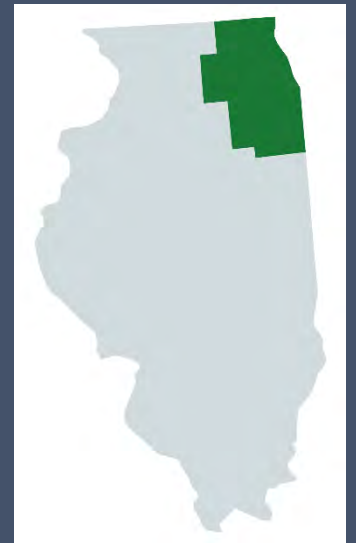


# NORTHEAST ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REGION (NEEDR)

Regional WIOA Plan, 2024-2028



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## CHAPTER 1: ECONOMIC & WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

### A. Provide an analysis of the factors listed below:

1. Economic conditions including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations (Sec. 679.560(a)(1)(i))
  - a. What are the targeted industries, high-impact industry clusters, and in-demand occupations in the region?
  - b. What industries have favorable location quotients?
  - c. What industries and occupations have favorable demand projections based on growth?
  - d. What industries and occupations have favorable demand projections based on replacements?
  - e. What industries are considered mature but still important to the economy?
  - f. What industries are considered emerging in the regional economy?
  - g. What is the projected regional key in-demand occupations?
  - h. What sources of supply and demand data were used to determine the targeted industries occupations and skills?

### Introduction to Labor Market Information

The data analysis conducted for this plan includes data provided by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity in the 2024 Regional Plan Data Packet for EDR 4 – Northeast, the Illinois Department of Employment Security’s Labor Market Information Resource Center, and Lightcast (formerly EMSI/Burning Glass). The combination of these three data sources provides the broadest perspective on the labor market situation for the NEEDR. Because the region is very large and densely populated it is critical to be able to refine the data analysis to identify trends and conditions that will impact the workforce and employment strategies of the region.

Much of the data analysis is based on 2020-2023 when available. The 10-year projection data may be able to provide a picture of where the regional economy is headed but will be influenced by the impacts of the pandemic and the recovery coming out of that time period.

Using the data to map out a plan for the future is going to require additional intelligence the Regional Integrated Business Team to best understand the industry pains and areas of opportunity for real-time services. Looking at the labor market data through an equity lens requires an analysis of the workforce in 2023. There are lingering challenges contributing to some groups not rejoining the workforce and these challenges pose needed service strategies that the region can focus on in the near and long term. The current data sets do not capture this information fully. As industry continues to be challenged with filling open positions, the region will continue to see changes in the skills and education requirements, changes in wages and benefits, and movement in the workforce seeking out better jobs, wages and work/life balance not readily captured in data.

Through the draft Illinois' Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified State Plan, the State has provided direction on analysis of economic conditions. This Northeast Economic Development Region (NEEDR) plan will use similar analysis in this document. Table 1 details the changes in gross domestic product (GDP) and personal income for the NEEDR and Illinois between 2018 and 2022. Data was obtained through the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. While there was a slight dip in GDP between 2019 and 2020 presumably due to the pandemic, there is an upward trend which is significant when examined over time.

	Gross Domestic Product (millions of dollars)						
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2018-2022	2020-2022
NEEDR	\$656,826	\$664,321	\$628,745	\$663,479	\$672,649	2.41%	6.98%
Illinois	\$851,517	\$857,985	\$810,210	\$852,749	\$864,170	1.48%	6.66%
	Personal Income						
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022		
NEEDR	\$546,635.08	\$561,950.06	\$592,683.69	\$640,985.01	\$639,985.41	17.078%	7.98%
Illinois	\$707,358.80	\$722,325.90	\$752,459.8	\$775,011.60	\$725,403.60	2.55%	(3.59)%

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Department of Commerce, November 2023

Between 2018-2020 the NEEDR's GDP change fared well and was comparable to the State of Illinois GDP change in the same time period. Personal Income increased in NEEDR and state and nation between 2018 and 2022, with a significant jump after the pandemic. The State did not see the same increase in personal income after 2020.

Table 2 details industry sectors in the NEEDR at the 2-digit NAICS (North American Industry Classification System) level, as well as employment changes between 2020-2030, location quotient and demand. The information used for this table was produced by IDES, however, due to the timing of the data production and planning cycle, the level of demand (Leading, Emerging, Maturing Industries) and Location Quotients were obtained using Lightcast data.

The top industries in the NEEDR at the 2-digit NAICS level based on projected employment numbers in 2030 are Health Care & Social Assistance (604,424 jobs), Retail Trade (407,698 jobs), Professional/Scientific/Technical Services (397,151 jobs), Manufacturing (376,843 jobs), and Educational Services (370,839 jobs). These top industries have only changed somewhat in order since 2020 but each industry's projected job growth is estimated to expand. The Health Care & Social Assistance industry reports the greatest job change of 9.17% or over 55,000 jobs. In fact, the overall region's employment base is showing growth projections during this time period of nearly 9%.

**Table 2: NEEDR Employment By Major Industry Sector**

NAICS Title	2020 Employment	Share of Total 2020 NEEDR Employment	2030 Employment	Net Employment Change 2020-2030	Percent Employment Change 2020-2030	Employment and LQ
Health Care and Social Assistance	549,018	12.65%	604,424	55,406	9.17%	(.98) Emerging
Retail Trade	385,436	8.88%	417,697	32,261	7.72%	(.92) Emerging
Manufacturing	364,410	8.40%	376,843	12,433	3.30%	(1.07) Leading
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	360,985	8.32%	397,151	36,166	9.11%	(1.23) Leading
Educational Services	358,162	8.25%	370,839	12,677	3.42%	(1.34) Leading
Admin. & Support & Waste Mgmt. & Remediation Services	329,135	7.58%	357,993	28,858	8.06%	(1.24) Leading
Accommodation and Food Services	276,492	6.37%	369,112	92,620	25.09%	(.90) Emerging
Finance and Insurance	257,357	5.93%	271,627	14,270	5.25%	(1.29) Leading
Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	254,229	5.86%	300,957	46,728	15.53%	(1.37) Leading
Wholesale Trade	220,321	5.08%	227,070	6,749	2.97%	(1.30) Leading
Government	207,167	4.77%	222,656	15,489	6.96%	(.77) Emerging
Other Services	182,060	4.20%	201,462	19,402	9.63%	(1.02) Leading
Construction	152,739	3.52%	170,781	18,042	10.56%	(.74) Emerging
Information	71,857	1.66%	73,932	2,075	2.81%	(.89) Emerging
Management of Companies and Enterprises	67,428	1.55%	68,214	786	1.15%	(1.02) Leading
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	64,306	1.48%	69,190	4,884	7.06%	(.98) Emerging
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	49,356	1.14%	84,343	34,987	41.48%	(1.01) Leading
Agricultural Production	10,337	0.24%	10,523	186	1.77%	(.19) Emerging
Natural Resources and Mining	1,581	0.04%	1,643	62	3.77%	(.11) Emerging
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,339,339</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>4,760,646</b>	<b>421,307</b>	<b>8.85%</b>	

Source 2020-2030 Employment: Illinois Department of Employment Security  
Source 2020 Location Quotient: Lightcast Data Analytics

Table 3 below details the top occupations at the 2-digit SOC (Standard Occupational Classification) level. The top occupations in the NEEDR in 2020 included Office and Administrative Support Occupations (571,042 jobs); Transportation and Material Moving Occupations (441,037 jobs); Sales and Related Occupations (415,264 jobs); Management Occupations (339,039 jobs) and Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations (285,099 jobs).

Office and Administrative Support Occupations makes up the largest percentage share of occupations in the NEEDR in 2020 at 13.31% of all jobs and is projected to experience a slight decline in jobs between 2020-2030 (-6,344 jobs or -1.10%). Not surprisingly, Transportation and Material Moving Occupations is projected to have an increase of over 65,000 jobs, which is nearly 15% in the 10-year period. With the exception of Office and Administrative Support, all other major occupational categories are projected to grow over the 10-year time-frame with the regional total of 421,307 jobs or nearly 10% growth.

All but one of the twenty-two major occupational categories are projecting a level of positive job change. Not unexpectedly, Food Preparation and Serving Occupations are projected to add the largest number of jobs in the 10-year period which is mainly a result of the rebound from the job loss in this sector during the pandemic. Given the significant increase in jobs in the Transportation and Distribution industry sector, there will be a similar increase in Transportation and Material Moving Occupations employment change. This trend holds for the average annual opening in major occupational categories where employment growth is strongest in Food Preparation and Serving occupations and Transportation and Material Moving Occupations. It is important to note that strong growth is expected in Sales, Management, Finance, and Healthcare Occupational categories as well. These occupational trends provide strong support for the selected industry targets for the NEEDR highlighted later in this chapter.

**Table 3: Regional Employment by Major Occupational Sector**

Standard Occupational Classification (SOC)			Share of		Employment Change		Average Annual Job Openings			
		2020	Total	2030	2020-2030		due to			
Code	Title	Emp.	2020	Emp.	Number	Percent	Exits	Transfer	Growth	Total
43-0000	Office & Administrative Support Occupations	577,386	13.31%	571,042	-6,344	-1.10	27,499	35,732	-634	62,597
53-0000	Transportation & Material Moving Occupations	441,037	10.16%	506,339	65,302	14.81	21,848	37,409	6,530	65,787
41-0000	Sales & Related Occupations	415,264	9.57%	443,536	28,272	6.81	20,645	33,304	2,827	56,776
11-0000	Management Occupations	339,039	7.81%	376,574	37,535	11.07	8,272	19,893	3,754	31,919
13-0000	Business & Financial Operations Occupations	288,093	6.64%	315,460	27,367	9.50	7,903	17,753	2,737	28,393
35-0000	Food Preparation & Serving Occupations	285,099	6.57%	366,520	81,421	28.56	24,806	33,113	8,142	66,061
51-0000	Production Occupations	280,156	6.46%	286,000	5,844	2.09	10,742	20,235	584	31,561
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners & Technical Occs	254,119	5.86%	274,712	20,593	8.10	6,662	7,940	2,059	16,661
25-0000	Education, Training & Library Occupations	243,144	5.60%	258,484	15,340	6.31	10,401	11,588	1,534	23,523
31-0000	Healthcare Support Occupations	160,367	3.70%	184,416	24,049	15.00	10,167	10,565	2,405	23,137
15-0000	Computer & Mathematical Occupations	156,743	3.61%	173,571	16,828	10.74	3,431	8,140	1,683	13,254
49-0000	Installation, Maintenance & Repair Occs	151,140	3.48%	166,429	15,289	10.12	5,065	9,968	1,529	16,562
47-0000	Construction & Extraction Occupations	139,466	3.21%	153,572	14,106	10.11	4,322	9,859	1,411	15,592
37-0000	Building & Grounds Cleaning & Maint. Occs	135,012	3.11%	148,634	13,622	10.09	8,091	10,326	1,362	19,779
33-0000	Protective Service Occupations	95,256	2.20%	105,997	10,741	11.28	4,781	6,512	1,074	12,367
39-0000	Personal Care & Service Occupations	92,185	2.12%	116,688	24,503	26.58	6,495	8,243	2,450	17,188
21-0000	Community & Social Services Occupations	77,098	1.78%	84,741	7,643	9.91	2,813	5,151	764	8,728
27-0000	Arts/Design/Entertainment, Sports/Media Occs	71,353	1.64%	78,156	6,803	9.53	2,821	4,689	680	8,190
17-0000	Architecture & Engineering Occupations	58,655	1.35%	62,899	4,244	7.24	1,448	2,902	424	4,774
23-0000	Legal Occupations	42,033	0.97%	47,289	5,256	12.50	1,201	1,684	526	3,411
19-0000	Life, Physical & Social Science Occupations	31,468	0.73%	34,223	2,755	8.75	669	2,258	276	3,203
45-0000	Farming, Fishing & Forestry Occupations	5,226	0.12%	5,364	138	2.64	223	599	14	836
00-0000	<b>Total, All Occupations</b>	<b>4,339,339</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>4,760,646</b>	<b>421,307</b>	<b>9.71</b>	<b>190,304</b>	<b>297,864</b>	<b>42,131</b>	<b>530,299</b>

Source 2020-2030 Employment: Illinois Department of Employment Security

Source 2020 Location Quotient: Lightcast Data Analytics

Location quotient is a helpful way of understanding how concentrated a specific industry is in a Region compared to the nation and what makes a Region “unique” in comparison to the national average. Industry sectors are defined in three separate groupings based on location quotient. These grouping detail the level of demand the industry is in the Region:

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

- **Leading Industries:** industries that are expected to grow during the projection period, and which are important within the state (i.e., have a location quotient greater than 1.0)
- **Emerging Industries:** industries that are not strongly represented in the current economy (i.e., have a location quotient that is less than 1.0), but are expected to grow during the projection period.
- **Maturing Industries:** industries that are important within the state but are not expected to grow during the projection period.

Each of these categories is significant for the economy, job growth and availability and are therefore important for the planning of WIOA and partner programs. In summary, LEADING industries are those that will likely provide the largest numbers of job openings due to their combination of size and growth; EMERGING industries are those that are currently small but are quickly gaining in economic importance and job creation; and MATURING industries are those which have slower job growth but still have significant presence in the economy and will continue to create job openings.

Using Location Quotients provides an indication if an industry has a comparative advantage in employment versus the rest of the US. A value of 1.0 indicates the industry is at the national level, values greater than 1.0 indicate the industry has a comparative advantage versus the nation and those with values less than 1.0 indicate a comparative disadvantage. When an industry has a comparative advantage, the area would want to support continued growth in that sector.

Leading industries in the NEEDR which have the largest employment base include Professional/Scientific/Technical Services, Manufacturing, Administrative Support/Waste Management/Remediation Services, Financial Services, Transportation and Warehousing, and Wholesale Trade. While several industries are categorized as Emerging, they are large and very close to moving above the 1.0 location quotient concentration divider between Leading and Emerging. These include Health Care and Social Assistance, Retail, Accommodation/Food Services, and Construction.

Tables 4 and 5 display the results of categorizing (according to this methodology) the major industries from Table 3. Major industry categories that are not included in one of these three categories are now dropped from the analysis.

**TABLE 4**  
**LEADING INDUSTRY SECTORS**

Industry	2020 Employment	2030 Employment	2020-2030 Net Employment Change	Location Quotient
<b>Total, All Industries</b>	<b>4,339,339</b>	<b>4,760,646</b>	<b>421,307</b>	<b>1.00</b>
Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	254,229	300,957	46,728	1.37
Wholesale Trade	220,321	227,070	6,749	1.30
Finance and Insurance	257,357	271,627	14,270	1.29
Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt/Remed. Svcs.	329,135	357,993	28,858	1.24
Professional/Scientific/Technical Services	360,985	397,151	36,166	1.23
Manufacturing	364,410	376,843	12,433	1.07

**TABLE 5**  
**EMERGING INDUSTRY SECTORS**

Industry	2020 Employment	2030 Employment	2020-2030 Net Employment Change	Location Quotient
<b>Total, All Industries</b>	<b>4,339,339</b>	<b>4,760,646</b>	<b>421,307</b>	<b>1.00</b>
Health Care/Social Assistance	549,018	604,424	55,406	0.98
Retail Trade	385,436	417,697	32,261	0.92
Accommodations/Food Services	276,492	369,112	92,620	0.9
Construction	152,739	170,781	18,042	0.74

## 2. Employment needs of employers in existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations (§ 679.560(a)(1)(ii))

Based on the data examined in the previous pages and the trends that are known to the LWIAs through their Business Services Representatives and Economic Development Partners, the NEEDR has chosen to focus sector efforts on the following industries, with the understanding that both Clean Energy and Information Technology (IT) underlie many of the other sectors and are important economic drivers in their own right:

- Healthcare and Social Assistance (including Life Sciences)
- Manufacturing (with an emphasis on Advanced Manufacturing)
- Transportation and Warehousing
- Information Technology
- Clean Energy – Exploring for future sector efforts



As outlined in Table 2, the first three sectors above are critical to the NEEDR economy and are emerging or leading sectors. NEEDR has broadened its understanding of the Healthcare industry to include the broader Life Sciences industry recognizing the value to the local economy of this industry that bridges sectors such as pharmaceuticals, food manufacturing, environmental and ecological sciences, biotechnology and more. Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIA) in the NEEDR also focus on additional sectors as warranted by local conditions.

The economic impact these industries have in the NEEDR is considerable. Table 6 details the aggregate effect on jobs for the Region by industry.

**Table 6: NEEDR Annual Impact by Sector (Event Size = 100)**

	Added Jobs	Direct Jobs	Indirect Jobs	Induced Jobs
Healthcare (62)	100	25	13	77
Jobs to Earning Multiplier	100	\$1,988,247.75	\$1,054,373.72	\$5,394,450.23
Manufacturing (31-33)	100	47	29	164
Jobs to Earning Multiplier	100	\$4,880,979	\$2,537,140	\$12,13,942
IT	100	35	14	141
Jobs to Earning Multiplier	100	\$2,710,298.4	\$1,034,898	\$9,359,893
Transportation and Warehousing	100	37	14	93
Jobs to Earning Multiplier	100	\$ 3,069,717	\$ 1,405,264	\$ 8,081,305

Source: Lightcast 2021.4, Bureau of Economic Analysis

Manufacturing is, and continues to be, a sector with tremendous innovation. The Region has always been at the forefront of technological innovation in this industry and intends to maintain that place in national leadership.

Table 7 below provides a summary of the 20 most frequently posted positions in the NEEDR on common online platforms. As anticipated the most frequently posted positions are those that are tied to the key industry sectors that are being targeted in the Region. To identify demand for employees, a report of all jobs posted in the major employment sectors was reviewed. The data used in the following analysis is from Lightcast. Lightcast collects job postings from common online platforms and identifies the most commonly required skills and certifications. Tables 8, 9, and 10 display the most frequently cited “specialized skills,” “common skills,” and “software skills” found in the 2023 job postings.

Additional analysis of the demand for employees in specific occupations found in the targeted industry sectors is discussed in more detail later in this Chapter.

**Table 7 – Job Postings in the NEEDR (2023)**

Occupation (SOC)	Total Postings (Jan 2023 – Dec 2023)	Unique Postings (Jan 2023 – Dec 2023)	Median Posting Duration
Registered Nurses	285,167	59,610	28 days
Retail Salespersons	84,553	29,901	27 days
Sales Representatives, Wholesale/ Mfg.	77,664	26,929	28 days
Software Developers	75,288	25,515	27 days
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	114,507	24,205	31 days
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	60,076	21,588	28 days
Customer Service Representatives	61,271	20,239	28 days
Managers, All Other	52,651	20,151	28 days
Laborers/Freight, Stock/Matl. Movers, Hand	52,381	16,077	26 days
Fast Food and Counter Workers	44,710	16,017	28 days
Medical and Health Services Managers	44,420	15,511	28 days
Computer Occupations, All Other	40,069	15,424	28 days
Sales Managers	36,088	12,901	28 days
General and Operations Managers	41,231	12,710	29 days
Accountants and Auditors	33,492	12,179	28 days
Food Service Managers	30,327	11,614	30 days
Nursing Assistants	38,349	11,363	26 days
Financial Managers	30,821	11,176	29 days
Human Resources Specialists	28,144	10,816	27 days
Marketing Managers	30,272	10,797	29 days

Source: Lightcast, Job Posting Analytics (2023)

Table 8 – Top Specialized Skills

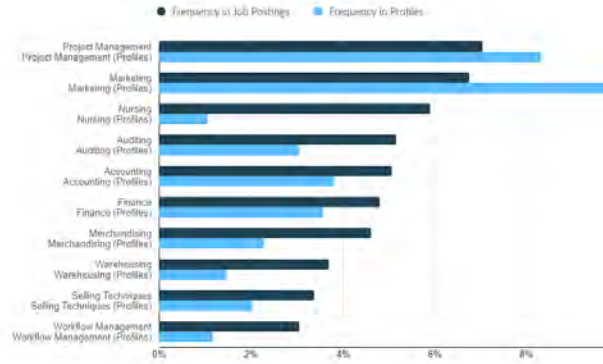
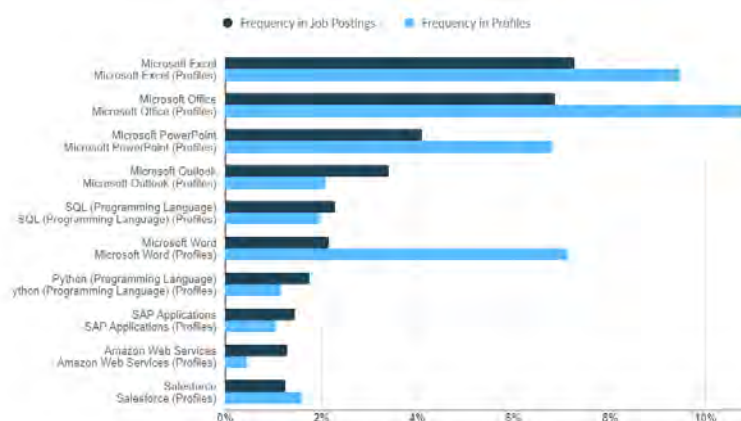


Table 9 – Top Common Skills



Table 10 – Top Software Skills



In addition to the secondary data trends that have been displayed in this Chapter, it is important to recognize the change in working arrangements since the pandemic. There has been a significant increase in remote and work from home (WFH) employment arrangements. In the Illinois WIOA Plan for 2024-2028 it was noted that the pandemic permanency increased work from home employment equivalent to almost 40 years of pre-pandemic growth. Data indicates that working from home is more common in major cities than in smaller cities and towns. Given that the NEEDR is a major metropolitan area, it is expected that WFH employment status will continue to exist in the region. This trend has implications for the employment needs of the employers in the region and local workforce areas in the NEEDR will continue to incorporate strategies that address this trend especially when conducting career coaching with job seekers and working with employers on recruitment activities.

3. Knowledge and skills needed to meet the employment needs of the employers in the region, including employment needs in in-demand industry sectors and occupations (§ 679.560(a)(2));
  - a. What are the targeted career pathway clusters in the region?
  - b. What skills are in demand in the region?
  - c. How well do the existing skills of job seekers match the demands of local businesses

The Region is targeting the five industry sectors of Healthcare and Social Assistance, Manufacturing, Transportation and Warehousing, Information Technology, and Clean Energy for its work overall, and each is also an area where the Region has or is developing comprehensive career pathways and training opportunities.

In 2016 the Region received funding from DCEO and hired a consultant (EDSI, Inc.) to develop industry guides and manuals, industry and occupational focused PowerPoint templates, industry sector information sheets, and demand occupation information sheets. This project was intended to aid both One-Stop staff and job seeking customers in understanding opportunities in the ten county Region in the four main industry sectors:

- Healthcare
- Information Technology (industry-occupation hybrid)
- Manufacturing
- Transportation/Logistics (including Wholesale Trade)

The guides and manuals incorporate career pathway materials and information to help individuals, workforce career counseling staff, other staff, and business customers in developing pathway-focused training and worker preparation activities. Over the last eight years, these guides and manuals have been modified and updated to meet the local needs of each LWIA. Additionally, the Region utilizes the Illinois Pathways web platform as well as tools developed and utilized by community colleges in the Region and from other sources to provide graphic pathway maps and the details that align with them.

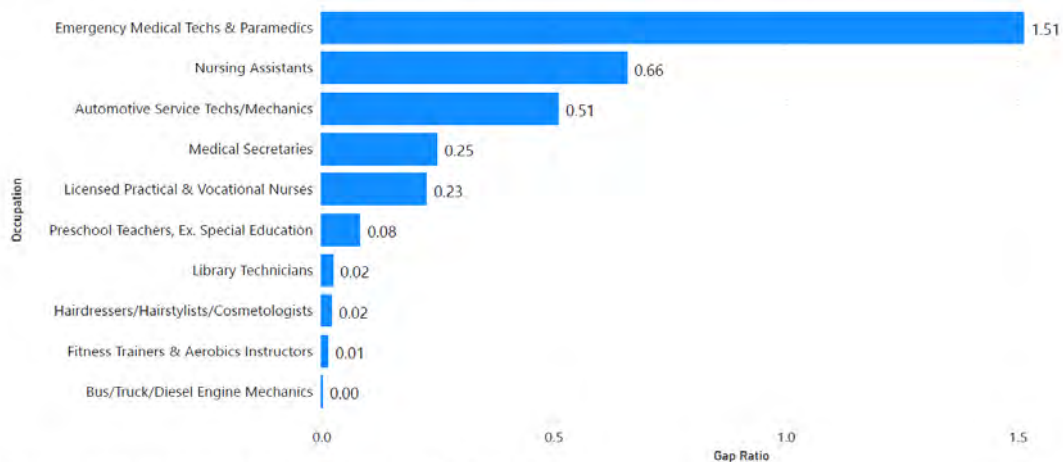
The Region looks at how the region’s job seekers are matching demands of local business through job posting analytics. Table 7 displayed earlier in this Chapter provides the 2023 Job Postings from Lightcast. Charts 1 through 4 identify the supply gap ratio for these openings as a proxy measure that provides insight on how closely supply aligns with demand for selected occupations. The supply in the below charts is the number of program completions in the region associated with the occupation and the demand is the estimated number of regional job openings. The occupations with the smallest values (at the bottom of these charts) are the ones with the largest gap between the current supply and the anticipated demand for that occupation. It is important to note that the gaps identified in these charts are only an indicator of the variation between supply and demand in an occupation. Because the completion data only includes those institutions in the NEEDR, it is not a completely accurate display of the situation. Because the NEEDR is an area that attracts employees from across the US, the gap may not be as large in some instances as the charts reflect.

### CHART 1: Supply Gap Analysis for Occupations Requiring Certificate or License

#### Supply Gap Analysis for Occupations Requiring a Certificate or License

Region  
Northeast

The supply gap ratio is a proxy measure that provides insight on how closely supply aligns with demand for selected occupations. The calculation of the ratio is supply / demand. In this case, the supply is the number of program completions in the region associated with the occupation and the demand is the estimated number of regional job openings. A gap ratio of one indicates one completer per projected job opening. Gaps lower than one indicate more job openings than completers, and gaps greater than 1 indicate more completers than openings.



Completers do not include most apprenticeships and true OJT provided solely by employers.

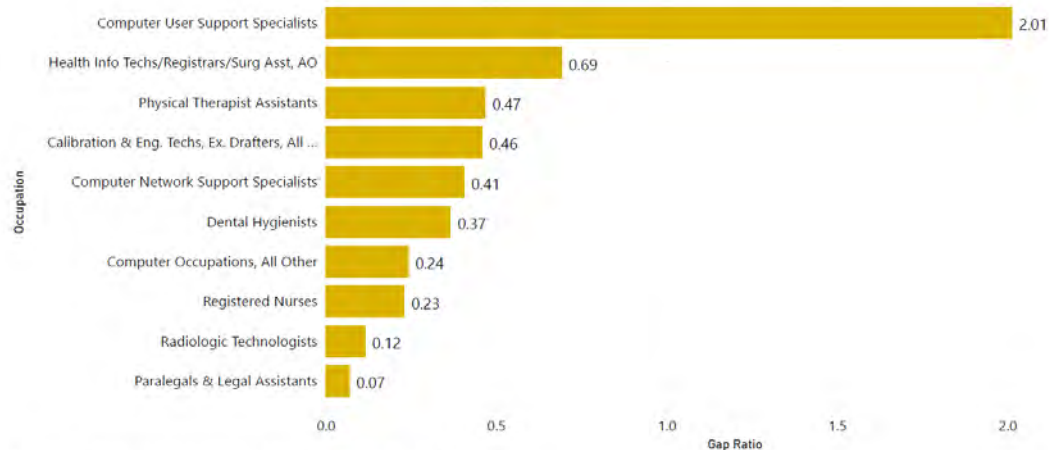
Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security, Illinois Board of Higher Education, & Lightcast, 2023.

## CHART 2: Supply Gap Analysis for Occupations Requiring Associate Degree

### Supply Gap Analysis for Occupations Requiring an Associate's Degree

Region  
Northeast

The supply gap ratio is a proxy measure that provides insight on how closely supply aligns with demand for selected occupations. The calculation of the ratio is supply / demand. In this case, the supply is the number of program completions in the region associated with the occupation and the demand is the estimated number of regional job openings. A gap ratio of one indicates one completer per projected job opening. Gaps lower than one indicate more job openings than completers, and gaps greater than 1 indicate more completers than openings.



Completers do not include most apprenticeships and true OJT provided solely by employers.

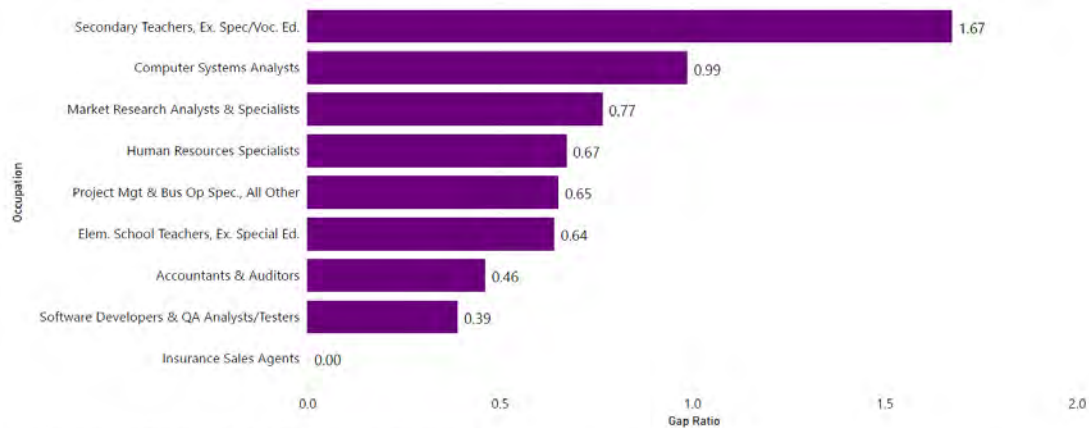
Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security, Illinois Board of Higher Education, & Lightcast, 2023.

## CHART 3: Supply Gap Analysis for Occupations Requiring Bachelor's Degree

### Supply Gap Analysis for Occupations Requiring a Bachelor's Degree

Region  
Northeast

The supply gap ratio is a proxy measure that provides insight on how closely supply aligns with demand for selected occupations. The calculation of the ratio is supply / demand. In this case, the supply is the number of program completions in the region associated with the occupation and the demand is the estimated number of regional job openings. A gap ratio of one indicates one completer per projected job opening. Gaps lower than one indicate more job openings than completers, and gaps greater than 1 indicate more completers than openings.



Completers do not include most apprenticeships and true OJT provided solely by employers.

Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security, Illinois Board of Higher Education, & Lightcast, 2023.

## CHART 4: Supply Gap Analysis for Occupations Requiring BA or Higher

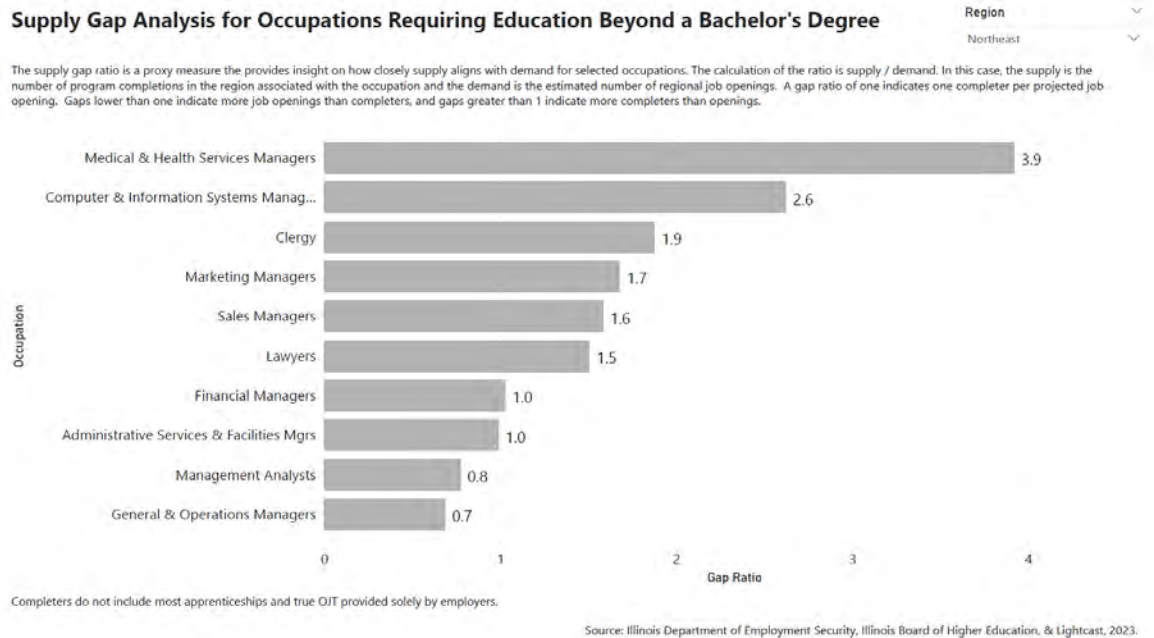


Table 11 provides detail on the job postings identified for the targeted industries in the NEEDR. The job postings within the targeted industries of Healthcare, IT, Manufacturing, and TDL show the most required skills and qualifications focus on an increase demand for post-secondary education, advanced technological skills, process improvements, customer service, direct care, management and leadership skills, and basic computer/software literacy. The demand occupations in the Clean Energy sector are being researched because the data around this sector is recently emerging and not as universally understood as that for the other targeted industry sectors. One important note about the job posting data is that this is an aggregation of job posts across a wide range of on-line sources. It is not intended to be exact enumerators of the occupational demand but to provide general indicators of the demand.

Based on the data sets, the NEEDR demonstrates it can meet the skill demands as NEEDR has a high rate of college-educated residents – higher than the state and nation at 48% of the population possessing a college degree. It is the adults having a high school diploma or less that poses the greatest disconnect with the needs of the workforce and low-wage earners advancing in the workforce to family sustaining wage employment. To address this challenge, the partners across the NEEDR are prioritizing the coordination and delivery of employment and training services to address the skills gap; the skills gap being unique to each of the four key industries and being addressed at the qualification and skills level. The NEEDR has been advocating for skills-based hiring among employers to address the deficit of candidates for a wide variety of open positions. Encouraging employers to explore more expansive hiring practices can assist those job seekers with barriers to employment.



- Major healthcare providers and systems in the region such as Advocate Aurora Health, Northwestern Memorial Health Care, Ascension Healthcare, and Mercy Health have a high demand for certified care givers such as Registered Nurses which is the number one occupation in job postings for the region. The job postings show employers require a variety of technical skills like nursing and CPR. NEEDR has a high supply of RNs and LPNs and are able to meet the demand of these qualifications and skills.
- Key industry leaders in the IT Sector such as Capital One, Uline, Michael Page, and Request Technology have a high need for technical skills in programming and computer science along with communications and customer service skills – advance training throughout the NEEDR give job seekers the opportunity to gain the required skills and qualifications to meet the industry’s high demand.
- NEEDR has a high demand for skills and qualifications in the manufacturing and transportation industries that are key industries in the region with employment opportunities across all occupations and skill levels. The NEEDR has strong training program availability in the top occupations in these two sectors, however, the employer demand has exceeded both the availability of training program completers as well as interested job seekers. It will be key to identify additional labor force participants to meet the strong employer demand that is seen in these sectors.
- The Biden administration has adopted an ambitious climate agenda that is one of the driving forces behind the focus on the Clean Energy workforce. With the unemployment rates at historic lows, there are concerns about the ability to train and employ enough clean-energy workers to meet the projected demands. The NEEDR has begun planning to target clean energy jobs and identify qualified training providers to prepare workers for the job openings. Continued involvement in the Illinois Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) initiatives will be a significant component of the NEEDR’s clean energy industry strategy moving forward. According to the 2023 U.S. Energy and Employment Jobs Report, clean energy jobs increased in every state and grew 3.9% nationally from 2021 to 2022. The number of jobs in battery electric vehicles increased by 28,366 (+27%) from 2021 to 2022, which was the fastest growth of any energy technology. Clean energy electricity technologies, such as solar and wind, accounted for nearly 87% of net new electric power generation jobs, adding 22,279 jobs (+3.6%). The number of women working in energy increased by 149,732 (+7.8%), meaning that over half of the net jobs added in 2022 were held by women. Veterans made up 9% of the U.S. energy workforce, higher than their representation in the overall U.S. economy (5%). These trends will be important considerations as the NEEDR addresses the employment needs of employers in the Clean Energy sector.



Overall, while there is a supply gap in some occupations in the targeted sectors, it is important to note that the NEEDR is a top attractor for educated talent, especially from elsewhere in the Midwest. Chicago repeatedly ranks among the top metro areas where students want to live after graduation. Within a five-hour drive of the NEEDR, over 500,000 students earn a degree yearly, with an additional 142,000 students earning non-degree certificates.



Table 11: Job Analytic Data Analysis for Targeted Industries in the NEEDR

Healthcare	Information Technology	Manufacturing	Transportation & Logistics
510,353	212,482	223,773	149,250
There were 510,353 total job postings from January 2023 to December 2023, of which 153,689 were unique.	There were 212,482 total job postings from January 2023 to December 2023, of which 70,089 were unique.	There were 223,723 total job postings from January 2023 to December 2023, of which 76,792 were unique.	There were 149,250 total job postings from January 2023 to December 2023, of which 34,188 were unique.
Top Companies	Top Companies	Top Companies	Top Companies
Advocate Aurora Health	Capital One	AbbVie	United Airlines
Northwestern Memorial Healthcare	Uline	Kraft Heinz	FedEx
Ascension Healthcare	Michael Page	S & C Electric Company	RJW Logistics
Northwestern Medicine	Request Technology	Abbott Laboratories	UPS
Loyola University Health System	Randstad	Medline Industries	Transdev
Edward-Elmhurst Health	Edward Jones	Northrop Grumman	Roehl Transport
NorthShore University Health System	Motion Recruitment	Horizon Therapeutics	Uber
Rush University Medical Center	Robert Half	Siemens	United States Postal Service
Franciscan Ministries	Walgreens Boots Alliance	Baxter International	Penske Automotive Group
Trinity Health	Healthcare Service Corporation	Motorola Solutions	Lineage Logistics
Top Posted Job Titles	Top Posted Job Titles	Top Posted Job Titles	Top Posted Job Titles
Registered Nurses	Software Engineers	Material Handlers	CDL-A Truck Drivers
Patient Care Technicians	Data Engineers	Maintenance Technicians	OTR CDL-A Truck Drivers
Caregivers	Software Developers	Machine Operators	CDL-A Flatbed Truck Drivers
Licensed Practical Nurses	Network Engineers	Customer Service Representatives	Forklift Operators
Physical Therapists	DevOps Engineers	Forklift Operators	Regional/Company CDL-A Truck Drivers
Medical Assistants	Full Stack Software Engineers	Maintenance Mechanics	Drivers
Phlebotomists	System Engineers	Production Supervisors	Material Handlers
Certified Nursing Assistants	Solutions Architects	CDL-A Truck Drivers	Customer Service Representatives
Patient Service Representatives	Java Developers	Assemblers	Warehouse Package Handlers
Nurse Practitioners	IT Project Managers	Warehouse Associates	Diesel Mechanics
Education Breakdown	Education Breakdown	Education Breakdown	Education Breakdown
HS or GED 29%	HS or GED 6%	HS or GED 24%	HS or GED 22%
Post Secondary degree 51%	Post Secondary degree 76%	Post Secondary degree 69%	Post Secondary degree 25%
Healthcare	Information Technology	Manufacturing	Transportation & Logistics
Top Specialized/Technical Skills	Top Specialized/Technical Skills	Top Specialized/Technical Skills	Top Specialized/Technical Skills
Nursing	Computer Science	Project Management	Truck Driving
Medical Records	Agile Methodology	Marketing	Warehousing
Nursing Care	SQL Programming Language	Finance	Forklift Truck
CPR	Project Management	Auditing	Auditing
Billing	Python Programming Language	New Product Development	Project Management
Treatment Planning	Java Programming Language	Warehousing	Flatbed Truck Operation
Direct Patient Care	Amazon Web Services	Process Improvement	Supply Chain
Electronic Medical Record	Microsoft Azure	Supply Chain	Pallet Jacks
Pediatrics	Automation	Accounting	Accounting
Discharge Planning	Software Engineering	SAP Applications	Finance
Top Common Skills	Top Common Skills	Top Common Skills	Top Common Skills
Communications	Communication	Communications	Communication
Customer Service	Management	Management	Customer Service
Management	Troubleshooting (Problem Solving)	Sales	Operations
Leadership	Problem Solving	Operations	Management
Planning	Leadership	Leadership	Sales
Ethical Standards and Conduct	Operations	Customer Service	Leadership
Top Qualifications	Top Qualifications	Top Qualifications	Top Qualifications
Registered Nurse (RN)	Certified Information Systems Security Professional	Valid Driver's License	Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Class A
Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification	Valid Driver's License	Master of Business Administration (MBA)	Commercial Driver's License (CDL)
Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certification	Project Management Professional Certification	Forklift Certification	Valid Driver's License
Valid Driver's License	Certified Information System Auditor (CISA)	Project Management Professional Certification	Tanker Endorsement
Certified Nursing Assistant (CAN)	CompTIA A+	Certified Public Accountant	Hazmat Endorsement
Licensed Practical Nurse (LPM)	Cisco Certified Network Associate	Security Clearance	Forklift Certification
American Red Cross (ARC) Certification	Master of Business Administration (MBA)	Top Secret-Sensitive Compartmented Information (TS/SCI) Clearance	Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) Card
Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS) Certification	Certified Internal Auditor	CDL Class A License	Tanker and Hazmat Combo X Endorsement
Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)	Cisco Certified Network Professional	Commercial Driver's License (CDL)	Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) Certification
Nurse Practitioner (APRN-CNP)	Microsoft Certified Professional		Master of Business Administration (MBA)

Source: Lightcast, 2023.4; Job Posting Analytics

4. Regional workforce considering current labor force employment and unemployment data, information on labor market trends, and educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment (§ 679.510(a)(1)(iv) and § 679.560(a)(3));
  - a. How is the region changing in terms of demographics, labor supply and occupational demand?
  - b. What special populations exist in the region, what is their magnitude, and what are the policy and service implications to meet the needs of these individuals?

### Labor Force Size, Demographic Employment and Unemployment

Table 12 details the labor force statistics of the NEEDR between 2018-2023. The greatest employment figure was reported in 2018 when the NEEDR had a total of 4,390,158 individuals employed but as of November 2023 the number of employed individuals has almost returned to that level (4,381,274). The labor force participation numbers have continued to climb since the pandemic from a low of 4,451,444 in 2020 to very close to pre-pandemic numbers in 2023 of 4,578,570. Unemployment in the NEEDR has continually decreased since the high of 9.7% during the pandemic in 2020 to 4.3% in November of 2023. The increase in labor force participation has been a positive trend for employers in the region who have been struggling to recruit talent for the last several years.

**Table 12: Labor Force Statistics in the NEEDR, 2018-2023**

Year	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Percent Unemployed
2023 (Nov.)	4,578,570	4,381,274	197,296	4.3%
2022	4,588,802	4,373,969	214,833	4.7%
2021	4,475,519	4,196,284	279,235	6.2%
2020	4,451,444	4,019,109	432,335	9.7%
2019	4,587,811	4,411,039	176,772	3.9%
2018	4,579,942	4,390,158	189,784	4.1%

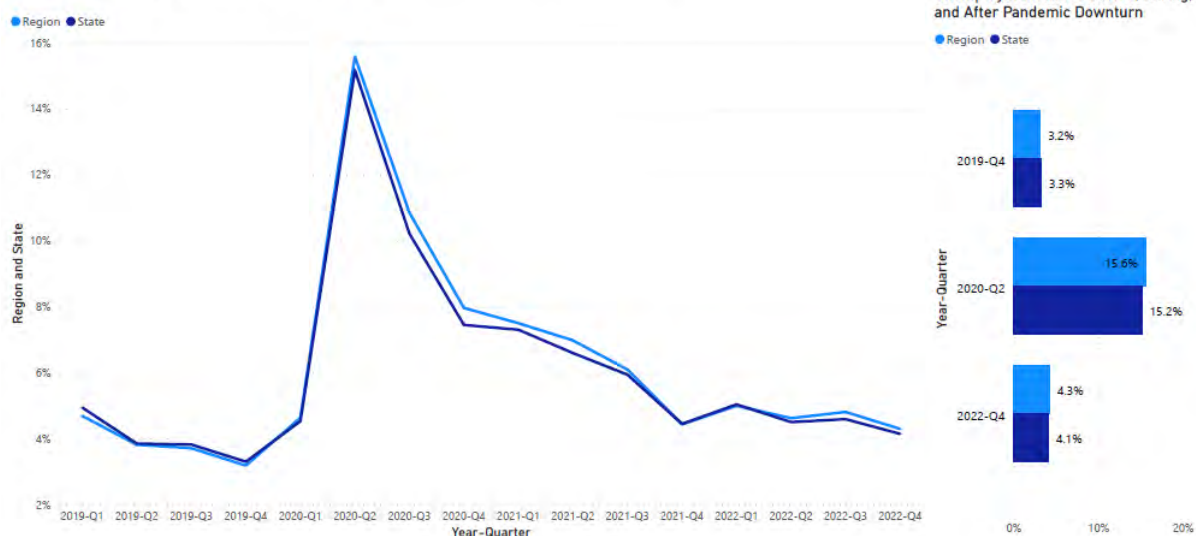
Source: IDES, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, 2018-2023

Figure 1 below reflects the unemployment rate for the NEEDR which had been declining in 2019 to a low of 3.2%. It jumped to the highest level in the second quarter of 2020 during the pandemic to an incredibly high rate of 15.6%. Since then, the unemployment rate in the region has shown significant decline over the next 3 years to 4.3% in November of 2023.

**Figure 1: Unemployment Rate, 2008-2020**

### Unemployment Rates Over Time, 2019-2022

Below are the quarterly unemployment rates over time for the region and the state. On the right are unemployment rates for selected time frames before, during, and after the pandemic downturn.



Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, respective years.

The NEEDR Region has an aging population. The population cohorts that increased the most between 2013-2023 were the cohorts from 55-64 and over 65 years of age with a net increase of 377,964 people. All other age cohorts experienced a decline in the population numbers with the greatest decline in the future workforce cohort of 5- to 19-year-olds with a decrease of (163,086) followed by the current workforce of 35 to 54 years old recording a decline of (135,462).

The NEEDR population in 2023 was reported at 8,67,316, a slight decrease of about 1% the 2013 population. The region represents a significant proportion of the total population of the State of Illinois (67.3%). The largest demographic population was White, followed by Hispanic (24.4%), Black (16.3%), and then Asian (8.1%). Two populations, Hispanic and Asian groups have shown marked increases in the region during the past decade, with the Hispanic population increasing by nearly 200,000 people or 9%. The diverse population in the region contributes to the region reporting 30.8% of the residents speak a language other than English at home – this percentage is higher than the statewide level of 23.2% and national level of 21.7%.

The statewide median income for all households was \$72,563, which is 5% higher than the national level of \$69,021. In Illinois, median income for married couples with children was \$110,026 and the counties in the region range from DuPage County reporting just under \$150,000 to DeKalb and Kankakee counties reporting just above \$100,000.

The demographic shift that is occurring has deep implications for workforce development activities, especially as it relates to the total available labor force, the aging of the population, and the diversity of residents.

**Table 9: Population by Age in the NEEDR, 2013-2023**

			2013-2023 Change		
Age Cohort	2013 Population	2023 Population	Net	Percent	2023 % of Cohort
Under 5 years	560,386	458,952	(101,434)	(18%)	5.29%
5 to 19 years	1,787,091	1,624,005	(163,086)	(9%)	18.72%
20 to 34 years	1,884,513	1,790,147	(94,366)	(5%)	20.64%
35 to 54 years	2,424,488	2,289,026	(135,462)	(6%)	27.34%
55 to 64 years	1,044,302	1,073,792	29,490	3%	12.38%
65 years and over	1,088,920	1,437,394	348,474	32%	16.57%
TOTAL	8,789,700	8,673,316	(116,384)	(1%)	100.00%

Source: Lightcast, 2023.4

**Table 10: Population by Race/Ethnicity in the NEEDR, 2011-2021**

			2013-2023 Change		
Race/Ethnicity	2013 Population	2023 Population	Net	Percent	2023 % of Cohort
White, non-hispanic	4,675,992	4,298,980	(377,012)	(8%)	49.57%
Black, non-hispanic	1,485,130	1,409,895	(75,235)	(5%)	16.26%
Asian	582,515	699,734	117,219	20%	8.07%
Two or More Races	120,262	148,759	28,497	24%	1.72%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	11,294	10,717	(577)	(5%)	0.12%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	2,023	2,108	85	4%	0.02%
Hispanic	1,912,484	2,103,123	190,639	9.00%	24.35%
TOTAL	8,789,700	8,673,316	(116,384)	(1%)	100.00%

Source: Lightcast, 2023.4

NEEDR reports a more educated population of 25 and over, reporting 66.8% continued education past high school compared to Illinois reporting with 64.5%. The NEEDR has a higher educational attainment of those with a four-year degree or higher than the state. Nearly a quarter of the Region's population has a bachelor's degree (24.4%) and 16.5% have a Graduate of Professional Degree. In a recent report from the Greater Chicago Economic Partnership (GCEP) it was noted that Chicagoland is third largest talent producer in the U.S. with over 147,000 students completing post-secondary programs across all disciplines in 2021. Moreover, the region is the fourth largest producer of STEM talent, with over 28,700 students completing programs in 2021.

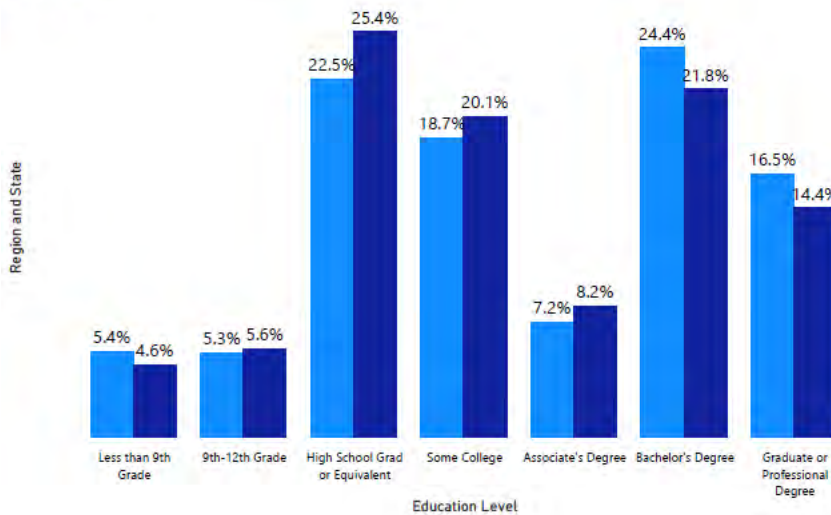
**Figure 2: Educational Attainment of Population 25 & Over, NEEDR**

## Education Attainment of Population 25 & Over

Over 64% of Illinois residents 25 & over continued education past high school. Below are the educational attainment characteristics of the region compared to the state.

Share of Population Age 25+ by Education Level

Region State



Group	Count Ages 25+
Less than 9th Grade	325,473
9th-12th Grade	319,239
High School Grad or Equivalent	1,354,167
Some College	1,130,549
Associate's Degree	435,495
Bachelor's Degree	1,471,249
Graduate or Professional Degree	994,970
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,031,142</b>

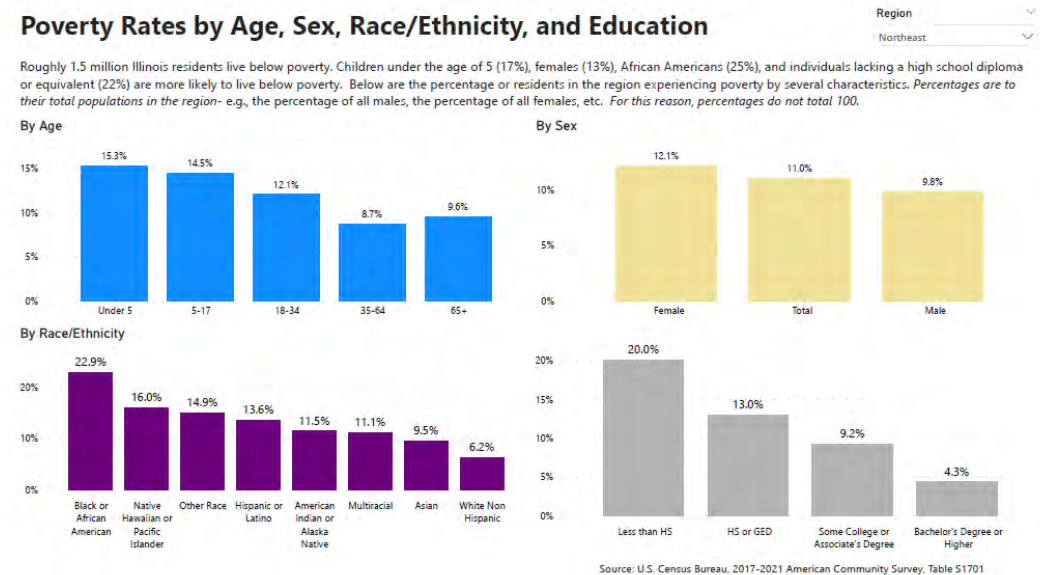
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey, Table S1501.

### Labor Market Trends and Education and Skill Levels including individuals with barriers to employment

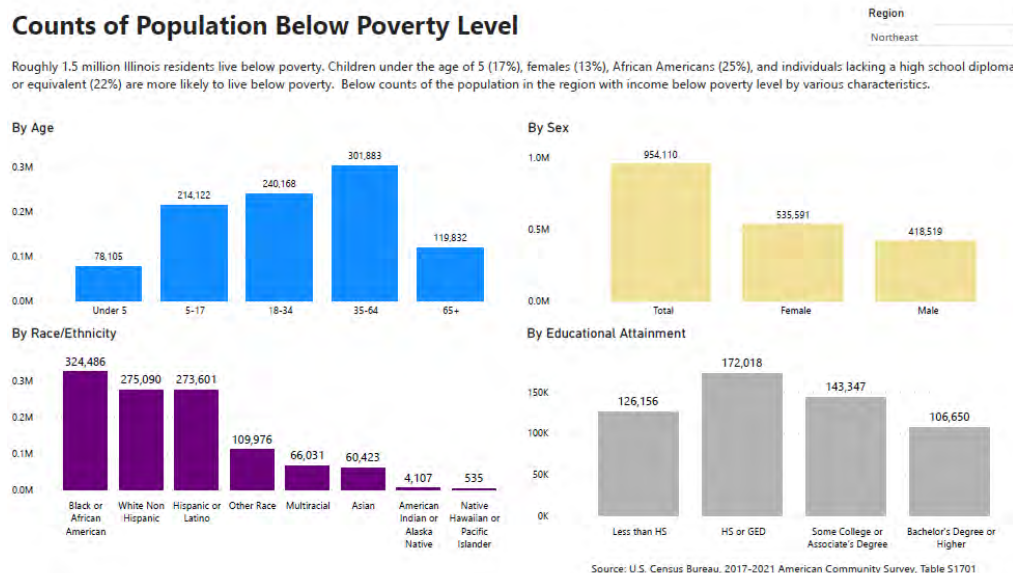
The NEEDR's labor market is characterized by high educational attainment and a large labor force. The labor force participation decline in 2019 and 2020 has seen a reversal. The education and skill levels of individuals with barriers to employment are an ever-present challenge in the NEEDR. Approximately 11.8% of households in the NEEDR are below poverty level compared to 12.5% of Illinois households below the poverty level. The poverty level hits hardest to those residents who are lacking a High School Diploma (20% of NEEDR residents) and are non-white race/ethnicity. The NEEDR has focused significant efforts on targeting the hardest to serve, including those job seekers who are dealing with poverty in addition to other barriers to employment. Figure 3 details the population living below poverty in the NEEDR.



**Figure 3: Percent Population Below Poverty (Age, Sex, Race/Ethnicity, and Education)**



**Figure 4: Counts of Population Below Poverty (Age, Sex, Race/Ethnicity, and Education)**



The NEEDR has 862,419 people with disabilities in the region. Over one-third of individuals presenting with a disability are of working age between the ages of 35-64 and an additional 12.6% between the ages of 18-34. Only 20.1% of the individuals with a disability in the NEEDR are reported as self-cared. The NEEDR implemented developed and implemented an initiative designed to assist employers in recruiting and hiring employees with disabilities. A pilot with 7 employers from across the NEEDR provided hands-on training and assistance in recruiting and hiring employees with disabilities. In addition, the Business Service Representatives in the region received training and a toolkit to work with additional employers on this focus. It is important to note that many employers are strategically targeting the expansion in the diversity

of their workforce. Because the NEEDR reflects such a diverse population base, employers can implement strong DEI initiatives in the region.

The NEEDR has approximately 287,300 veterans in the region. Nearly 54% of the veterans are aged 65 and older. Overall, almost 67% of the veteran population in the region has some college or post- secondary degree. Services to veterans and their families is a strategic focus at the local, regional, and state level.

Table 12 provides a snapshot of additional target population statistics in the NEEDR, as provided by the state.

**Table 12: Target Population Statistics**

<b>Low-Income Indicators</b>	
SNAP Cases, April 2023	382,510
SNAP Households, April 2023	192,385
TANF Persons, May 2023	38,045
TANF	13,981
<b><u>Foster Care Indicators</u></b>	
Total Foster Youth, July 31, 2023	8,160
Foster Youth- Relative Care	3,995
Foster Youth- Foster Care	3,485
Foster Youth- Institution or Group Home	387
Other Foster Youth	293
<b><u>DOC Indicators</u></b>	
Adult Prison Population by Sentencing Region, June 30, 2023	16,363
Adult Parolee Population by Region of Residence, June 30, 2023	10,497
Average Daily Juvenile Detention Population, February 2022	231
<b><u>Other Indicators</u></b>	
Single Parents	
Female Single Parent	203,291
Male Single Parent	64,173
Adult Population at Risk	
Foreign Born Population	222,644
Age 18+ without high school diploma	773,669

*Source: NEEDR 4 Northeast 2024 Data Packet*

Subpopulations with barriers to employment in the Region which are targeted by the regional system include:

- Basic skills deficient. Title II entities throughout the Region work directly with individuals to raise basic skill levels. Title II adult basic education plans align with WIOA Regional and Local plans.
- Individuals with Disabilities. The Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) works to ensure that individuals with a disability have access to assistive technology throughout the One-Stop system, access to Employer



Networks/Ticket-To-Work programs, and a coordinated regional network of organizations. Vocational Rehabilitation is an active, vibrant partner in the Region providing professional services to this population, including job readiness for youth, Pre-employment training services, comprehensive evaluations, vocational counseling and access to assistive technology, and staff that serves customers at various sites such as, local high schools, and community-based organizations. The Bureau of Blind Services offers individualized services for the blind and visually impaired individuals and businesses that hire these individuals throughout the Region.

- Returning citizens. There is an effort across the Region to prepare returning citizens for reentry into the workforce. The One-Stop system across the Region partners with local court, health and mental health groups, county jails, the Department of Corrections and a network of organizations and providers to deliver work-readiness training and make connections to employers hiring. Several programs that target returning citizens are in place in the NEEDR and discussed later in this plan.
- New Arrivals: There is also an effort across the region to prepare for the growing New Arrival population of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants many of whom are eligible for Temporary Protective Status and work authorization. The network of One-Stop system partners and organizations are connecting this population with basic career services, English as a Second Language classes and connections to employer hiring.

Service/policy implications of these targeted population groups include the need for more intensive career services including more intensive upfront job readiness/essential skills services prior to employment and training. Making it imperative that the system partners implement service integration to ensure the right mixture of career services are being delivered to the priority populations throughout the one-stop system. The One-Stop service integration action plans provide the framework for partners to leverage programs and services to increase service strategies when working with individuals with barriers to employment.

Local Workforce Innovation Boards set priority of services policies. These local policies include priority of service for veterans and qualified spouses, persons receiving public assistance, and low income and/or basic skills deficient individuals as well as individuals with a disability. Local areas take steps to promote awareness in the employer community about the benefits of hiring special populations, particularly Veterans, Individuals with Disabilities, and others prioritized for workforce services by the State of Illinois. As noted in Chapter II, local areas invest in a variety of strategies to serve individuals with barriers to employment across partnering agencies including TANF, Title II, CDBG, Title V, IDES, the Department of Corrections, Veterans Affairs, community-based organizations, and Small Business Development Centers among others.

- B. Describe how the Local Workforce Innovation Board and WIOA partners support the development and implementation of sector initiatives for in-demand industry sectors or occupations for the planning region (§ 679.510(a)(1)(iii)). Plans must answer the following questions:
1. How will the workforce partners convene or support the convening of regional employers, foundations, institutions and other stakeholders to create or maintain sector partnerships?
  2. Identify the established and active sector partnerships in the region (as defined in Illinois' Next Generation Sector Strategies Guide). If any exist, are they business-led and what is their role in WIOA planning?
  3. What public-private partnerships exist in the region that could support sector strategies, and what is their role in planning?
  4. What neutral conveners with the capacity to help establish sector partnerships exist in the region, and what is their role in planning?

The NEEDR has significant experience in sector-based workforce initiatives. The Workforce Partners of Metropolitan Chicago (WPMC) is a consortium comprised of the Directors of the Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) and the Title I providers in the NEEDR. This group formed a formal partnership more than 20 years ago. Since then, WPMC has been working together for the purpose of conducting WIOA planning and implementation, integrating regional business services, developing workforce sector strategies, and coordinating activities with WIOA core partners, economic development entities, community colleges/training providers, and other stakeholders. WPMC recognizes that the economic vitality of each local area and county is impacted by cross-geographic issues and that geographic boundaries are often meaningless to businesses and residents. WPMC also realizes the importance of collaboration to produce a greater impact across the Region. WPMC focuses on regional initiatives aimed at supporting business and sustaining the Region's economic vitality. By building a progressive system of change strategies and initiatives, WPMC support an education and workforce system that can be more closely aligned with what industries need in a quality workforce and ensures continued economic growth of the Region and the state.

The Workforce Partners of Metropolitan Chicago are committed to building a demand-driven workforce system that provides skilled employees for employers and develops real career opportunities for job seekers and career changers. The system makes it easy for business to access qualified applicants and an abundance of workforce development services.

Each local area has a Business Service Team (BST) that implement job development and job placement and layoff aversion initiatives and a range of work-based opportunities including On-the-Job Training (OJT), Customized or Incumbent Worker Training, Paid Work Experience, and Re-Entry. BSTs are the teams that facilitate services and workshops in response to the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) and coordinating and delivering hiring events and resource fairs. BST serve the regional business community contributing to various sector-focused committees and/or initiatives.

The WPMC have initiated a Regional Integrated Business Services Team (BST) for NEEDR made up of the individual BST's from each of the seven local workforce areas, including all partners' business facing staff. The goal of the Regional Integrated Business Services Team is to coordinate business services across the Region, including addressing needs of regional businesses, integrating core partner agencies (and other partners in the future), identifying and sharing best practices, discussing challenges, and identifying solutions, and engaging in professional development activities. Key accomplishments include hosting regional hiring events, Business U, sharing promising practices, joint business meetings, and coordinating responses to major employers with large and critical needs. The BST works with local, regional, state, and federal elected officials and others on the creation of policy and implementation of workforce initiatives designed to decrease unemployment and increase skilled workers. As businesses and employers relocate to the Region and expand across the Region, the BST has responded through customized hiring and talent connection events. Amazon is the most recent employer to open multiple facilities across the Region and utilize the local One-Stop systems to meet immediate and ongoing hiring needs.

The WPMC has worked with a coalition of Community College Presidents in the NEEDR – the Northeastern Illinois Workforce Coalition (NIWC). The coalition was originally formed as a result of the Critical Skills Shortage Initiative (CSSI) sector work more than a decade ago and continues to coordinate sector-driven and employer-focused initiatives. The members of the coalition meet quarterly, have developed key strategies to work together on, have joined together on grant applications, shared information and coordinated resident and business services throughout the Region. NIWC has continued to expand this in-district tuition model for WIOA customers receiving tuition vouchers. It is an agreement that workforce boards and community colleges have agreed to, charging in-district tuition for all students accessing WIOA ITAs.

In 2020 the seven county board chairs and the mayor of Chicago called on the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) and Choose Chicago to assemble the Regional Economic Recovery Task Force and pursue robust economic growth that reduces inequity. This task force has morphed into a group called the Greater Chicagoland Economic Partnership (GCEP). Over the past several years, this group helped the region focus on priorities, collaborate on solutions, and speak as one collective voice. The NEEDR has been in conversation with this group to identify joint initiatives to focus on. Some initial thoughts are around sharing of labor market information and data reports, targeting specific industry sectors with high growth and recruitment difficulties, and developing an on-going agenda for regular joint meetings between the Workforce Partners of Metro Chicago (WPMC) and GCEP.

In 2019 WPMC began working together on incumbent training projects. WPMC received a grant from DCEO to support incumbent worker training in the TDL and manufacturing industries. WPMC targeted projects that cover at least three of the seven workforce areas in the Region. WPMC completed a project with Ford Dealerships throughout the Region training current technicians. In addition, WPMC has completed regional training projects with multiple TDL businesses across the Region training incumbent workers in equipment maintenance management. Through this project a "Regional Incumbent Worker" Policy was developed so

that employers did not have to adjust to a variety of different policies when participating in incumbent worker training.

Working together on regional sector initiatives goes as far back as the state's Critical Skills Shortage Initiative (CSSI) through which the Region applied sector-based labor market analysis to workforce investments across the Region. More recently workforce, education, economic development, and human services entities have collaborated on significant sector projects. The infrastructure, relationships and lessons learned from these projects will drive the Region's sector-based programs into the future. These Regional initiatives tend to be grant-funded and the NEEDR has been competitive in receiving these funds. All initiatives are driven by the Region's employer-led local workforce boards.

Collaboration across partners and the Region will continue to focus strategies on regional partners engaging with small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations. Work with community colleges will continue to focus around industry sector talent development especially where industry-recognized credential attainment is necessary. Business service teams and One-Stop partners work with partners such as IDES, DRS, DCEO RED team to work with local businesses and regional employers.

The Region will promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services working with the IWIB and the Business Integration Team to meet the goals set out by the Illinois Integrated Business Services Team. A representative from the Region serves on the Illinois Integrated Business Services Team and many staff from the region are engaged in the work of this team.

In addition to sector initiatives in the Title I program, there has been significant development in Title II programs to align adult education with sector-specific career planning and skills training. Several of the Region's community colleges offer the Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System (ICAPS) model, through which adult education students (including ESL, Adult Basic Education, and Adult Secondary Education) simultaneously receive basic skills instruction that is contextualized to a specific industry sector and credit-bearing, industry-recognized college coursework that leads to a credential for jobs with family-sustaining wages. These programs offer robust support services, cohort models, team-teaching strategies, and yield high completion rates in various career cluster areas, such as Manufacturing, Healthcare, IT, and TDL. All Title II-funded adult education providers (colleges and community-based organizations) in the Region also provide at least one bridge program for adult learners, which helps transition underprepared adults to career pathway programs. These programs deliver contextualized instruction and career planning in Healthcare, Early Childhood Education, Industrial Arts/Manufacturing, IT, TDL/Automotive, and Office Administration. A detailed list of these programs can be found in Chapter 3 of this plan.

The Region's local areas have been successful in utilizing WIOA funding as well as private funds to implement a wide array of business-led sector initiatives. These include:

- The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership (The Partnership)'s workforce system includes One-Stop "Sector Centers" in four industry sectors industries in the Region: Information

Technology Sector, Hospitality and Tourism Sector, Healthcare Sector, and Transportation/Distribution/Logistics Sector. Additionally, the Partnership delivers ConstructionWorks, a program of the Illinois Toll Highway Authority (Illinois Tollway), a grant with a focus on expanding access to employment opportunities in construction for populations traditionally not well represented in the skilled trades.

- In McHenry County, the LWIA is an active partner in the Manufacturing Pathways Consortium, which includes nearly 100 manufacturing employers. The Consortium is facilitated by McHenry County College and is designed to increase awareness about manufacturing career pathways, create a systematic approach to collaborative hiring, and identifying non-traditional talent.
- The Workforce Partners of Metropolitan Chicago (WPMC) have successfully implemented sector initiatives over the past decade. Several of the initiatives noted here have demonstrated results that met the needs of the industries, increased the number of customers earning industry credentials and obtaining employment, and developed regional promising practices that continue to be replicated in like projects.
  - The Accelerated Training for Illinois Manufacturing (ATIM) program brought together a regional network of manufacturers, Local Workforce Boards Illinois workNet Centers (also known as WorkNet Centers but referenced as Illinois workNet Centers throughout this Plan) economic development organizations, and industry associations working together to develop industry awareness tools and communications, screening candidates, and identifying workplace competencies. Participants earned industry credentials and occupational competencies in paid work experience/internships or employment.
  - The Health Professions and Opportunity Program (HPOG) grant from the U.S. Health and Human Services Department trained low-income individuals in healthcare occupations. The initiative was a unique partnership among the Region's Local Workforce Boards, the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), community colleges and community-based workforce organizations Through bridge educational programs and occupational training the initiative provided access to healthcare careers for TANF participants and other low-income individuals.
  - A Job Driven NEG Grant funded a regional project that provided services, occupational and work-based training, certification(s) and job placement in the information technology sector, focusing on long-term unemployed job seekers, recipients who have been profiled as likely to exhaust benefits, and foreign-trained immigrant workers who qualify as dislocated workers and face barriers to obtaining employment in their trained field or profession.
- Lake County Workforce Development has worked with partners to launch the Lake County Workforce Ecosystem – a business outreach and workforce solution initiative led by a core partnership of Lake County Workforce Development, Lake County Partners, and College of Lake County. The Ecosystem drives talent development through an industry sector strategy. Through this partnership the LWIA has hosted sector summits in Healthcare, Manufacturing, and Professional Services.
- The Workforce Board in Will County was a part of the Will County Community Friendly Freight Plan. This unique plan aims to address issues of land-use and community livability

in this fast-growing business sector in the County. The Freight Plan will encompass a holistic planning approach covering freight mobility, land-use integration, workforce development, education/training, and community livability. Workforce issues were identified by Freight companies in the County to be one of the top concerns of growing the industry locally and as such will be carefully considered and addressed in the plan.

- The Partnership was recently named a finalist in two Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) Workforce Hub applications for the South Chicago and West/Southwest Chicago geographic areas. Workforce Hubs engage with potential employers, community-based organizations, educational institutions, and community-based and labor-based training providers to ensure program-eligible individuals across the County have dedicated and sustained support to enter and build clean energy careers. The main objective of the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program is to increase access to and opportunities for education, training, and support services to help program-eligible individuals succeed in the labor market generally and the clean energy sector specifically. Upon completion, participants will be prepared for entry-level clean energy jobs. The Partnership along with City Colleges of Chicago, Elevate Energy and multiple community partners and trainers plan to roll out this program in the coming year.

There are many other sector-based initiatives in the Region that are either led by local areas or with which Local Workforce Boards and system partners collaborate. Sector initiatives not described above are listed in the table below. These are examples and not meant to be a comprehensive list of sector initiatives that have been discussed regionally for purpose of sharing innovation, identifying areas of improvement, expanding participation locally and regionally, and documenting processes and successes for possible regional replication.

**Table 13: Other Regional Sector Initiatives**

Initiative	Key Partners	Geographic Area	Industries Targeted
Pharmacy Tech Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waukegan High School</li> <li>• College of Lake County</li> <li>• Walgreens</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lake County</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthcare</li> </ul>
Healthcare Professional Education Consortium Rosalind Franklin University led consortium of education leaders focused on workforce solutions in healthcare sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rosalind Franklin</li> <li>• College of Lake County</li> <li>• McHenry Community College</li> <li>• Universities/Colleges</li> <li>• Lake County Partners</li> <li>• Lake County Workforce Board</li> <li>• McHenry County Workforce Network</li> <li>• Northwestern Medicine</li> <li>• Private Sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lake County</li> <li>• McHenry County</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthcare</li> </ul>
National ABLE Network IT cohort training and work experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nation ABLE Network</li> <li>• Job Center of Lake County</li> <li>• Lake County Tech Hub</li> <li>• IDES</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lake County</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IT</li> </ul>
Manufacturing and Healthcare Career Training and Internship Program for O/S Young Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private Business</li> <li>• McHenry County College</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• McHenry County</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manufacturing</li> <li>• Healthcare</li> </ul>
Harvard and Woodstock Enterprise Zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Economic Development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• McHenry County</li> <li>• Boone County</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture and Food Processing</li> <li>• Manufacturing</li> <li>• Healthcare</li> </ul>
Manufacturing Careers Internship Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Career Services (BCS)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kane County (youth ages 18-21)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manufacturing</li> </ul>

Manufacturing Careers Internship Program (MCIP); Designed to help employers find and hire young adults interested in manufacturing and provide out- of-school youth with an opportunity to start a career in manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Career Services (BCS)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cook County</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manufacturing</li> </ul>
Apprenticeship Expansion Grant		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DuPage County</li> </ul>	
Title 1 Sector-Based Career Pathway Training and Bridge Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater West Town</li> <li>• Jane Adams Resource Corporation</li> <li>• Symbol</li> <li>• Association House</li> <li>• Chinese American Service League</li> <li>• Food Hero</li> <li>• OAI, Inc.</li> <li>• Revolution Workshop</li> <li>• St. Paul Church of God</li> <li>• National Able Network</li> <li>• Calumet Area Industrial Commission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cook County</li> <li>• Chicago</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manufacturing</li> <li>• Shipping &amp; Receiving</li> <li>• Information Technology</li> <li>• Construction</li> <li>• Banking</li> <li>• Healthcare</li> </ul>
TWL (CDL) Employer Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local TDL Employers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grundy County</li> <li>• Kankakee County</li> <li>• Livingston County</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TDL</li> </ul>
Community Friendly Freight Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will County Center for Economic Dev</li> <li>• Will County WDB</li> <li>• Will County</li> <li>• Private Business</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will County</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TDL</li> </ul>



One-Stop Sector Centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership</li> <li>• Pyramid Partners</li> <li>• Equus</li> <li>• YWCA</li> <li>• National Able Network</li> <li>• ResCare Healthcare</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cook County</li> <li>• Chicago</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthcare</li> <li>• Hospitality and Tourism</li> <li>• Information Technology</li> <li>• Transportation/ Distribution/ Logistics</li> </ul>
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C. If any employer collaboratives are engaged in the U.S Chamber's Talent Pipeline Management initiative, describe the following:

1. What is the focus of the collaborative(s)?
2. How is the workforce system supporting the needs of these employers?

Currently there are no employer collaboratives engaged in the U.S. Chamber's Talent Pipeline Management Initiative, however, one employer in Will County, National Tube Supply Company has been through the Talent Pipeline Management training program. In addition, several LWIA staff have participated in TPM training and are working to develop programs to engage employers in using the TPM framework.

D. Describe any broad economic development opportunities in the region within the context of the workforce, education and economic development plans.

Some important opportunities have been defined by the Greater Chicagoland Economic Partnership (GCEP). They are: Human Capital, Industry Base and Supply Chain, Innovation/Knowledge/R&D, Natural Assets, Infrastructure, Global Reach, Business Environment, and Financial Capital. GCEP has developed a "value proposition" for the Chicago metro region that focuses on the characteristics below which highlight the economic development opportunities for the NEEDR. The partnership between the WPMC and GCEP will further strengthen regional sector initiatives around these opportunities.

- Size – Chicagoland is the nation's third largest economy and is among the top 20 global economies, larger than most nations.
- Diversity – Unlike other metro areas with strong industry dominance, Chicagoland offers the most diverse economy in the US which provides a cushion against economic shocks as businesses and workers can transition more readily to alternative sectors during challenging times.
- Industry – The region is the most diverse manufacturing ecosystem in the US – of the 21 manufacturing subsectors, Chicagoland is ranked among the top five of 13 and is among the top 10 of 16.
- Innovation – The tech ecosystem is characterized by a blend of established industries, startups, and research institutions that contribute to its unique identity.
- Resilience – The Chicagoland region has the right combination of diversification, adaptability, environmental policy, and supportive social service systems that contribute to an economy's resilience.
- Cost – More affordable real estate and cost of living when compared to the coasts and similarly-sized, globally-connected metro areas.

E. Describe any broad economic development challenges in the region's workforce, education, and economic development plans.

- A recent economic challenge that the NEEDR has been working to address is the recent increase in immigrant and asylum seekers and the challenges to provide workforce services to that population. Several LWIAs have earmarked supplemental funds to developing programming and services to assist in preparing this population for employment. Working with DHS Welcome Centers has been a successful collaboration to assist these future job seekers. Nearly all of the LWIAs in the region will be able to tap into additional funds through the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) to serve this population and are discussing possible regional strategies for these initiatives.
- Ongoing challenges include availability of reliable childcare, efficient transportation (outside of Cook County), and in the more rural areas of the NEEDR, access to affordable internet.
- A long-standing economic development challenge that has recently become the focus of discussion and exploratory studies is workforce housing and affordable housing in general.

F. Describe how a *workforce equity lens* is incorporated into the local planning requirements for collecting and analyzing labor market information.

The workforce equity lens will be taken into account by collecting and analyzing data about demographics, race, ethnicity, among other characteristics of participants in the workforce system. The region will ensure inclusion of Census data and other credible data sources to understand the diverse workforce and how to best serve them. As will be discussed further in the document, the region has created a workforce equity lens definition that will provide guidance about representative data.

## CHAPTER 2: STRATEGIES FOR SERVICE INTEGRATION

- A. Provide an analysis of workforce development activities, including education and training, in the region. This analysis must include the strengths and weaknesses of workforce development activities and capacity to provide the workforce development activities to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment, and the employment needs of employers (Sec. 679.560(a)(4)). The plan must address the following areas:
1. Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce development activities in the region.
  2. Analyze the capacity of the regional partners to provide workforce development activities to address the education and skill needs of the workforce including individuals with barriers to employment.
  3. Analyze the capacity of the regional partners to provide activities to address the needs of employers.
  4. How well do existing training programs in the region and local areas prepare job seekers to enter and retain employment with regional businesses?
  5. Summarize the commitments of each program partner to implement the selected strategies described in the “Action Plan for Improving Service Integration in the Region.”

Title I is operated through the Local Workforce Innovation (LWIAs) There are seven LWIAs in the Northeast Economic Development Region and ten counties: Cook, DeKalb, DuPage, Grundy, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will. Residents are served through a range of comprehensive One-Stop Centers, affiliate organizations, and training providers. Title II (Adult Education) is administered through community colleges and providers throughout the Region. Title III (Wagner-Peyser) is administered through the Illinois Department of Employment Security. Title IV (Vocational Rehabilitation) is administered by the Illinois Department of Human Services Vocational Rehabilitation. Each partner delivers services and activities at partner sites as well as through co-location in the comprehensive One-Stop Centers. There are 17 community college districts in the NEEDR which work closely with the WIOA core partners for both employer and job seeker services.

The Region has developed important points of coordination that provide ongoing opportunities to deploy integrated strategies in the Region. As described in Chapter 1, the Workforce Partners of Metropolitan Chicago is the coalition of Local Workforce Boards and WIOA Title 1 Directors developed more than 20 years ago and is the platform for developing many of the NEEDR's sector strategies. The Workforce Partners of Metropolitan Chicago undertakes joint grant applications, project coordination and information sharing. In addition, the Northern Illinois Workforce

Coalition that convenes quarterly meetings of the Community College Presidents and Local Workforce Board Directors is a strong partner in developing and implementing regional strategies. The coalition was originally formed as a result of the CSSI sector work; the partnership was formalized 6 years ago. The coalition has joined together for grant applications, shared information and coordinated individual and business services throughout the Region. Due to the large geographic size of the NEEDR and the diversity of its economy, level of development, and needs of residents and businesses, the types of workforce development services offered vary. Each local area has different strategies, toolboxes and areas of focus for best servicing the needs of its residents and employers. There are, however, many commonalities of workforce development activities and types of services with promising return-on-investment (ROI) that have been provided through regional initiatives and that warrant continued focus and development.

- **Work-Based Learning Opportunities:** Several of the Local Workforce Boards use On-the-Job-Training (OJT), Apprenticeships, internships and work-experiences to provide the skills needed for job-seekers to be successful in the workplace. In addition, all of the community colleges coordinate internships, on-the-job-training, apprenticeships, and incumbent worker training within the Region. Efforts have begun to better connect adult education students to these opportunities. Overall, these types of programs are an opportunity for growth under WIOA.
  - An example is WorkNet DuPage provides young adults paid internships through WIOA, College of DuPage Project Hire-Ed and the DuPage WBL Consortium, which is a partnership between Regional Office of Education, GPS Education, and WorkNet. Additionally, Choose DuPage brings work experience to high school students; similar to a pre-apprenticeship and students can continue post-secondary at College of DuPage's Project Hire Ed Apprenticeship programs. The Technology and Manufacturing Association and IMEC both offer apprenticeship programs that DuPage supports through IWT grants. DuPage also has an Apprenticeship Expansion grant currently that is strengthening efforts of the integrated business services team to increase adoption of apprenticeship models.
  - The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership has developed a partnership with the Chicago Lighthouse for the Blind for Call Center work. Additionally, the Partnership has developed HVAC training at Four Seasons Heating and Air conditioning.
  - Lake County recently was awarded the Apprenticeship Expansion Grant. We are working with youth serving organizations to launch a cohort of incumbents (20) to participate in the Youth Development Practitioner's Apprenticeship Program. We work with manufacturers to identify apprenticeship opportunities. Additionally, College of Lake County has been successful with increasing registered apprenticeships across multiple industries.
  - In Will County, the workforce area has developed a partnership with the Joliet Junior College apprenticeship program in information technology. Apprentices

can work in a variety of careers, including AutoCAD Technician, Computer Programmer, Computer Support Specialist and several others. Additionally, Will County has developed partnerships with the Illinois Food Bank SEED

Apprenticeship and Women in the Trades.

- Regionally, two workforce areas (10 and 11) worked together on serving an employer through the IWT project. While the company is located in local area 11 but reached out to Will County for services and the two worked together to serve the employer.
- Career Pathways: Workforce development and education partners in the NEEDR are increasingly developing Career Pathway programs to prepare individuals to be successful in secondary and post-secondary education as well as help individuals enter or advance within a specific occupational cluster. Community colleges offer stackable credentials in many sectors, providing a pathway approach for adult learners, who can complete one credential and advance to the next credential.
  - For example, several training programs at McHenry County College have programs with stackable credentials, including, Accounting, Administrative Office Management, Automotive Technology, Business Management, IT Help Desk, Manufacturing Management, Marketing, Graphic Arts, and Health Information Management.
  - In DuPage, the workforce area will work with the College of DuPage to integrate their short-term stackable HVAC credential with future energy efficiency workforce development. ICAPS programs, bridge programs, transition coordinators, faculty (through specialist job-skills courses), and career development service areas provide goal-setting, academic advising, and enrollment assistance. This type of coordination/advising will be necessary within the One-Stop centers in order to meet the needs of clients/students.
  - In Lake County, Workforce Development developed the Work, Earn, & Learn program to provide an opportunity in a career pathway. Participants enroll in a career pathway program developed in cooperation with an industry partner. The industry partner provides a subsidized work-experience for the participant while delivering training and classroom training, leading to an industry credential with skills training reinforced from industry professionals.
- Sector Strategies: As detailed in Chapter 1, the NEEDR provides an extensive array of sector-based workforce development services for residents and businesses including comprehensive sector centers and multiple business-driven, multi-area partnerships, many funded through competitive grants the region has secured.

Many promising cooperative service delivery strategies are currently present within the Region. Additionally, the Regional plan will provide opportunities for new Regional cooperative agreements.

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

The strengths and weaknesses of regional workforce development activities are highlighted below.

### **Strengths of the Region's workforce system:**

#### *Demographic/Location Strengths*

- Access to large quantities of diverse talent
- Access to transportation and transportation routes (i.e., highways, roads, etc.)
- Overall, a highly educated workforce with sub-regional differences
- Diverse industry and employer base
- Wage and employment growth, acting as the economic driver for the State

#### *Relationship and Partner Advantages*

- Long history of partnership and collaboration through the Workforce Partners of Metropolitan Chicago
- WIOA system partnerships are strong across all the mandatory partners of the WIOA system and beyond.
- Partners are committed greater service integration and beginning to work on service integration action plans (see Service Integration section)
- Existing local partnerships across the WIOA system
- Strong employer partnerships
- Commitment to work-based learning opportunities
- Strong partnership with regional education systems (high schools/K-12, community colleges, and other training institutions)
- Economic development partnerships with shared goals
- Customer-centric

#### *Existing Training Programs That Meet the Needs of Employers*

- Apprenticeship – There are many apprenticeship efforts happening in the Region and these are well coordinate among many partners
- Organized work-based learning (on-the-job training, incumbent worker, work experience, internships)
- Strong training programs in multiple career paths, especially in transportation and logistics, building trades, manufacturing, and healthcare
- Quality workforce
- Funding – The Region and the local areas are able to leverage many sources of funding including competitive grants in addition to WIOA formula funds
- Strong partnership with training and educational providers

*Policy and Advocacy Capacity:* The Workforce Partners of Metropolitan Chicago are skilled at analyzing the current state of the workforce system and advocating for policies that can support improved systems and services.

## **Challenges of the Region's workforce system:**

### *Resource Challenges*

- Federal funding inconsistencies and aggressive timelines which affect planning and implementation of programs over time
- Lack of awareness of all the resources available to jobseekers
- Lack of sufficient and flexible resources to serve jobseekers that present in the WIOA system with multiple barriers to employment, including basic-skills deficient, criminal records, and undocumented workers.

### *Geographic Challenges*

- Lack of consistent public transportation throughout the NEEDR
- Minimal access to services to rural communities in the NEEDR, especially internet access
- Deteriorating infrastructure in rural communities
- Lack of transportation access and options to less urban areas

### *Demographic Challenges*

- Large number of non-English speaking individuals
- Cultural barriers to employment of diverse population
- Lack of technical skills
- Aging population
- Decline in overall population numbers with sub-regional differences

### *Systems-level Challenges*

- Shared responsibility among partners and expectations of collaboration. In terms of governance and service integration, Title I shares most responsibility for the success of the MOU, coordination and core service delivery while other partners may not receive consistent levels of guidance from national and state agencies.
- Silos among Titles (opportunities for coordination under WIOA) remain at the Federal and State level.
- Lack of an integrated, shared data system across the core partners for job seeker and business customer data and case management.

## **Capacity to provide workforce development activities to individuals with barriers to employment**

Due to the large geographic area and the differences in population throughout the Region, as well as access to different funding sources, each local area focuses on individuals with different barriers to employment but as a collective they share best practices, replicate innovative programs, and coordinate projects when appropriate. Examples are provided in the sub-sections below related to key populations.

- Low-Skilled Adults: The Region's education partners including the community college



partners of each local workforce area are also focusing on deliver of the Integrated Career & Academic Preparation System (ICAPS). ICAPS aims to provide an integrated pathway in Career and Technical Education (CTE) for college credit and program certificate opportunities for Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) students that lack basic skills. Through ICAPS programs students work to complete their high school equivalency and are co-enrolled in credit CTE courses/certificates through an integrated instructional model including contextualized and industry-focused basic skills education. The model provides career pathway/employment opportunities for students while enabling their transition into additional postsecondary certificate/degree programs.

The adult education programs at many of the region's colleges are working to incorporate workforce development activities into programming for low-skilled adults.

- The Partnership's One Stop Operator developed a referral tracking system using Airtable to better connect job seekers to services. Title 2 partners are connecting participants to Title 1 services and vice versa.
- Many adult education providers in the Region include career readiness activities within the ABE/ASE/ESL curriculum. For example, at South Suburban, it is mandatory for students to complete a resume with a transitions coach, and this is a classroom activity, along with attending an on-site job fair as a field trip once per year.
- College of Lake County delivers ABE, Bridge and ICAPS programs. Workforce Development provides workshops on job readiness, career awareness and connections to employers and hiring opportunities. After the Bridge program students can enroll in the Step Up to the Integrated Academic Preparation System (ICAPS) program. ICAPS are certificate programs in career and technical education fields. Current programs include: Certified Nurse Assisting, Healthcare Office Assistance, Phlebotomy Technician, Automotive Technology, HVAC/Refrigeration Engineering Technology, Administrative Management and Technology, and Computer Information Technology.
- In local area 5, Basic Certificate programs require between 1 and 29 credit hours and take less time to complete than vocational certificates. Many of the technical certificates are "stackable," which means as you finish more classes and earn more certificates, those certificates "stack up" to get you closer to completing an Associate of Applied Science degree. Although the ICAPS program is available to any student it primarily supports those who are underprepared for college classes, adult education students, and second language learners. Services include, job search assistance, clear schedule of courses leading to your Basic Vocational Certificate in less than a year, free loaner textbooks, free academic support classes and workshops to advance your career, a dedicated student support specialist to help ensure success, and classes with the same group of peers (cohorts) throughout the program. Courses in our local area are: Arc Welding Automotive Electrical Specialist, Basic Nurse Assistant Training, Bookkeeping, Break and Suspension Specialist, Clinical Laboratory Assistant, Computer

- Integrated Manufacturing, and Computer Network Specialist.
- In DuPage County, College of DuPage's ICAPS programs include Central Sterile Processing Distribution Technician, Office Technology Specialist, PC Technician (A+, Net+.) In addition, DuPage has a strong partnership with World Relief to serve English Language Learners, and they have recently started a bridge program for immigrants and refugees. We offer the NorthStar digital literacy platform and a monthly workshop to assist those with low-level of basic computer skills.
  - In Will County, workshops are offered to support clients with basic computer programs as well as a referral program with Title 2 partners, which offer GED and adult literacy programming in a hybrid model and at the one-stop location.
- Individuals with Disabilities: Local Title I providers coordinate with Vocational Rehabilitation staff and other WIOA system partners in delivery of services for people with disabilities. Local areas have Disability Navigators embedded within the One-Stops or within the system to target and serve people with disabilities.
    - The Regional DEI initiative –has four components: 1) Staff training on working with employers to assist hiring people with disabilities, justice impacted individuals, limited English speakers, etc., 2) Employer training on hiring, onboarding, and coaching these individuals, 3) Cohort of employers received intensive training, recruitment and hiring assistance, onboarding services, and ongoing technical assistance, 4) Toolkit to continue work with employers. This work was funded through DCEO grant. In addition, at a regional level, DHR - VR staff engaged with regional business services team to provide assistance with disability hiring fairs in several areas.
    - McHenry County has a contract with Parents Alliance to conduct the Project Search Program at Northwestern Huntley Hospital. This program works with individuals with disabilities to learn job skills within the hospital setting and gain permanent employment. McHenry County holds two disability focused job fairs a year.
    - In Will County the Department of Rehabilitative services offers services from the one-stop on a weekly basis to support individuals with disabilities. Will County also hosts job fairs two to three times a year for this population. Additionally, Will County partners with DRS to host informational webinars to businesses on how to provide equitable and inclusive support in the workplace.
    - DuPage County assists young adults with internship development and placement that takes into account their specific skill sets and limitations in the workplace. DuPage also partners with job coaches through Parents Alliance Employment Project as needed. Our business services team includes the concept of disability-inclusive hiring into their initial cold contacts and/or ongoing business communications with employer contacts. We have a close relationship to organizations that serve job seekers with disabilities, including Donka and Turning Pointe. The One Stop Operator also hosted a series of meetings with Ray Graham at our Center for Disability Employment Awareness month to increase knowledge

- of participating businesses.
- Lake County hosts onsite hiring events and partners to host the Disability Job Fair. Lake County is also expanding apprenticeship programs with a focus on individuals with a disability.
  - The Cook County Bureau of Economic Development award The Partnership funding to support Navigators to conduct outreach and connect individuals, including people with disabilities to the One-Stop system network. The Partnership continues to fund the LaGrange Area Department of Special Education, AERO, Bridges to Work, and Main Township High School with WIOA youth funds. These programs specialize in serving youth with disabilities.
- Returning Citizens: The NEEDR includes a number of communities that are major points of re-entry for those being released from the Corrections system. The WBMC and local areas collaborate closely with the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) and key providers of re-entry and other services for returning citizens (formerly incarcerated individuals) and in particular those recently released. Several areas (Lake County, Kane DeKalb Kendall, and Will County) provide mini-One-Stop services on-site at local prisons and jails, in order to deliver services prior to an individual's release.
    - Lake County Workforce Development and College of Lake County participate in the Lake County Coalition to Reduce Recidivism providing community-based reentry services and assisting returning individuals in becoming productive members of the community through programs and supportive services. This includes Revive Lake County, a five-week program that is delivered at two locations – the Lake County Adult Corrections Facility and the Job Center of Lake County – to provide accessibility to individuals throughout all stages of the rehabilitation process. Training topics include career awareness, employability skills, communication pointers, and transferable skills. The program is also delivered in the Lake County Jail in partnership with Sheriff's office, State's Attorney, and College of Lake County. Workforce Development also partners with several organizations that have the mission to work directly with returning citizens, including Waukegan Township and the Coalition to Reduce Recidivism. Lake County also has a Transitional Jobs program delivered in conjunction with area adult transition centers and other partners.
    - The Partnership continues its work with the Cook County justice Advisory Council on its Road Home program to align systems and policies to more effectively support successful reentry. With ARPA funding from the Cook County Bureau of Economic Development, the program expanded to support 3 agencies: Phalanx, Safer Foundation and SERCO. These agencies are tasked with connecting individuals exiting facilities with employment assistance and other resources. The Partnership also continues to fund the Safer Foundation under its WIOA program which specializes in serving returning citizens. The Partnership works closely with the Chicago Mayor's office on Reentry Services and the welcoming centers in the City of Chicago.

- McHenry County has a program called Step Forward that is designed to work with individuals coming out of the justice system to prepare them to be work ready. They partner with the Stateline Society for Human Resource Managers (SHRM) to offer modules in the program. McHenry also works with organizations to understand the re-entry population to help reduce barriers for them to access quality employment opportunities.
- Kankakee County provides re-entry services at Pontiac Correctional Center. Re-entry summits are biannual events that are onsite for prisoners who are being released within 6 months. In addition, Kankakee has a close partnership with the local reentry office and justice-involved youth providers that refer individuals for workforce services.
- Will County has two grant funded programs that serve justice impacted individuals to obtain credentials through our scholarship program or offer on-the-job training for this targeted population.
- DuPage County works closely with the Department of Probation and is assisting them with setting up career planning services at two planned Recovery Community centers (for those in recovery from substance use disorders who participated in Drug Court.) In addition, DuPage County recently developed a policy for Transitional Jobs and hopes to implement these specifically for recently released inmates of the County Jail. This is in partnership with the Sheriff's Office and an organization called Just DuPage. Some of these individuals are also attending online courses through College of DuPage while incarcerated and will be able to either continue those programs after release or find employment or transitional jobs with assistance.
- Out of School Youth: All areas report that this population is by definition difficult to reach because they are often not engaged with public entities and traditional community recruiting partners. Also, in a low unemployment economy, many young adults successfully secure some employment and do not always see the value of participation in a workforce program or education or have the ability to balance their employment with training or education. However, the regional partners know that this population's employment is too often at a low wage, often even at the minimum wage, and without further training and support, is too often precarious and lacking in career pathways.
  - The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership issued a WIOA Youth delegate agency RFP in 2023 and selected 24 agencies to provide Out of School youth services and 7 In-School Youth agencies. The Partnership received ARPA funding from the Cook County Bureau of Economic Development to expand its Opportunity Works Program which provides paid work experience/internships for suburban youth.
  - In Will County, the Connect to Your Future youth program provides occupational training and work-based learning opportunities.
  - McHenry County Workforce Center offers GED on site through McHenry County College for needed individuals as well as career pathway programs in healthcare

- and manufacturing which focus on classroom and work-based learning opportunities.
- In local area 5, there is a YouthBuild program in Elgin with the Housing Authority of Elgin and in Aurora with the QUAD County Urban League.
  - In Lake County, in response to challenges youth and young adults faced in accessing education, employment and training services during the pandemic, The Workforce Development Board hired a consulting firm to complete a thorough assessment of the youth service network in Lake County with a focus on the WIOA Youth Funded programs and services. The scope of work included the following and the report was published in March 2022: Community Assessment and Profile; Interview Target Populations; Stakeholder Interviews/Roundtables; Service Delivery/Gap Analysis. To develop and guide the actions recommended by the report, The Workforce Board has a Youth Task Force led by a 22-year-old young man of color. The Board created an action plan around how best to address recruitment and service gaps and is collaborating with a larger network of youth serving organizations and high schools, focusing on key sectors of the population including youth aging out of foster care, youth with a disability, youth tied to the justice system, and homeless youth.
  - Lake County Workforce Development was also part of the DOL Youth System Building Academy in 2023 with a team from Lake County including Workforce Development, CLC, Regional Office of Education, Operators Local 150, and Youth Build providers. An action plan was developed and accepted by DOL to co-create a system with youth and for youth.
  - Several areas have added Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for Youth to their WIOA service strategy, enhancing the ability to deliver skills training for out-of-school Youth specifically and to more seamlessly weave together adult service strategies with the youth program.
- Veterans: Veterans receive priority of service, as required by WIOA. IDES provides veteran representatives and WIOA managers in each workforce area who coordinate job fairs and host quarterly meetings with veterans' representatives from community colleges and other veteran entities. In addition, the IDES staff host workshops and do presentations to veteran groups. IDES hosts workshops for veterans and performs intakes of all veterans with priority of service. Other targeted veterans programs in the Region include:
    - The Chicago Federation of Labor, with support from the Partnership, has a specialized training program with Peoples Gas to train veterans for jobs with opportunities for advancement and family-supporting wages. WIOA Individual Training (ITA) account funds support these efforts.
    - Will County has a Disabled Veteran representative located full-time in their One-Stop Center and the Will County Veteran's Assistance Commission is located across the hall from the One-Stop Center for ease of client referral.

- English Language Learners: One-Stop centers provide referrals to the ESL programs at community colleges.
  - The College of DuPage offers transition courses in ESL, including workforce prep and/or college prep at the WorkNet DuPage Career Center, ESL is offered through the McHenry County College's Adult Education program with potential plans for the ESL programming to return to the One-Stop Center.
  - In Lake County, 18.7% of residents were born outside the US. Lake County works with the ABE providers and multiple agencies to provide services and programs. Through Job Center on the Move, Lake County has worked at community sites and libraries to meet the individuals in their communities. Bridge programs are offered through College of Lake County. Lake County has a list of agencies we work with, including Catholic Charities and Goodwill.
  - With ARPA funding from the Cook County Bureau of Economic Development, The Partnership was able to fund additional Program navigators to connecting individuals with limited English deficiencies to ESL and workforce services. The One Stop Operator, Scale Lit, designed a referrals system using Air table that is used to automate the referral process among WIOA partners. The Partnership continues to fund delegate agencies that work with large populations of English Language Learners, including the Chinese American Service League, Polish American Institute, and Central State Ser. In addition, The Partnership is currently working the State and City on connecting the thousands of New Arrivals to workforce services. The AJCs provide information to immigrants who have completed the work authorization application. Basic career services and placement assistance is provided.
- Homeless Individuals: Homeless services strategies are incorporated into local areas service.
  - In DuPage County workforce development participates in the County's Continuum of Care, making referrals to a host of organizations that serve homeless individuals.
  - McHenry County Workforce Network has actively worked with local community organizations to provide workforce services to individuals experiencing homelessness by providing workshops to build awareness behind available workforce services. Past projects included developing a welding training that targeted youth in need, including homeless youth. This program was an intense bootcamp that established welding skills to break into the welding industry and produced success in seeing youth transition from homeless services into permanent housing.
  - In Cook County, through the National Dislocated Workers QUEST grant, The Partnership forged a relationship with BEDS PLUS CARE, an organization that provides shelter and care to individuals who are homeless. The Partnership funds a work crew at BEDS PLUS Care to provide food and other assistance to those in the shelter. As mentioned above, The Partnership is working to provide employment services to the New Arrival population, many who are homeless and

- living in temporary shelters.
- In Lake County there are two housing authorities that are part of the Job Center and the Unify Referral System. PADS is an active partner with the Job Center.
- In Kane, Kendall and DeKalb Counties, Title I staff coordinate with the local Continuum of Care system and have attended meetings to convey information regarding employment and training services and opportunities to homeless providers in the area. Staff will continue to incorporate homeless service strategies related to employment and training in collaborating with the Continuum of Care boards.
- Will County participates in a Community Risk Reduction program and partners with the Will County Center for Community Concerns.
- **Older Workers:** The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) program sponsored by the Illinois Department on Aging and designed to assist the mature worker (at least 55 years old) in re-entering the job market is an active partner in the region's Illinois workNet Centers. SCSEP places eligible individuals, usually for 20 hours a week at minimum wages, in nonprofit agencies or community service agencies community assignments. Mature workers will also be assisted in skill enhancement opportunities and assistance in the transition to unsubsidized employment.
  - The workNet Center in DeKalb coordinates with Experience Works to serve the population 55 years of age and older. McHenry County will hold seminars on job search for older workers as part of our Network to Success Job Club. DuPage County recently hosted AARP to provide a workshop for older adults.
  - The "Back to Work 50+ Cook County" grant from AARP serves Cook County jobseekers through workshops, career coaching, and vocational training services (including computer training) in order to help them obtain employment. Through this grant, The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership will link older workers to the Region's high demand sectors: Business & Professional Services, Healthcare, Retail, Culinary and Hospitality, Information Technology, Manufacturing and Transportation Distribution & Logistics. Job Seekers will be connected to training that prepares them for one of 40 occupations that have strong projected growth, including health information technician, retail supervisor, and computer support specialist. Joliet Junior College received a Plus 50 Grant to assist older workers in returning to the workforce. They work collaboratively with the WIOA system to offer training and workshops to job seekers over 50 who are re-entering the workforce.

### **Capacity to Address the Needs of Employers**

Employer services include occupational and labor market information to inform economic forecasting, no-cost human resource services for recruiting, retaining, and hiring qualified employees and accelerated and a range of customized employer-based training initiatives for increasing skills of existing and new employees. The NEEDR is focused on supporting employers' DEI strategies by increasing access to a diverse pool of job seekers.

Each local area's WIOA system includes a business services team made up of staff from all partners who are business-facing and focused on job development and business services. As noted above in Chapter 1, the NEEDR convenes a Regional Integrated Business Service Team with the focus of bringing together WIOA Title 1 Business Services Representative, IDES Business Service and Employer Service Representatives, and DHS-VR Business Service Representatives and coordinating and streamlining services to employers, and in particular those larger employers with sites in multiple areas or with a workforce drawn from across the Region. A goal is to reduce the employer's work in engaging with the public workforce system and ensure they can access workers, training, and other services from any of the workforce areas in the Region. The regional team is designed to provide the ability to serve employers across the region and to conduct joint initiatives among the LWIAs in the region.

The local and regional teams:

- Engage the business community to identify industry-hiring trends and industry-recognized credentials.
- Support industry-specific sector strategies designed to facilitate in-depth focus on particular industries with business partnerships in these areas.
- Analyze and disseminate labor market information to project job growth, wages, and training requirements.
- Provide comprehensive analysis of our regional labor market.
- Provide Area wage and benefits analysis for targeted positions.
- Create custom recruitment plans.
- Post jobs online.
- Conduct targeted recruitment through email and social marketing tools.
- Provide an application collection center.
- Conduct applicant screening using business' key criteria and assessment tools.
- Organize job fairs and special employer events.
- Provide interview scheduling service and facilities.
- Provide pre-hire training for eligible applicants.
- Provide On-the-job training program funds.
- Facilitate employed worker training for industry certifications and credentials.
- Respond to WARN notices, facilitating workshops on behalf of the State, City, and County by providing information on rights, responsibilities, and resources for the workforce.

The NEEDR is committed to ensuring training programs in the region and local areas prepare job seekers to enter and retain employment with regional businesses. It will continue to work with the IWIB and the Business Integration Team to meet the goals set out by the Illinois Integrated Business Services Team. Representatives from the region serve on the business services teams and share information with local boards and partners as each local area works towards more integrated business services.



Each local area in the NEEDR conducts formal and ongoing efforts to ensure the existing skills of job seekers match the demands of local businesses. Each area reviews training programs and meets with industry advisory groups and board members who are business representatives to review their list of programs on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) to ensure that training and curriculum is aligned with the needs of industry and that training programs prepare workers for specific positions that are in-demand and provide industry-recognized credentials for these in-demand opportunities. An annual analysis of labor market information is conducted to ensure training programs meet the needs of the regional economy.

Illinois Department of Employment Security provide the following services to employers throughout the Region:

- Assists employers with creating an Illinois Job Link registration, posting job orders and searching for resumes in [illinoisjoblink.com](https://illinoisjoblink.com).
- Assists employers with their recruitment events, either at the One-Stop centers or at their assigned location.
- Facilitate quality job matches, conforming to State labor laws.
- Create customized Phone Notifications and e-mail blasts to job seekers to inform them to attend events in an effort to assist employers with their workforce needs.
- Conduct outreach efforts to assist the business community.
- Provide employer seminars to keep employers informed on new laws and regulations in Unemployment Insurance and employment services.
- Provide Labor Market Information to employers.
- Provide mass notification of local hiring events.
- Provide assistance with Work Opportunity Tax Credits (WOTC), Fidelity Bonding, Apprenticeship Information, On-Job-Training (OJT), Veteran Programs and Federal Contractor Regulations.

Commitments of each program partner to implement the selected strategies described in the Action Plan for Improving Service Integration in the Region.

The Workforce Partners of Metro Chicago, which represent the 7 LWIAs in the NEEDR, have been focused on service integration through their regional initiatives for over 20 years. They have several regional teams that have committed to continuous improvement in service integration through the sharing of best practices and the development of ongoing regional coordinated initiatives. The Regional Business Services Team has had joint training on service integration and has shared best practices to assist others in ensuring strong service integration strategies. The Regional One-Stop Operator team has been collaborating on best practices designed to enhance service integration.

After completing a local Service Integration Self-Assessment each local area has developed an action plan for service integration and has developed specific activities individually and collectively to raise service integration activities to a higher level. The action plans include goals

for the following service integration components:

- Customer Centered Design
- Partner Staff Goals
- Intake and Assessment
- Service Goals
- Career Pathways Goals
- Information
- Evaluation Goals

The core partners have been integral participants in service integration discussion and have had significant engagement in regional teams. Core partners across each local area are committed to focusing on service integration areas such as enhanced cross-training, customer-centered design improvements, professional development efforts, and responsive service delivery strategies.

The NEEDR was also represented on the state Service Integration workgroup and was involved in the development of the Illinois Service Integration Policy which informed the development of the Service Integration Self-Assessment Tool

**B. Describe how transportation and other supportive services are coordinated within the Region (Sec. 679.510(a)(1)(vi)). The plan must respond to the following questions:**

1. What regional organizations currently provide or could provide supportive services?
2. What policies and procedures will be established to promote coordination of supportive services delivery?

The NEEDR is fortunate to have an extensive transportation system in the urban portions of the region, including public transit, although, as mentioned above, outside of the core, transit can be a challenge. The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) provides more than two million rides each weekday on bus and rail services in Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will Counties. The Region's transportation system includes the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Metra and Pace bus and (ADA) Paratransit Service. The RTA's system covers approximately 3,700 square miles and serves approximately 8.4 million residents. The RTA also provides rider services, including online and telephone travel planning assistance and travel training for seniors and people with disabilities. Public transportation is less available in the lower-density, outlying areas of the Region. The RTA does not cover Kendall, Kankakee, Grundy or DeKalb counties, which have smaller, local bus services and paratransit services. Some of the local areas provide gas cards to clients in training in areas with less public transportation options and some will work with suburban bus lines to provide easy to understand information for job seekers on transportation services. Although there is an extensive transportation system in the Region – there are areas underserved including rural, last miles, off-hours and weekend services, service off main routes and across county lines.

One-Stop clients are referred to entities or organizations that are not available at the One-Stop center for supportive services. Examples include housing, health, transportation, services for individuals with disabilities and financial counseling. Veterans have assistance available to them for transportation needs and expediting referral to housing and medical services. In addition, supportive services are available for IDHS customers receiving TANF and/or SNAP benefits that agree to participate in any approved program with the partners. In some local areas, youth receive incentive payments and gas cards for training and work experience transportation.

Some adult education providers are able to collaborate and deliver childcare services. Many adult education programs have a transitions coordinator to assist underprepared adults with the transition to college. Some colleges offer special services for all students on campus, such as a women's center providing support in the case of emergency. Many colleges provide credit waivers of differing amounts for high school equivalency (HSE) graduates and/or ESL completers, and many have a scholarship fund for high scoring HSE graduates. Foundations on campus are often able to provide various types of support to students, such as funding the cost of the GED test.

Resource guides from IDES are available in all areas to serve individuals with barriers to employment. These resource guides provide a list of supportive services available in the community and are updated regularly. Statewide IDES offices and staff have access to these resource guides. In several areas these are supplemented by content gathered by the other partners. In a number of counties in the region, the 2-1-1 non-emergency telephone line is available. 2-1-1 connects people with essential community information and services. Callers can receive live assistance with needs such as food and shelter, counseling and mental health services, income and employment support, help for the elderly and people with disabilities, and resources for children and families.

C. Describe the coordination of services with regional economic development services and WIOA service providers (Sec. 679.510(a)(1)(vii)). The plan must answer the following questions:

1. What economic development organizations, WIOA service providers, or businesses are actively engaged in regional planning?
2. What economic development organizations, WIOA service providers, or businesses were invited to participate but declined?

Due to the large population and geographic size of the Region, and the smaller scope of many economic development entities at the county level, much of the coordination with economic development services and providers happens at the local level rather than region wide. For example, in many of the local areas, the local economic development department or authority has a seat on the Local Workforce Board and is included in policy making decisions and a range of activities. Local Workforce Boards across the Region work with county and municipal

economic development offices to address workforce issues associated with companies relocating to the Region.

- For example, The Partnership works closely with the City of Chicago Department of Planning Development and the Mayor's economic development team as well as the Cook County Bureau of Economic Development. In this capacity, the Partnership has assisted with supporting the expansion of local companies and participated in "pitch" meetings whereby the City, World Business Chicago, and The Partnership have met with companies considering locating to Chicago.
- Choose DuPage is represented on our LWIB, and we sit on the Choose DuPage Board. Workforce Development representatives are part of the Workforce Development committee of the Choose DuPage Board, participated in the Choose DuPage strategic planning, and will integrate that with our local WIOA plan. We have always worked side by side on company visits as needed, as well as data gathering.
- Lake County Workforce has partnered with the local economic development group, Lake County Partners (LCP), to provide Business Service Outreach. LCP partners with Lake County Workforce Development in meeting with employers as part of the business outreach visit related to expansion, retention and attraction. LCP provides referrals back to Lake County Workforce as appropriate from interactions/conversations. These services include additional partners and stakeholders including the local community college, College of Lake County. In Lake County, the Workforce Ecosystem was formed to ensure that local businesses have access to talent, training, and development resources for retention and expansion purposes. The Ecosystem consists of a partnership between Lake County Workforce Development, College of Lake County, Lake County Partners, and Lake County High Schools Technology Campus, local high schools, and the Lake County University Center. A major element of this collaboration is the use of a shared CRM system to manage the business outreach visits and relationships.
- In Will County, the Local Workforce Board conducts joint planning with the Will County Center for Economic Development (CED) and all Local Workforce Board staff are located at the CED. This partnership enhances coordination with economic development and provides additional services to employers.
- In Cook County, The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership is a member of the County's Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC). EDAC is the forum where certain tax credit and loan applications are reviewed and approved. Additionally, the Committee also provides advisement on the allocation of Community Development Block Grants, HOME Investment Partnership, Emergency Solutions Grants, and other eligible projects. As part of EDAC, The Partnership connects with the entities receiving these grants to promote the business services of the workforce system. The Partnership provides workforce development advisement on capital planning projects with diversity goals and manages the workforce recruitment activities associated with these projects. In 2022, The Partnership and the Cook County Bureau of Economic Development launched Career Connector Hiring events throughout the Suburban Cook County. These events are designed to connect employers with immediate job openings to job ready candidates. Six to seven events are planned during the year in different suburban locations.

The Partnership also engages any of the more than 100 Cook County municipalities around their workforce development needs by supporting their economic development interests and presenting to companies that are expanding and/or considering location within the municipality. The Partnership supports strategy development in the City of Chicago's master planning initiative to accelerate growth in priority growth sectors (Tourism and Hospitality, Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics; Technology, and Healthcare and Life Sciences). These working groups are facilitated by World Business Chicago. The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership participates in various forums created by the Mayor's Office to address underserved communities throughout Chicago at mini town hall meetings and provides support in the planning and implementation of the City of Chicago's resource fairs for residents and for business owners.

- In McHenry County, representatives from the Department of Commerce Economic Development unit and local economic development agencies participate on the business services team. McHenry County partners with economic development groups in the Northern Stateline EDR for grant applications, business outreach activities, and the implementation of a comprehensive economic development strategy. In addition, McHenry County facilitates a Business Resource Team that is comprised of Economic Development Stakeholders from around McHenry County that meets on a Bi-Monthly basis to provide updates from each area. This team is comprised of city economic development entities in McHenry County, a local DCEO representative, McHenry County College, high school, and workforce development business services. This team provides an avenue to coordinate efforts and understand what grant opportunities may be available through the state. Workforce also partners with the McHenry County Economic Development Corporation to aid in company recruiting.
- In Grundy, Livingston, Kankakee, local economic development entities are Workforce Board members. In addition, the workforce board office is co-located with economic development which has created a strong partnership. A good example of this is Economic Development brought Workforce Board staff into the early meetings with Gotion during the recruitment of the company to the area. After the announcement, Board staff is working with company on creating a recruitment plan, which will be a regional effort in order to fill the 2,600 jobs.
- Local economic development departments participate in the Greater Chicagoland Economic Partnership, which allows workforce development to tap into regional economic development activities. Additionally, at least one Local Workforce Board Director is a member of the Chicagoland Metropolitan Agency for Planning's (CMAP) Economic Development Committee and regularly provides input on the regional planning efforts that CMAP is responsible for.

The WPMC Directors hosted a virtual session with stakeholders from across the workforce system including education, economic development, employers, and other partners provide an overview and gather additional content for the Plan.

There were not any economic development organizations, WIOA services providers, or businesses that were invited to participate but declined.

**D. Describe the coordination of administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate (Sec. 679.510(a)(1)(v)).**

Local Workforce Boards have engaged the WIOA partners in discussion around costs and are currently negotiating based on their fair share use of the workforce development system. Additionally, partners have identified cost contributions based on available funds and system use. The partners will work together towards continuous system improvements through shared costs, leveraging of resources and a foundation of cooperation.

The NEEDR pools a significant portion of WIOA funds toward collaboration. For more than 20 years, the Workforce Partners of Metropolitan Chicago (formerly Workforce Boards of Metropolitan Chicago) have agreed to pool funds to execute regional projects identified through strategic planning. Activities include:

- A half day Workforce Board Strategic Planning event
- Customer Service/Cross-Training Series with Core Partners
- Common Customer Tracking System
- Common Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Systems
- Shared Labor Market Information data

The convener of these activities, the Regional Coordinator, is responsible for:

- Convening meeting of WPMC partner staff
- Assisting with the development and management of an annual regional cost share agreement and budget
- Assisting with the development and execution of activities to support the strategic Regional plan
- Assisting in fostering regional partnerships with stakeholder and employers to support Regional workforce development and economic development initiatives
- Planning and convening events designed to advance regional initiatives, address capacity building needs of One-Stop system staff, and actively engage workforce development stakeholders and employers
- Facilitating ongoing communication among WPMC
- Performing tasks that support regional communication strategies
- Maximizing the Region's benefit from each of the local workforce area's initiatives by fostering the sharing of information
- Managing procurement processes related to regional initiatives, in accordance with applicable competitive and small purchase procurement requirements
- Preparing progress reports and materials on regional initiatives
- Adapting Regional reports and project deliverables for use at the local level

The local Title I staff will negotiate with partners to include Regional Planning costs in the MOU. The MOU, which is to include administrative cost sharing arrangements among the partners, is still pending. The MOU under WIOA will be finalized July 1, 2020.

E. Describe how a workforce equity lens is or will be incorporated into the regional service integration strategies, including job seekers and employers.

The region has created a workforce equity lens definition: “We actively work to expand access and eliminate disparities people experience, especially those from marginalized communities, by providing a customized service approach to all clients.” The region will use this when it comes to thinking through regional integration strategies. The workforce development system can share this definition or information about this definition when interacting with partner programs and employers. Partners and employers should be addressing various populations for recruitment and retention that should be in line with areas that the workforce system would like to address. The region can continue to work towards initiatives and discussions about equitable practices. The region strives to work with employers who offer quality jobs and share the quality jobs principles with those who do not currently meet that threshold. Additionally, the Hiring Initiative to Reimagine Equity (HIRE) initiative was recently created by the Department of Labor (DOL). The LWIAs were informed about this initiative, and it entails removing barriers, stressing equal participation and opportunity, and expanding job access for workers in underrepresented communities. Regional workforce leaders and partners can be mindful of the HIRE initiative and how it could be applied in coordination of services. Lastly, training staff on how to work with diverse populations will be important for equity in service delivery processes.

NOTE: Work-based learning resources identified in partner/stakeholder forum

Middle skills pathways analysis and model

<https://edsystemsniu.org/middle-skills-pathways-in-chicago-resources/>

Illinois State Board of Education Work-based learning Employer Champion website

<http://tinyurl.com/r933d3eh>

### CHAPTER 3: VISION, GOALS, AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- A. Describe the local strategic vision to support state and regional economic growth (§ 679.560(a)(5)). Describe how this aligns with the State of Illinois' vision and principles (page 1). Include a description of how the region and local areas will accomplish the local strategic vision and support state and regional economic growth.

**Vision: The Northeast Economic Development Region WIOA partners will work collaboratively to deliver a workforce development system that provides opportunities for career growth for the Region's jobseekers and workers as well as ensures a skilled workforce to meet the needs of businesses.**

This vision will ensure that the Region's workforce development system will be responsive to changes in the economy, including changes in dominant industry sectors, as well as changes in the skills and education needed for jobs. The workforce development system will assist the Region's workers and jobseekers to advance along career pathways and will effectively collaborate with educators and economic development agencies to provide an aligned system for the Region's stakeholders. This vision focuses on the One-Stop delivery system and reinforces that the region shall provide a true "One-Stop" experience, at which any employer, worker, or jobseeker can access the programs and resources they need, whether in-person or electronically. The Northeast Economic Development region is committed to utilize ongoing evaluations to assess programmatic success, providing for continuous system improvement.

The region also will engage in analyzing best practices in WDB coordination from other similar metro urban regions in other states to better understand how to best serve employer and jobseeker needs. Analyzing these other metro region comparable plans provides opportunities for operational optimization and alignment within the local boards. Our regional WDB leadership will commence a process designed to improve our alignment in serving the needs of our jobseekers, educators, and corporate partners.

Increasingly, our companies, educators, and strategies are multi-regional and require coordinated action. We understand that our workforce system must be more aligned with this trend and better support multi-regional planning and service delivery. Regional workforce leaders will engage in efforts to shape the local workforce system to include a review of policies and procedures to ensure they are effective, flexible and to identify gaps and possible solutions to any service gaps that exist.

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

In addition to having strong alignment with the Illinois' Workforce System Vision, the NEEDR



has been actively engaged in customer centered service delivery activities. Several areas have had staff trained in human centered service design and delivery training provided by DCEO. Cross LWIA teams were involved in the training and worked jointly to develop service design projects which incorporated the training knowledge with local service delivery activities. The One-Stop Operator staff from Cook County also were provided with additional training on human centered service design and used a “train the trainer” model to facilitate knowledge and technique transfer to a wide variety of direct service staff. The NEEDR has a Regional One-Stop Operator group dedicated to sharing best practices and learnings. This group focused a recent meeting on presentations by local area teams on their experiences and uses of the customer centered design approach.

- B. Describe the local goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce (including youth and individuals with barriers to employment) and goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on performance indicators (Sec. 677.155(a)(1)). Include a description of how the region and local areas will accomplish local goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce and goals relating to performance.

Local goals include:

- Improved and expanded regional sector partnerships which increase the focus on critical in- demand occupations in key industry sectors;
- Expanded career pathway opportunities, including work-based training models and integrated programs of study, that lead to industry-recognized credentials and improved employment and earnings;
- Expanded workforce opportunities for populations facing multiple barriers to career advancement through improved career services, career pathway programs and expanded bridge programs.

The Region recognizes and accepts the rapid technological change and workforce shortage local businesses are faced with. The Regional leaders are all engaged in technology-based services as part of their service delivery models of not only WIOA services, but their partner providers such as approved training providers and partner programs. Many of the regional training providers implemented online learning platforms, hybrid programs of study and virtual training simulators for some occupational training opportunities. As new technology advancements are introduced into the workforce development industry, the region is committed to exploration and adoption as it may apply and enhance program services. Some recent examples that have come to light are virtual work-based learning opportunities, digital media rich career exploration, and oculus virtual occupational training programs.

Even with these new technology advancements, not all are affordable or equitable to regional partners, businesses, and participants. The regional workforce leaders will continue to explore funding resource opportunities to engage in collectively for digital equity implementation and support.

The region has been nimble to ensure the public workforce system's performance is maximized and serves in the best interest of the client by meeting them at their point of need. It is noteworthy to add, as regional workforce leaders, we have learned the other side of the technology coin – that is the need to have a balance with all the service delivery models available – not all clients want or can even use technology-based service models – some want and need face to face service delivery models. There was significant emphasis to achieve a balance to meet the diverse clients the region serves. Further monitoring, evaluation and exploration will continue.

Lake County Workforce Development was accepted and is a participant in Jobs for the Future's Workforce Community of Action Group. The Group is designed to facilitate a process for collaboratively thinking about and solving problems through a critical lens. The process and lessons learned will be shared with the other LWIAs in the NEEDR to provide assistance in addressing community workforce issues in a collaborative way.

The three goals identified above provide the basis for service delivery strategies, however, the NEEDR is committed to continuing to evaluate and explore additional strategies that will improve the services provided to both employers and job seekers. These goals will be evaluated annually to review the service delivery strategies that were undertaken, examine the process used for service delivery, and benchmark outcomes from the strategies. A continuous improvement process will be the foundation for the evaluation and improvements or changes will be based on both the evaluation and feedback from staff, partners, employers, and participants.

- C. Provide a description of the regional and local strategies that will achieve the vision and principles. This section must include a description of the strategies and services that will be used in the local areas:
1. To facilitate engagement of employers in workforce development programs, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations (§679.560(b)(3)(i));
  2. To support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area (§ 679.560(b)(3)(ii));
  3. To better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development (§ 679.560(b)(3)(iii));
  4. To strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs (§ 679.560(b)(3)(iv));
  5. To promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services (§ 679.560(b)(4)); and
  6. To implement initiatives such as incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies, career pathways initiatives, utilization of effective business intermediaries, and other business services and strategies designed to meet the needs of regional employers (§ 679.560(b)(3)(v)).

NEEDR is committed to collaborate across partners and services to develop strategies to address the skills gaps across the Region, through the workNet Centers and led by the core partners. The partners will engage in a regional planning process that explores career pathways, bridge programs, further development of ICAPPs, and workNet Centers tracking unemployed and underemployed individuals that lack a high school diploma, basic skills deficient, and post-secondary credentials. The NEEDR will develop additional strategies on how identified individuals will have access to the services and employment and training activities including providing access through the workNet Center, job readiness training integrated into classrooms, and working with training and service providers around stackable credentials.

The vision and principles of the NEEDR will be implemented through the following seven (7) policy strategies that together are necessary to reach the NEEDR plan goals. The NEEDR has incorporated the following strategies, including several that align directly with strategies from the Illinois Unified State Plan and solutions addressing the bullets above within multiple strategies as well as specific strategies as appropriate.

The strategies continue to serve the region and its business and industry needs. The pandemic did provide opportunities in how these strategies can be further supported through the use of advanced technology-based platforms. We have learned now more than ever; the region is experiencing a lack of skilled workforce to these now technology based enhanced occupations. We recognize the importance of an expanded focus on improving technological skills of participants through services provided at the Centers and in occupational training.

**Strategy 1: Strengthen relationships with local industry and enhance the ability to meet the needs of businesses**

The NEEDR has been working to increase partnerships with businesses to better serve their needs through cooperative strategies with partners. Some specific examples include:

- Disability job fairs and employer education workshops. Through a partnership with DHS-VR and training from a grant from DCEO, local areas developed and implemented employer workshops that focused on strategies for hiring people with disabilities. The training was followed-up with job fairs targeted to persons with a disability. These population specific job fairs have been replicated throughout the region and are offered multiple times throughout each year.
- Local Business Service team members are drawn from all partners and the Regional Business Services team also includes all partners. The expansion of business service teams beyond WIOA Title I has limited the duplication of services and has provided employers with a much broader array of services to meet their needs.

Each local area also has engaged in activities designed to strengthen relationships with local industry. For example, Will County developed a Business Service Team that identified the key employer services provided by the following entities: Joliet Junior College Career Services,

Joliet Junior College Workforce Development, Joliet Junior College Corporate and Community Education, Illinois Department of Employment Security, Employer and Employment Services,

Workforce Services Division of Will County, Will County Center for Economic Development, and the Workforce Board of Will County. Through this expanded team the area identified and implemented a Customer Relationship Management system to share employer connections and activities.

Lake County Workforce Development is also expanding and enhancing business services. As part of the work developing their local plan, workforce development staff have had opportunities to engage employers in surveys and focus groups to solicit new input into programming. Lake County Workforce Development will also review training programs and classes with employers to verify the relevancy of training programs to the skills needed in the workplace. Lake County Workforce Development is also developing solutions around the hiring needs of employers with a greater focus on the hard-to-fill jobs and positions that struggle with retention, as well as working with staffing firms and growing internship programs. In addition, Lake County Workforce Development is utilizing an on-the-job training strategy to assist small businesses that want to help employees move up the career ladder and create opening in entry-level positions.

In Kane, Kendall and DeKalb Counties, the Business Services Team has established contacts with small businesses that have participated or expressed interest in the on-the-job training and incumbent worker programs. Partnerships have also been established with the Aurora Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Elgin Development Group. Kane, Kendall, and DeKalb counties are expanding the business services team to include two additional Business Service Representatives to strengthen the outreach to local businesses and to form mutually beneficial partnerships with employers. Existing relationships with the business centers at the Elgin, Kishwaukee, and Waubensee Community Colleges will also be vital to maintaining open channels of communication with employers across all three counties in the local area. Kane County is currently developing web content to market and promote services to businesses on its website.

The McHenry County Workforce Network has expanded business service focus to help organizations meet workforce demands by targeting alternative talent pools. This includes holding job fairs for individuals with disabilities twice a year, going on 4 years and running a program called Step Forward to working with returning citizens to become job ready within the workplace. These efforts not only help to bring quality positions for individuals with barriers to employment but gives talent solutions for the local organizations.

DuPage County continues to enhance and refine its business services offerings, with a renewed focus on work-based learning. A county-wide Business Services Team has been assembled to coordinate and synergize outreach to businesses. The team includes representatives from DuPage County Workforce Development Division, Illinois Department of Commerce, Choose DuPage (Economic Development), College of DuPage Business Solutions, and College of DuPage Center for Entrepreneurship. In addition to expanded outreach, the team conducts information sessions at which businesses can learn of the grants, tax credits, and other services available to help them become more competitive. The team is conducting a campaign to recruit additional business leaders to the DuPage Workforce Board in order to capitalize on the industry expertise that they would bring to the Board and that would inform and guide local workforce

development initiatives. A recent addition to these services is a program called Career Conversations targeted to a variety of populations (parents returning to work, re-entry and recovery communities, etc.) designed to allow employers to connect with job seekers in a conversational and informative platform culminating in traditional recruiting activities at the conclusion of the conversations.

The Workforce Partners of Metro Chicago have convened the Regional Integrated Business Services Team. The Regional BST meets regularly to discuss how each of the local areas have their business services structured and how different job functions are managed and delivered in each area. Incumbent worker training, on-the-job training projects, internships, adult work experience, files and monitoring, Rapid Response, and business services strategies are discussed, and promising practices are shared. The Regional BST provides an opportunity for building relationships among business service teams across the Region, exchanging ideas, and sharing job openings and company closures. This team has explored and tested ways to market Regional on-the-job training and incumbent worker opportunities to employers with multiple locations throughout the metro Region through coordinated efforts across local areas. The NEEDR is working to coordinate with IDES to provide system-wide services to employers and leverage employer relationships across funding streams. Local Business service team members hold a regional meetings to discuss best practices and Regional collaboration.

#### 2024 Plan:

- For 2024 the regional BST was recalibrated to be relevant to the current environment. The Team will be re-engaged and because of staff turnover, re-introduced. In addition to sharing and updating on current and future activities, the group will identify joint regional initiatives to target for the next 2 years. Some options include third party training, opportunities for peer discussion and learning, and the opportunity to work together and replicate local projects. The energy in this group and the interactions have been fantastic. It bodes well for future regional business services work.
- Engagement of Small Business and Promotion of entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services. The NEEDR and the local areas continue to target small business in addition to larger employers in recognition that small businesses employ nearly half of workers according to Forbes Magazine (46.4% of all US employees are working for firms with under 500 workers-the Federal threshold for “small business”). The NEEDR however, focuses small businesses efforts on those employers with less than 20 employees. Local WDB's coordinate with their Chambers of Commerce and Small Business Development Centers on entrepreneurship and a range of activities for small businesses and entrepreneurs, including hosting informational and networking events and workshops for small businesses. Some specific examples include incumbent worker training targeted to small businesses, workshops for targeted small businesses (women, minority, veteran, disabled, etc.) on certification, and ARPA funds targeted to entrepreneurial training. The NEEDR has had discussions about the closure of Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) in several areas and is exploring avenues to address the gap in services to small businesses created by these closures.

### **Strategy 2: Support employer-driven Regional sector initiatives**

The NEEDR continues to gather information on promising practices throughout the Region and leverage these practices to support high-quality, customized, regional, and local initiatives in all of the targeted industry sectors. The many sector initiatives listed above in Chapter 1, provide further detail about how this strategy is being implemented in the Region and provide a sample of the type of initiatives that will be pursued in the coming years.

Sector strategies have long been a focus of programming and services in the NEEDR going back to the Critical Skill Shortages (CSSI) Initiatives in the early 2000's. The region recognized the importance of focusing on specific sectors to develop strategies that can meet a broad array of employer needs and have economies of scale in program development and implementation. CSSI focused on Manufacturing, Healthcare, and Transportation/ Distribution/Logistics (TDL). The knowledge acquired through the implementation of strategies in those three sectors lead to additional regional sector initiatives in Healthcare (Health Professions Opportunities Grant – HPOG – funded through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), Manufacturing (Accelerated Training in Manufacturing – ATIM – funded through the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity), and TDL (Technical Assistance Grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity).

The lessons learned and best practices identified in these previous regional sector initiatives provide the groundwork for future activity in the sectors identified in Chapter 1 (Healthcare, Manufacturing, TDL, Information Technology, and Clean Energy).

### **Strategy 3: Provide economic advancement for all populations through career pathways and a strong focus on work-based learning activities**

The NEEDR pursues several strategies focused on supporting economic advancement for all populations, with a specific focus on supporting entry into the workforce and movement along career pathways for our targeted populations as outlined above. The Region will pursue customized programs and work to build career pathways as outlined in Chapter 2 for populations including:

- Low-skilled adults
- Individuals with disabilities
- Returning Citizens (formerly incarcerated individuals)
- Out of School Youth
- Veterans
- English Language Learners
- Homeless individuals
- Older individuals
- 

Several projects are being pursued Region-wide. In all cases, the WPMC will work to disseminate information about the project and support peer-to-peer learning so when an initiative is successful in one local area it can be replicated or adapted to succeed in another Region.

In past years, the Region developed and implemented industry guides and manuals, industry and occupational focused PowerPoint templates, industry sector information sheets, and demand occupation information sheets. The guides and manuals incorporate career pathway materials and information to help individuals, workforce career counseling staff, other staff and business customers in developing pathway-focused training and worker preparation activities. Work-based learning activities are outlined specifically in Chapter 3, immediately below. The Region is strongly focused on delivering a broad array of work-based training initiatives in conjunction with Regional and local businesses.

#### **Strategy 4: Expand service integration**

This strategy integrates and enhances the career services now received through education and workforce funding streams and programs especially for populations facing multiple barriers to employment. The NEEDR has a history of successfully conducting referrals among counties, especially for customers who are located near the county border. Rapid response activities have required the LWIAs to work collectively as one Region to serve those affected. The LWIAs are committed to serving customers across the Region in a seamless manner and have developed the awareness of who to contact in neighboring counties for referrals. A common Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool has been explored across the NEEDR but costs and security concerns have sidelined those activities. However, individual LWIAs in the NEEDR have implemented cross-partner CRM like tools to ensure seamless service delivery that has been identified as important to the region.

As part of overall service integration across the Region, priority activities will include:

- Regional Business Service Team – As mentioned earlier in this plan, the NEEDR will build on the work done already by the Regional Business Team and the Region's wider Service Integration goals. The Region will continue to develop the Regional BST through activities both in terms of breadth (inclusion of more partners) and depth (more integrated activities). The Region has piloted several innovative activities that will be continued and expanded in coming years. The Regional BST has worked together on numerous rapid response activities as well as demand-side projects where a regional employer has a major hiring need that demands the efforts of the entire Region to identify, prepare and refer large numbers of workers to fill a critical need.
- Front-Line Staff: Career Planner/Career Coach development and training: The Region provided a forum to more formally bring together Career Planners to share best practices, identify innovative ways to encourage and support partner integration, and to conduct cross training and program information/resources across all programs provided in the One-Stop Centers. Several region-wide training sessions were held for Career Planners and Career Coaches including Assisting Customers in Utilizing Technology, Recruitment and Enrollment of Job Seekers, Communicating with Difficult Customers, and Safety and Security.
- One-Stop Operator Development and Training – Similarly, we have begun to bring together the One-Stop Operators from all seven LWIAs to give them a larger context for the work they do and provide them with an avenue to share information and receive

exposure to Regional activities. The discussions from this group have resulted in the replication of service strategies around customer referrals, workforce system kiosks, customer outreach, and partner service integration.

- The workforce system kiosks (titled Job Center on the Move by the Lake County Workforce Development system) have been implemented in Lake County, DuPage County, Cook County, and Will County. These kiosks have been used for outreach and expanded community access to WIOA services.
- Northeastern Illinois Workforce Coalition (NIWC) – Seven Local Workforce Development Areas and twelve community colleges in Northeast Illinois have long partnered to provide career guidance and career skills classes to its customers. They have collaborated on special grants, such as the Health Professions Opportunity Grant (HPOG), and the Accelerated Training for Illinois Manufacturing (ATIM). These training grant-funded program administrators and the community colleges agreed to in-district tuition for the WIOA grant-supported students. NIWC has continued to expand this in-district tuition model for WIOA customers receiving tuition vouchers. This integrated model streamlines the class selection and enrollment process for WIOA customers and reduces the administrative burden for the local areas and community colleges within the Region.

As noted elsewhere in the Plan and immediately below, the Region would benefit from a common customer relationship management (CRM) system to better support the work of service integration system-wide for both jobseeker and business customer case management, across all partners. Some local areas have their own systems using proprietary or off-the-shelf systems (Salesforce, others), but all seek a more comprehensive solution across partners and hope for such a solution at the state level.

The regional workforce leaders will continue to explore WIOA program and partner program policies in collecting data on referrals made among the programs to identify gaps that need to be addressed as well as further establish equitable access to all programs. This will apply to follow-up services back to the referral program for appropriate case management actions to be taken. The Regional One-Stop Operator team has focused several meetings on the referral systems used by local areas to share best practices and to identify possible commonalities in selecting systems. Some referral systems shared were:

**Job Center of Lake County's UNIFY Referral System** – An internal partner Unify webpage was designed and launched in July 2021. The Unify webpage includes an overview of each of the 14 Job Center partners and an electronic referral system. This internal partner webpage increased understanding about partner programs among frontline staff members of each organization and facilitate referrals. Unify also created a seamless process for customers to receive a broader array of services in a more all-in-one manner.

**Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership – Airtable Referral System** – The Partnership developed a referral tracking system using Airtable to better connect job seekers to services. Airtable is a dynamic tool for referrals, outcome tracking, collaboration, and transparency between partners. This system allows partners to send and receive referrals through a single referral



form, filter real-time referral data, receive automated messages about referrals, and track referral outcomes.

**McHenry County Workforce Development Partners Referral System** – The McHenry County Workforce Development Partners developed a referral system that allows workforce partners to have a simple process to contact customers between partner agencies. This process has been in effect for several years and has positively impacted the service integration efforts for the McHenry County area. Additionally, as part of the referral process, referrals are tracked and followed up with to ‘close the loop’ within the process to make sure all customers are receiving the services they require.

Partners in the NEEDR have been working collaboratively for many years both on a local and regional basis. Partners regularly identify professional development and skill training needs for staff and the training is provided to all partner staff in the region. Examples of recent cross-partner training includes:

- One-Stop Center Safety and Security
- Assisting Customers in Utilizing Technology
- Recruitment and Enrollment of Job Seekers
- Prospecting for New Business Customers
- Overcoming Employer Objections
- Employer Outreach and Relationship Nurturing
- Developing Reporting Processes for Tracking Customers and Services
- Communicating with Difficult Customers
- How Workforce Partners can Support Inclusive Employment

#### **Strategy 5: Promote improved data driven decision making**

The Northeast Economic Development Region seeks to use data (workforce intelligence) more aggressively from a range of sources and at the qualitative and quantitative levels to better drive decision-making and support the state and regional commitment to workforce development and job creation. The Region is identifying ways to better capture labor market information that will allow employers and jobseekers to promote and access job openings, review changing labor market trends and opportunities, identify funding opportunities and find education, training, and support services.

This strategy supports employers by establishing and managing regional sector partnerships using talent pipeline management tools and resources. The region will provide easier access to career guidance and planning information for the delivery of enhanced career services, including information on career pathways within critical sectors of in-demand industries. It also will provide better information to employers on how to promote career opportunities and job openings and access business services, education, training resources and services.

All LWIAs in the Region have access to and purchase a variety of privately developed labor market information systems. These include: EMSI, Chmura (JobsEQ), Help Wanted online, and Burning Glass among others. The region approaches each labor market system to obtain a joint

presentation and cost proposal to ensure common questions are addressed and pricing proposals are often discounted based on multi-area purchases. The utilization of a combination of secondary data and real-time data for both employers and jobseekers has ensured a much richer perspective on the labor market, labor force needs, and future skill requirements.

The Region regularly collects and publishes key workforce intelligence by sector and posts it on the Regional website. Data mirrors the types of data that were gathered in preparation for this Plan development and included in Chapter 1. More extensive detailed data is gathered and shared among the Regional Business Services Team and used by the LWIAs in identifying new initiatives, re-focusing the targeting of industries and in-demand occupations, and making other data-informed decisions. Data is shared with economic development partners and those entities also share their data with the local areas and the WPMC. As mentioned earlier, data sharing and analysis is one of the possible collaborations between the WPMC and the GCEP economic development group.

By sharing and expanding access to workforce intelligence of various types and levels, the NEEDR was able several years ago to successfully identify the TDL sector as a critically in-demand sector and request grant funds that supported career pathways in the industry. These career pathways have placed an emphasis on incumbent worker training, upskilling the talent in TDL.

The Region is data rich and will place emphasis on how to use the data, identify where the data gaps are and address those gaps with actionable strategies. Regional leaders will learn from partner programs data reporting and analysis to see if there are opportunities to further collaborate to improve upon policies and referral processes to ensure expanded and equitable access to all the programs.

#### **Strategy 6: Increase coordination between workforce development and economic development**

Each of the Region's local areas will work closely with their respective economic development organizations, as outlined above in Chapter 2, in a variety of activities. The region will increase their work with economic development to identify the value add of specific employer driven programs, such as on-the-job training and incumbent worker training. The local WDBs will work to create expanded relationships with Chambers of Commerce on a range of activities around partnering with businesses, supporting employment at firms moving into the Region or expanding, and growing small businesses as noted above.

Workforce development business service teams have sponsored round tables with economic development partners and the Region plans to expand this practice to include additional core partners and to span across local areas. Some specific examples are:

- Lake County, the public/private economic development organization, Lake County Partners, and the Lake County Workforce Development Board engage in formal quarterly meetings and other communication with the economic development departments in each municipality and local chambers of commerce to share information about new and growing businesses, technology incubators, and small business start-ups.

- McHenry County facilitates a bi-monthly Business Resource Team comprised of Economic Development stakeholders. The team coordinates economic development efforts, identifies grant opportunities, and provides a forum to discuss future economic development plans.
- DuPage County Workforce Development has a seat on the Choose DuPage Board and is a member of their Workforce Development Committee. They participated in Choose DuPage Strategic planning and will integrate that with their local WIOA plan.

In September 2020, the seven county board chairs and the mayor of Chicago called on the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) and Choose Chicago to assemble the Regional Economic Recovery Task Force and pursue robust economic growth that reduces inequity. This task force has morphed into a group called the Greater Chicagoland Economic Partnership (GCEP). Over the past several years, this group helped the region focus on priorities, collaborate on solutions, and speak as one collective voice. The NEEDR has been in conversation with this group to identify joint initiatives to focus on. Some initial thoughts are around sharing of labor market information and data reports, targeting specific industry sectors with high growth and recruitment difficulties, and developing an on-going agenda for regular joint meetings between the Workforce Partners of Metro Chicago (WPMC) and GCEP.

#### **Strategy 7: Strengthen linkages between the One-Stop delivery system and unemployment programs**

Wagner-Peyser staff are co-located in the One-Stop centers providing employment services to all job seekers. Title I and Wagner-Peyser (Title III) staff work together on joint business service committees, coordinating outreach to businesses at the policy level as well as participating together on individual business service teams and the regional BST. Efforts to further coordinate business services will be expanded. The NEEDR will work with partners to implement strategies and practices noted by the IWIB Integrated Business Services Team. IDES staff are active participants in the Regional Business Services team which has expanded coordination and information sharing within the system.

When Illinois rolled out the “Workshare” program, the NEEDR reached out to IDES and arranged a focused information session about the program. This gave the region the opportunity to ask detailed questions about how the program worked, the process for employers to participate, and to explore how they can assist in providing information to employers about Workshare.

The Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) has integrated the UI system’s Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) initiative into the One-Stops in the region. The RESEA program provides access to reemployment services through formula-based funding and a series of requirements intended to increase the use and availability of evidence-based reemployment interventions and strategies. The permanent RESEA program has four purposes:

1. Reduce UI duration through improved employment outcomes;
2. Strengthen UI program integrity;
3. Promote alignment with the vision of WIOA; and
4. Establish RESEA as an entry point to other workforce system partners.

Through the RESEA profiling process, UI claimants most likely to exhaust benefits are targeted and required to receive assistance with their reemployment efforts. IDES RESEA Workshops which are delivered at the start of services to each RESEA participant include Workforce Services-Title 1B staff presenting the WIOA Application and program eligibility information and orientations to other partner programs and services. Completing a WIOA Application is part of the RESEA Workshops in the region.

**D. Describe Regional strategies that will increase apprenticeship and other work-based learning opportunities.**

***Apprenticeship***

A number of competitive Apprenticeship grants have been secured by Regional partners that continue to expand access to apprenticeship and expand the scope and diversity of industries in which apprenticeship is delivered. Apprenticeship projects in the area include multiple DCEO Apprenticeship Intermediary and Expansion grants and the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership's ConstructionWorks project in conjunction with the Illinois Tollway.

The NEEDR has been engaged in apprenticeship activities for several years. Activities range from formal participation in apprenticeship grants to support of apprenticeships through ITAs and Incumbent Worker Training. Some specific examples include:

- workNet DuPage supports manufacturing apprenticeships offered through TMA and IMEC with Incumbent Worker grants.
- Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership is working with People Gas on Utility Workers Training Program and has developed an Arborist apprenticeship with Openlands.
- Lake County Workforce Development is utilizing funds from an Apprenticeship Expansion grant to support a Youth Development Practitioner Apprenticeship.
- Workforce Services Division of Will County is working with Joliet Junior College on their IT Apprenticeship and with Chicago Women in Trades on construction apprenticeships.

***Other Work-Based Learning***

The Region's broad array of work-based learning activities are built in conjunction with employers and industry organizations and as partnerships between WIOA Title I and local community colleges and in particular their CTE programs. The Region has a long history of providing work-based learning opportunities to youth and adults as part of a training program or stand-alone to ensure that customers obtain valuable work experiences.

Some examples include:

- Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership is working with Unite Here to conduct hospitality training with a work-based learning component.
- Lake County Workforce Development is implementing the "Give me 10" program. This work-based learning program is designed to bridge the gap between classroom and hands-on training. Employers commit to providing 10 hours on-site experience for

youth in their field of interest. Based on the success in those two areas, Kankakee County is in the process of implementing the program with youth in their area.

- workNet DuPage is in the process of implementing a transitional jobs program for recently released inmates from the DuPage County jail.
- Two new work-based learning projects are underway through the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership. One is call center opportunities at Chicago Lighthouse for the Blind and the other is HVAC training at Four Seasons Heating and Air Conditioning.
- The McHenry County Workforce Network has established programs to build customer's experience through work-based learning for both young adults with disabilities and returning citizens. The Project SEARCH program focuses on working with young adults transitioning out of high school into the workplace that have barriers to employment by providing them critical soft skills and having the customers go through 3 internships within the hospital setting. The Step Forward program prepares returning citizens for work and the McHenry County Workforce Network takes this program a step further by working with these individuals to gain a work experience in their desired field.
- Several areas have made a shift in focus from mainly ITA training to more OJT and subsidized work experience, especially with small businesses.
- LWIAs in the NEEDR also have partnered to provide incumbent worker training to companies that have connections in multiple areas.
- The WEL (Work, Earn, and Learn) Program delivered by Lake County Workforce Development provides an opportunity to complete a curriculum-based work experience with a local employer. The participants learn new skills from industry professionals. The work experience provides the opportunity for participants to earn industry-based credentials during or after the work experience. The purpose of the WEL Program is to improve an employer's strategy for hiring a skilled workforce and create a talent pipeline into hard-to-fill positions. Some of the most recent WEL programs include Transportation (Flagger, CDL, Forklift Operator, OSHA, CPR, and First Aid), Diesel Mechanics, Warehouse Management, and Graphic Design.
- Edward-Elmhurst Health and Northwestern Medicine, who sit on the DuPage WIB, have discussed critical hiring needs, and identified Medical Assistant (MA) and Patient Care Technicians (PCT) as most in-demand positions. Together with the Board, a Healthcare Talent Pipeline was developed to steer clients from the local workforce system towards these occupations. Edward-Elmhurst Health utilized Incumbent Worker Training funds to further upskill current employees.
- DuPage County partnered with the College of DuPage to provide CNA training to existing Edward Elmhurst employees to address the shortage of patient care technicians (PCT) across the region. The County utilized IWT dollars to fund the training.

E. Describe initiatives to shorten the time from credential to employment and address how the area will work with the education system to begin putting training opportunities in place to meet this strategy.

Education partners in NEEDR realize the value and significance of shortening the time from credential to employment. A range of activities are in place region-wide to continue to focus on this effort. All work-based learning activities (OJT, pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, and incumbent worker training) are geared toward moving workers into employment more quickly and effectively.

The Regional and Local Business Service teams, which include the community colleges, listen to employer needs and work to better understand employer training needs. Insights from these dialogues are shared to the local high schools to identify CTE and other programs focusing on short-term credentials that be built into dual-credit programs.

Community colleges across the Region have partnered with high schools to offer dual credit programs, which help students quickly complete their degree and enter the workforce, while saving money along the way. The community colleges in the Region are also working with four-year universities to ensure credits are recognized and accepted.

Community colleges are exploring a range of non-credit programs in conjunction with businesses, which often facilitate industry-recognized credentials more quickly than traditional course timelines, especially when these are interim credentials that would normally be part of a longer college course or program. Workers retain the value from these interim steps in themselves and should more easily be able to later take additional credentials that can be stacked toward college degrees.

Workforce areas in the NEEDR have implemented several activities designed to shorten the time from credential to employment and to engage the education system in these initiatives. Examples include:

- workNet DuPage had expanded local policies to encourage participants into short-term training which has provided an incentive to educational institutions to develop and expand short-term training to meet the increased demand.
- In Kane/DeKalb/Kendall Counties, the LWIA has worked with the 3 local community colleges to develop a joint cohort program for welding occupations. They worked with the colleges to develop a brief application process that is applicable to all 3 institutions and also braided in college readiness training into the programs. They also have developed short-term training programs with IMEC as the training partner and they are working with Elgin Community College to incorporate short-term existing Comptia training which includes credentials into their non-credit courses.
- The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership is continuing their earn and learn initiative focusing on preparing community health workers.
- Lake County Workforce Development is working with the College of Lake County in nursing occupations to segment the program in smaller pieces (initially for CNA) to

provide customers with a credential in a short time frame and then provide the opportunity to continue on to an associate or bachelor's degree.

- F. Describe the steps that will be taken to support the state's efforts to align and integrate education, workforce and economic development, including:
1. Fostering the improvement and expansion of employer-driven regional sector partnerships to increase the focus on critical in-demand occupations in key sectors that are the engine of economic growth for the state and its regions.
  2. Expanding career pathway opportunities through more accelerated and work-based training, and align and integrate programs of study leading to industry-recognized credentials and improved employment and earnings.
  3. Expanding career services and opportunities for populations facing multiple barriers to close the gap in educational attainment and economic advancement through career pathways and improved career services.

### **Sector Partnerships**

LWIAs in the NEEDR have worked in recent years to expand its sector initiatives throughout the Region and sector-based career pathway programs at community colleges.

Regional initiatives will be guided by the statewide policy framework that defines the goals and guiding principles of employer-driven partnerships and how state and regional resources can be used to launch, expand and support them. The state has developed a statewide guide for business and industry associations to work with education, workforce, and economic development in establishing and managing these partnerships to achieve and promote economic growth and economic advancement. This Region will work to align and integrate business services among the core programs along with Regional economic development partners. The Region will explore how to integrate funding and resources from core programs and economic development to support employer-driven sector initiatives, including leveraging rapid response and layoff aversion for business retention. Additionally, the NEEDR will work to share demand occupation information and develop common marketing and outreach materials around key industry sectors and demand occupations.

The Region will continue to promote opportunities that lead to career and economic advancement in critical and in-demand industries. There have been several successful programs in the region that will be expanded, replicated, or implemented to target employer in-demand occupational needs.

- The Region is exploring replicating the Accelerated Training In Manufacturing (ATIM) program in other sectors. This model was not only very successful in addressing employer needs for targeted in-demand occupations, but it provided an opportunity for training institutions to focus on those occupations that were best suited to their equipment, staff, and space capacities.
- Several College in the NEEDR offer apprenticeships in manufacturing, including Industrial Maintenance Technician, Computer Numeric Control Operator and Supply Chain Assistant. Apprentices are paid employees who pursue formal coursework at

Harper College focused on the Applied Associate of Science degree in Manufacturing. Apprentices follow the traditional earn and learn model where they apply the concepts learned in the classroom to on-the-job experiences. The course pathway includes several industry recognized credentials. Tuition and fees are paid by the employer and apprentices receive pay increases regularly, as they progress through the program. Employers provide input into curriculum design.

### Career Pathways

The Region has been expanding career pathway offerings throughout the workforce development system through the ICAPS program. ICAPS includes comprehensive academic and social student supports (e.g., tutoring, childcare, transportation, access to public benefits, subsidized jobs), making the program ideal for many populations with barriers to employment. In the NEEDR, the following ICAPS offerings are available through the Adult Education system:

Adult Education Program	ICAPS run in FY23
A Safe Haven	Culinary
Asian Human Services	Early Childhood and Education Professionals
Chinese Mutual Aide	Culinary Training Program
Chinese Mutual Aide – Elgin	Office Technology
City Colleges of Chicago	Manufacturing
College of DuPage	CompTiaA+/Network +, Office Technology - Office Technology Specialist/Central Sterile Processing Distribution Technician
College of Lake County	Automotive/IT/HVAC CAN/Medical Office Asst.
Elgin Community College	CNC/Welding/HVAC/Dental Assisting/Sterile Processing/BNAT
Greater West Town	Shipping and Receiving Vocational Skills Woodworking Vocational Skills
Howard Area Community Center	ICAPS Culinary Support Course
Joliet Junior College	Supply Chain Management Child Development Professional
Kankakee Community College	Manufacturing
McHenry County College	Administrative Office Skills Basic Nursing Assistant (CNA) Computer Numerical Control (CNC) Machining Entrepreneurship Welding Technician
Moraine Valley Community College	Supplemental Healthcare BNAT Caregivers
Morton College	Credit Connect
Oakton Community College	IT/CDL/BNAT
Polish American Association	can
Prairie State college	Forklift
South Suburban College	Welding
Township HS District #211	Medical Assistant
Triton Community College	Pharmacy Technicians
Waubensee Community College	Phlebotomy and Medical Terminology
YWCA Elgin	HealthCare ICAPS



Efforts are underway to develop and expand other career pathway initiatives in the Region to serve populations with barriers. For example, McHenry County is coordinating with Vocational Rehab for an on-the-job training and evaluation program for people with disabilities and is also working on plans to coordinate career pathways and career service delivery with McHenry Community College.

The Region's providers will advocate that the ICAPS model be expanded to include non-credit programs, which are currently not allowable under the model. Improved coordination between core partners through the MOU negotiation process, co-location of services within One-Stops, and adult education's involvement on the Local Workforce Boards make a strong referral system into these programs. Additionally, local programs will explore ways to better leverage TANF, SNAP, CSBG and CDBG for support services for participants facing multiple barriers.

There are many other career pathway initiatives underway in the NEEDR. The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership provides Career Pathway Training grants to Jane Adams Resource Center and Symbol Training Institute for CNC training. Under the Apprenticeship Expansion Grant, Lake County Workforce Development is expanding career pathway opportunities to additional high schools' students through a partnership with AON Corporation. An extensive career pathway project was undertaken in Will County last year called "Pathways to Professions." It was designed to give job seekers an opportunity to explore a wide range of career paths and then to engage with the WIOA system to enter into a training pathway. The program is being offered again in the Spring of 2024.

### **Bridge Programs**

Bridge programs prepare adults with limited academic or limited English skills to enter and succeed in post-secondary education and training that leads to career path employment in skilled jobs. While there is not a dedicated federal or state level source for bridge funding, the Illinois Community College Board and Commerce have expanded and continue to expand these programs within their existing workforce and education programs.

The Career Foundations curriculum is a tool to educate low-skilled adults on career pathways and support transitions to sector-focused bridge programs and post-secondary education and training at community colleges or community-based providers. The curriculum exposes students and job seekers to local career pathways programming options, assists with creating a plan to transition to advance to post-secondary education or training, and encourages job seekers to not only focus on the immediate job, but plan for how they could advance along a career pathway. Currently, Career Foundations is being implemented across the seven City Colleges of Chicago within the Adult Education department. Additionally, there are a number of community-based adult education and workforce providers (including WIOA Affiliate sites) in LWIA 7 are implementing the curriculum within their workforce or adult education programs.

As with the ICAPS program, the LWIAs in the NEEDR are committed to making referrals to these critical bridge programs. Below is a list of the current bridge programs offered by Adult Education providers in the region.

Adult Education Program	Bridges run in FY23
Asian Human Services	Healthcare ESL Bridge; Tech for Employment Empowerment Bridge
Centro Romero	ECE Bridge; Bridge to Health Careers
Chinese Mutual Aide – Elgin	Healthcare Bridge
City Colleges of Chicago	Early Childhood
College of DuPage	Information and Technology Bridge
College of Lake County	Intro to Admin Technology Management Bridge; Intro to Computer Technology Bridge; Healthcare Bridge Workforce Preparation & Career Development IELCE Bridge; Intro to Manufacturing as a Career; Job Readiness Health Care Bridge; Workforce Preparation & Career Development IELCE Bridge
Elgin Community College	Industrial Arts Bridge; Healthcare Bridge; Early Childhood Education Bridge
Greater West Town	Shipping and Receiving; Computational Skills; WW Blueprint Reading; Woodworking Career Development
Howard Area Community Center	Hospitality Bridge
Joliet Junior College	Transportation Distribution and Logistics Bridge Early Child Education Bridge
Kankakee Community College	Career Awareness Health Careers Bridge
Kishwaukee Community College	Bridge to Careers (IELCE) Bridge to Information Technology; Bridge to Healthcare
Literacy Chicago	Carpentry Bridge
McHenry County College	Int Nursing Asst (NAE) Transition
Moraine Valley Community College	Bridge to Healthcare ;Bridge to Career Pathways; Bridge to Data Entry
Morton College	Bridge to Health Careers
Mundelein Consolidated HS	Bridge to Career Pathways
Oakton Community College	TDL Bridge ;Healthcare Bridge
Polish American Association	Health Bridge
Prairie State college	Bridge to Careers
Pui Tak Center	Bridge/Healthcare
Safer Foundation/PACE institute	TDL; WRC
St. Augustine – Chicago	ASE Bridge Program English and Spanish
The Literacy Council (YWCA NWIL)	IT Careers Blast Off! IT Bridge Course
Township HS District #113	IELCE bridge to Careers
Township HS District #211	Bridge to Healthcare/Medical Terminology
Triton Community College	Introduction to Medical Careers; Introduction to Medical Terminology; Introduction to Office Administration; Introduction to Office Management; Introduction to Early Childhood Education
Waubensee Community College	Information Technology Bridge
World Relief – Aurora	Healthcare Career Preparation
World Relief – DuPage	Healthcare Career Preparation
World Relief – Chicago	Emerging Careers Bridge
YWCA Elgin	IELCE Bridge

G. Describe how the goals established in this plan will be monitored and evaluated.

Regional workforce leaders at the local board level will continue to engage with community and program partners to further explore ways they can collaborate to better the public workforce system and meet the high demand for skilled workers. This includes exploring current policies, partnerships and funding opportunities to aid community leaders to better serve their businesses, and eligible program participants.

Continuous improvement has been at the forefront of all programs and initiatives developed and implemented by the workforce areas in the NEEDR. The Workforce Partners of Metropolitan Chicago (WPMC) have monthly meetings that include a regular review of regional goals and partner engagement. In each local area, the One-Stop Operator is required to report progress and activity to the Workforce Boards on service integration activities, partner referrals, staff cross training, and customer outcomes.

The WPMC have strived to ensure that the system that is in place in the NEEDR is both responsive to employer and job seeker needs yet is also nimble enough to make swift changes to programming and services to address rapidly changing needs.

H. Describe how a *workforce equity lens* is or will be incorporated in the implementation of regional workforce, education, and economic development strategies.

As noted in an earlier chapter of this plan, regional workforce leaders have and continue to work together in building consensus for a regional equity lens definition in order for each local board to support and collectively operate from: *We actively work to expand access and eliminate disparities people experience, especially those from marginalized communities, by providing a customized service approach to all clients.* Through the modified strategies stated and the sharing of partner aggregate program data, regional leaders will begin to identify the equity gaps that require attention and action. Regional workforce leaders support sharing of data in order to make data informed decisions to better serve and increase access for all populations within the region.

To further this strategy the WPMC used funds received from a DCEO grant to support training of staff and employers in methods and best practices in hiring people from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. In addition, seven companies participated in a pilot project that provided hands-on assistance in hiring, onboarding, and retaining persons with disabilities. A toolkit was developed for use by staff to provide assistance to employers in the future.



# LAKE COUNTY WORKFORCE PLAN 2024-2028



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TRAINING • CONNECTING • DEVELOPING ILLINOIS' WORKFORCE

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# Lake County Workforce Development

March 31, 2024

On behalf of the Lake County Workforce Development Board, I am delighted to present the 2024-2028 Local Workforce Plan. The local plan was approved by the board and was posted for a 30-day public comment period. The plan is scheduled to be presented to the Lake County Board for approval on April 9, 2024. The CEO's signature will be provided thereafter.

I extend my gratitude to the members of the Lake County workforce system for their diligent efforts in developing this plan, as well as to the staff of the Workforce Development Department and our local partners. The collaborative effort involved in crafting this document offers valuable insights into our current workforce system and its future trajectory.

The Lake County Workforce Board operates most effectively by leveraging relationships and partnering with stakeholders in the regional and local economy, a principle that was underscored during the pandemic. We collaborate closely with schools, colleges, local governments, non-profits, social service providers, and the business community to address shared goals and economic needs. The dedicated individuals from both the public and private sectors who serve on the Lake County Workforce Development Board volunteer their time and expertise to steer Workforce Development towards fulfilling its mission, vision, and purpose.

The 2024-2028 plan reaffirms our commitment to a workforce system that tackles disparities and fosters employer-led industry sector Career Pathways partnerships, aligning the skills of our workforce with high-demand careers. The plan underscores the Board's dedication to recognizing the needs of employers and job seekers and adapting our approach for the future.

As stewards of taxpayer dollars, the Lake County Workforce Development Board is committed to ensuring that every investment in workforce development yields impactful results. I eagerly anticipate your continued partnership and support as we, together with our partners, strive to build a brighter future for Lake County's businesses.

Sincerely,

Kimberly M. 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**

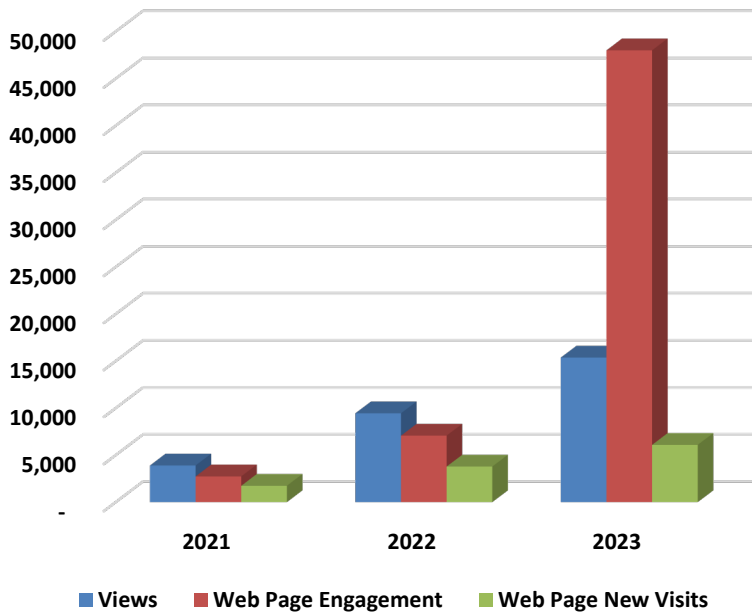
In early 2021, The Lake County Workforce Development Board (WDB) hired a firm to develop and implement an Outreach and Communications Plan designed to support the strategic goals and action plans of the WDB Strategic Plan – including board member recruitment, improve engagement with community partners,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

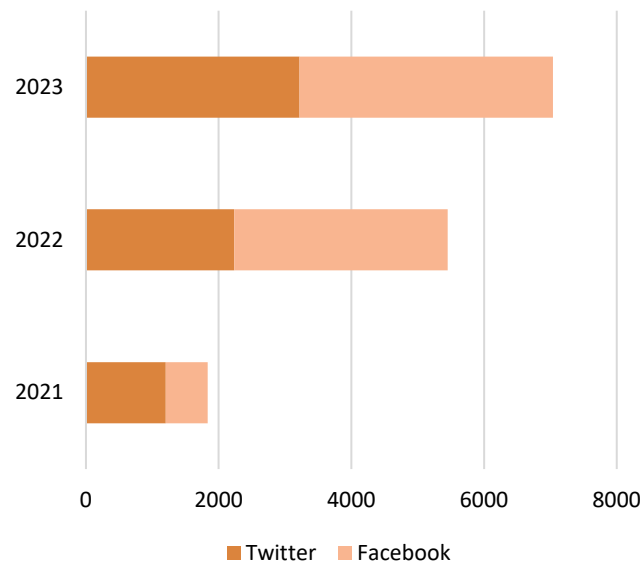
During 2023, the Outreach and Communication plan was reviewed to determine the effectiveness and benefits. The review delved into the analytics of the website's performance, showcasing substantial growth in page views, user engagement, and new visitors from 2021 to 2023. The social media platforms, including 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.

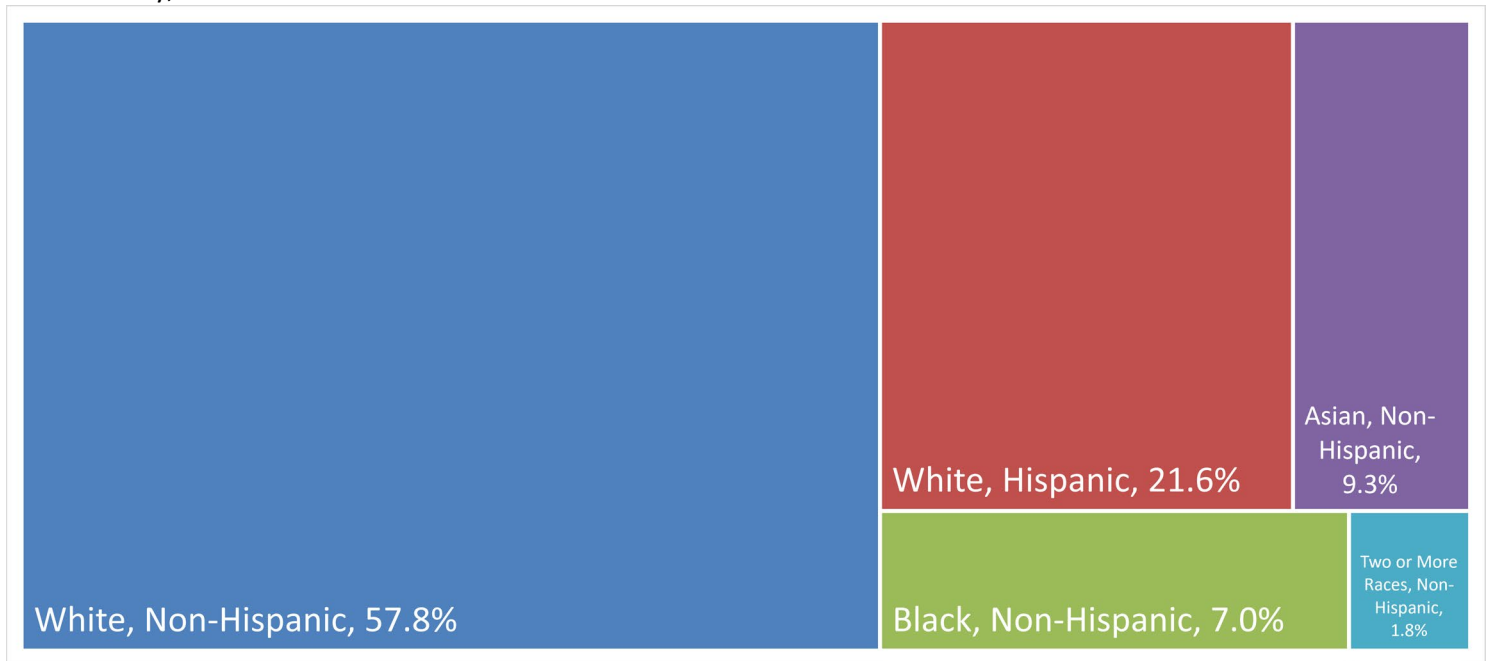
### General Trends

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

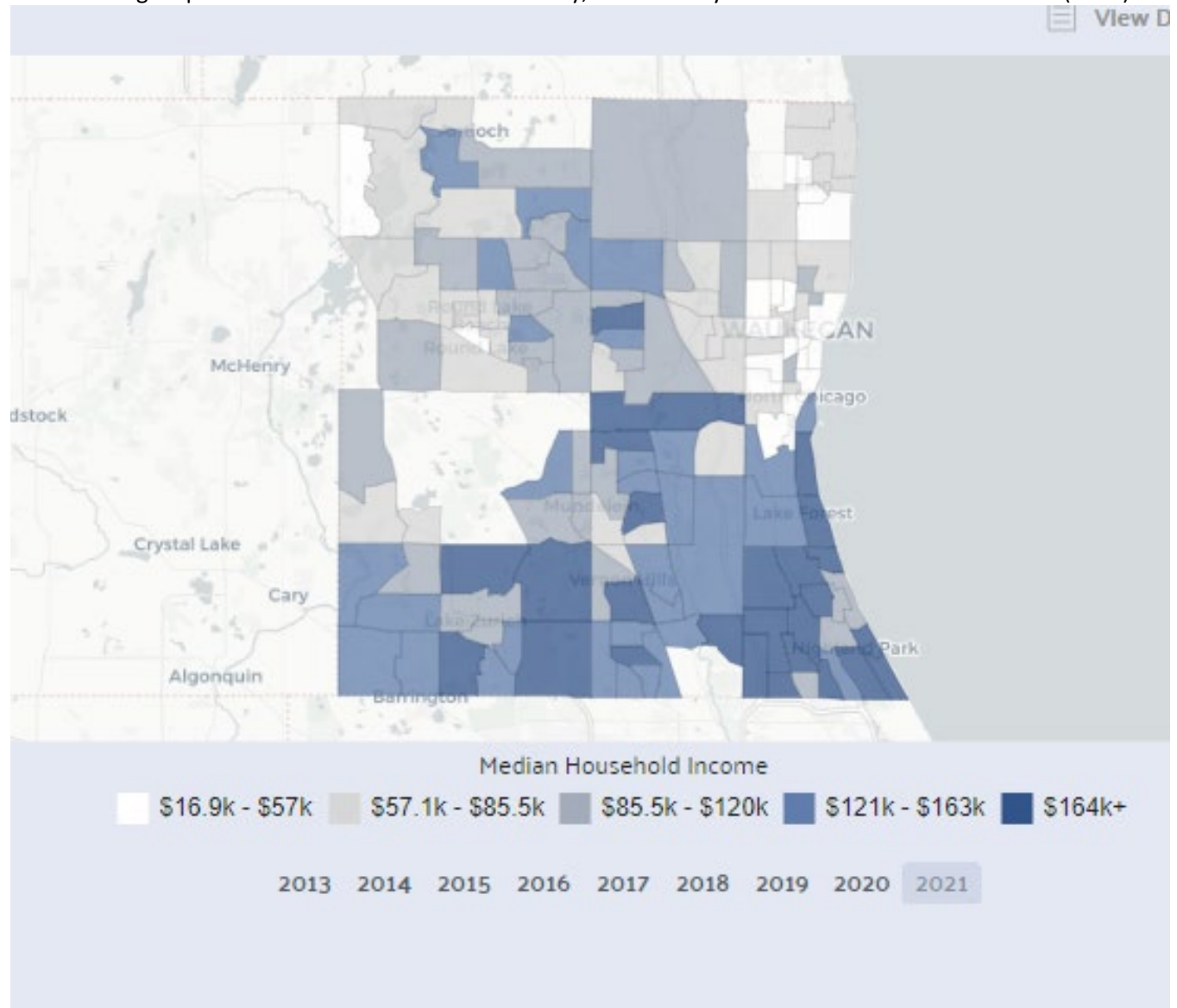
Description	Employed in Industry (2001)	Employed in Industry (2022)	Employed in Industry (2023)	Change (2001 - 2023)	% Change (2001 - 2023)	% of Total Jobs in Industry (2022)	Median Hourly Earnings	Typical Entry Level Education
Registered Nurses	2,800	3,943	3,938	1,138	41%	13.40%	\$38.20	Bachelor's degree
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.

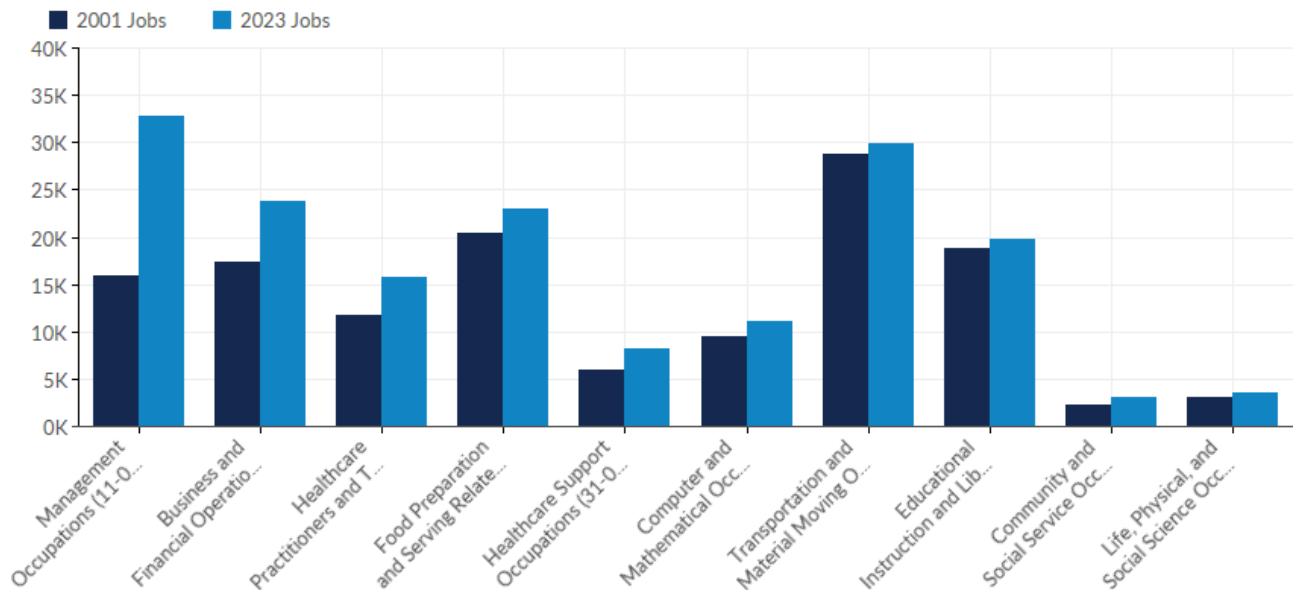
Breaking down poverty by racial or ethnic groups, the most common group living below the poverty line in Lake County, IL, is White, followed by Hispanic and Black populations. Additionally, in 2022, 8.3% of children were living in poverty in Lake County, IL, showing a positive trend with a 5% decline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

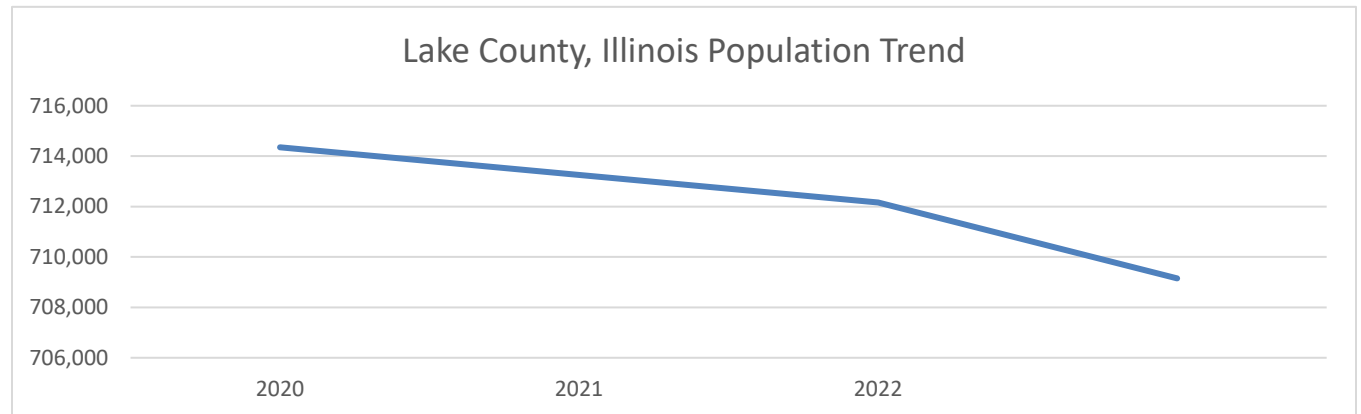


NET EMPLOYMENT CHANGE FOR SELECTED PERIOD BY SECTOR: LAKE COUNTY, 2016-2020

## 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.

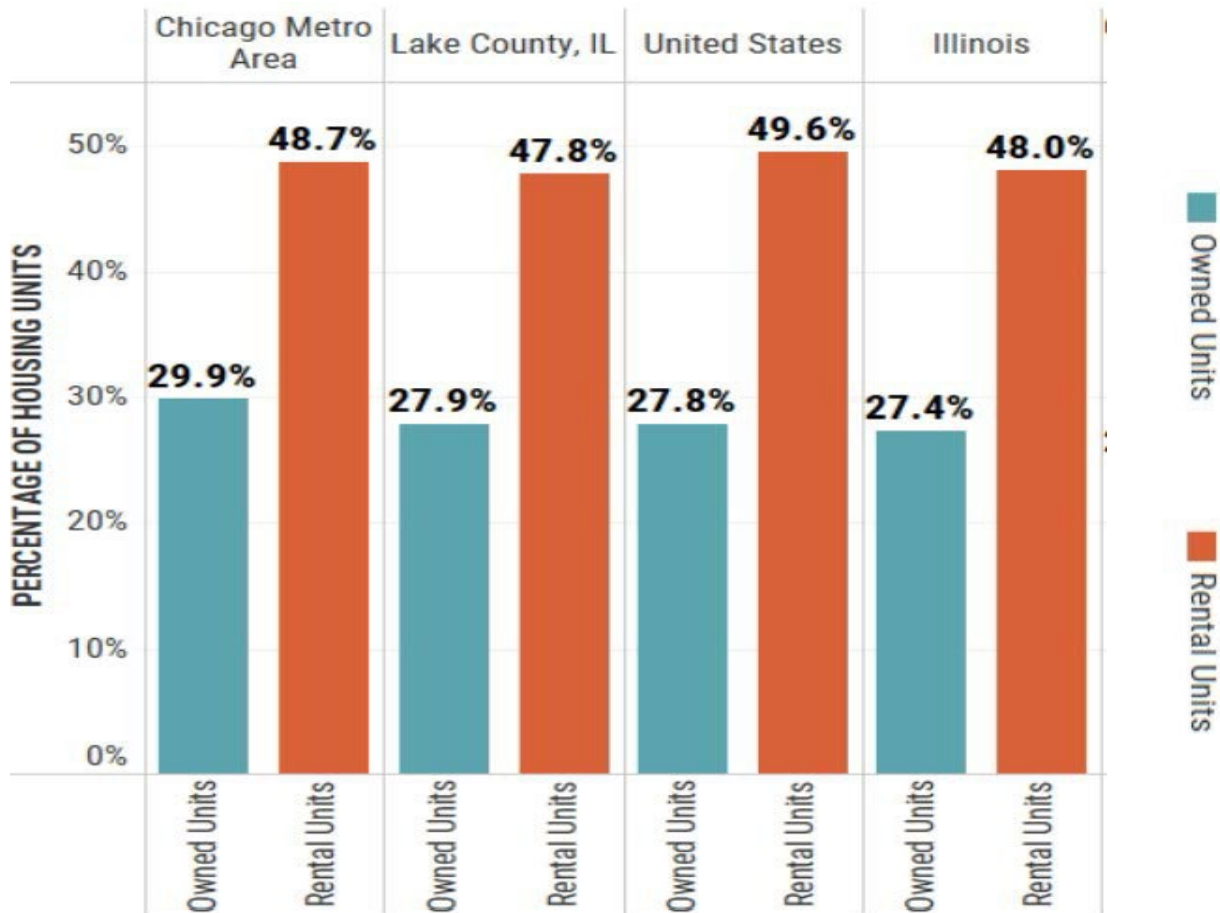


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Annual County Resident Population Estimates, 2022.

## 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 27, 2024, 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.

#### **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)

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.

1. Describe the process used by the Local Board to provide a public comment period prior to submission of the plan, including an opportunity to have input into the development of the local plan, particularly for representatives of businesses, education and labor organizations (§ 679.560(b)(19)).

*The NEEDR Regional Plan was developed through a collaborative process between the seven (7) LWIAs in the Region, the WIOA core partners, Economic Development organizations, Educational entities, Business leaders, and other key stakeholders. In addition to soliciting input from each stakeholder group, a formal virtual meeting was held on Wednesday, February 14, 2024 to provide an opportunity for all stakeholders to discuss the plan in a single meeting. The intent was to allow for discussion between stakeholders about the concepts included in the plan and provide additional input to be incorporated in the draft version of the plan. Over 100 stakeholders from across the NEEDR attended the session and a lively discussion was held. After the stakeholder meeting, the Regional Plan was posted for public comment on Friday, February 16, 2024 throughout the NEEDR. The Regional Plan was posted for the required 30 days.*

2. Provide a summary of the public comments received and how this information was addressed by the CEO, partners and the Local Board in the final plan.

*There were no public comments received in any of the seven LWIAs in response to the Regional Plan.*

3. Provide information regarding the regional and local plan modification procedures.

*Because there were no public comments on the draft plan, no plan modification was required.*

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.





