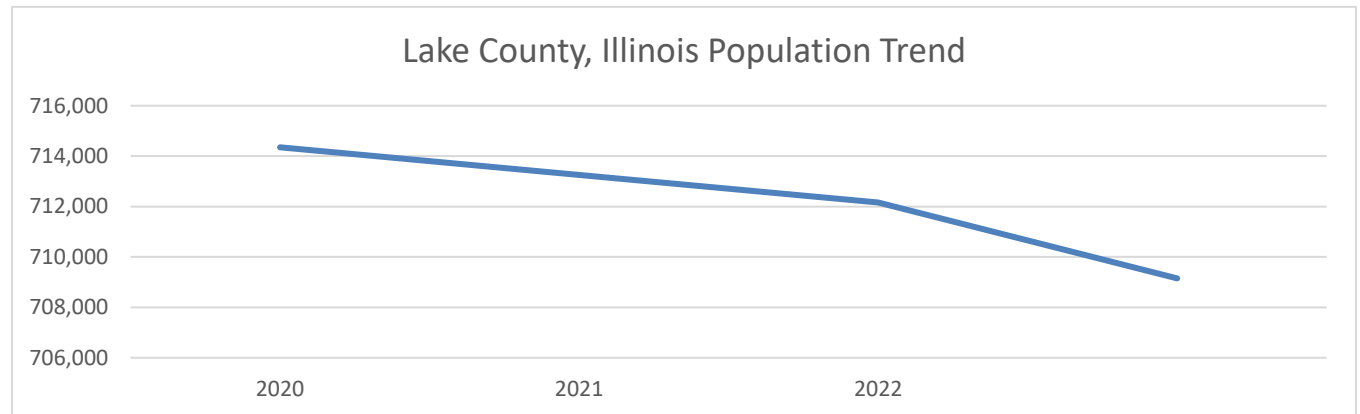


NET EMPLOYMENT CHANGE FOR SELECTED PERIOD BY SECTOR: LAKE COUNTY, 2016-2020

## Population Flattening

Between 2010 and 2022, Lake County observed population growth in 5 out of the 12 years, with the most significant annual increase recorded at 2.3% between 2019 and 2020. Conversely, the county faced its most substantial decline between 2018 and 2019, experiencing a 0.5% reduction in population. On average, from 2010 to 2022, the county registered a modest annual growth rate of 0.1%.

As of 2022, the population of Lake County, Illinois, reached 709,150, marking a 0.7% increase from the 704,179 residents recorded in 2010. To provide context, over the same period, the overall population of the United States grew by 7.7%, while the state of Illinois experienced a 2% decline in its population.

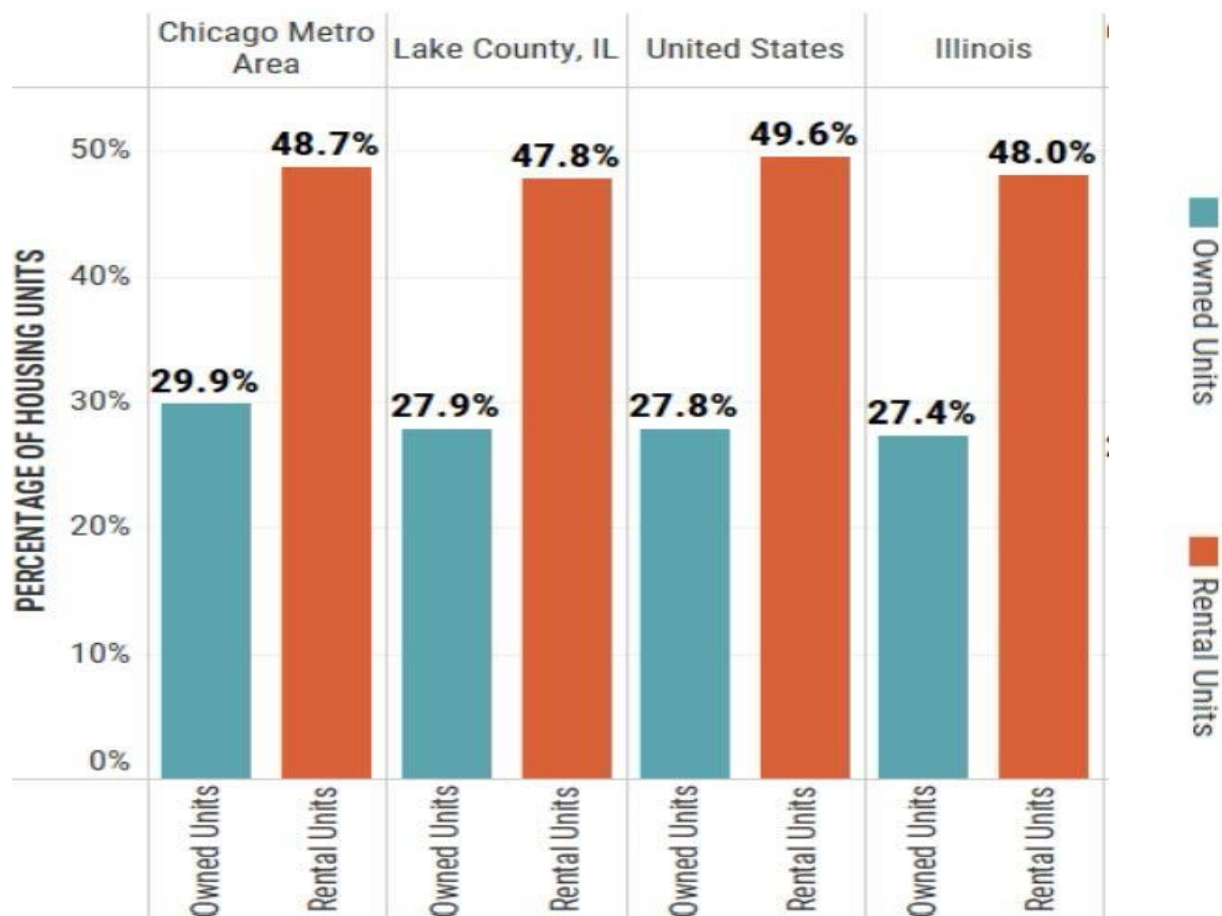


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Annual County Resident Population Estimates, 2022.

## Household Stability

Of all the County's housing units, 68% are occupied by their owners compared to just 56% nationally. Those occupants are more likely to be partnered households (64% in Lake County versus 55% nationally) and more likely to have a four-year degree (45% in Lake County versus 32% in the US overall). Unsurprisingly, this combination of coupled households and high education boosts earning power. Lake County's median household income exceeds the US average by 42% (\$89,400 versus \$62,800). Lake County's median home price also exceeds the US median, but by a much lower 22%. Housing affordability may elude the peer benchmark counties of the East and West coasts, but for Lake County's affluent residents, affordability lies within reach. However, despite this relative affordability, nearly half (47.8%) of renter-occupied units are spending more than 30% of their income on housing expenses. When compared to owner-occupied units, this falls to only 28% (27.9%) of occupants, again drawing attention to income disparities across the county.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY, 2019 SHARE OF HOUSING UNITS WHOSE OCCUPANTS SPEND MORE THAN 30 PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME ON HOUSING EXPENSES (I.E., RENT OR MORTGAGE PAYMENTS)



Source: American Community Survey, 2019 5-year sample; TIP Strategies, Inc.

## **Chapter 1 -3: Regional Plan Components**

**Northeast Economic Development Region #4 Regional Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Plan**

<https://www.lakecountyworkforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/EDR-4-Regional-Plan-FINAL-DRAFT.pdf>

## Chapter 4: Operating Systems & Policies – Local Component

This chapter provides an overview of all the operating system and policies developed and overseen by the Lake County Workforce Development Board. This chapter includes an overview of governance documents that describe the one-stop system – led out by the Job Center of Lake County One Stop Operator and partners.

### A. Coordination of Planning Requirements

The Local Workforce Innovation Area 1 Memorandum of Understanding provides a description of the one-stop delivery system, and other information that is essential to the establishment and operation of effective local workforce development systems as required by the WIOA Rule (20 CFR Part 678.705). The Memorandum of Understanding and any subsequent modifications is incorporated by reference into this plan.

The Local Workforce Innovation Area 1 Service Integration Self-Assessment Tool provides a description of how local workforce partners will align and coordinate services as required by the State of Illinois Service Integration Policy (WIOA Policy Chapter 1, Section 13). The Service Integration Self-Assessment Tool, and any subsequent modifications, are incorporated by reference into this plan.

The lake County Workforce Development Board has ensured alignment with the WIOA-required compliance documents, including the Regional and Local WIOA Plans, the Job Center of Lake County MOU, the Job Center Partner Action Plan, and the One-Stop certification. Furthermore, the Workforce Board has harmonized its strategic plan with the Local Plan, incorporating key elements of the Job Center Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and the Service Integration Action Plan.

The Job Center of Lake County Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) plays a crucial role in outlining the one-stop delivery system and essential information necessary for the effective operation of local workforce development systems, as mandated by the WIOA Rule (20 CFR Part 678.705). This MOU delineates the roles and responsibilities of the One-Stop Center Partners, encompassing the four Core Partners: the Workforce Development Department, Illinois Department of Employment Security, College of Lake County, and Department of Rehabilitation Services, along with the roles of the One-Stop Operator. All partners to the MOU recognize that establishing and implementing a successful One-Stop System requires time, planning, mutual trust, and cooperation, with each partner committed to acting as a team in good faith.

The Job Center partners consistently implement and enhance various aspects of the shared vision, ensuring collaboration among education, workforce, economic development, and required partners. This collaborative effort aims to provide program participants with access to services and programs that facilitate successful progression along chosen career pathways, ultimately leading to high-paying jobs in growing sectors of the economy, offering long-term opportunities for stable employment. The Memorandum of Understanding, along with any subsequent modifications, is incorporated by reference into this plan. The following sections align with the Job Center MOU:

- The Job Center of Lake County
- The Job Center of Lake County Partners
- The Job Center Referral Process
- MOU Data Sharing
- MOU Cost Sharing Agreement
- MOU Governance
- One-Stop Operator

## The Job Center of Lake County

The Job Center of Lake County partners share a vision for the local one-stop delivery system to promote business driven talent solutions through integrated resources and partnerships to enhance the economic vitality of Lake County and maintain a culture of equity and inclusivity in serving priority populations.

The Job Center partners have made it a priority to focus the coordination of services around continuous improvement efforts to address and reduce overlapping services, create efficiencies in serving the job seekers and businesses, and increasing the career services delivered at the Job Center and throughout the system among the partners. The Job Center partners have all signed onto a well-versed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) detailing carefully planned and coordinated services among and across all federally funded workforce development programs to achieve a level of integrated service delivery.

The Job Center of Lake County partners, led by the One-Stop Operator, deliver programs and services based on its overall intent to provide free help to job seekers and businesses. The partners have successfully been able to deliver a seamless set of services including:

- Computers for individuals to create resumes, apply for jobs or services at the Job Center and strategic locations (Job Center on the Move) Resource room with free internet and resume writing tools
- Free access to printer and copy machines for employment and training related communications and materials
- Employment plan development
- On-demand online application for job training or a paid work experience
- Job Center kiosks at two locations (Waukegan Public Library & College of Lake County Lakeshore campus); a mobile kiosk is used at outreach events throughout the county
- Job search assistance
- Career counseling
- Practice interviewing
- Skills testing
- Labor market and employer information as related to careers, jobs, and training
- Access to Supportive services (which can include information about SNAP, financial assistance, Medicaid, training services, child-care, emergency funds, and other benefits)
- Hiring events and business service information
- Accessibility and special accommodations for people with disabilities
- Referrals to community resources and other agencies, and more
- Access to Illinois workNet website
- Access to Illinois Job Link
- Unemployment insurance information
- Current job vacancies
- Calendar of activities including job fairs and workshops
- Access to onsite interviewing by hiring employers
- Access to partner and community-based organization programs through direct connection or linkage
- Hybrid job search Workshops at the job center and strategic locations throughout Lake County

The Lake County Workforce Development Board in partnership with the Lake County CEO has identified and certified the Job Center of Lake County as the one comprehensive American Job Center to serve the local workforce development area. The Job Center of Lake County is located at 1 N. Genesee Street, Waukegan – on the campus of the College of Lake County Lakeshore Campus. The Job Center is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday; and is easily accessible by auto and public transportation (bus and train).

The Workforce Board has not certified any additional affiliate or specialized workforce centers in Lake County. The Workforce Board does support service delivery throughout the county at various sites in order to serve a greater number of customers effectively and efficiently with minimal challenges – specifically serving a greater number of underserved customers in underserved communities. The Workforce Board reserves the right to further research and explore the need for affiliate or specialized workforce centers based on the need of workforce development customers.

#### **Virtual Workshops and Information Session (VIS) –**

The Job Center of Lake County offers hybrid workshops as a best practice—adopted following COVID-19. Workshops are offered at the Jobcenter or at libraries throughout the county. Attendees can also participate in ZOOM. The virtual information sessions reduce structural barriers, transportation barriers, while increasing expanded access throughout Lake County. The virtual information session also increases access through its 24-hour available access to apply for employment and training resources outside of the typical work hours of The Job Center of Lake County.

· In 2023, 47 workshops and events offered by the Job Center of Lake County with a total of 661 attendees. Key topics included:

- Accelerate Your Job Search
- Your Personal Brand & Resume
- Master the Interview
- You Are Not Alone: Landing a Job When You Have a Disability
- State of the Workforce
- Strategies to maximize Your Income
- Thriving on a Tight Budget
- Industry Snapshot: IT
- Job Search 2.0
- Get Empowered
- Manufacturing: Training Options
- Overcoming Barriers
- Job Search During the Holidays
- Equal Employment Opportunity Act
- LinkedIn
- Construction industry with Union 150
- An on-demand Virtual Information Session provides greater access to a greater number of individuals – being able to view the session anytime and on any device and complete an online application. In 2023, 2308 individuals applied to the Virtual Information Sessions.

#### **Job Center of Lake County Mobile Job Center**

Workforce Development conducted a community needs survey to gauge community-support for mobile Job Center activities and services, with attention to the communities of Zion and North Chicago.

To increase services to job seekers and provide more accessibility and equity in delivery of employment and training services, Workforce Development (LCWD) is implementing a mobile and remote job center concept – Workforce Development team members will bring a pod of laptops and video conferencing devices into underserved communities. This mobile job center will allow community members to connect with services within their communities without having to travel to the Job Center in Waukegan. The smart video conferencing devices will enhance interaction with employers and job seekers. This technology will allow for better



connection with employers to provide access to a broader audience with virtual job fairs and hiring events as well as a much-needed way to provide skills training and job search workshops to additional communities and community groups.

Launched in April 2022, “Job Center on the Move” offers candidates the unique opportunity to engage in one-on-one consultations with a Job Center representative, aiding them in advancing their careers. This initiative eliminates the need for candidates to visit our Waukegan office by offering a selection of tailored services at their convenience.

Our partnerships extend to the North Chicago Public Library, Zion-Benton Public Library, Legacy Reentry Foundation, and Catholic Charities of Lake County. We are actively collaborating with additional partners across Lake County to enhance our service offerings. Our goal is to ensure increased accessibility and equity in the provision of employment and training services, thereby catering to the diverse needs of job seekers.

### **Job Center of Lake County Reopening Plan**

In July of 2021 the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity issued guidance for a safe return to work and reopening plan for all American Job Centers in the state of Illinois. The Job Center complied and responded to the check list associated with reopening protocols. The Reopen plan was updated in December 2023 to document that the Job Center is now open on a walk-in basis during hours of operation.

#### **Job Center Partners**

The Job Center of Lake County offers career services and programs to adults, dislocated workers, youth, employers, and other community members through the coordinated efforts of the core and required workforce system partners.

Partners to the MOU include: WIOA Title I – Lake County Workforce Development; WIOA Title II – College of Lake County and APC Partners; WIOA Title III – IDES; WIOA Title IV – DHS VR; Veterans Services – IDES; TAA – Workforce Development; Migrant & Seasonal Farmworkers – IDES, Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP) – National Able Network; TANF DHS; YouthBuild – Youth Conservation Corps and YouthBuild Lake County; HUD – Waukegan Housing Authority and Lake County Housing Authority; CSBG – Community Action Partnership.

Job Center partners send customer referrals to each other through the Unify referral system. Each partner has designated one or more personnel to act as receivers responding to these referrals on a timely basis.

Since its inception in July 2021, over 2000 referrals have been sent through Unify.

#### **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Core Partners**

- **Title I (Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth)** – Workforce Development is a key community player in the areas of career services, business services, and education/ training required for implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and is committed to providing and coordinating services on-site at the Job Center of Lake County and through-out the system. Workforce Development has an ongoing commitment to deliver all career services on-site at the Job Center of Lake County as well as community locations based on the customer needs. Workforce staff are physically located at the Job Center delivering career services including eligibility, outreach, intake, and orientation; initial skills assessment, labor exchange services, referral and coordination; information on supportive services and assistance with establishing eligibility for financial assistance; as well as development of an individual employment plan; individual career coaching and planning; access to internships and work experience opportunities.
- **Title II - Adult Basic Education** has over 25 physical sites in Lake County with additional remote training opportunities (9 affiliated with CLC, 5 with Highland Park High School and 14 with Mundelein High School) . There are other locations within the County that assist individuals with this subject matter but for the purposes of

WIOA Title II, these are the locations observed. The CLC Adult Education staff also provides program information and services at the Job Center of Lake County.

- **Title III - Wagner-Peyser** services and programming are offered by the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES). IDES is co-located at the Job Center of Lake County represented by two Wagner-Peyser staff. Two additional IDES staff provide programs and services specifically for veterans.
- **Title IV - Vocational Rehabilitation** through the Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) has one office in Lake County and eight (8) contractors who provide employment and training services to DRS clients in Lake County and additional contractors in the surrounding suburbs. DRS representative is onsite in the Job Center weekly, meeting with customers as well as assisting with workshops and employer hiring events.

In addition to the locations of the above core partner services, Lake County has a wide variety of service providers and organizations that provide educational and employment related services and services to special populations. The Job Center partners have developed the Integrated Services Action Plan around this vision of collaboration. The Workforce Board's strategic plan has a stated objective to facilitate greater collaboration among and between workforce partners and stakeholders. The Workforce Board Operations Committee drives the agenda and work tasks associated with the Job Center MOU and program collaboration model.

#### Job Center Referral Process – UNIFY

Launched in July 2021, Unify is an internal partner webpage that features a form allowing partners to send referrals regarding customer needs to each other. Additional information includes snapshots of all 14 partners and archived Quarterly One Stop reports and Quarterly Cross-training presentations. Developed with input and support from all Job Center partners and approval by the Workforce Board, this internal webpage has increased understanding about partners programs among frontline staff members and facilitates seamless referrals. Since its inception, over 2,000 referrals have been sent via this method. This tool has been shared as a best practice with the Chicago Metro Region One Stop Operators and at the 2023 WIOA Summit and at a WIOA Wednesday webinar.

#### ServicePoint Referral Network

The Job Center of Lake County joined the ServicePoint referral system in 2017. Lake County uses ServicePoint as its Homeless Management Information System. In 2021, the Job Center of Lake County received and responded to 135 referrals through ServicePoint with the majority coming from PADS Lake County, a community-based organization provided resources and shelter to individuals and families experiencing homelessness or housing crisis. Job Center referrals accounted for 12% of all referrals sent through ServicePoint in 2020. Catholic Charities, YWCA Lake County, and Community Partners for Affordable Housing also received a high number of referrals for emergency or rental assistance and housing relief. The Job Center of Lake County has maintained a relationship with all three of these organizations for more than a decade and shares resources from these organizations on social media and in the Job Center.

#### MOU Data Sharing

Given that the Job Center partners continue to explore available options and await guidance from the State of Illinois Department of Innovation Technology. While awaiting the implementation of an agreed-upon data system solution, the partners pledge to seek alternative secure means of sharing information relevant to enhancing outcomes for both customers and businesses. The One-Stop Operator remains actively engaged with the Workforce Board and partners to identify the most immediate and effective approaches for sharing information on shared customers.

### MOU Cost Sharing Agreement

The Workforce Development Board takes the lead in the annual Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) cost-sharing agreement negotiations with each MOU partner. Successful consensus has been reached among the local board, chief elected official, and required partners on the negotiated shared costs, showcasing a commitment to fair and equitable service delivery and integration within the comprehensive one-stop and across the system.

Lake County serves as the lease holder for the Job Center space in Waukegan, Illinois, with the Lake County Workforce Development Department allocating all infrastructure-related expenses to the WIOA Formula Grant and covering all Job Center-related costs. Workforce Development maintains a general ledger of Job Center infrastructure expenses and conducts a reconciliation process twice a year, invoicing the partners as agreed upon. The partners have agreed to contribute a proportionate share of infrastructure costs based on the allocation methodology of Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), considering the time staff members spend delivering services on-site, at partner locations, or supporting services through technology. All partner programs have committed to a minimum FTE of 0.25.

Expenses associated with the One-Stop Operator are covered by the Workforce Development WIOA Formula grant at 100%. The One-Stop Operator, selected through a competitive procurement process within a partner consortium, receives a budget percentage relative to current Workforce Development staff performing the One-Stop Operator functions on-site at the Job Center. Consequently, Workforce Development will continue to contribute 100% to this cost. Lake County Workforce Development assumes the responsibility of reporting costs and reconciliation to the required partners and Workforce Board on a bi-annual basis.

### MOU Governance

The governance of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) falls under the purview of the Workforce Development Board. All Job Center partners have collectively agreed upon standard business practices to govern the MOU, ensuring compliance in negotiating and executing the MOU for career services and program delivery, as well as the MOU cost-sharing agreement. To maintain transparency and adherence to established protocols, Job Center partners communicate with the Workforce Board regarding any proposed MOU changes or amendments, following a predefined process.

In instances where requests or issues arise, a Workforce Board member assumes the role of a neutral facilitator, overseeing the resolution process and effectively communicating outcomes to the Workforce Board. This collaborative approach ensures that the governance structure remains robust, promoting effective communication and adherence to the established guidelines within the MOU.

### One Stop Operator

The One-Stop Operator for the Job Center of Lake County comprises a consortium of the Lake County Workforce Development Department, Illinois Department of Employment Security, College of Lake County, and IDHS Division of Rehabilitation Services. The Workforce Board, in collaboration with the Lake County Purchasing Division, successfully completed the One-Stop Operator procurement process in 2022. An agreement for the term July 2022-June 2026 was approved, aligning with the Workforce Board's Procurement Policy, which references compliance with WIOA and the need to bid out the One-Stop Operator every four years. The Workforce Board is prepared to initiate a new One-Stop Operator procurement process in 2026.

The One-Stop Operator's primary function and scope of work involve coordinating partner activities and services, focusing on the Lake County One-Stop Action Plan's service integration priorities. These priorities encompass:

1. Communication Across One-Stop Partners:
  - a. Maintain the Job Center of Lake County website/web-page content and ensure the integrity of partner information and linkages.
  - b. Organize outreach initiatives to promote service availability.
  - c. Maintain the partner program information webpage (Unify).
  - d. Assure up-to-date and available one-stop center materials for resource staff and customers.

2. Timely and Coordinated Access to Services:
  - a. Coordinate activities between programs and services at the Job Center of Lake County among all One-Stop Partners and Services Providers.
  - b. Maintain the partner referral webpage (Unify).
  - c. Provide information through technology to enhance access to basic career services, employment, and training activities.
  - d. Collect customer feedback for continuous improvement.
3. Services Delivered by Function Based on Partner Services and Job Center Customer Flow:
  - a. Convene quarterly meetings of Job Center partners, supporting MOU implementation.
  - b. Work with partners to develop and implement a seamless integration of services, reducing silos for each partner program.
  - c. Conduct cross-training events in collaboration with Job Center Partners.
  - d. Assist partners in identifying recruitment and outreach strategies.
4. Data Collection and Reporting:
  - a. Collect data and apply benchmarks to measure system performance.
  - b. Provide monthly data collection, reporting, and analysis to the LCWDB.
  - c. Present a quarterly report to the LCWDB.
  - d. Annually review one-stop program(s) and center accessibility.
5. Comprehensive One-Stop Center Certification:
  - a. Coordinate activities to meet the requirements of the Comprehensive One-Stop Center Certification.
  - b. Coordinate reviews and updates of the Comprehensive One-Stop Center Certification with the LCWDB.

The Workforce Board is committed to initiating a new One-Stop Operator procurement process in 2026, focusing on the operator's role in leading the coordination of the Lake County One-Stop Service Integration Action Plan. The One-Stop Operator will be accountable to the Workforce Board's Operation Committee, reporting progress and outputs through a Quarterly One-Stop Report.

#### The Job Center of Lake County Service Integration Action Planning

The Job Center of Lake County, in collaboration with the Workforce Board, has developed a Service Integration Action Plan in accordance with the State of Illinois Service Integration Policy (WIOA Policy Chapter 1, Section 13). This plan serves as a framework for coordinating and harmonizing services among Job Center partners, aiming to enhance the overall experience for employers, job seekers, and system customers. The Service Integration Action Plan, along with any subsequent modifications, is integrated into the broader plan outlined here.

Service integration, as conceptualized by the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB), involves strategic combinations to streamline access to one-stop center services. The goal is to optimize the delivery of services for the benefit of employers, job seekers, and system customers. Integration may occur across various entities, services, or programs, adapting over time to meet evolving customer needs.

The IWIB has identified seven service integration functions in its policy (DCEO WIOA POLICY 18-WIOA-1.13), forming the core of Illinois' local one-stop delivery system. Each workforce board is responsible for assessing service integration levels in seven functional areas and 15 associated goals for each one-stop center within its jurisdiction. Priority actions are then identified to advance strategic service integration goals, with a self-assessment guide provided to support local workforce boards in policy implementation.

Job Center partners were actively involved in completing the service integration self-assessment guide for their respective agencies. This involved evaluating service integration levels and identifying specific areas for focused improvement efforts. Each partner conducted a self-assessment to determine their agency's position on the collaboration continuum within the Job Center for each goal.

## **B. Technology and Remote Access**

The Workforce Board is committed to pursuing alignment and integration of participant and performance data across programs with the goal of providing effective and efficient services delivered onsite in the Job Center as well as in remote areas throughout Lake County. To ensure the Job Center's comprehensive one-stop center provides inclusive access to job seekers and priority populations, the following tactics are strategies are used:

- Deployment of a mobile/remote job center branded as "Job Center on The Move" to designated community partner sites and organizations within marginalized communities and cities that serve underrepresented population groups to expand access of career services within a variety of locations.
- The Job Center utilizes a LMI Underserved Area search in IEBS to target participant outreach in underserved areas of Lake County (i.e., Zion, North Chicago, Waukegan, etc.) as well as Census Tract tools to assess the marginalized cities in need to establish aligned partnership and services with schools, agencies, CBO's, and libraries to offer career services to their population groups/clients
- The Job Center utilizes "Community Kiosk" that are located within priority cities in high traffic areas to expand the Job Center's reach within marginalized communities to create enhanced and expanded access points, while leveraging community partners flow of customers to be exposed to Job Center services in a self-service "Kiosk" providing Job Center services outside of the traditional working hours.
- The Job Center partners with IDHS to help identify UI Profilee individuals that are assisted through RESEA workshops and create a direct referral process to deploy career services immediately, while partnering with our state partners DRS, DHS, Economic Development, and our Housing partners to assess their agency and client to allocate personnel accordingly.
- The Job Center utilizes various forms of technology to reduce the barriers of access by deploying digital tools such as: DocuSign, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Adobe Reader, Virtual Information Session platform, and diversified Canva marketing to better engage with clients while understanding there are several ways to enhance connectivity and provide an inclusive framework.
- Application to WIOA Title I services can be completed on an ad-hoc basis by accessing the Virtual Information Session.
- Key workshops including Industry Snapshots and the annual State of the Workforce are offered in a virtual format.
- Individuals can access virtual training including LinkedIn Learning and Grow with Google to expand their technical skills and update their credentials.
- Outside of providing Technology and Remote access the department assess and evaluates the zip codes that have attained access through workforce development programming to ensure there are no access point or zip code gaps.

### **Lake County Workforce Development System - Access to services in remote areas and with technology**

The Workforce Board recognizes the need to expand service strategies beyond the walls of the Job Center in Waukegan to deliver equitable services and programs throughout Lake County and in underserved communities. The Workforce Board supports the One-Stop Operator and Job Center partners in providing access to services in remote areas, using technology and other means. The One-Stop Operator and Job Center partners have identified the following promising practices that enables individuals and employers to have access to services:

- Job Center of Lake County Website
- Job Center on the Move at strategic locations
- Job Center kiosks
- College of Lake County Campuses
- Libraries
- Community based workshops and services

- Monthly E-Newsletters
- LinkedIn Learning
- DocuSign
- COURSERA / Google Scholarship
- Utilization of Meeting Platforms: ZOOM, MS Teams.

#### Job Center of Lake County Website

The One-Stop Operator manages the website for the Job Center [www.lakecountyjobcenter.com](http://www.lakecountyjobcenter.com). The website provides information and connections to all the Job Center partners and partners' programs. The Job Center partners provide information and program activities to keep the website up to date and relevant with the most current calendar of events, programs, and contact information. The website is an opportunity for individuals in remote areas to find assistance with career services, calendar of workshops, publications, videos, and contact information. The website is customized to be a highly mobile-optimized site, ideally responsive for desktop, laptop, phones, or tablets.

#### College of Lake County Campuses

To best serve customers, Adult Basic Education (ABE) customers, and College of Lake County (CLC) students, the College of Lake County and the Workforce Board recognize the need for a workforce development presence at the College of Lake County, Grayslake Campus. The College of Lake County has dedicated an office within the main college campus for Workforce Development to serve customers in the farthest western part of the county, provide an immediate service to participants attending CLC classes, and encourage a direct referral with CLC ABE students at the Grayslake campus. In addition, classroom space is made available for customer or partner training and board meetings.

#### Libraries

The Job Center has a long-standing partnership with the library system throughout Lake County. Recognizing the need to bring services, workshops, and information into all areas of the county, the Job Center partners delivered career services at the following libraries in 2023. Through this partnership, the Job Center is able to serve a greater number of

individuals in these communities as well as increase access to services to individuals with limited mobility.

- Antioch
- Fremont (Mundelein)
- Grayslake
- Lake Villa District (Lindenhurst)
- North Chicago
- Waukegan
- Warren Newport (Gurnee)
- Zion Benton

#### Community based workshops and services

Job Center partners continue to reach out to a network of relationships in remote areas to assist individuals in accessing services in an ongoing effort to serve the underserved in underserved communities as well as leverage high performing services from a vast network of organizations and providers. The Job Center participates in job fairs and events throughout the county and region including the following remote locations: Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center, Lake County Housing Authority, University Center of Lake County, and Waukegan Housing Authority. , , and

## Newsletters

Lake County Government has regular e-newsletters distributed by County Board members and Workforce Development information, events, and services are often included in these newsletters that are emailed to constituents. Content for the monthly Career Solutions e-blast has been reviewed and updated under the 2023 Communications Plan.

## LinkedIn Learning -

In 2020, LinkedIn Learning was launched to deliver skills training to participants and staff. The courses promote microlearning to build the professional and soft skills of the participant. LinkedIn Learning offers the latest courses that aid in developing the most in-demand skills. The courses provided are for every job title and all professional levels. The platform allows all individuals the same level of access to the library of courses. The Workforce Development Department program utilizes the training courses within LinkedIn Learning to help participants boost their job skills and enhance their professional profiles. Participants can access courses through LinkedIn Learning's mobile-optimized website or app.

LinkedIn Learning launched in the Spring of 2020 to deliver skills training to participants and staff. The courses offered are data-driven and intended to build the professional and soft skills of the participant. The training provided is for every job title and for all professional levels. The platform allows all individuals the same level of access to the library of courses of their background. The Workforce Development Department program utilizes the training courses within LinkedIn Learning to help participants boost their job skills and enhance their professional profiles. Continuous and on-demand training and education are crucial in these ever-changing times. The website is highly mobile-optimized and can be accessed by desktop, laptop, phone, or tablet.

## DocuSign

DocuSign was purchased in the Fall of 2020 to provide participants and staff with an easy and secure way to sign and receive documents necessary throughout the eligibility screening process and their training. The team can upload required documents and send them to the participant or Job Center partners to sign. The platform has allowed participants and staff the ability to be remote when completing the eligibility and enrollment process. The website is mobile-optimized and can be accessed by desktop, laptop, phone, or tablet. In the fast-paced world of business, efficiency is paramount. The seamless integration of essential tools not only streamlines processes but also significantly enhances productivity. For the Business Services team, leveraging the power of Salesforce.com and integrating it with DocuSign could revolutionize their operations. This integration promises to optimize workflows, enhance customer experiences, and accelerate the journey towards paperless transactions. Integrating DocuSign with Salesforce.com fosters improved collaboration and communication among team members and clients alike. Real-time updates on document statuses are readily available, enabling Account Executives to follow up with clients promptly. Additionally, automated notifications can be set up to alert both parties about pending signatures or completed transactions. This real-time visibility not only enhances accountability but also cultivates trust and transparency in client relationships.

## COURSERA / Google Scholarship

In 2021, Grow with Google scholarships, in partnership with Coursera, were launched to deliver job-ready skills to participants to prepare them for a career in IT or professional services by equipping them with a Google Professional Certificate. Participants can choose from seven areas of focus, including IT Support, Data Analytics, and Project Management while gaining in-demand skills. The scholarships were awarded by the National Association Workforce Boards and the intended target participants in vulnerable populations. The platform offers flexible, on-demand learning taught by Google professionals, which is self-paced and at no cost to the participant. Participants are able to access courses through LinkedIn Learning's mobile-optimized website or app.

Google Scholarships with Coursera launched in the Summer of 2021 to deliver job-ready skills to participants to launch them in a career by equipping them with a Google Professional Certificate in areas of focus, including IT Support, Data Analytics, and Project Management. The scholarships were awarded by the National Association Workforce Boards and the intended target participants in vulnerable populations. The platform offers flexible, on-demand learning, taught by Google professionals, self-paced, and at no cost to the participant. The website is highly mobile-optimized and can be accessed by desktop, laptop, phone, or tablet.

Utilization of Meeting Platforms: ZOOM, MS Teams, etc....

Staff members have employed platforms like Zoom and Microsoft Teams for both group and one-on-one meetings, finding these tools user-friendly and convenient for both themselves and participants. These platforms are highly mobile-optimized, accessible through desktops, laptops, phones, or tablets. Despite the resumption of face-to-face meetings, digital meeting platforms continue to be regularly utilized to enhance the accessibility of services and meetings



### **C. Lake County Workforce Development System - Core Program Delivery**

The Workforce Board has made a commitment through its strategic plan to prioritize services to individuals with barriers to employment and has been guiding programs and services to be inclusive in serving the communities and customizing and making available programs to underserved individuals in underserved communities. The Workforce Board recognizes the importance of accessibility of programs and services to all eligible individuals, including individuals with barriers to employment. To that end, the Workforce Board works with and encourages its workforce partners to establish new opportunities to serve workforce customers. The Board's Operation's Committee is specifically responsible for working with workforce system partners to develop new accessibility strategies and opportunities.

The following promising practices have expanded access to employment, training, education and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment:

- Revive Lake County
- Work, Earn, & Learn
- Workforce Essential Skills Training
- Workforce Equity Initiative Grant
- Ready to Work - Legal Services
- Community Kiosk in marginalized communities
- Family Centered Approach practice
- DOL YouthBuild Programs
- Job Center on The Move

Partner programs, organizations, communities served, and job seekers that come from an array of communities are strategically engaged through the Workforce Development equity lens by:

- Embedding services within underserved communities onsite or through community Kiosk to increase access points
- Utilization of Census Data to engage and attract students and job seekers that may have barriers
- Conduct and create workshops for age specific groups
- Apply and secure grants to address gender, class, and race inequities
- Monthly review of EO Demographic data as it pertains to trainees and job seekers served to ensure equity is being applied within WIOA services
- Leverage community partners that have access to diverse job seekers, families, institutions, and state resources to market services accordingly
- Branding displays diversity and equity
- Provide Job Center and Lake County Workforce services within accessible points of the community with technology access simultaneously to apply for services.
- WDB Board Equity Task force and diverse make up of board members provides oversight of programming areas to ensure an equity lens is applied or that there is representation from all demographic groups along with a priority of service expectation
- Engage schools that may have subpar graduation rates and infuse workforce programming to ensure resources are made available
- Implement Family Centered Coaching matter to ensure access is provided not only to the individual but to the entire family to increase structural/family success
- Programs allow for pathways and onboarding ramps to ensure equitable access
- Policies that support and address equity that ultimately increases engagement amongst priority populations
- Supply resources that typically are not available or affordable amongst different demographic groups

## Revive Lake County

The Revive Lake County program is a commendable initiative that addresses the challenges faced by formerly incarcerated individuals during their re-entry into the workforce. The collaboration of various stakeholders, including government agencies, educational institutions, and local businesses, reflects a holistic approach to the issue of reintegrating returning citizens.

### Key features of the program:

- *Stakeholder Collaboration:* The involvement of a diverse group of stakeholders, including the Lake County Workforce Development Department, the Job Center, educational institutions, legal entities, and local businesses, demonstrates a united front in addressing the challenges faced by formerly incarcerated individuals.
- *Thorough Exploratory Stage:* The extensive exploratory stage, involving workshops, interviews, and the review of promising practices, highlights the commitment to evidence-based program design. The input from subject-matter experts and identification of service gaps contribute to the program's effectiveness.
- *Accessible Locations:* Delivering the program at two locations—the Lake County Adult Corrections Facility and the Job Center—shows a commitment to accessibility, ensuring that individuals at different stages of rehabilitation can participate.
- *Comprehensive Curriculum:* The five-week program, with its hands-on curriculum and distinct modules, addresses crucial workforce development elements. Focusing on workplace values, employability skills, communication, and transferable skills ensures a well-rounded approach to preparing participants for the job market.
- *Employer Input:* The incorporation of the "Bring Your 'A' Game" curriculum, shaped by input from 1,500 national employers, underscores the program's responsiveness to the needs of the current job market.
- *Capstone Presentation:* The inclusion of a capstone presentation, where participants summarize their skills, goals, and plans for success, empowers them to take ownership of their professional development. This reflective exercise enhances accountability and showcases the progress made during the program.
- *Graduate Success Stories:* The program's success is evidenced by the positive outcomes of the initial graduates. One graduate obtaining a commercial driver's license and experiencing a significant pay increase exemplifies the tangible impact of the program on participants' lives.
- *Ongoing Evaluation:* The commitment to tracking and analyzing outcomes for continuous improvement demonstrates a dedication to the program's long-term success and adaptability.
- *Long-Term Perspective:* Acknowledging the complexity of workforce solutions for returning citizens, the program positions itself as the first step in a sophisticated process. This recognition suggests a commitment to long-term impact and a willingness to iterate and improve over time.

Revive Lake County stands as a promising model for addressing the multifaceted challenges of economic integration for formerly incarcerated individuals.

## **SNAP To Success**

The collaboration between Workforce Development (WD), National Able Network, and the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) to implement the SNAP to Success program through the Job Center demonstrates a commitment to supporting SNAP participants in their journey towards employment, career advancement, and self-sufficiency.

Key features of the SNAP to Success program:

1. **Partnership with National Able Network and IDHS:** The involvement of National Able Network as the contractor to IDHS strengthens the program's capacity to provide comprehensive services. This partnership leverages the expertise of different organizations to address the multifaceted needs of SNAP participants.
2. **Program Components:** The program encompasses a range of services, including occupational training in IT leading to industry credentials, job search training (such as job clubs and resume workshops), work placements (on-the-job training, apprenticeships), job retention services, and referrals to additional education (basic education, ESL, vocational education). This holistic approach addresses both skills development and employment readiness.
3. **Virtual Program Transition:** Adapting the program to a virtual format demonstrates flexibility and resilience in response to changing circumstances, such as those brought about by external factors like the COVID-19 pandemic. This adjustment allows continued support for SNAP participants while ensuring their safety and accessibility to program services.
4. **Marketing and Referral:** The Job Center's ongoing efforts to market the program and refer customers to online orientations indicate a proactive approach to reaching and engaging SNAP participants. Effective communication and outreach are crucial in ensuring that eligible individuals are aware of and can access the program.
5. **Continued Service Delivery:** Despite the shift to a virtual format, the commitment to serving SNAP participants remains evident. The program's continuity highlights its adaptability and dedication to supporting individuals in their efforts to secure employment and build sustainable careers.
6. **Co-Enrollment in WIOA Funded Activities:** The intention to co-enroll participants in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funded activities demonstrates a coordinated approach to maximize the resources available for workforce development. This collaboration enhances the potential for a seamless transition for participants to subsequent career development opportunities.

As the program progresses, ongoing monitoring and evaluation will be crucial to assessing its impact and identifying areas for improvement. The SNAP to Success program, with its comprehensive services and adaptability, aligns with the goal of empowering SNAP participants to achieve long-term self-sufficiency through meaningful employment.

## Work Earn & Learn

The Work, Earn, & Learn (WEL) program initiated by Workforce Development in partnership with the Lake County Division of Transportation is a versatile and adaptive approach to skill development, work experience, and career pathway creation. The collaboration with an industry partner and the incorporation of various components make it a comprehensive and effective initiative. Here are key points highlighted in the provided information:

- **Program Structure:**
  - The WEL program involves a collaboration between Workforce Development, Lake County residents, and a partnering employer, where the employer serves as the industry worksite.
  - Participants engage in a full-time paid work experience, receiving training and industry-recognized credentials. This includes competency-based modules delivered by industry professionals, ensuring a well-rounded skill set.
- **Industry-Specific Training and Credentials:**
  - The program emphasizes practical skills development by having participants undergo worksite rotations in various areas, such as road maintenance, the parts room, and the sign shop.
  - Industry-recognized credentials, including Flagger, OSHA, Forklift, CDL, CPR, and First Aid, enhance the marketability of participants in the chosen field.
- **Adaptability and Replicability:**
  - Workforce Development designed the WEL program to be easily replicable with other industries and employers. This scalability allows for the program's implementation across different sectors and the potential for additional cohorts at the same employment site.
- **Pandemic Response:**
  - In response to the pandemic, the program has adapted elements into the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Work Experience/paid internship program model.
  - Virtual meetings with employers and worksites in the 3rd quarter demonstrate a commitment to maintaining program engagement and relevance even in a virtual setting.
- **Continuity and Marketing:**
  - The decision to continue the Work Experience model with embedded WEL elements during the pandemic showcases a commitment to program continuity and the importance of maintaining opportunities for skill development, even during challenging times.
  - Marketing the program during Rapid Response events/presentations highlights a proactive approach to reaching a wider audience, including laid-off workers seeking valuable wage-earning opportunities and industry expertise.
- **Federal Support:**
  - The connection with the US Department of Defense Skills Bridge program for Lake County government provides additional credibility and support for the WEL program.

The Work, Earn, & Learn program not only addresses the skills gap but also provides a practical and adaptable model for workforce development. Its emphasis on industry-specific training, adaptability to virtual settings, and collaboration with employers make it a valuable asset in enhancing the employability of Lake County residents. The program's responsiveness to the challenges posed by the pandemic and its integration into broader workforce development initiatives demonstrate a commitment to sustained impact and relevance.

## Workforce Equity Initiative Grant

The Workforce Equity Initiative Grant received by the College of Lake County, in partnership with Workforce Development and the Job Center, is a commendable effort to address workforce gaps and provide targeted communities in Lake County with access to short-term, high-demand training programs. Here are key highlights of the initiative:

- **Grant Purpose and Focus:**
  - The grant, from the Illinois Community College Board, aims to create, support, or expand short-term workforce training opportunities in high-need communities within Lake County.
  - Special emphasis is placed on North Chicago, Round Lake, Waukegan, and Zion to address identified workforce gaps in these areas.
- **Comprehensive Support for Students:**
  - Grant funds cover not only tuition and fees but also course materials, textbooks, industry exam fees, and a scholarship to assist with living expenses such as childcare, housing, and transportation.
  - Eligible students have the opportunity to earn certificates in nine high-demand programs, spanning administrative management technology to healthcare-focused roles.
- **Accelerating Entry into High-Demand Occupations:**
  - The overarching goal is to accelerate the time for the targeted population to enter and succeed in postsecondary education and training programs leading to employment in high-skilled, high-wage, and in-demand occupations.
- **Collaborative Effort:**
  - Workforce Development and the Job Center have partnered with the College of Lake County on this initiative to facilitate employment connections with local businesses after completion of the credential.
  - The initiative aligns certificates with regional workforce gaps, aiming for full-time job placement with competitive wages.
- **Career Services and Job Placement Support:**
  - Workforce Development plays a crucial role in providing career services to students, overseeing job readiness tasks, and connecting students to employers with opportunities aligned with their programs.
  - The focus on job placement and retention, as well as the introduction of work-based learning opportunities, enhances the effectiveness of the initiative.
- **Grant Extension:**
  - Due to the impact of the pandemic on student enrollment, the grant has been extended through March 2022. This extension allows for additional time to encourage and support students in pursuing the training programs.

The Workforce Equity Initiative Grant is a comprehensive and adaptable approach to addressing workforce needs, providing holistic support to students, and responding to challenges posed by the pandemic. By focusing on short-term, high-impact training, the initiative contributes to building a skilled and competitive workforce in Lake County.

## Legal Services

The Job Center maintains a strong relationship with several organizations that provide legal services to either justice-impacted individuals or immigrants. These organizations include Prairie State Legal Services, Coalition Legal, the North Suburban Legal Aid Clinic and Haces. Services at these organizations include sealing or expungement, citizenship & naturalization, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, Legalization & Family Unification.

## Williams Consent Decree Drop-In Centers

The Williams Consent Decree facilitates the transition of individuals with mental illness from state-funded facilities into communities, promoting independence with professional support. Managed by the Lake County Health Department, the program emphasizes permanent supportive housing and support for qualifying individuals. Consumers enrolled in the program receive transition coordination to ensure a smooth move into the community.

Support services are provided to consumers for continuing education or finding employment. Peer coaching is offered by individuals who have experienced similar challenges, providing valuable support during the transition. Additionally, two consumer-run drop-in centers in Waukegan and Zion serve as nonclinical environments for socialization, peer support, and computer access. These centers, supervised with a computer room and a seating area, create a comfortable atmosphere.

Workforce Development delivers on-site career services at the drop-in centers, focusing on aspects like resume writing, interviewing skills, workplace skills, and information on local employers. The goal is to assist individuals in developing components of an employment and education plan when appropriate, ensuring a personalized approach.

The program aims to empower individuals with mental illness for independent living while receiving essential support. The inclusion of career services enhances the program's effectiveness by addressing vocational needs. Peer support, education, employment assistance, and community engagement contribute to the overall success of individuals transitioning into permanent supportive housing. The program, with its comprehensive services, promotes the well-being and integration of individuals with mental illness into the community.

#### DOL YouthBuild Programs

YouthBuild programs, authorized by the Department of Labor under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act, are designed to assist low-income and underserved young individuals. These programs, such as YouthBuild Lake County, offer a comprehensive array of services, including secondary education completion, career pathways training, and transitional support for success in college, job placement, and ongoing follow-up.

YouthBuild Lake County specifically focuses on underserved young adults in North Chicago. The program provides various services, ranging from education and GED attainment to high school diploma completion, counseling, leadership development, and career pathway opportunities in Construction, Healthcare, Transportation Distribution and Logistics, and Utilities. As a proud partner of the Job Center of Lake County, YouthBuild Lake County contributes to the youth-serving network, ensuring a holistic approach to support.

The Youth Conservation Corp (YCC) is dedicated to serving underserved young adults facing challenges such as dropping out of high school, low income, homelessness, and disability. The core YouthBuild program encompasses education, GED completion, construction training, and career/life skills training. Additionally, YCC offers a summer program providing conservation work experience and environmental education to high school and college students interested in preserving Lake County's natural areas through a public/private partnership with the Lake County Forest Preserve.

The local Youth Build Programs, integral members of the Youth Task Force, continue to collaborate closely with the Job Center to ensure their customers receive comprehensive wrap-around services for success in their employment journey. They actively engage with the Job Center's Unify referral system to connect their customers to the Job Center for services and additional resources. This partnership enhances the impact of YouthBuild programs by facilitating a seamless integration of services and resources for the benefit of the young individuals they serve.

The Workforce Board collaborates with various educational institutions in Lake County, including the College of Lake County, high schools, and higher education institutions. The partnership is focused on supporting, marketing, funding, and assisting in scaling up several models and methods aimed at enhancing educational and career opportunities. These initiatives include:

- Integrated Education and Training Models:
  - Collaborative efforts to develop and implement integrated education and training models that seamlessly combine education and skill development, ensuring a comprehensive approach to learning.
- Dual Credit Programs:
  - Support for dual credit programs that enable high school students to earn college credits simultaneously, promoting a smoother transition from secondary to post-secondary education.
- Prior Learning Assessments:
  - Assistance in implementing and promoting prior learning assessments, recognizing and accrediting the knowledge and skills individuals have acquired through previous experiences.
- Targeted Marketing Strategies:
  - Development and execution of targeted marketing strategies to raise awareness and promote participation in various educational and training programs offered by partner institutions.
- Career Pathways:
  - Collaboration to establish and enhance career pathways that guide individuals through a structured sequence of education, training, and employment opportunities aligned with their chosen career fields.
- Increased Work Based Learning Opportunities:
  - Expansion of work-based learning opportunities to provide students with hands-on experiences, fostering a deeper understanding of their chosen fields and enhancing employability.
- Additional Activities Leading to Post-Secondary Credentials:
  - Support for various activities that contribute to the attainment of post-secondary credentials, including certifications, degrees, and other recognized qualifications.

The collaboration between the Workforce Board and educational partners underscores a commitment to creating a seamless and supportive educational ecosystem. By aligning efforts in these key areas, the partnership aims to provide students with diverse and effective pathways to post-secondary success and meaningful careers.

#### College of Lake County Integrated Education and Training models

The Integrated Career & Academic Preparation System (ICAPS) represents the adoption of the Integrated Education and Training (IET) model in Illinois, offering a cohesive pathway in Career and Technical Education (CTE) for Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) students who require foundational skills. ICAPS facilitates access to college credit and program certificates, equipping students with career pathways and employment opportunities while facilitating their progression into further postsecondary programs.

At the College of Lake County, the Step-Up program is designed for adult education students, guiding them toward college and career readiness. It ensures access to college, fosters success within college environments, and facilitates employment in chosen fields. Initially, Adult Basic Education (ABE) students engage in the Bridge to Careers program, focusing on language, math, and computer skills tailored to specific career fields such as Healthcare, Early Childhood Education, Administrative Management and Technology, Computer Information Technology, Hospitality and Culinary Management, Manufacturing, and Criminal Justice.

Following the Bridge program, students can transition to the Step Up to ICAPS program, offering certificate programs in various career and technical education fields. These include Certified Nurse Assisting, Healthcare Office Assistance, Phlebotomy Technician, Automotive Technology, Automotive Collision Repair, HVAC/Refrigeration Engineering

Technology, Administrative Management and Technology, Computer Information Technology, Welding, Industrial Technology, and Precision Machining Technology.

Collaborating closely with the Workforce Board and Workforce Development, the College of Lake County analyzes labor market data, employer hiring trends, and local wage information to develop ICAPS programs aligned with current workforce demands. Identified employers are engaged in the process, with the College presenting proposed ICAPS programs to the Workforce Board for endorsement, highlighting their role in fostering career pathways in key industry sectors and meeting in-demand occupation needs.

An example of effective collaboration between Workforce Development, the College of Lake County, and Adult Basic Education involves addressing a local employer's need for personal care aid workers. Through joint efforts, a short-term training program for Personal Care Aides was developed and integrated into the ICAPS framework. WIOA eligible students were recruited, received grant funding for tuition, and upon successful completion, were offered paid work experience with the employer. This collaborative approach demonstrates a promising practice for addressing high-demand occupation needs and can be replicated for other industries.

#### College of Lake County Integrated Education and Training models

The College of Lake County continues to offer Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs and remains actively engaged in integration meetings. Integrated Education and Training is a valuable approach that combines education and skill development to provide learners with a holistic and practical learning experience. Here are some points to highlight:

- Ongoing Offerings:
  - The College of Lake County's commitment to offering Integrated Education and Training indicates a dedication to providing learners with comprehensive education that includes both academic and practical skills.
- Integration Meetings:
  - The College's participation in integration meetings suggests a collaborative and communicative approach. These meetings likely involve coordination with various stakeholders to enhance the effectiveness of integrated education programs.
- Holistic Learning Experience:
  - Integrated Education and Training emphasizes a holistic learning experience, addressing both academic and practical skills needed for success in specific industries or fields.
- Alignment with Workforce Needs:
  - IET programs are often designed to align with workforce needs, ensuring that learners acquire the skills and knowledge required in the current job market.
- Learner-Centric Approach:
  - The continued offering of IET programs indicates a learner-centric approach, acknowledging the diverse needs and aspirations of individuals seeking education and training.
- Responsive to Industry Changes:
  - Participation in integration meetings may also suggest an adaptability to changes in industries and the job market. Regular discussions with stakeholders help in tailoring programs to meet evolving workforce demands.

Integrated Education and Training programs play a crucial role in preparing individuals for success in both education and the workforce. The ongoing commitment of the College of Lake County to provide such programs is commendable and contributes to the overall development and success of learners in the Lake County community.



### College of Lake County Dual Credit Programs

The Dual Credit program at the College of Lake County allows high school students to enroll in college-level courses, earning college credit without incurring any costs. These courses are available at the students' high school or at the Lake County High Schools Technology Campus in Grayslake. Students are officially registered at CLC, offering a seamless transition into higher education. The program enables students to shorten the time required for a college degree, developing a college transcript during their high school years, potentially saving time and money. Dual credit courses are equivalent to those offered at CLC, maintaining the same standards as on-campus classes.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) certificate and degree programs, including graphic arts technology, nurse assisting, welding, and automotive, are integrated into the program. Collaborative efforts among educational partners, including CLC, CTE, and workforce development professionals, aim to connect students to further education, employers, internships, and ongoing professional development.

Annual Career Expos, conducted in partnership with the Lake County High Schools Tech Campus and Workforce Development, provide students with insights into potential careers. These expos, adapted to virtual platforms during the pandemic, continued successfully with seamless transitions to virtual registration, information dissemination, and connections between registrants, employers, and Workforce Development services.

### Higher Education Prior Learning Assessments

The term Prior Learning Assessment refers to the evaluation and assessment of an individual's learning acquired outside the traditional academic environment. This assessment aims to recognize and credit life learning for college credit, certification, or advanced standing in further education or training. College-level learning obtained through work, training, and life experiences can be acknowledged and awarded as Prior Learning credit.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a comprehensive process that measures formal, non-formal, and informal learning. It involves mediation for recognition across various contexts and certification against the requirements for credit, access, inclusion, or advancement in formal education, training systems, or the workplace.

The Workforce Board expresses interest in initiating a conversation with the College of Lake County and the Lake County University Center to explore opportunities for building processes around prior learning assessment. The objective is to raise awareness of the assessment process within the job center and among partners and agencies serving veterans, dislocated workers, and career changers.

Acknowledging the nationally recognized work done by the Council for Adult Experiential Learning (CAEL) regarding prior learning assessments, the Workforce Board aims to collaborate with CAEL to establish and advance goals related to prior learning within the workforce development system. This partnership seeks to leverage CAEL's expertise to enhance the understanding and implementation of prior learning assessments, contributing to the overall effectiveness of the workforce development system.

### Workforce Development System Targeted Marketing Strategies

The collaborative efforts of the Lake County Workforce Development Board, the Job Center, and the broader workforce development system have been instrumental in identifying and implementing effective strategies for targeted marketing. These strategies are designed to raise awareness of high-wage/high-demand occupations in key industry sectors, benefiting both individual job seekers and employers in the region.

One of the key initiatives is resume sourcing for employers, which goes beyond traditional work experience to consider transferable skills, interest inventories, and candidates' willingness to explore new career paths. This approach helps employers find candidates who may not have a direct match in terms of experience but possess the skills and potential for success in high-demand occupations.

Another important initiative is the establishment of work-experience programs for WIOA-eligible participants. These

programs are designed to bridge skill gaps and provide individuals with the opportunity to acquire new skills in various occupations and industries. By participating in these programs, individuals can enhance their employability and access higher-paying jobs in growing sectors.

Job search workshops conducted by the Job Center and Workforce Development staff cater to job seekers of all skill levels. These workshops offer valuable insights on streamlining job searches, enhancing resumes, building personal brands, effective networking, and successful interview strategies. These workshops are tailored to meet the diverse needs of job seekers and empower them to take proactive steps in their job search.

The partnership with local high schools is another crucial initiative aimed at engaging students and providing them with information about potential job opportunities, careers, and industry sectors within Lake County. By fostering early interest in high-demand occupations, this initiative helps prepare students for future career pathways and ensures a pipeline of skilled workers for local employers.

Employers are also supported through initiatives that assist them in identifying innovative ways to train and advance current employees into high-demand/high-wage occupations. This includes accessing incumbent worker training funds, developing training plans, and utilizing apprenticeship models. By investing in their workforce, employers can address skills gaps and retain valuable employees, ultimately contributing to the economic growth of the region.

Additionally, the partnership with the Senior Community Employment Program (SCEP) offers work-based training for low-income individuals aged 55 or older. This program not only provides valuable training opportunities but also expands hiring potential across various occupations and industries, benefiting both mature workers and employers.

To promote these initiatives and services, Workforce Development has invested in outreach and recruitment activities. Tools such as Canva Pro and HootSuite Pro are used to enhance outreach efforts and track the effectiveness of marketing campaigns. These tools help ensure that the workforce development system reaches its target audience and effectively communicates the value of its programs and services.

In 2023, Workforce Development issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) to secure the services of a qualified Marketing and Communications professional group. The purpose of this initiative is to provide ongoing support in executing the Lake County Workforce Development Board's strategic outreach and communication plan. The comprehensive services outlined in the RFP include facilitating the current outreach plan, improving communication processes, enhancing positive stories and successful partnership narratives, streamlining brand consistency, and collaborating with and supporting staff in various communication activities.

Overall, these strategic marketing initiatives aim to strengthen visibility, communicate success, and ensure consistent branding for all stakeholders involved in the workforce development system. By promoting high-wage/high-demand occupations and providing targeted support to job seekers and employers, the Lake County Workforce Development Board and its partners are working to create a more resilient, competitive, and inclusive economy for the region.

### Career Pathways

The Workforce Board has strategically prioritized the development of career pathways, emphasizing flexibility and customization for individuals and employers, in collaboration with key partners. Departing from traditional linear education and training programs, the Board aims to create modular career pathways that cater to the diverse needs of job seekers, students, and youth.

Recognizing the existing diversity among providers and educational partners offering career pathway components, the Workforce Board plans to collaborate with them to build comprehensive models. These models will span K-12 education, post-secondary education, licensing, credentialing, on-the-job training, and transitions to subsequent employment. The objectives of these models include:

- Alignment with high-demand occupations in industry sectors.
- Addressing short and long-term hiring needs of employers.

- Catering to individual characteristics such as age, education, training, employment status, and barriers.
- Tackling awareness, education, and training needs with a focus on skills development.
- Identifying on- and off-ramps throughout the pathway.
- Establishing mechanisms to identify and overcome barriers for each individual.
- Requiring collaborative efforts among partners to facilitate smooth transitions between pathway modules.

Workforce Development views career pathways as an opportunity to address structural issues by collaborating directly with employers to remove barriers. Recognizing that improving educational outcomes alone is insufficient to eliminate racial attainment gaps, the Board advocates for intentional career pathways centered on equity to advance racial equity initiatives.

#### Demonstrated Co-Enrollment Successes

The Workforce Board actively champions the practice of co-enrollment among its system partners, recognizing the impactful results of collaborative efforts in helping customers acquire essential career skills and smoothly transition into employment. These collaborative initiatives extend to exploring additional workforce grant opportunities, with the goal of expanding training offerings for various segments of the population in Lake County. Noteworthy partnerships include:

##### Activities leading to a recognized post-secondary credential

The Workforce Board strongly advocates for the pursuit of post-secondary credentials among all participants in the workforce system. Recognizing the pivotal role of training providers, educators, and apprenticeship programs as essential partners, the Workforce Board maintains a robust collaborative relationship with the College of Lake County (CLC). This collaboration aims to broaden the offerings of short-term career programs, aligning them with the evolving needs of the local workforce.

The Workforce Board extends its collaboration with training providers across the region to pinpoint high-performing programs that cater to the talent requirements of local employers and regional industries. In 2019, the Workforce Board joined forces with the Chicago Cook Partnership on the ConstructionWorks project, further strengthening ties with local and regional labor and union apprenticeship programs. Simultaneously, the College of Lake County geared up to launch its apprenticeship programs in 2020.

Working in concert with CLC and various public and private educational institutions within Lake County, the Workforce Board actively encourages individuals to pursue certificates or credentials. The discussion includes the concept of stackable credentials, emphasizing the importance of acquiring multiple credentials that align with high-demand industries identified within Lake County. This strategic approach aims to equip participants with the skills and qualifications necessary to meet the demands of the local job market.

##### Individual Training Accounts (ITAs)

The Workforce Board annually formulates the budget for the WIOA grant, allocating a substantial portion towards Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). Workforce Development utilizes these ITAs for participants eligible under WIOA, identified as requiring occupational training to acquire specific skills and industry credentials essential for local employers and regional industries. These ITAs are tailored for short-term occupational training programs in high-demand occupations, certified on the Illinois Eligible Training Provider List. With over 60 high-demand occupations available within key industry sectors in Lake County, eligible participants can select training options, all culminating in a certificate of completion and/or an industry credential.

In the last two grant cycles (July 2022-June 2023), Workforce Development sanctioned 423 ITAs for WIOA eligible adults, dislocated workers, and youth participants. The annual expenditure of grant funds for occupational training surpassed \$1.8 million. The Workforce Board maintains a Demand Occupation Training List (DOTL) for ITAs, aligning with prioritized industry sectors. Participants can exclusively access training from the Workforce Board's certified training provider program list. Nevertheless, on a case-by-case basis, a customer may appeal to the Workforce Development Director for approval to enroll in an occupation not on the list.

In response to the pandemic, Workforce Development has implemented various business practices and policy changes:

- **DocuSign Implementation:**
  - Investment in DocuSign for administering ITAs to clients.
- **ITA Exemptions:**
  - Updating the WDB Policy to create ITA exemptions on amounts and semester-based training programs.
- **Time Period Limit Removal:**
  - Updating the WDB Policy to remove the time period limit for receiving training services through WIOA.
- **Support Services Expansion:**
  - Eligibility Criteria Expansion: Updating the WDB Policy to broaden eligibility criteria, fostering inclusivity and reducing bureaucratic constraints.

#### Eligible Training Provider List & Programs

Workforce Development actively collaborates with training providers, educators, and community-based training programs on multiple fronts. This engagement involves a comprehensive understanding of their training programs, recruitment of potential students, sharing labor market information, and fostering connections with employers. Regular meetings are conducted with training providers certified through the Illinois Eligible Training Provider list to enhance the knowledge of Job Center partners and career specialists about available programs and offerings.

To facilitate effective communication, Workforce Development arranges visits and hosts meetings for training providers to showcase their programs, employer connections, and successful outcomes. Collaboration extends to rapid response events and industry sector initiatives, encouraging participation in resource and job fairs. Providing opportunities for training providers to reserve space in the Job Center for information sharing with customers remains a priority.

Throughout the pandemic, the Workforce Board extensively engaged with training providers, educators, and community-based training programs. The focus was on understanding their responses to the pandemic, changes to training and education programs, recruitment strategies for potential students, utilization of labor market information, and connections with employers. An initial survey was distributed to gather information on their status, plans, and procedures. Many providers transitioned their courses to online platforms, limiting onsite training.

In response to the challenges posed by the pandemic, Workforce Development implemented several solutions:

- **Virtual Engagements:**
  - Conducting virtual training provider engagements to discuss program details and requirements.
- **Virtual Snapshots:**
  - Conducting virtual training provider snapshots to highlight program offerings and their alignment with relevant industries.
- **In-Demand Occupation List Updates:**
  - Updating the In-Demand Occupation list to align with the current industry environment.
- **Virtual Rapid Response Events:**

- Facilitating active participation of training providers in virtual rapid response events.
- **Resource Sharing:**
  - Posting training provider resources on the Virtual Information Session landing page.

These measures ensure ongoing communication, collaboration, and information sharing between Workforce Development and training providers, adapting to the evolving circumstances brought about by the pandemic.

## Apprenticeships

The College of Lake County has expanded its apprenticeship in 2023 and offers structured on-the-job learning in Business Administration, Education, Horticulture, Manufacturing, and Welding. The apprenticeship program was created as a direct response to requests from area employers. The Youth Task Force worked collaboratively in 2023 to identify and foster collaboration of one system, with one voice, that provides youth access to services, education, training, and good jobs. It was determined during this task force that apprenticeships are a viable career pathway option for all youth and disconnected youth specifically. It is a proven model that can benefit the youth system in Lake County. Apprenticeships provide structured on-the-job learning, wages, and the support of a mentor. It is this team and initiative that led Lake County Workforce Development to apply for the Apprenticeship Expansion Grant. Lake County Workforce Development was awarded the grant and hired an Apprenticeship Navigator whose role is embedded in the Integrated Business Service Team to increase and expand registered apprenticeship programs across Lake County and in collaboration with regional systems and industries.

LCWD will take a high-level strategic approach to building out the apprenticeship ecosystem in the local area and engage in information sharing and data gathering throughout the region. The Apprenticeship expansion grant has led to several outcomes in 2023 and 2024 including 10 new business engagements, 1 registered apprenticeship program expanded, the development and registration of one new program in Industrial Manufacturing Technology. Three registered apprenticeship programs have shown interest and opted-in the Eligible Training Providers List (ETPL).

LCWD collaborated with stakeholders and young adults together to co-create a youth-serving system and create a community of practice among the stakeholders to be a one-voice, no-wrong-door approach to serve the most marginalized young adult populations. The Integrated Business Service Team recruited 19 candidates to enroll in a registered apprenticeship program for Youth Development Practitioners Academy.

The Integrated Business Service team will work with partners in the workforce ecosystem using talent pipeline management strategies that are industry and employer-led to build a talent pipeline to meet industry needs.

The IBST team will focus on the following elements:

- Industry sector strategies that identify workforce needs, conducting industry focus groups to learn about business challenges and collectively create workforce solutions.
- Awareness and communication of the value proposition of work-based learning and apprenticeships
- Provide technical assistance in the creation and expansion of apprenticeships in Lake County

As baby boomers continue to retire, employers benefit by developing highly skilled workers and sharing the knowledge base with the next generation. Each apprentice in the program is assigned a mentor, who learns on the job from a senior employee. CLC provides the technology and theory while the employer provides the hands-on, practical application.

DOL Registered Apprenticeship training programs are eligible training programs under WIOA to be funded through an Individual Training Account (ITA). The Workforce Board will work with CLC to manage the process of having the DOL Registered Apprenticeship programs approved as part of the Illinois Eligible Training Provider List when appropriate. Workforce Development will make available to potential participants/students' information on the apprenticeship programs and where appropriate and eligible enroll in additional WIOA grant funded services.

#### **D. Coordination Strategies with State, Regional and Local Partners**

The Workforce Development Board is the oversight and policy body for the WIOA Title I grant and funded programs in Lake County – Local Workforce Area 1. The Workforce Board is committed to coordinate strategies and promising practices across the local and regional area as well as engage in state-wide initiatives. The Workforce Board has member representation on the Illinois Workforce Investment Board as well as on the National Association of Workforce Boards. In addition, The Director of Workforce Development as well as the Workforce Board Coordinator are active members of both the regional Workforce Partners of Metropolitan Chicago and the Illinois Workforce Partnership. The One Stop Operations Lead participates in Regional OSO meetings sponsored by the Workforce Partners of Metropolitan Chicago the Workforce Board takes an active role in coordinating and aligning strategies with partners of the Job Center and workforce development system and has noted that services are enhanced, and duplication of activities are being addressed.

The following sections provide summaries on core partner services that have a focus on integration and coordination:

- WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Employment and Training Activities
- WIOA Title II, Adult Basic Education and Literacy Activities
- WIOA Title III, Wagner-Peyser Act
- WIOA Title IV, Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- Secondary and Post-Secondary Education Partners and Programs
- Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act
- Workforce Board Supportive Service Policy and Coordination

##### **Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth employment and training activities under WIOA Title 1**

The work of the Workforce Board is driven by a strategic plan and grants are administered and programs are implemented by the Lake County Workforce Development Department. Workforce Development is also the on-site One-Stop Operator for the One-Stop Operator partner consortium.

Workforce Development Department is the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) grant administrator and service provider and serves WIOA eligible adults, dislocated workers, and youth. Workforce Development provides career planning and coaching, authorizes training vouchers through Individual Training Accounts (ITA), develops career pathways, connects job seekers to employers, and works with employers to up-skill employees. Workforce Development has demonstrated success and innovation in the delivery, management, and oversight of workforce development services and programs to diverse populations, including success in business and industry engagement as led by the Workforce Ecosystem, the partnership between Workforce Development, College of Lake County, Illinois Department of Employment Security, and Lake County Partners.

Workforce Development has developed a comprehensive, performance driven customer flow to best serve adults, dislocated workers, and youth. Key components and program elements as defined in WIOA and implemented by Workforce Development in the Job Center and throughout the workforce system include:

- Individual customer outreach, intake, and orientation activities
- Kiosk access points at partner sites for intake and resource accessibility
- WIOA Title IB eligibility determination
- Individual assessment of skills, barriers, and supportive services needs
- Development of individual employment plans
- Program coordination and referrals through an integrated resource team and partner networks
- Access to labor market information
- Access to training provider performance and cost information
- Authorization of Individual Training Accounts (ITAs)
- Connection to employers and industry
- Connection to hiring opportunities
- Development of work-based learning opportunities

- Job search assistance
- Follow-up and retention activities
- Incumbent worker training.

## Workforce Partners of Metro Chicago

The Workforce Partners of Metropolitan Chicago (WPMC) is a collaborative consortium consisting of Directors from the Workforce Development Boards and Title I providers within the Northeast Economic Development Region. Covering ten counties, including Lake, McHenry, DeKalb, Kendall, Kane, DuPage, Cook, Will, Kankakee, and Grundy, this consortium has been in existence for over 15 years. The WPMC plays a crucial role in fostering formal partnerships and joint planning efforts related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA).

Recognizing the impact of cross-geographic issues on the economic well-being of individual areas and counties, WPMC understands that traditional geographic boundaries may not align with the needs of businesses and residents. In response, the consortium focuses on regional initiatives to support businesses, enhance economic vitality, and collaborate with WIOA core partners, economic development entities, community colleges, training providers, and other stakeholders.

WPMC's collaborative efforts are driven by the understanding that the economic success of each local area is interconnected with the overall prosperity of the entire region. With a goal of coordinating across the Chicago region, sharing best practices, and addressing common challenges, WPMC provides funding for employment, training, and educational services. The consortium actively builds partnerships with a diverse array of stakeholders from both the private and public sectors, aiming to address sector-specific challenges collaboratively and implement solutions in partnership with industry experts.

### **Integrated Regional Business Services Team**

The WPMC has established a Regional Integrated Business Services Team (RBST) for NEEDR. This team is a collective of individual business service teams from each of the seven local workforce areas, inclusive of all partner business-facing staff. The RBST's objective is to streamline business services across the region. This includes catering to the needs of regional industries, integrating core partner agencies (and potential future partners), sharing best practices, addressing challenges, and finding solutions, and participating in professional development activities.

The team's notable achievements encompass hosting regional hiring events, conducting business sessions, sharing effective practices, holding joint business meetings, and coordinating responses to major employers with significant needs. As businesses and employers continue to relocate and expand within the region, the BST has been proactive in organizing customized hiring and talent connection events.

### **Adult Education and Literacy Activities under WIOA Title II**

Collaborating under APC 532, the College of Lake County, along with its partners Mundelein High School and Highland Park High School, is dedicated to offering adult education and literacy activities for Lake County residents who lack fundamental skills in reading, writing, math, or require English as a Second Language instruction. Governed by Title II of the 2014 Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA), Adult Education providers are mandated to integrate and coordinate with Workforce Employment Services (Title III), Workforce Development (Title I), and Vocational Rehabilitation (Title IV) activities. The primary facilitator of this integration is the Job Center of Lake County, designated as the One-Stop Center per WIOA, staffed both on-site and off-site by the four core partners.

On-site and off-site personnel from the College of Lake County and its APC partners collaborate with services and Job Center partners. The College of Lake County ABE staff co-locates at the Job Center, providing referrals to adult education and career/technical education providers, job search assistance and workshops, Spanish translation, and connections to other Job Center partners. The Adult Education program, situated in the same building as the Job Center, reciprocates referrals to the Job Center for its students. In Grayslake, the Adult Education program collaborates with the Job Center and CLC's Career and Job Placement Center. Mundelein HS and Highland Park HS establish direct links to the Job Center and collaborate with Workforce Development to bring services and workshops into their classrooms.



Adult education services are delivered at various locations, including the Job Center of Lake County, College of Lake County's campuses at Grayslake, Waukegan, Vernon Hills, and community sites; Highland Park High School and its community sites; and Mundelein High School and its community sites.

The Workforce Board's membership includes a representative from the Lake County Area Planning Council (APC), representing three organizations: College of Lake County, Mundelein High School, and Highland Park High School. The APC's representative on the Workforce Board serves as the Dean of the College of Lake County's adult education program. All three organizations within the APC are members of the Workforce Board's Operations Committee and partners in the Job Center Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Additionally, the Director of Lake County Workforce Development holds a position on the APC Board. The APC Title II Plan aligns with the WIOA Local Workforce Plan and has been endorsed by the Workforce Board Operations Committee. The Director of Lake County Workforce Development, as a member of the APC Board, contributes to the writing of the APC Plan to ensure alignment with the most up-to-date information in both plans.

#### TABE Test

Workforce Development has entered into an agreement with the College of Lake County Adult Education and ESL Division for TABE testing services. Testing is available Monday through Friday at the Job Center administered by Workforce Development staff. TABE testing is also provided at the College of Lake County for group testing.

Workforce Development makes a referral for testing through the TABE testing portal – both parties have access to the customer record and test scores. This partnership has proven to be both an effective use of agency and customer time and efficient in assessing customers within a testing environment. Customers needing services from CLC ABE based on test scores have that immediate referral and connection.

TABE 11/12 is given to all applicants unless they have an associate degree or higher which the applicant would have to provide verification. Applicants going through either a Work Experience or On the Job Training exclusively do not have to take the TABE 11/12.

#### Wagner-Peyser Act under WIOA Title III

Title III Wagner Peyser Act services are provided by the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES). Two (2) staff members from IDES are located permanently at the Job Center and provide Wagner-Peyser assistance to individuals. Duplication of services has been greatly reduced by the location of these IDES staff members at the Job Center. Wagner Peyser staff members also schedule e-blasts to those receiving unemployment insurance regarding pertinent Job Center events and resources.

To ensure that local coordination of Wagner-Peyser programs and services is further enhanced and that duplication of services are minimized to the greatest extent possible, an IDES manager serves on the Workforce Board and chairs the Workforce Board's Operation Committee. In addition, IDES is a part of the partner consortium serving as the One-Stop Operator for the Job Center.

#### Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment program

The Illinois Dept. of Employment Security (IDES) first transitioned to the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) initiative in 2016. With that transition, those UI claimants that were most likely to exhaust benefits were targeted and required to receive assistance with their reemployment efforts.

RESEA workshops are held monthly at the Job Center by the IDES Wagner-Peyser team co-located at the Job Center. The workshop covers information and tips the job seekers need to consider when looking for work including resumes, job search tips, Illinois Job Link, and overview of key partner programs. Workforce Development participants in the monthly workshop provide an overview of WIOA funded services. Wagner-Peyser staff continue to work with the job seekers by completing an individual employment plan documenting next steps including training, schooling, and job search assistance. Wagner-Peyser completes a 30-day status update with the job seekers. During the COVID-19 pandemic Employment Services and RESEA services transitioned from in-person to virtual. RESEA services have continued to be accessible via phone, and additional virtual services are being explored by IDES.

#### Vocational rehabilitation service activities under WIOA Title IV

Coordination with the Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) is promoted and enhanced through the membership of the DRS Local Office Administrator on the Workforce Board. This individual has participated in meetings with core and required workforce system partners to enhance coordination of programs and encourage referrals throughout the workforce system. DRS has co-located an employee at the Job Center one day a week – as a result the Job Center partners have focused that day of the week on service collaboration, strategies and programming geared towards individuals with a disability. The co-location of DRS in the Job Center has resulted in an increase in connecting individuals with a disability to employers – including locally established business, retailers in addition to Goodwill Industries who is responsible for the hiring of food- service workers at the Great Lakes Naval Station.

The Workforce Board was a grant recipient for a Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) grant. This grant enabled the hiring of a project lead, and individual with an LSW (Licensed Social Worker) and CADC (Certified Alcohol and other Drugs Counselor) and over 20 years' experience working with families and persons who are dually diagnosed with Mental Health and Substance Abuse. This individual continues to focus on the coordination and alignment of programs and services across the workforce system for individuals with disabilities as well as continues to administer the Ticket to Work Program through the Job Center.

This pandemic has forced more of an operational impact onto the DRS services and plans. Specifically, DRS has pivoted away from a very structured brick & mortar, face-to-face method of interaction between staff, customers, vendors and external partners to a very capable platform which often combines application of computer use, cellular telephone implementation and applicable telephonic/computer communicative platforms such as e-mail, ZOOM, MS Teams, and Web-Ex. Face-to-face interaction during the pandemic has been rare and when it does occur, it is usually under the guidance of very, very strict CDC Guidance which would help to prevent the infection and /or spread of COVID-19 (or any related variant).

#### Veterans

In March 2020, the Illinois Department of Employment Security's (IDES) Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) program began enlisting the use of digital tools that facilitated remote work and streamlined day-to-day administrative operations. The use of this technology, as part of a "new normal" activity, allowed customer service provisions to take place that, due to COVID-19's impact, had been restrictive at best. As this dramatic shift to telework and virtual event planning and implementation began to emerge as common practice, lessons were learned and improvements to the delivery model took place. These changes have left its mark on day-to-day operations in the post-COVID-19 landscape.

#### Secondary and Post-Secondary Education Programs

The Workforce Board's membership reflects a diverse representation of both secondary and post-secondary education systems. Key members include the county-wide elected Regional Superintendent of Schools, the President of the College of Lake County, the Dean of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Program at the College of Lake County, and the owner of a proprietary school serving both youth and adult clients. This collaborative effort ensures that a broad spectrum of voices actively contributes to the integration and enhancement of workforce and education initiatives in Lake County.

## **College of Lake County**

The College of Lake County, positioned as the primary community college for Lake County, takes a leading role in delivering comprehensive education and workforce solutions. Spread across campuses in Grayslake, Waukegan, and Vernon Hills, along with a robust online program suite, the College caters to a wide range of individual and employer needs. With multiple programs certified through the Eligible Training Provider List, the College actively collaborates with the Workforce Board to continuously add programs that align with the identified talent needs of local employers and industries.

The Job Center of Lake County, situated on the College of Lake County, Lakeshore Campus in Waukegan, operates within the college, fostering a close connection between workforce services and educational resources. Moreover, the College provides office space for Workforce Development staff at the Grayslake Campus, contributing to increased awareness of services for individuals and students.

In alignment with the Workforce Board's strategic plan, the College of Lake County has recently adopted its own strategic plan, focusing on six pillars:

- Access & Success for Students
- Equity & Inclusion
- Teaching & Learning Excellence
- Community & Workforce Partnerships
- Collaborative Culture
- Strategic Use of Resources

This shared vision highlights the College of Lake County's commitment to prioritizing student success, promoting equity and inclusion, ensuring teaching and learning excellence, fostering partnerships with the community and workforce, cultivating a collaborative culture, and strategically utilizing resources. This alignment enhances the synergy between the college and the workforce initiatives guided by the Workforce Board.

## **Lake County High Schools Tech Campus**

The Lake County High School Tech Campus operates as an extension site for juniors and seniors from multiple area schools, providing specialized career training programs. Acknowledged as a premier Career Technical Education training facility in the Midwest, the Tech Campus boasts a highly qualified staff dedicated to excellence in career technical education. With 22 member high schools spanning Lake and McHenry Counties, representing over 1600 high school students, it holds the distinction of being the largest career technical secondary educational system in the State of Illinois.

Workforce Development actively engages with the Tech Campus, participating in the strategic planning process, infusing workforce and industry information into classrooms, featuring industry guest speakers, and mobilizing resources to establish student internships. Collaborating on recruitment days for graduating seniors, Workforce Development offers valuable insights into employment opportunities and aids in transition planning into post-secondary education, work experiences, or direct connections with hiring employers.

Integral to the Lake County Workforce Ecosystem, the Tech Campus plays a crucial role in organizing annual Career Expos for students, serving as a nexus for employers and high school students. These expos facilitate valuable insights into potential career paths. Specifically designed for high school juniors and seniors, the Tech Campus creates an environment that fosters career exploration and readiness.

Lake County Tech Campus provides Career and Technical Education training in 19 unique programs to junior and high school students in Lake and McHenry counties. These programs equip students with academic and employability skills, preparing them for the future workforce. Offering work-based learning opportunities as an alternative to traditional career pathways, the Tech Campus provides a debt-free solution for students to explore various fields, including Automotive, Biomedical Science, Certified Nursing Assistance, Computer Support Services,

Construction Skills & Management, Cosmetology, Criminal Justice, Culinary Arts, Cybersecurity, Early Education & Teaching, Emergency Medical Services, Firefighting, Gaming Programming & Virtualization, Industrial Technology, Law Enforcement & CSI, Medical Assisting, Multimedia Design, Welding/Fabrication, Business Administration, Horticulture, Landscape Design, Arboriculture, Production, Construction & Maintenance, Manufacturing – CNC Programming, Automation, Robotics & Mechatronics, HVAC Engineering Technology, and Information Technology - Computer Information Technology & Cybersecurity.

#### Lake County University Center

The University Center of Lake County is a partnership of public and private colleges and universities offering coursework and degrees within Lake County. The University Center is comprised of 7 public and 9 private institutions providing bachelor completion, graduate, and advanced professional development programs at multiple sites to those who work or reside in or near Lake County. The University Center of Lake County, located on the campus of College of Lake County, offers bachelor's completion programs and, in most cases, only upper division (junior and senior) level undergraduate courses. Admission requirements vary from institution to institution, but generally include approximately 60 hours of undergraduate coursework and/or the equivalent of an associate degree. The College of Lake County can provide that lower division coursework through associate degree programs. More than 130 degrees, certificates, and professional development courses are offered and delivered in a variety of formats that appeal to adult learners: evenings and weekends, face-to-face, online, blended, and interactive video. The University Center, a consortium-based center, provides high-quality educational opportunities for the residents, workers, and employers of the Lake County region.

The Job Center and Workforce Development connects individuals to the University Center for advance education as well as employers hiring for jobs aligned with the programs and degrees offered through the Center.

Lake County University Center is a partner in the Lake County Workforce Ecosystem which has contributed to the advanced dialogue around what additional course work and degrees need to be made available along career pathway to meet the needs of Lake County employers and regional industries.

The University Center prior to the pandemic, offered in-person, online, and hybrid learning modes; financial aid assistance workshops; in-person pre-advisement, however, today given CDC guidelines, many of the programs and services are online. Still, students can take advantage of the building and amenities available should they need a quiet study space, especially if working from home is a challenge. Plan in responding is to increase awareness of the programs and services that University Center has to offer working place-bond adults.

The University Center has historically prioritized workforce equity by intentionally seeking communities in Lake County where high school and college degree completion is below average. Through community partnerships with local businesses and nonprofit organizations. University Center collaborates to help inform and recruit prospective students. Additionally, University Center is proactive in addressing challenges that marginalized and underserved communities experience as barriers to achieving a college degree.

## Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006

The College of Lake County (CLC) plays a pivotal role as the provider of Perkins career and technical education services in Lake County and stands as an active and integral member of the Job Center. Ongoing coordination efforts between workforce development and CLC leadership have significantly enhanced collaborative initiatives. To facilitate seamless coordination, CLC staff is stationed on-site at the Job Center, ensuring direct involvement and accessibility. Additionally, CLC staff is available through the affiliate site situated on the CLC campus. Collaborating closely with workforce development partners, CLC actively contributes to the delivery of services and promotes the provision of career education opportunities for the partners' customers.

Demonstrating a commitment to aligning workforce and economic development through integrated and coordinated services, CLC provides various offerings:

- **Career & Job Placement Center services:** Including resume writing, career counseling, interviewing preparation, internship support, and placement assistance.
- **Referral services through Counseling and Advising:** Extending support to prospective and enrolled students.
- **Dedicated resources for the One Stop Center and Services:** Ensuring comprehensive assistance for individuals seeking employment and career development.

Within the framework of Perkins/Career & Technical Education, the Career & Job Placement Center, Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), and EMPS Program Coordinator actively engage in making referrals to the One Stop Center. This collaborative effort involves sharing location and contact information, and when necessary, direct contact with Case Managers to complete the referral cycle. Such integrated efforts underscore CLC's commitment to providing holistic support and fostering smooth transitions for individuals seeking career and technical education.

## College & Career Navigators

To establish a more deliberate link to post-secondary education and enhance support for current and prospective students, the College & Career Navigators (CCN) initiative was introduced, assigning dedicated navigators to each high school. The primary objective is to promote Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. When CTE students apply to the College of Lake County (CLC), CCNs play a crucial role in facilitating student onboarding. New students receive first-semester advising from a CCN within the Recruitment & Onboarding Department.

The Career Navigators program is specifically tailored to assist young adults and students aged 16 to 24 in exploring career opportunities and attaining the education and training necessary for success in the workplace. CLC students gain a competitive edge by acquiring career and technical education aligned with high-wage careers in in-demand industries.

Career Navigators engage with individuals, ensuring their needs are met while adopting an equity lens to prevent discrimination and ensure fair treatment, especially for members of special population groups. Collaborating directly with IEPR (Institutional Effectiveness Planning & Research), Career Navigators ensure accurate data collection at the time of intake. Their focus is on creating a welcoming environment for entering students, where the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion are actively practiced at CLC.

Whether pursuing a GED, high school completion, or technical certification aligned with high-skill, high-wage industries, students guided by Career Navigators optimize their education with the support of professional Career Coaches.

### **Apprenticeship Model**

In 2023, the College of Lake County significantly expanded its apprenticeship offerings, focusing on meeting the specific needs of businesses and industries in Lake County. This expansion involves providing internal training on the apprenticeship model to faculty and staff. The Apprenticeship Program aligns closely with CLC's 2020-24 Strategic Plan and its six key pillars. To strengthen its initiatives, CLC has formed alliances with workforce partners across various industry sectors. These collaborations aim to develop and enhance new credentials, increase the capacity of existing programs, and utilize apprenticeships to address both regional and Lake County workforce needs.

The College of Lake County's Perkins Grant is actively engaged in the Apprenticeship Network Event. The event's goals include expanding apprenticeship opportunities and capacity. One limiting factor, aside from current health concerns, is the number of participating employers in the program. The networking event serves as a platform for companies to collaborate with peers and learn best practices from those who have successfully established similar programs. Following the event, the CLC team will conduct follow-up discussions with employers to delve into their specific areas of interest and program objectives, further enhancing the effectiveness and impact of the apprenticeship initiatives.

### Workforce Board Supportive Service Policy

The Workforce Board has implemented a Supportive Service policy designed to assist individuals enrolled in training programs by providing support for various needs, including childcare, technology, transportation, barrier reduction funding, and related expenses. This policy aligns with the broader framework of promoting access, equity, and inclusion within the expanded WDB policies.

Under the Supportive Service policy, individuals can receive assistance for childcare, technology, transportation, barrier reduction funding, and other needs essential for successful training participation. The policy is flexible, allowing for additional supportive services approval when an individual is assessed as requiring financial assistance to continue training and achieve success.

The Workforce Board collaborated with core partners to identify prevalent needs in the local workforce development system. Transportation, technology, barrier reduction, and childcare emerged as critical factors influencing individuals' ability to access, retain, and advance in employment opportunities.

Recognizing the widespread impact of the pandemic and economic challenges, particularly among Black and Latino adults, the Workforce Development Board prioritized reviewing the Supportive Service Policy through an equity lens. In response, the policy underwent modifications to enhance participants' access to resources, ensuring success in enrolling, completing training, and securing employment. Notable changes include increased access to transportation expenses and digital resources, reflecting a commitment to addressing the evolving needs of individuals in the workforce development system.

### Family Centered Employment

The Lake County Workforce Development Board has actively engaged in a national Family Centered Employment community of practice, seeking insights into community needs related to childcare and transportation. As a proactive measure, the board has implemented tested promising practices and forged collaborations with key community-based organizations (CBOs), including but not limited to United Way, YMCA, College of Lake County, Housing Authority, Waukegan and Round Lake Public Schools, Lake County Tech Campus, Adult Education, and the Job Center of Lake County. This collaborative effort resulted in the establishment of the Family Centered Employment Taskforce, which strives to integrate services within a family-centered model, ultimately achieving improved outcomes for both parents and children through training and workforce support.

In 2019, initial steps were taken to gather data and explore resources to enhance family-centered services, with more extensive strategies anticipated to be researched and implemented in 2020 and beyond. The primary goal is to identify opportunities for coordinated service delivery, eliminate benefits cliffs, and pool resources to expand access to occupational training, job search assistance, and supportive services.

Over the next four years, the Lake County Workforce Development remains committed to identifying promising practices in implementing family-centered employment approaches. The focus includes creating awareness about these practices in Lake County, fostering stronger relationships and collaboration with community organizations, childcare providers, and other agencies, and implementing system-level changes to advance families and meet the evolving demands of the workforce. The recent adoption of the Prosperity Agenda's Family-Centered Coaching (FCC) in 2022 represents a significant step, aiming to empower families, create new pathways to economic prosperity, promote personal fulfillment, and contribute to racial justice in partnership with families and organizations across various sectors and states.



## **YWCA Lake County**

Families in need of assistance with finding childcare and financial support turn to the YWCA, where they are referred to the Childcare Assistance Program (CCAP). Administered by the YWCA, CCAP aims to provide low-income, working families with access to quality and affordable childcare. This program enables families to continue working while contributing to the healthy emotional and social development of their children. The YWCA offers a range of services to connect families with resources for locating, qualifying, and covering the costs of childcare and early education programs.

## **TANF**

Recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) are eligible to receive transportation assistance and childcare support during their employment. Furthermore, additional assistance may be provided when they are enrolled in an approved education program. For individuals not covered by TANF, community providers often offer services that can be availed. An example is the Community Action Partnership, which currently operates under a grant from Lake County. This grant covers the expenses of drop-in childcare to facilitate attendance at job interviews and supports daycare costs until an individual receives their initial paycheck.

## **Community Action Partnership**

Community Action Partnership (CAP) of Lake County serves residents in various ways to promote self-sufficiency, and it operates as a partner within the Job Center's referral network. Individuals are referred to CAP for several programs and services, including:

- Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Illinois Home Weatherization Assistance Program (IHWAP)
- Head Start
- Preschool programs, including full-day, before and after school, and financial assistance
- Post-Secondary Scholarships
- Kids Club Summer Day Camp
- CAP plays a crucial role in providing support to the community, addressing various needs from energy assistance to educational programs for children and families.

### **United Way Lake County 211**

In 2019, United Way of Lake County introduced the 211 services, establishing a free, confidential, and 24-hour information and referral helpline. This vital service serves as a central access point to health and human services in Lake County, connecting individuals to resources through various channels, including phone, text, and online platforms. Staffed by resource navigators, the comprehensive 211 service caters to diverse needs such as mental health, addiction support, crisis counseling, food programs, housing options, employment, education support, financial assistance, and more. The multi-lingual service is available in English and Spanish, with interpretation services provided in over 150 languages.

Since its inception, the Lake County 211 helpline has facilitated over 230,000 connections, addressing critical needs like hunger, shelter, and access to resources. The report highlights the 211 team's response to the tragedy in Highland Park, where essential support and long-term recovery assistance were provided, showcasing the service's pivotal role in crisis response. In 2023, the 211 service experienced a notable 38% increase in contacts, accompanied by expanded marketing efforts and positive feedback from callers, further solidifying its reputation as a reliable and professional resource.

A significant percentage of contacts occurred outside normal business hours, with top needs including housing and shelter, utilities, food, and employment/income assistance. The report provides a breakdown of callers by gender, age, race/ethnicity, and language, offering valuable insights into the service's reach and impact across different communities in Lake County. Additionally, feedback from both contacts and service providers is included in the report, highlighting high satisfaction levels and emphasizing the critical role played by 211 in addressing ongoing challenges and promoting overall community well-being.

### **WIOA Youth Providers Policies**

The Workforce Board recognizes the importance of addressing the diverse needs of young adults and youth as they actively participate in employment and training activities. To ensure their successful retention in employment, the Workforce Board places a strong emphasis on active collaboration with youth-serving providers and high schools catering to WIOA eligible youth. This collaborative approach involves leveraging resources and establishing allowable policies to provide additional supportive services that are crucial for sustaining engagement and achieving success among young participants. The goal is to create a supportive environment that caters to the unique requirements of youth, facilitating their meaningful involvement in employment and training initiatives.

## Transportation Solutions

Stakeholders, partners, municipalities, and businesses throughout Lake County have acknowledged the significance of collaboration and innovation in devising sustainable plans to enhance mobility for residents and the commuting workforce. Tackling the challenge of attracting and retaining young professional talent, Lake County Partners initiated a public-private partnership to introduce an enhanced reverse commute Metra train service. This collaborative effort involved Lake County Partners, AbbVie, Horizon Pharma, the City of Lake Forest, Metra, and other contributors who jointly funded a pilot schedule for improved express service between Chicago and Lake County along the Milwaukee District North Line.

The existing Metra schedule presented challenges for reverse-commute riders traveling to and from Lake Forest, a station near major employers. The pilot schedule aimed to address these challenges by introducing a new outbound express train departing Union Station at 5:35 a.m., arriving in Lake Forest at 6:25 a.m., adjusting the schedule of an inbound afternoon train to provide express service from Lake Forest, and adding a new inbound train departing from Lake Forest at 5:30 p.m., reaching Union Station at 6:22 p.m.

As part of the public-private partnership, the collaborative group committed to developing a definitive agreement to share the cost of installing a universal crossover near Lake Forest, creating additional opportunities for enhanced service. This collaboration serves as a prime example of how local businesses, economic development entities, and government are joining forces to address workforce needs and transit gaps in the county.

While Lake County boasts strengths in transportation, challenges persist in east-west connectivity. The 2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Report (CEDS) emphasizes opportunities to enhance Lake County's infrastructure, supporting business development and increasing resiliency. The Workforce Development Board (WDB) remains steadfast in addressing transportation barriers in its WIOA policies to minimize commuting disruptions for WIOA clients.

## Lake County Paratransit Study

Since the mid-2000s, Lake County, along with communities, townships and transit partners has been evaluating and working to enhance paratransit options. In 2005, the Lake County Coordinated Transportation Services Committee (LCCTSC) was created to facilitate the implementation of public transportation with an enhanced emphasis on paratransit service. In 2019, Lake County completed a paratransit market study that garnered input from residents and a dedicated group of stakeholders to identify strategies to improve service in Lake County. The new Ride Lake County service is the culmination of these efforts from the community.

Ride Lake County provides borderless countywide paratransit service, meaning seniors age 60+ and people with disabilities can get transportation to any area of Lake County for work, shopping, medical appointments, and more. Riders call a dedicated number to schedule trips in advance. All Ride Lake County vehicles are wheelchair accessible and provide curb-to-curb service from your desired pick up and drop off locations. The service runs from 6 a.m. – 6 p.m. seven days a week, excluding holidays. One-way fare costs range between \$2.00 and \$6.00 depending on how far you travel. Ride Lake County is sponsored by Lake County and Pace Suburban Bus. The service is funded in part by grants from the Regional Transportation Authority.

## E. Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Activities

The Lake County Workforce Development Board plays a crucial role in providing policy and oversight for adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities, including statewide rapid response initiatives managed by the Lake County Workforce Development Department.

The various programs developed and implemented by Workforce Development aim to enhance education and training opportunities, responding to the talent needs of businesses and industries. These programs are designed to build a well-prepared workforce and foster economic growth. Here is an overview of some key programs:

- **Individual Training Accounts (ITAs):** Grant funds are allocated to eligible participants with skills gaps, enabling them to pursue training in high-demand occupational programs.
- **Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) Grants:** Workers affected by layoffs or closures due to foreign trade or competition receive additional services, benefits, and grant funding for additional education and training.
- **Revive Lake County:** A program targeting formerly incarcerated individuals to enhance employability skills, provide occupational training, and facilitate the transition to employment. The program is also delivered in the Lake County Jail.
- **SNAP To Success:** In partnership with a national provider and the Illinois Department of Human Services, SNAP recipients receive training and employment opportunities in the IT field.
- **Career Crossroads:** A career awareness program in high schools for graduating seniors and parents, offering insights into opportunities beyond traditional college paths.
- **Family Centered Employment:** Part of a nationwide community of practice, this program aims to be more inclusive and flexible in client services while serving the entire family.
- **Five Steps to Your Next Job:** Workshops delivered to job seekers, teaching the most up-to-date search techniques.
- **Work Earn & Learn:** A partnership with the Department of Transportation (DOT) and employers, providing participants with paid internships, industry experience, and an industry-recognized credential.
- **Workforce Essential Skills Training:** Young adults aged 18-24 receive career readiness, soft skills training, career pathway guidance, and connections to training and/or employment, delivered at the Depke Center.
- **Work-Based Learning:** Through the Work, Earn and Learn Program, clients work with industry professionals, earning industry wages for up to six months, acquiring industry-recognized credentials while learning from professionals.
- **Rapid Response:** A coordinated effort to assist workers impacted by layoffs or closings, providing benefits, rapid reemployment support, job readiness skills, and occupational training.
- **Incumbent Worker Training:** A grant-funded strategy with local businesses to address employee retention, on-the-job skills gaps, and prepare for career advancement.
- These programs collectively contribute to building a skilled and adaptable workforce while addressing the diverse needs of the community.

### Lake County Workforce Ecosystem

The Lake County Workforce Ecosystem fosters collaboration among various businesses, industries, and workforce partners. Key members of the Ecosystem include Workforce Development, the Job Center, Lake County Partners, the College of Lake County, Lake County High Schools Tech Campus, the University Center, City Municipalities, and various Not-for-Profit Organizations.

The Ecosystem has transitioned from mere business visitation counts to a more comprehensive measurement of business engagement. This strategic shift focuses on collaborative efforts to build talent solutions, champion workforce initiatives, and influence industry developments. Notably, the Ecosystem's accomplishments have been showcased at the annual Big Event hosted by Lake County Partners, where a local employer received recognition for Innovative Workforce Solutions.

To bolster collaboration and decision-making, the Ecosystem is enhancing the shared Salesforce.com CRM system. The aim is to leverage business intelligence, facilitate tactical decision-making, and implement effective business engagement strategies. The Ecosystem is committed to collaborating with regional economic development associations and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs to host regional and local events.

Addressing equity, the Ecosystem focuses on assessing and providing data on career options that emphasize certificates and industry credentials instead of traditional college degrees. Priority is given to engaging small and minority-owned businesses, with an emphasis on educating businesses about the value of a diverse workforce. Additionally, efforts are directed towards connecting dislocated workers and job seekers facing barriers to opportunities.

#### Work-based Learning Strategies

The Workforce Board has been encouraging the use of OJT and Work Experience opportunities as successful work-based learning strategies. As noted previously, the Workforce Board is also promoting the use of Incumbent Worker Training with an allocation from Adult and Dislocated Worker WIOA formula funding. Workforce Development has executed a comprehensive work-based learning program for adults and dislocated workers. Through its business engagement strategies, Workforce Development has been working directly with employers across the key industry sectors of healthcare, manufacturing, TDL and professional services to develop and execute work-experience, on-the job training, incumbent working training and piloting transitional jobs. Workforce Development has been instrumental in demonstrating how these work-based learning strategies, when executed in collaboration with employer – participants – Workforce Development, is not only a successful hiring incentive but a retention strategy as participants have a training track with accountability and expectations defined upfront.

To better serve the targeted dislocated worker and provide more equity in delivery of skills development and labor exchange activities, Workforce Development (LCWD) is implementing a mobile/remote job center – using current inventory to set up a pod of laptops and purchasing additional technology to allow for video conferencing within underrepresented and underserved communities. The mobile job center will be brought into underserved communities providing job seekers access to Job Center services, applications, resume writing, connection to employers, job searching and access to training, interviewing and workshops. This mobile job center will allow underserved, targeted job seekers to connect with services without having to travel to the Job Center in Waukegan.

The new smart video conferencing devices will enhance interaction with employers and job seekers in Lake County. Technology will allow for better connection with employers to provide access to a broader audience with virtual job fairs and hiring events as well as a much-needed way to provide skills training and job search workshops to a remote group of job seekers.

The work experience program markets to underserved communities, organizations, and job seekers to expose diverse individuals to this training opportunity- Workforce Development will continue to outreach to a diverse pool of workers and employers.

The Workforce Development EO will continue to monitor enrollments, demographics, and outcomes of the participants enrolled to ensure equal access and diversity.

### Statewide Rapid Response Activities

On behalf of the Workforce Board, Workforce Development assumes leadership of rapid response, collaborating with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) and the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES). In instances where direct access to impacted workers is feasible before the layoff, Workforce Development and IDES extend invitations to the Job Center or affiliate sites to acquaint workers with available services and funding options for training and employment.

In scenarios where access to impacted workers prior to the layoff is granted, Workforce Development provides an overview of services and engages individually with interested workers, fostering successful rapid re-employment by connecting them with hiring employers before the layoff date. Meetings with potential employers have been facilitated at the workplace, yielding positive outcomes when allowed by the current employer.

Post-separation, Workforce Development and IDES employ targeted e-blasts and job fairs, collaborating with employers offering similar positions to the laid-off workers. The practice of connecting workers with hiring employers before the layoff and the subsequent job fairs have proven highly effective. Workforce Development recognizes the importance of expanding the network to regional areas and includes employers from surrounding regions in job fairs to maximize re-employment efforts.

In situations where applicable, Workforce Development collaborates with DCEO to certify rapid response events for the Trade Adjustment Act (TAA). Subsequently, Workforce Development administers TAA requirements for eligible impacted workers, successfully managing TAA training grants for workers pursuing diverse training, ranging from certificate-based to master-level programs and teaching certifications.

While adapting to changing circumstances, Workforce Development has transitioned to virtual events/presentations for rapid response, showcasing services from Workforce Development, IDES, and Employee Benefits Security Administration. Although the frequency of rapid response events has declined due to increased rehiring and reduced unemployment rates, affected workers continue to receive Workforce Development services, ensuring a swift transition from unemployment to employment.

### Sector Recruitment Specialists

Workforce Development received a rapid response grant from DCEO in 2017 to pilot a Sector Recruitment Specialist Strategy. The goal of the project was to enhance rapid-response program services connecting dislocated workers to high demand jobs in four key industry sectors in Lake County: healthcare, manufacturing, TDL and IT. The Sector Recruitment Specialist Program hired four dislocated workers that have worked in one of these industry sectors and have a demonstrated orientation to the industry's needs and demands as related to the workforce. The Specialists possessed necessary qualifications, skills, and insights to the industry elements to engage with the diverse population and employers. The Specialists worked to expand upon rapid-response program activities that include worker recruitment, worker assessment of transferable skills, employer information gathering strategies that could lead to potential lay-off aversion, and connections with employers with hiring needs. The pilot program resulted in a more effective documented process to connect the dislocated worker to employment. Workforce Development has been able to retain the services of the sector specialists and adopt workplans around industry sector business outreach.

The pandemic provided Workforce Development with the opportunity to rebrand the business service team as the needs of business and industry were swiftly changing, they had to know Workforce Development was on the front-line to help them address their needs. Business Service Reps established the title "Account Executive" to represent their relationship with businesses. Each Account Executive is an industry specialist overseeing a specific industry such as Hospitality/Retail, Manufacturing, Transportation and Logistics, Healthcare, and Information Technology with the expectation of creating industry experts. Industry Account Executives have deployed industry specific solutions and assistance to local business and industry during the pandemic.

The Account Executives are the point of contact with the business and industry, they also foster business to business engagement, business to training and education providers, membership organizations and additional business services as well as the job seeker to hiring opportunities. Workforce Development has a diverse employment team and has ensured the Business Service team account executives are also diverse and represent the communities being served.

## **F. Youth Employment and Training Activities**

The WIOA Youth Program is moving beyond stand-alone programs focused on intake-assessment-services-outcomes to a program design centered on service integration guiding youth to successfully establish and pursue employment, education, and a career goal. The following sections provide a description of the WIOA grant funded youth programs as well as programs supported by the Workforce Board and administered by Workforce Development:

- North Chicago Community High School Work Study
- Career Crossroads
- Lake County Summer Youth Employment Program
- Minimum Expenditure for Out-of-School Youth
- Edge Factor

### **The WIOA Youth Program**

Program services and activities include recruitment, assessment, training, education, work-based learning, and employment retention elements; in addition to career exploration, training and education leading to credential and work-based learning opportunities.

The Workforce Board requires that all enrolled youth have access to meaningful work-based learning activities and to successfully accomplish this program element and in keeping with the intent of service integration, Workforce Development Department will lead out all business services outreach and activities that will connect with local employers and develop meaningful relationships.

### **Work Study**

North Chicago Community High School has been a longstanding partner of the Lake County Workforce Development Department, serving as a sub-recipient for over three years. They administer a Work Study class for their high school senior students, offering them the opportunity to earn credit while gaining exposure to various careers, leadership skills, work maturity, and more. Given North Chicago's higher poverty rate and limited resources compared to other areas, it is imperative for this partnership to continue. Lake County Workforce Development remains committed to providing funding for this successful program, recognizing its importance in supporting the students of North Chicago Community High School.

### **Career Crossroads**

Workforce Development collaborates closely with local high schools to enhance awareness of industries, jobs, and careers available in Lake County. Through initiatives like Career Crossroads, the team engages with high school seniors, providing them with valuable information about various industries and occupations. Using up-to-date labor market information and presentations from local employers, students are exposed to a wide range of career choices and receive an introduction to the workforce development system.

One key aspect of this collaboration is attending assemblies at local high schools, where the team delivers presentations and interacts with students directly. Additionally, Career Crossroads has led to partnerships with high schools to host resource fairs, bringing together local training providers and employers to provide opportunities for both students and parents.

Employers participating in Career Crossroads have established meaningful connections with high school students, leading to the creation of work-based learning opportunities. This successful program model is replicable across multiple high schools and has proven to be beneficial for both students and employers.

Workforce Development remains committed to serving as a valuable resource for local high schools interested in offering a Career Crossroads experience to their senior students. The High School Career Crossroads 2023/2024 Project aims to partner with Lake County High Schools to deliver work readiness training to high school students.



As part of this initiative, students at Grant Community High School and Round Lake Area High School will have the opportunity to participate in after-school job readiness activities and internships, earning a competitive wage. These activities will include career pathway exposure, resume building, mock interviews, financial literacy workshops, leadership skills development, information on high-growth jobs, and entrepreneurial workshops. Additionally, students will engage in a 20-hour internship at their respective high schools.

The ultimate goal of the program is to work closely with students to identify their short and long-term career goals and provide them with the resources and support they need to pursue successful employment opportunities after graduation.

#### Lake County Summer Youth Employment Program

Over the past 26 years, Workforce Development has received annual general revenue funding from the Lake County Board to administer a summer jobs program for low-income, in-school youth aged 14 to 22 (with an IEP). Emphasizing the significance of this program is crucial, especially as federal workforce dollars for in-school youth continue to decrease.

Youth workers have been placed with community-based providers, governmental offices and private employers across the county, providing them with their first exposure to the work environment. These summer jobs offer valuable work experience, boost confidence, and add a meaningful entry to their resumes. Workforce Development and the Workforce Board have proactively engaged local businesses, encouraging them to utilize County dollars to cover wages for youth during the summer.

Participating in the summer youth program offers high school students a unique and valuable opportunity to gain practical work experience and enhance their professional skills. Engaging in a work-based learning experience during this program not only provides students with exposure to real-world work environments but also allows them to apply classroom knowledge to practical scenarios. The hands-on nature of the experience fosters a deeper understanding of their chosen career pathways, helping them make informed decisions about their future. Moreover, students can develop essential workplace skills, such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, which are crucial for success in any professional setting. The program strategically matches students based on where they reside, ensuring proximity to an employer for convenient transportation. Beyond skill development, the program promotes networking with professionals in the field, potentially leading to mentorship opportunities and insights that can guide students in their academic and career pathway choices.

As part of continuous improvement, Workforce Development has enhanced the summer youth program onboarding process, exposing youth to key workplace behaviors and discussing how these behaviors will be reviewed and evaluated by their supervisors and the program manager using Edge Factor to reinforce positive on the job behaviors such as teamwork, cooperation and respect.

#### Minimum expenditures for out-of-school youth

The Workforce Board has developed a WIOA Youth Comprehensive Career Pathway Program model designed to fulfill the WIOA minimum out-of-school youth expenditure requirement. This program model emphasizes service integration with various partners, including workforce development entities, youth-serving organizations, and the education system. The primary focus of the program is to serve out-of-school youth effectively. To implement this model, the Workforce Board allocates WIOA funding to youth-serving organizations through a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process, aligning funding with expenditure requirements.

A crucial element in the program's design is its integration with Workforce Development, encompassing the approval of youth eligibility, youth enrollments, and the continuous monitoring of program activities and invoices monthly. This high level of integration and oversight ensures that Workforce Development maintains real-time information on enrollments, activities, and expenditures, all of which contribute to meeting expenditure levels.

Workforce Development actively manages and monitors the program's progress, preparing a comprehensive monthly grant expenditure report for the Workforce Board Executive Committee as part of its oversight

responsibilities. Grant benchmarks are continuously monitored throughout the grant cycle, enabling the Workforce Board to provide guidance on corrective actions if trends indicate a deviation from meeting expenditure requirements. This approach ensures that the program remains on track and responsive to the needs of the out-of-school youth population.

### **Design Framework for Youth Programs**

Lake County Workforce Development (LCWD) emphasizes program modules and services that integrate promising practices to ensure the success of the WIOA Youth Program. The 14 program elements required by WIOA are included within the following services;

- **Case Management and Support:** LCWD will develop the Individual Service Strategy (ISS) with the participant to establish employment and training goals while providing ongoing support as the participant progresses through their ISS plan. A promising practice includes weekly meetings with contractors to review the ISS plan and document progress.
- **Enrollment:** LCWD will complete the process of enrolling youth, including collecting necessary documents, entering participants into the Illinois Workforce Development System (IWDS), and creating participant files.
- **Career Interest Assessments:** LCWD will guide youth through assessment tools to help identify their career interests.
- **Support Services:** LCWD will assess and document participants for the need of support services, with participant needs documented in the ISS along with referrals.
- **Comprehensive Guidance:** LCWD will assess participants for the need of counseling services and provide those services or make appropriate referrals, with participant services and referrals documented in the ISS.
- **Financial Literacy:** LCWD will provide activities to expose participants to financial literacy and financial wellness.
- **Entrepreneurial Skills Training:** LCWD will provide activities to expose participants to entrepreneurial skills training, ensuring all participants receive a minimum of 2 hours of training and exposure to the College of Lake County Small Business Administration.
- **Leadership Development:** LCWD will provide opportunities for participants to engage in community service and peer-centered activities.
- **Job Readiness Training:** LCWD will provide job readiness training activities, including e-training designed to build workplace skills.
- **Labor Market Information (LMI)/Employment Information:** LCWD will provide LMI data for Lake County's high-demand occupational industries.
- **Business Services – Business Outreach:** LCWD will implement business outreach strategies to establish meaningful relationships with local businesses and employers, enhancing work-based learning activities for participants and organizing multiple company tours.
- **Work-Based Learning/Education Offered:** LCWD will provide activities exposing participants to jobs, industries, and employers in Lake County, including job application preparation, resume writing, mock interviewing, job shadows, and company tours.
- **Occupational Skills Training:** LCWD will provide participants with basic computer literacy skills training leading to an industry-recognized credential, partnering with a training provider of their choice.
- **Education for Specific Occupation/Career Pathway:** LCWD will authorize Individual Training Accounts based on the Workforce Development Investment Board high-priority occupational list.
- **Tutoring, Study Skills Training:** LCWD will make tutoring, study skills training, and dropout prevention strategies accessible, ensuring participants receive services as needed.
- **Alternative Secondary School Services/Study Skills:** LCWD will provide referral services to prepare youth to earn a high school diploma or equivalent, with participants earning their GED or high school diploma equivalency.
- **Prep for Post-Secondary/Training:** LCWD will provide activities to help participants prepare for and transition to post-secondary education and training, including assistance with completing the FAFSA and reviewing financing options.
- **Job Search Services:** LCWD will provide participants with job search activities, including assistance with job search websites, attendance at employment workshops, hiring events, and job fairs.

- **Adult Mentoring during Follow-up Services:** LCWD will provide adult mentoring during program enrollment and follow-up services to support participants' retention and advancement, ensuring meaningful two-way communication and support.
- **Follow-up Services:** LCWD will provide participants with follow-up services, including 12 months of meaningful two-way communication.

### **Youth Investment Project**

The Youth Investment Project, led by the Lake County Workforce Development, is a comprehensive initiative dedicated to overhauling the youth workforce development system in Lake County. Its primary aim is to ensure that all young adults in the region have fair access to education, training, and quality job opportunities. To achieve this goal, the project focuses on engaging professional service providers to deliver data-driven decision-making, asset mapping, capacity building, and a youth-centric approach. It also emphasizes conducting listening sessions and focus groups with young adults to gather feedback on their experiences and career aspirations. Additionally, the project plans to hold formal listening sessions with stakeholders, partners, and youth-serving organizations to inform the development of a systemwide work plan.

The Youth Systems Building Academy, spearheaded by the LCWD team, seeks to establish a youth-serving workforce system that prioritizes the voices of youth and stakeholders. This includes convening partners and stakeholders for formal listening sessions, establishing a youth steering committee, emphasizing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), and completing asset mapping of youth services and education programs in Lake County. Furthermore, the academy aims to recruit youth-serving organizations to pilot the DOL Registered Apprenticeship Program and launch a cohort of Youth Development Practitioner's Apprenticeship Program, fostering a community of practice within Lake County. The academy also stresses the importance of maintaining meaningful and measurable data sets and implementing equity-driven solutions.

The project also involves contracting with entities like New Ways to Work Inc. and ICF International to complete specific tasks. New Ways to Work Inc. will focus on facilitating listening sessions and focus groups with youth and young adults, while ICF International will develop an asset map of youth services available in Lake County and surrounding areas. These tasks include identifying and cataloging youth-serving organizations, programs, education, and training providers, as well as analyzing and sharing relevant data on youth demographics, labor market trends, and program effectiveness.

Overall, the Youth Investment Project aims to establish a more inclusive and equitable network, ensuring that all youth in the region have equal opportunities to engage in work-based learning, pre-apprenticeship, and apprenticeship programs, and access quality jobs. The project's strategy involves data-driven decision-making, asset mapping, capacity building, a youth-centric approach, and active engagement with stakeholders and employers. By enhancing access to services, education, training, career pathways, and quality jobs, the project seeks to reduce disconnection rates among high school students and young adults, leaving a lasting impact on Lake County's youth workforce development network.

Recognizing the need to revamp youth services in the county, LCWD is aligned with the Youth Investment Project's comprehensive approach. To this end, LCWD is keen on investing in communications and marketing to effectively rebrand youth services. This investment aims to promote awareness among stakeholders and engage the youth population in the region, ensuring equitable access to quality jobs and participation in work-based learning, pre-apprenticeship, and apprenticeship programs.

## Edge Factor

Edge Factor is a comprehensive resource that empowers communities to address workforce development challenges, inspire students, engage parents, and foster connections between local companies, schools, and families. It provides e-learning tools designed to showcase various industries and careers, teach essential soft skills, and demonstrate how Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM) are applied in real-world scenarios. The platform also highlights local training and career opportunities, making it a valuable resource for K-12 and postsecondary schools, businesses, workforce development organizations, and families. Additionally, Edge Factor is widely utilized by educational partners across the United States, including school districts, afterschool programs, community-based organizations, and workforce development agencies, to equip students and young adults with the skills necessary for success in the workplace. The platform's multimedia library offers a vast array of interactive tools and stories, providing valuable insights into various careers, professional journeys, and essential skills. Moreover, Edge Factor includes custom content tailored for parents of young students, ensuring they have the necessary resources to support their children's unique career aspirations.

## Services for Youth with Disabilities

Lake County Workforce Development will ensure equal access by making all necessary accommodations, such as providing longer testing times or other assessment accommodations.

- LCWD resource rooms and Job Centers are equipped with assistive tools and adaptive equipment needed to serve youth with disabilities effectively.
- Career specialists collaborate with referral partners like vocational rehabilitation services or school disability support offices that offer specific resources for youth with disabilities.
- LCWD takes an integrated approach, considering each youth's individual needs and referring them to appropriate partners for any specialized assistance beyond what our career specialists can directly provide.

## G. Priority of Services Strategies and Policy

The Workforce Board has established policies to ensure that individuals facing barriers to employment have access to services through the Job Center and across Lake County communities. The Operation Committee of the Workforce Board places a specific focus on providing priority of service to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and those who are basic skills deficient, in accordance with WIOA regulations.

The Job Center of Lake County partners are dedicated to prioritizing service for specific populations, including veterans, spouses of veterans, recipients of public assistance, low-income individuals, and those with basic skills deficiencies. Collaborative efforts have been initiated among Job Center partners to identify effective strategies for serving these populations:

- **Veterans:** Immediate assistance is provided through the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) team. Veterans receive prompt referrals and appointments, and those who self-identify during interactions with other Job Center partners are also referred to IDES.
- **Recipients of Public Assistance:** Workshops and counseling sessions are organized every Friday at the Job Center for recipients of public assistance. Additional services are provided through SNAP to Success, which directly assists SNAP recipients. Outreach efforts extend to housing authorities and community-based organizations serving this population.
- **Low-Income Individuals:** Individuals screened as low income are referred to the appropriate network of partners to establish an employment plan. Financial counseling and career path planning are provided by Job Center partners to help low-income individuals.
- **Basic Skills Deficient Individuals:** Adult basic education providers and community-based organizations focus on enhancing the skills of individuals with basic skills deficiencies. Seamless referrals are made between the Job Center and the College of Lake County, which share the same building.
- **High School Students:** Programming efforts, such as Career Crossroads and the Lake County Careers website, aim to engage high school students in discussions about careers, industries, and occupations.

The Operations Committee continually reviews data on services provided to these priority populations, and Workforce Development leadership and staff regularly assess areas for improvement. The Workforce Board emphasizes compliance with all applicable requirements related to determining priority populations. Priority of service provisions have been expanded through collaborative efforts with various agencies and partners, including Housing Authorities, the Department of Human Services, Department of Rehab Services, IDPES-DVOPs, Veteran Commission, Veteran Administration (VA), local municipalities, high schools, and organizations serving individuals with disabilities and those with re-entry needs.

Workforce Development identifies individuals eligible for priority of service at the point of entry, ensures they are informed of their entitlement, and provides information about available programs and services. Individuals qualifying for priority of service receive career and training services before other non-covered individuals and are prioritized on waiting lists. However, once enrolled, they may not be displaced by individuals not covered by priority of service. This comprehensive approach ensures that individuals facing barriers to employment receive the necessary support and resources.

## H. Training Activities and Policy

The Workforce Board is responsible for setting policy and providing oversight in regard to the following WIOA grant-funded training and activities:

- Annual Training Expenditure Requirement
- Work-Based Learning Strategies
- Individual Training Accounts
- Training Provider Approval

### Annual Training Expenditure Requirement

The Workforce Board and Workforce Development comply with the State requirement that a minimum of 50% of local expenditures be for direct training costs. Workforce Development as the fiscal agent has developed a robust expenditure reporting process utilizing comprehensive Excel Spreadsheets that provide a detail crosswalk from the Lake County General ledger to the training expenditure reporting. Workforce Development prepares a monthly grant expenditure report for the Workforce Board Executive Committee as part of monitoring and oversight. Grant benchmarks are monitored throughout the grant cycle, allowing the Workforce Board to provide direction on corrective action if a trend is noted toward not meeting the expenditure requirements. The Workforce Board has approved training budgets that include direct training utilizing Individual Training Accounts, supportive services, and work-based learning including work-experience, on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, and transitional jobs.

Workforce Development has experienced minimal negative impact on the Annual Training Expenditure requirement for the adult and dislocated worker funding streams. Workforce Development had seen an increase in job seekers applying for services and wanting to be trained during the pandemic while layoffs were occurring, and job opportunities were not available during lock down. There was a net positive effect where job seekers took the time to upskill during the pandemic and training providers assisted in this effort and moved to remote learning and virtual learning environments.

Workforce Board reviewed and updated policies to have been enacted to assist with training services that inadvertently also assist with the spending requirement:

- Technology Policy- \$1,500 laptop purchase available along with technical assistance
- Daycare Assistance- In Process of creating a reimbursement process
- Hot Spot financial assistance to support remote learning
- Allowing previous WIOA registrants to receive services even if they received services 1 year ago due to the pandemic or being laid off again due to COVID-19
- In house budget spreadsheets have been created for each career specialist to increase accountability during COVID-19
- Training Institutions with the assistance of Workforce Development created virtual/hybrid learning environments to support the continuity of training and education
- Virtual Training Provider education sessions were created to educate job seekers, the community, staff, and partners on high wage/high demand occupational training opportunities and skill requirements of key industry sectors/job.

Workforce Development plans to adapt and conduct activities moving forward that include:

- Continuing to make available online training opportunities.
- Continuing to make available support services to participants enrolled in training – addressing barriers to successful attendance and completion.
- Virtual Training Provider forums for community members and partners to expose job seekers to training programs and services which affect the expenditure rate.
- Increased access to support services including support services needed to be successful in a remote learning environment.

- Explore budgeting and implementing of the WDB Needs Related Payment Policy.
- Continuing to support virtual learning platforms offered by training and education providers.
- Allocate a percentage of Business Services Account Executives' time to work-based training activities and oversight.
- Use technology to streamline the customer enrollment, such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and WebEx.
- Continue to monitor and support priority of service.
- Continue to work with Job Center partners to increase customer referrals.

**Workforce Development incorporates an equity lens to training activities and policies by:**

- Review and enact grants that support priority population groups- Continue to implement the Woman of Color grant over the next two years.
- Continuing to implement supportive services policies such as Needs Related Payment, Technology Devices, Hot Spots, Daycare, and Transportation resources that are severely needed within underserved communities and certain population groups.
- Marketing training resources to underserved communities through mobile workshops within those communities and creating work environments within those communities to increase diverse enrollment and equity across all funding streams.
- Monitoring training enrollments and percentages and have EO Officer address disparate treatment if it occurs
- Ensure enrollments and marketing of training services occur from all communities within Lake County by connecting/marketing to partners that serve diverse clients and families.
- ADA accommodations are implemented by training providers when request occurs.
- Engage Women, African American, Disability, Veteran, and other diverse population groups on workforce planning.
- Assess if technology resources have assisted with training goals. Survey job seekers from adverse situations.

**Work-based Learning Strategies**

The Workforce Board has sets policy for work-based learning opportunities and continues to review the policies of the workforce boards in the region to ensure alignment.

Work Experience policy provides guidance around WIOA-funded work experience programs opportunities for adults, dislocated workers, and youth who have completed training programs and/or whose Individual Employment Plan includes work experience. Work experience is a planned, structured training experience that takes place in a workplace for a limited period. Work experience may be paid or unpaid, as appropriate. A work experience workplace may be an office of local government, a non-profit organization, or a for-profit employer. Labor standards apply in any work experience where an employee/employer relationship, as defined by the Fair Labor Standards Act, exists.

Workforce Development responded to the safety and protocol needs of businesses when the pandemic occurred and had to stop some of the work-based learning opportunities due to safety concerns.

There was also an inadvertent positive impact as Workforce Development went through the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Allowed workers that were laid off when the pandemic initially occurred to receive work-based learning opportunities and earn a wage while learning a new job.
- There was an increase of impacted workers eligible and ready to enroll in a paid work experience.
- Processes and procedures created a streamlined program and worksite onboarding.
- Policy change allowed for work-experience wages to align with industry standards/pay and pay participants a competitive wage while learning a new job.
- Creation of hybrid onsite and remote work base learning opportunities and job description.

Workforce Development has adapted and will conduct activities moving forward that include:

- Continue to assess the program and the environment to see what changes need to be made
- Continue adapting to the environment and continue to offer hybrid internships with employers
- Look at a transferrable skill work experience program where job seekers can work at multiple sites as an employment plan to expose them to different industries, job functions, and industry experts. This would require a change in policy and duration of work experiences

Workforce Development integrates an equity lens into its work-based training activities and policies through the following measures:

- The work experience program actively targets underserved communities, organizations, and job seekers to introduce them to this training opportunity. Outreach strategies prioritize recruiting a diverse pool of workers and employers, ensuring inclusivity and representation.
- The Equal Opportunity (EO) officer consistently monitors enrollments, demographics, and outcomes of participants to guarantee equal access to the program. Presently, the work-based learning program boasts an impressive statistic, with 85% of its participants coming from diverse backgrounds and belonging to minority groups.

**Incumbent Worker Training (IWT)** policy provides general guidance for all IWT projects, as well as specific guidance for the formula fund grants when utilizing their twenty percent authority and Discretionary funds for grantees of the Statewide fifteen percent funds. The incumbent worker training program is designed to assist employers in upgrading the skills of their workforce in order to remain competitive in both regional and global markets. The training is “employer driven” and responds to changes in market conditions as well as the introduction of new technology into the workplace. The employer is the primary customer and the primary beneficiary of the training. Benefits to the Employees – The training provides new work-related skills and prepares the workers for job upgrades.

IWT was not a priority of business and industry as the focus through the pandemic and economic downturn has been focused on viability and keeping their operations running, staying open, and retaining the current workforce where possible. DCEO Policy allowed for IWT to occur upon hiring and it has with this opportunity that IWT is a retention and career pathway strategy at the time of hiring Workforce Development plans to adapt and conduct activities moving forward that include:

- Continue to assess internal needs of employers and policy changes that can be flexible in the ever-changing environment.
- Support IWT during the hiring process and incorporate OJT/Apprenticeship training during the same period of time.

Workforce Development works with business and industry on hiring and retaining a more diverse workforce through training, reskilling, and advanced education.

**On-the-Job Training Policy (OJT)** is training that is provided by an employer to a paid participant while engaged in productive work in a job that provides the knowledge or skills essential to the full and adequate performance of the job. OJT programs must provide potential new employees, or active underemployed employees (adults, dislocated workers, or eligible youth, when appropriate) with the opportunity to acquire new skills or knowledge essential to job performance.

The pandemic has affected the OJT program due to employers laying off and not hiring during the initial months of the pandemic. But a viable program with employers ready to hire and train the right candidate.

Moving forward Workforce Development continues to assess policies that address today’s environment and the future environment.



Board Policy enacted to address equity by letting employers know if they address our priority population groups there is a financial incentive connected to hiring a competent worker:

- Reimbursement rate up to 75% when considering the following factors:
- The characteristics of the participants taking into consideration whether they are individuals with barriers to employment which is defined as a member of 1 or more of the following populations:
  - a. Veterans
  - b. Displaced homemakers
  - c. Low-income individuals
  - d. Individuals with disabilities
  - e. Older Individuals
  - f. Out of School Youth
  - g. Ex-Offenders
  - h. Homeless Individuals
  - i. Participant is unemployed 26 weeks or longer

**Transitional Jobs (TJ)** policy is one that provides a limited work experience, that is subsidized in the public, private, or non-profit sectors for those individuals with barriers to employment because of chronic unemployment or inconsistent work history; TJ are designed to enable an individual to establish a work history, demonstrate work success, and develop the skills that lead to unsubsidized employment.

Workforce Development was in the process of implementing this program through a partnership with the Lake County Jail. The pandemic halted this engagement and Workforce Development plans to revisit the partnership with Lake County Jail in the future.

#### Individual Training Account Policy and training services

The Workforce Board has adopted the attached ITA Policy and has been directing Workforce Development to establish business practices and service delivery strategies to execute the elements of the ITA Policy. The Individual Training Account (ITAs) policy provides guidance regarding the issuance of ITAs for training and associated eligible costs when utilizing WIOA funds participants under one of the following provisions of WIOA: Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth (in-school and out-of-school). Participants eligible to receive an ITA must select an approved training program that leads to a credential attainment in a career that is listed on the Demand Occupation Training List (DOTL). Eligible and approved participants may, in consultation with the designated career planner, select an eligible program and training provider from the eligible training provider list as documented on IWDS. The guidance and selection process will be provided in a manner that maximizes customer choice. The Workforce Board includes in the ITA policy a funding cap per program as well as the frequency a customer can access funding through an ITA – both of these are contingent on the current state of training, tuition costs, industry needs and total funds available.

As noted in the ITA policy, the Workforce Board has adopted the Demand Occupation Training List. The Demand Occupation Training List aligns the investment of workforce development funds for training with the education and skill requirements of employers in the critical sectors of local economy. Demand Occupations are skilled job categories within target industry sectors that show the potential for job growth and pay a living wage. Focusing training funds on these occupations serves both employers who are in search of qualified talent, and jobseekers who are looking for careers with bright job prospects.

The Workforce Board has and will continue to utilize ITAs as the main form of occupational training for eligible adults, dislocated workers, and youth. Customer choice for a training program is available to eligible adults and dislocated workers who are assessed as suitable to receive an ITA for occupational training and have identified a training program and provider that aligns with the employment and training plan developed with a Workforce Development career specialist. The selected occupational training must be in an occupation identified by the Workforce Board as Demand Occupations as noted in the Workforce Board's policy.

When priorities are set and plans are put in place, classroom training may be used to train cohorts for specific occupations/ certificates/industry credentials, and customized training will be utilized to tailor training to meet employer needs. Contracts for training can occur in situations where incumbent or customized training is required to meet the needs of a specific employer. These contracts will still be subject to the administrative procurement policies and procedures of Lake County, Illinois.

The Workforce Board continues to explore opportunities with local education, training providers and programs to invest in classroom training for economy of scale, when an entrance point along a career pathway and when determined as the best way to serve a cohort of eligible individuals. For example, if there is a vendor delivering computer training/industry credentials consistently utilizing a substantial number of ITAs year to year, the Workforce Board will explore negotiating classroom “quantities of training” with that vendor to maximize grant funds. In addition, when a program has demonstrated success in training individuals along a career pathway that has led to employer engagement and successful completers gaining employment, the Workforce Board will work with the entity to document a program deliverable that aligns with occupations on the Demand Occupation Training List leading to employment opportunities and will work to pilot the program.

During the pandemic, Workforce Development experienced an increase of job seekers interested in enrolling in occupational training using an ITA. Individuals were laid off and took the time to focus on careers, education attainment, and self-reflection as it pertains to how workforce could assist with training and tuition assistance.

The Workforce Development Board promptly modified policy to remove a 5-year wait time for returning eligible individuals to receive an ITA for occupational training. Additional ITA policy modifications that assisted in individuals pursuing training through an ITA:

- 150% exemption from the base amount approval
- 100% of semester-based programs at approved associated degree schools paid for
- Expansive DOTL list considered and additional occupations can be added based on need
- Supported hybrid training or 100% remote training programs

Workforce Development plans to adapt and conduct activities moving forward that include:

- Continue to support hybrid or 100% remote training options
- Supply ITA recipients with technology and hot spots to support the ITA
- Look at cohort training or class-room size training options depending on funding
- Continue and expand training provider and industry snap shots/forums for job seekers to better understand the training programs that support high wage/high demand jobs in key industry sectors.

Workforce Development incorporates an equity lens as it pertaining to ITAs:

- Continue to serve 51% of job seekers that are basic skill deficient, SNAP recipients, long term unemployed, under employed, and low-income individuals.
- Continue to recruit and outreach in underserved communities in partnership with groups/agencies representing the underserved populations.
- EO office continue to review, assess, and provide findings on any disparity of enrollments.
- Continue to look at grants that support the ITA and training process that support equity deliverables
- Work towards a more wholistic customer-centered design, bringing services into communities, reduce the need for travel to one location to receive services and increasing the number of job seekers recruited in different zip codes.
- Continue to expand on the WDB Equity Task Force in reviewing policy.

### Local Training Provider Approval Policy and Procedures

Currently, the Workforce Board has not introduced further criteria for certifying training provider programs beyond the requirements outlined by the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). Regular meetings are held by Workforce Development with training providers to gather insights into program specifics, participant success rates, and employer engagement for recruitment.

To bolster these engagements, the Workforce Board intends to expand its regular meetings to include dedicated training provider performance sessions. These sessions will involve a thorough analysis of data, fostering discussions on strategies to better serve diverse populations and increase employer participation.

The Local Training Provider/Program Certification policy outlines the standards for training providers seeking certification and recertification under LWIA 1 to qualify for WIOA Title I funds. This policy plays a crucial role in ensuring accountability and adherence to the Training Provider Certification policies set by DCEO. Workforce Board staff are tasked with reviewing and validating the eligibility of training providers and programs on behalf of the Workforce Development Board.

### WIOA Title IB Workforce Funds Policy

Under WIOA, the Workforce Board has authority to manage WIOA Title IB workforce funds, with regards to transferring and budgeting for specific programming within grant compliance requirements. The following areas are addressed:

- Fund transfers
- Incumbent Worker Training
- Transitional Jobs
- Pay for Performance Contracts

#### Fund transfers between the Adult and Dislocated Worker funding streams

The Workforce Board analyzes the expenditure trends and variances as part of its annual budget policy process. The Workforce Board takes into consideration the expenditure trends in direct training and the type of training programs that were most effective in achieving performance measures. As part of budget policies, the Workforce Board considers local strategies, transfers between adult and dislocated worker funding streams and the use of funds for incumbent worker training.

The Workforce Board has not had a need to transfer funds between Adult and Dislocated Worker funding streams, but it reserves the right to revisit this item in the future and will adhere to DCEO Policy that allows no more than 50% of funds be transferred between Adult and Dislocated Worker funding streams.

### Incumbent Worker Training Policy

The Workforce Board has an approved Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) policy that provides general guidance for all IWT projects, as well as specific guidance for the formula fund grants when utilizing their twenty percent authority and Discretionary funds for grantees of the Statewide fifteen percent funds. The incumbent worker training program is designed to assist employers in upgrading the skills of their workforce in order to remain competitive in both regional and global markets. The training is “employer driven” and responds to changes in market conditions as well as the introduction of new technology into the workplace. The employer is the primary customer and the primary beneficiary of the training. Benefits to the Employees – The training provides new work-related skills and prepares the workers for job upgrades.

The Workforce Board has budgeted the use of fund for incumbent worker training and has successfully met the training needs of small to mid-size businesses throughout Lake County. The Workforce Board will continue to budget funds for incumbent worker training across key industry sectors.

## **I. Equity Lens – Services and Policies**

Partner programs, organizations, communities served, and job seekers that come from an array of communities are strategically engaged through the Workforce Development equity lens by:

- Embedding services within underserved communities
- Utilization of Census Data to engage and attract students and job seekers that may have barriers
- Conduct and create workshops for age specific groups
- Apply and secure grants to address gender, class, and race inequities
- Monthly review of EO Demographic data as it pertains to trainees and job seekers served to ensure equity is being applied within WIOA services
- Leverage community partners that have access to diverse job seekers, families, institutions, and state resources to market services accordingly
- Branding displays diversity and equity
- WDB Board Equity Task force and diverse make up of board members provides oversight of programming areas to ensure an equity lens is applied or that there is representation from all demographic groups along with a priority of service expectation
- Engage schools that may have subpar graduation rates and infuse workforce programming to ensure resources are made available
- Programs allow for pathways and onboarding ramps to ensure equitable access
- Policies that support and address equity that ultimately increases engagement amongst priority populations
- Supply resources that typically are not available or affordable amongst different demographic groups

## Chapter 5: Performance Goals and Evaluation – Local Component

### A. Local Levels of Negotiated Performance

#### WIOA Performance Measures

There are **six (6)** primary indicators of performance for the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs authorized under WIOA Title IB as outlined in WIOA Final Rule Section 677.155(a)(1). The first five (5) indicators are negotiated for each of the Title IB programs (fifteen total measures are negotiated), while there is no negotiated level required for the final indicator (Effectiveness in Serving Employers) and thus will not be included

The negotiated performance goals for Program Year 2022/2023 are:

### Workforce Development Activities (Title IB of WIOA)

#### Negotiated Levels of Performance for PY 2022 and 2023

### LWIA #1 – Lake County Workforce Development Department

#### Adult

	PY 2022	PY 2023
Employment Rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	75.0%	75.0%
Employment Rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit	71.0%	71.0%
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	\$9,300	\$9,300
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters after Exit	82.0%	82.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	54.0%	54.0%

#### Dislocated Worker

Employment Rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	77.0%	77.0%
Employment Rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit	75.0%	75.0%
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	\$13,500	\$13,500
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters after Exit	85.0%	85.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	56.0%	56.0%

#### Youth

Employment or Education Rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	73.0%	73.0%
Employment or Education Rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit	72.0%	72.0%
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	\$4,650	\$4,650
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters after Exit	72.0%	72.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	54.0%	54.0%

## **B. Current and Planned Evaluation - Leadership**

The Workforce Board has established high performing goals consistent with the factors developed by the State Board. To maintain itself as a high performing workforce board, the Workforce Board has included in its agendas service and program evaluation summaries as well as financial management reports. The Workforce Board has recognized the value of its members and modified meeting formats to allow for a greater focus on innovation, member input, and engagement on workforce development topics, industry trends, and partner integration. In addition, the Workforce Board members have asked for additional time to hear success stories from participants and service providers.

The Workforce Board is proud of some of its most recent recognitions:

- Current Workforce Board Chair, Andrew Warrington, serves as Co-Chair Illinois Workforce Investment Board
- Former Workforce Board Chair, Jennifer Harris, President CR Search, serves on the National Association of Workforce Boards as the Vice Chair and Chairs the Small Business Task Force
- Lake County Chamber of Commerce Business Impact Award for serving the Lake County business community 2023
- Ashanhti Ross of Lake County Workforce Development received the NAWDP Workforce Heroes Award 2022 recognizing the exceptional work towards workforce development initiatives
- Community Based Organization award by Waukegan Township Office 2023
- Domney Tool recognized by Illinois Workforce Partnership Business Leadership Award 2023
- Sue Dickson founder of Give Me Ten Program and owner of Closs Tire received the Illinois Workforce Partnership Innovative Solutions Award 2023
- Shaquita Blanks a WIOA client received the Illinois Workforce Partnership Award 2023
- Job Center of Lake County presented to the 2023 WIOA Summit “Providing Services to Immigrants through the Job Center System
- LCWD received the WIOA Summit Award 2023- Excellence in collaboration for Veterans Programming
- Laser precision and LCWDB President received the National Association of Workforce Development 2023 Youth Employer of the Year Award
- LCWD received the American Legion Small Business Employer of the Year Award

The Workforce Board is currently assessing existing service delivery strategies for potential expansion, focusing on those with promising returns on investment.

Within the Lake County Workforce Ecosystem, collaboration and strategy enhancements among partner agencies such as Workforce Development, College of Lake County, Lake County Partners, and others are actively underway. Anchored in a newly formulated purpose statement, the Ecosystem strives to elevate Lake County's economic vitality through a unified approach, with a strong emphasis on equity.

Workforce Development has notably strengthened its business services team, extending services regionally and integrating with youth-serving providers and local high schools. This expanded regional outreach targets key industry sectors and shares successful practices. The emphasis on youth providers and high schools aims to bolster work-based opportunities for young individuals, with plans for industry sector specialists underway.

A significant initiative involves establishing robust program partnerships between Workforce Development and area high schools, building upon the successful pilot program initiated with North Chicago High School in 2020. The objective is to replicate this model across multiple high schools, businesses, and industries, offering standardized engagement opportunities for high school students.

Responding to the strategic planning process, the Workforce Board is actively advocating for workforce development policy and regional initiatives. Leveraging its expertise and connections with national, regional, and state associations, the Workforce Board aims to effect substantial change. Additionally, the organization maintains a resilient and adaptable culture in response to the dynamic economic landscape.

Workforce Development is reassessing its priorities, aligning strategies with three overarching themes: fostering a high-performing organizational environment, promoting a service delivery culture of equity and inclusivity, and aligning workforce development programs with data-driven industry sector initiatives.

The Workforce Board's oversight of programs and services at the Job Center of Lake County has yielded significant returns on state-provided resources. Key accomplishments include serving thousands of job seekers, conducting numerous workshops, and achieving high employment rates and credential attainment percentages.

Evaluation of service delivery strategies prioritizes return on investment, leading to actions such as directing WIOA youth funding to integrated programs and addressing duplicative services. Ongoing evaluation involves gathering qualitative feedback and quantitative data from certified training providers, supplemented by performance sessions and regular committee involvement.

Continued collaboration with youth-serving organizations and training providers remains a core focus, ensuring alignment with the Workforce Board's strategies. Definitive metrics and measures of success are being formulated in partnership with Job Center Partners and the Service Integration Action Plan. Committees within the Workforce Board are diligently documenting processes and data to ensure the delivery of cost-effective and high-performing programs that effectively serve underserved residents and areas.

### **C. Equity Lens - Performance Goals and Evaluation**

Presently, WIOA Performance Goals do not incorporate factors such as race, ethnicity, disability, gender, and other demographics when establishing expected performance levels. However, a forthcoming initiative, the Statistical Adjustment Model (SAM), is undergoing implementation. SAM is designed to factor in the existing barriers faced by the job seekers being served, thereby adjusting performance outcomes accordingly.

The introduction of SAM aims to enhance the precision and equity of performance evaluations by considering the unique challenges and circumstances of individuals within diverse demographic categories. By evaluating disaggregated outcome data, the workforce development system can identify specific areas where underrepresentation in certain occupations exists. This insight will inform future strategies and interventions to address disparities and promote inclusivity within the workforce.

#### **Board Service Policy Internal Review Process**

Workforce Development's Career Specialists, who carry case management responsibilities, will actively engage in a monthly training and review program focused on local policies, associated forms, and general practices essential to the case management process. These sessions aim not only to reinforce existing procedures but also to facilitate policy and document reviews, ensuring consistency, compliance, and equity. The goal is to foster impactful internal discussions regarding potential updates or adjustments in policies to better support clients facing barriers. Scheduled for one hour each, these training sessions will occur bi-monthly or monthly.

Looking forward, as Workforce Development contemplates policy modifications, there will be a heightened emphasis on ensuring decision-makers consider the unique needs and challenges of disadvantaged and low-income communities. Future policies and programs aimed at serving businesses and reskilling customers will prioritize equity. Enhancing equity within Workforce Development requires directing resources toward disadvantaged and low-income communities and broadening access for the most marginalized populations.

The Board Service Policy Internal Review Process follows this framework:

Project Plan: Examination of local policies, associated forms, best practices, and system applications to ensure coherence and adherence.

Staff members aim to review one to two selected policies per month, ensuring adherence to all regulations and guidelines. The process is designed to:

- Establish consistency across all case managers.
- Facilitate knowledge sharing among team members.
- Ensure consistent delivery of services/activities to customers.
- Incorporate insights and outcomes from the Peer-to-Peer Project Plan for Best Practices for WIOA Files, Case Notes, and Lines of Service.

### **Regional Service Strategies**

The impact of the pandemic on regional service strategies and EDR4's regional response and action plans is covered in detail in Chapters 1-3.



## **Chapter 6: Technical Requirements and Assurances**

The Workforce Board adheres to the technical requirements and assurances that are required by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) including the following:

- Fiscal Management
- Procurement Policies and Procedures
- Physical and Programmatic Accessibility
- Plan Development and Public Comment

### **A. Fiscal Management**

The Lake County Workforce Development Department has been identified by the CEO of Lake County as the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds as described in WIOA. Workforce Development has developed tested processes and procedures that align with Lake County government's financial requirements and purchasing ordinance. The Workforce Board sets budget policy aligning with Lake County's budget policies.

The Workforce Board has established a Finance and Compliance Committee. The Finance Committee provides financial analysis, advice, and oversight of the organization's budget. The Committee's sole responsibility is to ensure the organization is operating with the financial resources it needs to provide programs and services to the community.

#### **Procurement Policies and Procedures**

The Workforce Board and the Workforce Development Department follow Lake County's Purchasing Ordinance and the Lake County Purchasing Division takes the lead in managing the process. The competitive process used to award sub-recipients and contracts for activities carried out under WIOA Title I are pursuant to the Lake County procurement policies and procedures. The Workforce Board works with Lake County Purchasing when releasing request for proposals for youth services and one-stop operators and request for quotes for professional services.

## **B. Physical and Programmatic Accessibility**

The Job Center of Lake County MOU clearly defines how the entities within the one-stop delivery system, including the one-stop operator and the one-stop partners will comply with WIOA Sec. 188 and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disability Act of 1990 regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities.

- The Job Center of Lake County is reviewed for facility and programmatic accessibility by an EO Officer from DCEO on a routine basis (e.g. annually or semi-annually).
- Workforce Development has a trained EO Officer who reviews the Job Center as well as external partner sites where services are provided such as at College of Lake County Grayslake Campus, Youth Program contractor locations, and training providers in Lake County accepting ITAs.
- The Job Center's layout supports a culture of inclusiveness in compliance with Section 188 of WIOA, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and all other applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.
- The Job Center is recognizable in a high-traffic area; and is accessible through public transportation and a reasonable walking distance. The Job Center has both accessible on-street parking with spaces closest to the door marked for individuals with disabilities as well as access to a parking garage with dedicated parking spaces marked for individuals with disabilities.
- The Job Center has assistive technology equipment available.

The Job Center Partners are committed to ensure all individuals seeking services at the Job Center will be given access to services on site and the opportunity to explore occupations to understand the technical and physical requirements. Accommodation will be made for individuals when necessary. All partners agree that they will not discriminate in their employment practices or services based on gender, age, race, color, creed, religion, national origin, disability, or veteran's status, or on the basis of any other classification protected under state or federal law. The partners assure that they have in place policies and procedures to address these issues, and that such policies and procedures have been disseminated to their employees and otherwise posted as required by law. The partners further assure that they are currently in compliance with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations regarding these issues.

Partners, co-located at the Job Center, cooperate with compliance monitoring that is conducted to ensure that all comprehensive one-stop centers, programs, services, technology, and materials are accessible and available to all.

The local area must describe steps that will be taken to address the challenges and opportunities that are associated with meeting the administrative requirement of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs.

In addition to the workforce equity lens described in this Local Plan, LWIA 1 will continue to monitor the lasting effects of the pandemic to maintain adaptability and flexibility with regards to the delivery of WIOA programs and services across all demographics. Examples may include the continued use or adoption of technology resources, as needed, or the continued analysis of data pertaining to customer demographics and/or characteristics.

### C. Plan Develop & Public Comment

The Workforce Board has taken several measures to ensure public engagement and gather input on the Plan:

- A public meeting was conducted to collect feedback from Job Center and workforce system partners. The discussion revolved around each entity identifying the population groups they serve, types of services delivered, unique service elements for populations, and service gaps.
- Lake County Partners presented a comprehensive "State of the Current Workforce in Lake County Report" to Workforce Development and key partners. This report included up-to-date information on the current economy, industry and occupational data, demographics, and educational insights.
- Comments and feedback were actively collected at various committee meetings, including the Operations Committee, the Talent Pipeline Committee, the Employer Connection Committee, and the Executive Committee.
- During the development of the new strategic plan, the Workforce Board engaged with community leaders and partners to gather information on strategies aligning with and contributing to the local plan.
- Collaborative efforts with Job Center partners were undertaken to document ways of increasing access to services in underserved communities.
- Individual interviews were conducted with core partners, education and training providers, partners of the Workforce Ecosystem, as well as Workforce Development teams responsible for developing and executing programs and serving individual and business customers.
- A legal notice was posted in the Daily Herald on February 28, 2020, informing the public about the availability of the plan for review. The draft Plan was accessible for public viewing at the Lake County Workforce Development Board office in Waukegan, IL, and was also posted on the Workforce Board website.

Public comments received and how the information is addressed by the CEO, partners, and local board in the final plan

No public comments were received during the 30-day public comment period.

Plan modification procedures.

The Workforce Board will consider modifications to this plan per federal and state requirements. The Workforce Board will undertake a review annually to determine whether modifications outside of the required modifications are needed and will conduct modification of the plan pursuant to guidance from the State of Illinois.

#### **D. Equity Lens – Administrative**

Lake County Workforce Development is focused on creating a more equitable, accessible, and effective workforce system grounded in an understanding of user and stakeholder experience, including how racial, social, and geographic inequities inform experience and outcomes. The Workforce Development Board has adopted the following definitions of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, to guide our work.

- **DIVERSITY** - Understanding that everyone is unique and recognizing our individual differences. These can be along the dimension of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. A focused dedication on meeting the needs of everyone in our community, especially those who have been historically underserved.
- **EQUITY** - The effort to provide different levels of support based on an individual's or group's needs in order to achieve fairness in outcomes. Consistently striving to meet individuals where they are, while providing them with support and access to services. Working to achieve equity acknowledges unequal starting places and the necessity to correct the imbalance.
- **INCLUSION** - A state of belonging, when persons of different backgrounds and identities are valued, integrated, and welcomed equitably as decision-makers and collaborators. Inclusion involves people being given the opportunity to grow and feel/know they belong. Diversity efforts alone do not create inclusive environments. Inclusion involves a sense of coming as you are and being accepted, rather than feeling the need to assimilate.

As Workforce Development advances in this work, we aspire to move further on the equity spectrum toward justice—the dismantling of barriers to resources and opportunities in society so that a more equitable and accessible workforce system, regardless of remote or in-person service delivery is created.

In addition Workforce Development will continue to comply with all Federal and State physical inclusiveness and accessibility requirements, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, Section 188 of WIOA, the Illinois Accessibility Code, the most recent ADA standards for Accessible Design and the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards, and all other applicable statutory and regulatory requirements, as well as all Equal Opportunity policies and standards including those adhered to by each Partner agency when hiring.



