



WIOA ANNUAL STATEWIDE PERFORMANCE REPORT NARRATIVE

PY 2023



OVERVIEW

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the activities, outcomes, and continuous improvement initiatives implemented by the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) for Program Year (PY) 2023. Throughout the year, the CNMI faced significant economic challenges that affected both the local economy and workforce development efforts. These included the slow recovery of the tourism industry, continued inflationary pressures, and a wave of business closures that contributed to job losses and reduced employment opportunities. Despite these obstacles, CNMI's workforce development programs remained steadfast in their mission to provide critical services to job seekers, dislocated workers, and youth.

In response to these challenges, the CNMI focused on ensuring that participants in WIOA programs received the skills and credentials necessary to access sustainable employment opportunities. The report outlines the strategies employed to enhance the effectiveness of workforce development services, including targeted training, skills development programs, and partnerships with local employers and educational institutions. Through these efforts, the CNMI sought to strengthen the resilience of the workforce, improve job placement rates, and address the skills gap that exists in key industries.

The CNMI's workforce programs also prioritized continuous improvement, implementing a range of activities designed to ensure data integrity, enhance program delivery, and meet evolving labor market needs. These activities included robust case file reviews, ongoing training for staff, and strategic adjustments to services based on emerging economic trends. Despite the challenges posed by the economic environment, the CNMI remained committed to advancing its workforce development goals, providing valuable services to individuals seeking to enhance their skills and re-enter the workforce, and fostering long-term economic stability for the region.

WAIVER

In the PY2024 state plan cycle, the CNMI submitted a waiver request to modify the 75% funding requirement for Out-of-School Youth (OSY) to allow for a more balanced distribution of youth funds between In-School Youth (ISY) and OSY. This request was driven by a need to better serve both groups of youth and create more equitable opportunities for career development. On May 28, 2024, the waiver was approved retroactively to PY2022 state plan modification, which has opened new opportunities to expand youth employment initiatives across the CNMI.

With the approval of the waiver, the CNMI is now positioned to collaborate more effectively with key local partners, including the Saipan Chamber of Commerce and the CNMI Public School System, to support the Career Exploration Summer Internship program. This initiative is specifically designed for incoming high school juniors and seniors, providing them with hands-on training, career exploration, and valuable work experience in local industries. The Saipan Chamber of Commerce plays a pivotal role in connecting students with internship opportunities across a range of sectors, ensuring that participants gain exposure to in-demand careers and receive mentorship from local business leaders. The CNMI Public School System helps identify and support students throughout the program, ensuring they are prepared and have the necessary resources to succeed. Together, these partners work to equip students with the skills and knowledge required for future employment in the CNMI's evolving economy.

This collaborative effort not only provides students with critical job experience but also aligns with broader workforce development goals, creating a stronger talent pipeline for local industries. Through this program, we aim to bridge the gap between education and employment, providing students with the tools they need to enter high-demand careers and support the CNMI's economic growth. As we look to the future, we hope to expand the program, increase industry involvement, and offer more pathways for students to develop long-term career opportunities.

EFFECTIVENESS IN SERVING EMPLOYERS

We closed the program year with modest results, achieving a 30.24% rate for Employer Penetration and 54.79% for Repeat Business Customers. These outcomes highlight the need for increased program awareness and enhanced outreach efforts, which will be key in driving greater employer engagement and fostering stronger Business or Employer Customer relationships. Throughout the year, we connected with 166 businesses and employers across the three populated islands of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) - Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

While this shows a decrease of 6 businesses compared to the previous year, it offers valuable insights and an opportunity to refine our approach. With targeted efforts, we are optimistic about expanding our reach and reconnecting with businesses across the islands. As we look to the future, we are mindful of areas for improvement and excited about the potential for growth, with a renewed commitment to achieving even greater success for our programs in the year ahead.

A significant component of this effort included the collaboration with Title IV – the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR). OVR played a vital role in supporting the engagement of employers by facilitating connections with businesses committed to inclusive hiring practices and providing support to individuals with disabilities seeking employment. This partnership not only expanded opportunities for underrepresented job seekers but also strengthened relationships with employers who value diversity and accessibility in the workplace.

EFFECTIVENESS OF SERVING EMPLOYERS		
Employer Services	Establishment Count	
Employer Information and Support Services	166	
Workforce Recruitment Assistance Services	107	
Engaged in Strategic Planning/Eco Devo	100	
Accessing Untapped Labor Pools	76	
Training Services	60	
Incumbent Worker Training Services	46	
Rapid Response/Business Downsizing Assistance	1	
Planning Layoff Response Services	10	
Pilot Approaches	Numerator	Rate
Retention with Same Employer in the 2nd and 4th Quarters After Exit Rate		
Employer Penetration Rate	72	13.11%
	549	
Repeat Business Customers Rate	72	23.76%
	303	
State Established Measure		

EVALUATION AND RESEARCH

The Pre-Apprenticeship pilot program, launched in Program Year (PY) 2023, is still in its early stages of implementation. As such, it is premature to conduct a comprehensive evaluation during PY 2023. However, the CNMI recognizes the importance of assessing the program's effectiveness and plans to conduct a thorough evaluation in PY 2024.

This evaluation will focus on both participant and employer perspectives, providing valuable insights into the program's impact on skills development, job readiness, and overall success in preparing participants for Registered Apprenticeship programs and long-term careers. By gathering feedback from participants on their experiences with training and internships, as well as from employers on the performance of interns, the evaluation will help gauge the effectiveness of the program and its alignment with local workforce needs.

While the program is still in its infancy, the planned evaluation in PY 2024 will play a critical role in identifying areas for improvement and refining the program structure to better serve both participants and employers. This will ensure the program continues to provide meaningful career pathways and strengthens the CNMI's workforce development efforts in the future.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

A customer satisfaction survey was launched through our Virtual Online System (VOS), an integrated platform that also serves as our primary case management system. This system not only facilitates seamless data collection but also ensures that survey responses are directly linked to individual customer records, enabling a more comprehensive analysis of customer experiences. By leveraging this platform, we streamlined the survey deployment process, making it accessible to participants or Jobseekers, while maintaining the accuracy and organization of collected data. Integrating the survey with our case management system allows us to gather valuable feedback efficiently, helping us identify areas for improvement and enhance the overall quality of our services.

Our customer base includes employers, whose feedback is critical for enhancing and customizing our services to better align with their workforce development needs. Given that employers may require training to navigate the Virtual Online System (VOS), it may not be the most effective tool for gathering their input. To capture their valuable feedback, a more personalized approach would be necessary, such as conducting surveys through one-on-one interactions. This method ensures convenience for the employers while fostering meaningful engagement and accurate data collection.

The survey was distributed to numerous jobseekers or participants; however, participation was lower than anticipated. To enhance response and submission rates, we plan to implement the questionnaire during various program functions and service delivery points. Encouraging participants to share their experiences by emphasizing the importance of their feedback will be key to improving our services and the effectiveness of training outcomes.

In this survey we captured five (5) participant responses regarding Staff Efficiency and Tracking.

Overall, the survey responses ranged from satisfactory to neutral. With a larger sample size, we could gain deeper insights into users' impressions of the online experience while using the Virtual Online System (VOS). This highlights the need to prioritize training program staff on effectively sharing these surveys and actively encouraging participation. By improving staff engagement techniques, we can increase response rates and obtain more comprehensive data to refine and enhance our services.

Indicate the primary purpose for which you will be using this information	
Answer	Percent of Times Answered
Job Search	20.0%
Career planning/Occupational Research	20.0%
Locate education or training providers	20.0%
Just looking around	20.0%
Other	20.0%

It was easy to find information	
Answer	Percent of Times Answered
Agree	60.0%
Neither Agree or Disagree	40.0%

The data was easy to understand	
Answer	Percent of Times Answered
Strongly Agree	20.0%
Agree	60.0%
Neither Agree or Disagree	20.0%

The data met my needs	
Answer	Percent of Times Answered
Strongly Agree	40.0%
Agree	40.0%
Neither Agree or Disagree	20.0%

Overall, how would you rate your visit with this website?	
Answer	Percent of Times Answered
Excellent	60.0%
Good	20.0%
No Opinion	20.0%

PROGRESS TOWARDS STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS

This section outlines the progress made in implementing the CNMI's Unified State Plan, which focuses on developing a skilled workforce to meet employer needs and foster economic growth. These efforts are aligned with the broader objectives of achieving economic self-sufficiency and prosperity. The initiatives detailed here reflect the CNMI's commitment to addressing workforce development needs, supporting employer demands, and creating sustainable solutions that contribute to long-term economic success. Through these ongoing efforts, we aim to build a strong workforce that drives both growth and self-sufficiency for all residents.

Goal 1: Strengthen the collaboration of the workforce development system for the expansion of a comprehensive, integrated, effective, and streamlined service delivery system.

Our collaborative approach among the public workforce partners, including Titles I, II, and IV, along with other key stakeholders, has been instrumental in enhancing the effectiveness of our outreach efforts. By working together, we have been able to coordinate joint outreach events that leverage the expertise and resources of each partner. This collaboration has allowed us to reach a wider audience, including job seekers, employers, and individuals with disabilities, ensuring that all community members are informed about the services and opportunities available to them. Through these collective efforts, we have strengthened our community engagement, built stronger relationships with local organizations, and increased access to essential workforce development resources. This joint outreach approach continues to foster a more integrated service delivery system that meets the diverse needs of our population.

Goal 2: Enhance Business Service strategies to increase strategic partnerships and engagement to develop customized services that align with the present-day economy across programs of the workforce development system.

Significant progress has been made toward achieving Goal 2, which aims to enhance business service strategies and foster strategic partnerships within the workforce development system. Over the past year, we have focused on strengthening relationships with local businesses and industry leaders to ensure our services align with the current economic needs. This has involved the development of customized workforce solutions that address both the skill gaps of job seekers and the evolving demands of employers. Through collaborative efforts with key stakeholders, including business associations, educational institutions, and workforce partners, we have expanded our business engagement strategies,

making them more responsive and adaptable to today's economic climate. Additionally, we have tailored services to meet the specific needs of businesses, providing more relevant training, recruitment support, and other workforce development resources. These actions are fostering long-term partnerships, improving employer satisfaction, and contributing to a stronger, more resilient workforce that aligns with the present-day economy.

We have actively engaged with key industries to identify their workforce needs and design customized services that align with current economic demands. Through sector-specific partnerships, particularly in industries such as construction, hospitality, and the care economy, specifically childcare, we have developed tailored training programs that directly address skills gaps, providing job seekers with the qualifications needed to succeed in these high-demand fields.

Additionally, we have worked closely with employers to understand their evolving workforce needs, ensuring that our business engagement strategies are flexible and responsive. This collaboration has resulted in stronger, more effective partnerships, and has helped streamline the pathway for job seekers to enter industries with long-term career potential. By leveraging sector-based strategies, we have not only enhanced the relevance of our training programs but have also created more opportunities for individuals to secure stable employment in key industries, contributing to both workforce development and regional economic growth.

Goal 3: Integrate an innovative customer-centered service delivery model focused on the customer's job-driven occupational and training needs that includes enhanced supportive services to address barriers that may impede participation.

We have prioritized aligning our services with the job-driven needs of customers by developing training programs tailored to specific occupations, while also enhancing supportive services to help participants overcome barriers to program participation. This approach ensures that individuals not only receive the training they need but also the necessary resources, such as transportation assistance, childcare, and financial support, to successfully engage in and complete their training programs.

In line with this goal, we have piloted career exploration programs modeled after the framework of quality pre-apprenticeship programs. These programs provide foundational knowledge in targeted industries, such as construction, healthcare, and hospitality, and include hands-on internships that allow participants to gain valuable real-world experience. By offering a structured pathway to apprenticeships, these pre-apprenticeship programs help participants better understand their career options and acquire essential skills before entering full apprenticeship programs or direct employment. This customer-centered model has proven effective in both preparing job seekers for specific career paths and addressing the challenges that may otherwise hinder their successful participation in workforce development programs.

Goal 4: Increase the skills of jobseekers for high-quality jobs and careers in demand-driven industries that align with the workforce needs of employers that lead to employment, reemployment, and retention.

Progress toward achieving Goal 4, which focuses on increasing the skills of jobseekers for high-quality jobs and careers in demand-driven industries, has been strong, particularly through the expansion of approved programs of study on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). These programs provide jobseekers with the necessary skills and certifications to access high-demand occupations that align with employer's workforce needs. By focusing on industry-recognized credentials and qualifications, we are ensuring that individuals are equipped for careers in sectors such as healthcare, hospitality, construction, and other high-growth industries.

The ETPL has been a key tool in connecting jobseekers to quality training providers offering programs that directly lead to employment, reemployment, and retention. By expanding access to these approved programs, we are creating clear pathways for career advancement, with jobseekers gaining the skills required for in-demand roles. Additionally, these programs are designed to ensure that individuals are prepared for long-term career growth, helping them not only secure employment but also retain it and advance within their chosen fields. This approach supports both individual career success and the broader goal of meeting the workforce needs of employers.

Goal 5: Empower the SWDB and State Workforce Agency through professional development or other training needs in order to adequately engage with and support participants, employers, and other service providers' workforce needs.

We have made significant strides in ensuring that both board members and agency staff are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively engage with and support participants, employers, and service providers. This has been accomplished through a variety of professional development opportunities, including targeted training sessions, workshops, and conferences focused on emerging workforce trends, employer needs, and best practices in service delivery.

SECTOR STRATEGIES AND CAREER PATHWAYS

Our business engagement strategies were conducted through a combination of sector-based approach and individualized sessions with businesses to effectively address the workforce needs of local employers. The sector-based approach allowed us to group businesses within key industries such as healthcare, hospitality, construction, and information technology, enabling us to tailor workforce development efforts to the specific needs and challenges of each sector. By focusing on these sectors, we were able to identify shared workforce gaps and develop targeted training programs that meet the demand for skilled workers across multiple businesses within the same industry.

Additionally, we held individualized sessions with businesses to provide more personalized support. These sessions allowed us to understand the unique workforce needs of each employer, discuss specific challenges related to recruitment, retention, and skills development, and identify customized solutions. During these sessions, we also discussed the available workforce development resources, such as training programs, funding opportunities, and support services, to help businesses address their particular hiring needs and enhance their workforce.

Together, the sector-based approach and individualized sessions enabled us to build stronger relationships with local employers, align workforce development efforts with industry demand, and create more effective, tailored solutions that support both businesses and workers in the CNMI.

Career Pathways: Work-Based Learning

In Program Year 2023, the CNMI implemented a variety of work-based learning strategies aimed at helping job seekers, including adults, dislocated workers, and youth, develop the skills and experience necessary for success in the workforce. These strategies focused on enhancing career readiness, providing hands-on learning opportunities, and increasing employment outcomes for participants across multiple sectors of the economy.

Work Experience and Internship Programs: One of the core components of CNMI's work-based learning strategy was offering Work Experience and Internship opportunities to individuals who were new to the workforce or lacked specific job skills. These programs were designed to help participants gain practical, on-the-job experience in their chosen occupations, allowing them to build their skills and demonstrate their abilities to potential employers. By providing these opportunities, the CNMI aimed to increase participants' competitiveness in the job market, helping them transition from education to employment with a clearer understanding of job expectations and industry demands. Work Experience and

Internships were tailored to meet the needs of local businesses, ensuring that participants gained valuable, industry-relevant experience.

Pre-Apprenticeship Pilot Program: In 2023, the CNMI launched a Pre-Apprenticeship pilot program focused on equipping participants with essential skills through a combination of foundational training and real-world internship opportunities. The program targeted high-demand industries such as construction, childcare, and hospitality, providing participants with the technical knowledge needed to succeed. Classroom training was complemented by hands-on internships, allowing participants to apply their skills in real work settings, gain practical experience, build confidence, and refine their abilities.

Looking ahead, the CNMI plans to expand the Pre-Apprenticeship program into emerging sectors, including information technology, agriculture, and environmental remediation. These industries offer significant growth potential and new opportunities for participants to explore high-demand career pathways. By preparing individuals for entry into Registered Apprenticeship programs and full-time employment, this initiative aims to enhance job readiness, support career advancement, and meet the evolving needs of the local economy.

Career Advancement through On-the-Job Training and Registered Apprenticeships: The CNMI also focused on providing career advancement opportunities for individuals seeking to improve their existing skills and move up within their chosen careers. On-the-Job Training (OJT) and Registered Apprenticeship programs were central to this strategy. OJT programs allowed workers to gain skills and expertise in specific occupations while being paid for their work, ensuring they had the opportunity to earn an income while continuing their education and training. Registered Apprenticeships, which combine paid work with classroom instruction, offered participants the chance to earn industry-recognized credentials while learning on the job. These programs not only helped workers develop advanced skills but also gave them access to long-term career pathways in fields such as construction, healthcare, and hospitality.

In summary, the work-based learning strategies implemented by CNMI in Program Year 2023 focused on providing participants with meaningful, hands-on experiences to build their skills, improve their job prospects, and create pathways for career advancement. Through initiatives like Work Experience, Internships, the Pre-Apprenticeship pilot, and On-the-Job Training programs, the CNMI has strengthened its workforce development efforts, helping individuals gain the practical experience needed to succeed in the competitive labor market. These strategies continue to be a key part of the CNMI's approach to preparing a skilled workforce that meets the needs of local employers and supports the growth of the region's economy.

EXCEPTION TO OSY EXPENDITURE

In the Program Year (PY) 2024 state plan cycle, the CNMI requested a waiver to modify the 75% Out-of-School Youth (OSY) expenditure requirement. This waiver was sought to allow a more balanced allocation of youth funding between In-School Youth (ISY) and OSY, which would better address the needs of both youth populations and promote equitable opportunities for career development. The waiver was approved retroactively to the PY2022 state plan modification on May 28, 2024. This change provides an opportunity to expand and enhance youth employment initiatives across the CNMI.

Through these efforts, the CNMI is working to bridge the gap between education and employment by equipping youth with the essential skills and knowledge needed for future success in the workforce. By expanding opportunities such as the summer youth employment training and youth internship programs, the CNMI aims to provide more comprehensive experiences that will enrich the development of youth in the workforce. These initiatives offer hands-on learning, mentorship, and exposure to in-demand industries, preparing youth for long-term career success.

This collaborative approach not only strengthens the talent pipeline for local industries but also encourages youth to explore diverse career paths early in their academic journey. As the programs grow, the CNMI plans to further expand these offerings, increase the involvement of local businesses, and create additional pathways that allow youth to develop their skills and transition smoothly into the workforce. With a focus on expanding industry partnerships and internship opportunities, the CNMI will ensure that youth gain valuable work experience that can shape their future careers.

Despite the changes in funding requirements, the CNMI remains committed to prioritizing Out-of-School Youth (OSY), ensuring they have access to meaningful opportunities that help build their career readiness. Through this continued commitment, the CNMI seeks to offer more robust, engaging programs that equip youth with the tools they need to succeed, while also meeting the workforce needs of the local economy.

PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY

In PY2023, the state's performance under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs demonstrated both achievements and opportunities for improvement. This section outlines progress toward meeting key performance measures, including employment outcomes, credential attainment, and skill development. Additionally, it highlights areas where performance fell short of established benchmarks, providing context for contributing factors and outlining strategies for continuous improvement. These results reflect the state's commitment to fostering a dynamic, responsive workforce system that meets the evolving needs of job seekers and employers.

WIOA Adult Program

The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Adult Program under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) demonstrated commendable progress in several key areas during Program Year 2023, while also identifying areas for continued improvement.

- Employment Rate – 2nd Quarter After Exit: Achieved 45.6%, falling short of the target of 52.6%.
- Employment Rate – 4th Quarter After Exit: Reached 49.5%, narrowly missing the target of 50.0%.

Despite these employment rate challenges, the Adult Program exceeded expectations in critical performance indicators:

- Median Earnings: Reported median earnings of \$5,304, significantly surpassing the target of \$4,200.
- Credential Attainment Rate: Attained a rate of 85.7%, exceeding the target of 80.0%.
- Measurable Skill Gains: Recorded 77.6%, surpassing the target of 75.9%.

These results highlight the CNMI Adult Program's success in supporting participants' skill development and credential attainment, which are essential for long-term workforce success. Moving forward, efforts will focus on closing the employment rate gaps while sustaining high performance in earnings and skills advancement.

WIOA Dislocated Worker Program

The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Dislocated Worker Program achieved notable success in Program Year 2023, exceeding targets in key areas related to earnings, credential attainment, and skill development. While some employment measures

fell short, the program's overall performance reflects a strong commitment to supporting dislocated workers in their transition back into the workforce.

- Entered Employment – 2nd Quarter After Exit: Achieved 43.2%, below the target of 50.0%.
- Entered Employment – 4th Quarter After Exit: Exceeded the target, reaching 52.8% against a goal of 50.0%.

The program met or exceeded targets in the following key performance measures:

- Median Earnings: Reached \$4,940, surpassing the target of \$4,200.
- Credential Attainment Rate: Attained 75.0%, well above the target of 66.5%.
- Measurable Skill Gains: Achieved an impressive 90.0%, far exceeding the target of 71.4%.

These results demonstrate the program's effectiveness in equipping dislocated workers with the skills and credentials needed for success in the labor market. Moving forward, efforts will be directed at improving early employment outcomes while sustaining the high levels of performance in earnings, credential attainment, and skill gains.

WIOA Youth Program

In Program Year 2023, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Youth Program under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) demonstrated strong outcomes in employment, education, and earnings, while also identifying areas for growth in credential attainment and skill gains.

Key performance results include:

- Employment/Education/Training Rate – 2nd Quarter After Exit: Achieved 60.0%, exceeding the target of 57.8%.
- Employment/Education/Training Rate – 4th Quarter After Exit: Reached 54.2%, surpassing the target of 50.0%.
- Median Earnings: Reported median earnings of \$5,304, significantly surpassing the target of \$4,000.

Despite these successes, challenges remain in the following areas:

- Credential Attainment Rate: Achieved 40.0%, falling short of the target of 66.6%.
- Measurable Skill Gains: Recorded 54.1%, below the target of 70.0%.

These results underscore the program's effectiveness in supporting youth employment and earnings while highlighting the need for targeted strategies to improve credential attainment and measurable skill gains. Moving forward, CNMI will focus on enhancing support services and training initiatives to ensure participants achieve sustained success in education, training, and career development.

Common Exit Policy

The CNMI's Common Exit Policy, developed in partnership with the State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) Policy Committee, includes participants enrolled in multiple DOL WIA-administered partner programs. The policy is triggered when a participant has not received services from any applicable program for at least 90 consecutive days, and no future participant-level services are scheduled.

The programs included in the CNMI's Common Exit Policy are:

1. WIOA Dislocated Worker Program
2. WIOA Youth Program
3. National Dislocated Worker Grant Programs
4. Apprenticeship State Expansion

These programs, which utilize the same Management Information System (MIS), are covered under the policy to ensure coordinated exit procedures for co-enrolled participants. The Common Exit Policy will be periodically reviewed to ensure it aligns with federal requirements and remains effective in serving participants.

In light of the ongoing economic challenges, including the slow recovery of the tourism industry, reduced business operations, and closures, CNMI's workforce programs have continued to play a vital role in supporting job seekers and dislocated workers. The prolonged impact of these conditions, coupled with rising inflation and other economic pressures, has created significant obstacles for both job seekers and employers. Despite these difficulties, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs have demonstrated resilience, achieving notable successes in key performance areas. Moving forward, CNMI remains committed to strengthening its workforce development strategies, enhancing partnerships with local businesses, and providing targeted support to ensure that individuals can gain the skills, credentials, and opportunities needed to thrive in a rapidly evolving economic landscape.

Negotiated Performance Levels for PY2023

	PY 2022	PY2023
WIOA title I - Adult		
Employment Rate 2 nd Quarter after Exit	52.6%	52.6%
Employment Rate 4 th Quarter after Exit	50.0%	50.0%
Median Earnings 2 nd Quarter after Exit	\$4,200	\$4,200
Credential Attainment Rate	80.0%	80.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	75.9%	75.9%
WIOA title I - Dislocated Worker	PY2022	PY2023
Employment Rate 2 nd Quarter after Exit	50.0%	50.0%
Employment Rate 4 th Quarter after Exit	50.0%	50.0%
Median Earnings 2 nd Quarter after Exit	\$4,200	\$4,200
Credential Attainment Rate	66.5%	66.5%
Measurable Skill Gains	71.4%	71.4%
WIOA title I - Youth	PY 2022	PY2023
Education and Employment Rate 2 nd Quarter after Exit	57.8%	57.8%
Education and Employment Rate 4 th Quarter after Exit	50.0%	50.0%
Median Earnings 2 nd Quarter after Exit	\$4,000	\$4,000
Credential Attainment Rate	66.6%	66.6%
Measurable Skill Gains	70.0%	70.0%

Data Validation and Integrity Approach

To ensure the highest level of data accuracy and integrity, the CNMI implemented a 100% case file review procedure as part of its data validation process for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs. This comprehensive approach involved a thorough review of all participant case files to verify the accuracy of reported outcomes, ensure adherence to program eligibility requirements, and maintain compliance with federal and state data reporting standards.

The methodology for the 100% case file review included the following key activities:

1. **Comprehensive File Review:** Every participant case file across all program categories (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) was examined to ensure complete and accurate documentation of services, outcomes, and eligibility criteria.
2. **Data Verification:** Employment outcomes, credential attainment, and measurable skill gains were cross-checked against supporting documentation, such as wage records, training certificates, and participant attestations, to ensure data accuracy.
3. **Compliance Audits:** Each file was evaluated for compliance with WIOA regulations, ensuring that all services provided and outcomes reported met the required federal and state standards.
4. **Error Identification and Resolution:** Any discrepancies identified during the review were corrected promptly, with targeted feedback provided to staff to address data entry issues and improve future reporting accuracy.

By conducting a 100% case file review, the CNMI demonstrated its commitment to maintaining robust data integrity, ensuring the reliability of performance outcomes, and fostering continuous improvement in program administration and reporting.

STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES

The WIOA Statewide Governor's Reserve has been strategically utilized to support key components of the CNMI's workforce development system, ensuring the effective implementation of the state plan and overall program operations. A portion of the funds has been allocated to enhancing our data management system, which plays a crucial role in tracking participant outcomes, program performance, and compliance with federal and local regulations. This investment in technology has improved our ability to collect, analyze, and report data, ensuring that we can make informed decisions and continuously improve service delivery.

Additionally, funds from the Governor's Reserve have been directed towards staff salaries, specifically for fiscal and administrative functions, to support the day-to-day operations of the workforce development system. This ensures that the necessary infrastructure is in place for managing grants, budgeting, reporting, and coordinating services effectively.

To further support the implementation of the CNMI's State Plan, the Governor's Reserve has also been used to fund activities for the State Workforce Development Board (SWDB). These activities have included strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, and ensuring alignment between local workforce needs and state-level initiatives. The SWDB's efforts have been essential in overseeing the execution of the state plan and ensuring that workforce development activities are focused on the region's economic goals.

Finally, the Governor's Reserve has supported the identification and certification of eligible training providers through the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). This ensures that the training programs offered are high-quality and aligned with the demands of the labor market, providing job seekers with the skills necessary to secure employment in in-demand industries. These targeted investments have played a pivotal role in strengthening the workforce development system and ensuring that it meets the needs of both jobseekers and employers across the CNMI.

Rapid Response

The closure of Hyatt Regency Saipan, a major employer that had been a cornerstone of the local economy for over 40 years, presented a significant challenge for both the workforce and the community. In response to this, the CNMI Workforce Development System immediately activated rapid response services to assist displaced workers and help mitigate the economic impact of the closure.

Our rapid response activities began with the establishment of a collaborative team involving the Department of Labor, the State Workforce Development Board, and other community stakeholders to ensure comprehensive support for approximately 146 affected employees. We conducted on-site informational sessions at Hyatt Regency Saipan to provide workers with detailed information about available services, including career counseling, job search assistance, and training opportunities.



In addition to these immediate services, we partnered with local employers and training providers to offer tailored reemployment services and career exploration resources. Workers were connected to job openings in hospitality, retail, and other growing sectors, while also being given access to retraining programs to help them transition into new careers. Recognizing the need for emotional and financial support during this transition, we coordinated with community organizations to offer supportive services such as financial planning workshops and referrals to local support networks.

To ensure Hyatt Regency Saipan's affected employees receive timely and efficient support, the CNMI Workforce Development System worked closely with Hyatt management to bring workforce services directly to the impacted employees. Through this coordination, dedicated space was made available on-site at the Hyatt for employees to access both basic and individualized career services. This on-site presence allowed workers to engage easily with workforce staff, receive job search assistance, attend resume workshops, and access critical labor market information without the need to travel to a separate location. Additionally, personalized career counseling and skills assessments were provided in a convenient and accessible setting, ensuring that each individual received the tailored support needed for a successful transition. By bringing services directly to the employees, we eliminated barriers to access and ensured that the workforce system was responsive and adaptive to their immediate needs.



Overall, our rapid response efforts aimed to equip affected employees with the tools and resources necessary for a successful transition into new employment opportunities, while helping to stabilize the local workforce and economy. By leveraging the full support of workforce development partners, we were able to minimize the impact of Hyatt Regency Saipan's closure and assist workers in navigating this challenging time.

NATIONAL DISLOCATED WORKER GRANT

2022 Quality Jobs, Equity, Training, and Strategy (QUEST)

The CNMI continues its active administration of the National Dislocated Worker Grant - Quality Jobs, Equity, Training, and Strategy (QUEST) to address the ongoing economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This grant supports disaster-relief temporary employment and provides essential supportive services to eligible individuals, helping to alleviate the economic challenges caused by the pandemic. Priority is given to those whose employment was directly affected by COVID-19, in accordance with federal and local policies and established eligibility criteria. Key activities include developing and expanding strategic partnerships, conducting outreach to the community and participants, engaging local businesses to identify employment opportunities, and providing targeted employment and training services to help individuals re-enter the workforce successfully.

QUEST Disaster Recovery National Dislocated Worker Grants (DWGs) awarded within the CNMI are strategically coordinated with state rapid response activities and dislocated worker programs to ensure timely and effective support for impacted individuals. These funds are utilized to provide critical services such as career counseling, skills training, and job placement assistance. Additionally, DWGs align with the state's co-enrollment policies by integrating services across workforce development programs, enhancing access to resources for dislocated workers. Additionally, the grants play a critical role in disaster and emergency management efforts, providing timely assistance and employment opportunities in response to crises, ensuring that affected workers receive the support needed to re-enter the workforce effectively.



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The CNMI receives technical assistance (TA) from federal partners as needed to support its workforce development programs under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Federal agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and the Employment and Training Administration (ETA), offer ongoing help to ensure that the CNMI's programs run smoothly and comply with federal requirements.

In Program Year (PY) 2023, federal partners provided valuable guidance on staying compliant with WIOA rules, improving program performance, and enhancing service delivery. This support was especially helpful as the CNMI dealt with challenges like the slow recovery of the tourism industry, rising inflation, and business closures that affected job opportunities. Federal partners also hosted webinars and consultations to update the CNMI on policies, performance expectations, and data reporting requirements. These sessions helped the CNMI's workforce staff stay informed and make sure their programs met federal standards.

For example, federal assistance helped strengthen local programs like the Career Exploration Summer Internship program by offering advice on how to make the program better for students and employers. They also helped the CNMI adjust to changes in funding and ensure that youth programs served both in-school and out-of-school youth effectively.

In summary, the CNMI's workforce programs benefit from the ongoing support and expertise provided by federal partners. This assistance helps the CNMI meet its goals for providing job training, supporting dislocated workers, and offering youth valuable career development opportunities. Continued technical assistance will be key to the CNMI's success in strengthening its workforce and growing the economy.

PROMISING PRACTICES, LESSONS LEARNED, AND SUCCESS STORIES

Promising Practice

The establishment of satellite offices through strategic partnerships with community organizations and educational institutions has proven to be a promising practice in expanding access to workforce development services across the CNMI. In collaboration with key partners such as the Youth Affairs Office, Division of Youth Services, Carolinian Affairs Office, Northern Marianas Technical Institute, and Department of Labor (DOL) Field Offices on Rota and Tinian, satellite offices were created in villages to ensure that individuals had equitable access to program services, particularly those offered under WIOA and other workforce initiatives.

By setting up these satellite offices in close proximity to local communities, the CNMI Workforce Development System was able to provide a more inclusive and accessible service delivery model. This collaboration allowed individuals on Saipan, Rota, Tinian, and throughout the islands to receive the same high-quality career counseling, job search assistance, skills development programs, and training opportunities that were previously only available at centralized locations. The satellite offices acted as local hubs where community members could access personalized support, attend informational sessions, and participate in workshops aimed at improving their employability and career prospects.

The partnership with local organizations, including the Youth Affairs Office and Division of Youth Services, enabled targeted outreach to youth and young adults, helping them connect with workforce services at a critical stage in their career development. Similarly, the Carolinian Affairs Office helped bridge cultural and linguistic barriers, ensuring that community members from diverse backgrounds could fully participate in workforce development activities. Collaboration with Northern Marianas Technical Institute further enhanced the satellite office services by providing access to vocational training programs and certification courses, directly aligned with the needs of local industries.

These satellite offices were not just physical spaces but also symbols of commitment to reducing geographic and social barriers to workforce development. They ensured that all residents, regardless of location, could easily engage with the resources and support available to them. This decentralized approach has contributed to a more equitable and inclusive workforce development system, empowering individuals to gain the skills and experience needed to succeed in today's job market.

Overall, the establishment of satellite offices in partnership with community stakeholders has proven to be an effective and sustainable approach to increasing access to workforce

development services, ensuring that no individual is left behind, regardless of where they live in the CNMI. This initiative exemplifies a commitment to inclusiveness, accessibility, and partnership in the effort to build a strong and resilient local workforce.

Lessons Learned

One of the key lessons learned in recent workforce development efforts is the profound impact that economic challenges and evolving trends have on the workforce, particularly in the context of the CNMI. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted how quickly economic shifts can disrupt industries, leading to layoffs, business closures, and an increased demand for workforce services. At the same time, the global economy continues to evolve with significant technological advancements, changing labor market needs, and shifting industry landscapes, creating both challenges and opportunities for workers and employers alike.

The pandemic, for example, exacerbated existing economic disparities, leaving certain sectors—such as tourism and hospitality—especially vulnerable. Many workers in these industries, who had been employed for years, suddenly found themselves facing job loss and uncertainty. The challenge of reemployment in such a context required rapid adaptation by workforce development systems to meet the immediate needs of affected workers, while also helping them build long-term career pathways in emerging sectors.

As the economy continues to recover and transform, it has become clear that certain skills gaps persist in key industries, including healthcare, technology, and construction. These gaps reflect broader national and global trends, such as the growing demand for tech-savvy professionals and healthcare workers, especially in the wake of the pandemic. For the CNMI, addressing these evolving workforce trends means not only offering retraining programs but also ensuring that the training aligns with industry needs and equips workers with skills that are both transferable and future-proof.

Another critical lesson has been the importance of flexibility and agility in responding to workforce trends. Economic challenges, such as labor shortages and changing employer expectations, demand that workforce development strategies evolve to meet the needs of both workers and employers. This emphasized the need for a more dynamic, sector-based approach to workforce development, where partnerships between public agencies, local businesses, and educational institutions can help ensure that training and employment opportunities are aligned with the real-time demands of the labor market.

Furthermore, the experience has underscored the importance of addressing economic disparities by ensuring that marginalized communities, such as those in rural or remote areas, have equitable access to workforce development services. The use of satellite offices and the expansion of services to these areas is an example of how localized efforts can help level the playing field for individuals who may otherwise be overlooked by traditional workforce systems.

In summary, the lessons learned from the economic challenges and evolving workforce trends highlight the need for an adaptive, inclusive, and forward-thinking workforce development approach. As industries continue to evolve and new economic realities emerge, the workforce system must remain flexible, collaborative, and responsive to the diverse needs of workers, employers, and the broader community.

Success Stories

2nd QTR ADULT: Selina Taitano



After a virtual semester at the local college, Selina quickly realized that it wasn't the right fit for her. Taking a break from school, she explored opportunities through the Workforce Investment Agency (WIA) with her brother's advice. After becoming eligible for WIOA services, Selina was assessed for her career interests and objectives. At the time, she worked part-time and on-call, and her case manager introduced her to training options in

line with her interests, including administrative assistance.

Fortuitously, a Work Base Training Sponsor had just been approved for training in this field. Selina interviewed, scored well, and began training with the Northern Marianas Technical Institute (NMTech). Despite her initial lack of experience with office equipment and Excel, she found the team helpful and supportive.

Selina was grateful for the skills she gained, and her supervisor, Ben Babauta, praised her as an excellent and hardworking trainee. After completing her training, she accepted a full-time job at NMTech. However, her passion for nature led her to a new role as an Administrative Assistant at Johnston Applied Marine Sciences (JAMS), where she could combine her love for nature with her skills; some days working in the office or on the field.

2nd QTR DW: Eldin Johanas Maratita

The COVID-19 pandemic changed life for everyone, including 39-year-old Eldin Maratita, a husband and father of three. After 12 years as a Ramp and Cargo Supervisor, he left his job due to financial struggles caused by reduced hours, pay cuts, and a demotion. "We cut expenses like power, water, and even food," Eldin shared. "I don't know how, but we made it work."



While job searching, Eldin discovered the Department of Correction (DOC) was recruiting for its Correction Cadet Academy. With the support of WIOA, Eldin and 38 other participants qualified for WIOA services, receiving training, guidance, and support as they prepared for careers in corrections.

On October 6, 2022, Eldin graduated from the Academy with an Associate in Basic Law Enforcement: Corrections Officer Track and was promoted to Correction Officer I. Reflecting on the change, he said, "We're not living the life, but with our salaries, we've caught up on bills, paid off debts, and even started saving." With his youngest son set to graduate and move on in May, Eldin feels peace of mind knowing his civil service job provides stability and hope for the future.

2nd QTR YOUTH: Tammy Joy B. Fernandez

Tammy, an early graduate of Dr. Rita Hocog Inos Jr. Sr. High School on Rota, took significant steps toward her career while still in school. As a junior, she joined the Cooperative Education Class, a work-prep program in partnership with the WIOA and local organizations. After qualifying for services, Tammy sought work experience and guidance, starting as a Counselor Aid at her school for a semester.



As an ongoing WIOA Participant, Tammy enrolled in the Career Technical Education (CTE) Nursing Assistant Program. By 16, she became a licensed Nursing Assistant through the Northern Marianas Island Board of Nursing. Her journey was inspired by a personal loss at 13 when she and her sister cared for their mother at the Rota Health Clinic before her passing. Tammy encourages others to persevere stating, "Time does heal, no matter how cliché it sounds. Stay true to yourself, and with dedication to your dreams, you can accomplish anything."

Tammy worked part-time for the local Clinic till she graduated from High School on May 31, 2023. In June 2023 she enlisted and was accepted into the Airforce.

4th QTR ADULT: Ma Sarah Camacho

Ma Sarah embarked on a journey through various hospitality gigs, always seeking more fulfillment. She eventually secured a position at the local hospital, where she discovered her true calling. While balancing work and classes, she earned her Certification and Licensure as a Rehabilitation Substance Abuse Counselor. She also welcomed a son. However, she faced the challenges of Postpartum Depression and recognized the need to pause and prioritize her mental health and family.



Taking a step back allowed her to regain balance and focus on what mattered most. Feeling recovered and wanting to re-enter the workforce equipped with a High School Diploma she saw the opportunity to work at the Department of Corrections. With WIA's partnership with DOC and support, she completed the 9th Cycle Academy as a Correctional Officer I with an Associate in Basic Law Enforcement. In September 2024, she was recertified to be a Rehabilitation Substance Abuse Treatment Counselor and awaits a final transition to provide treatment to inmates.

4th QTR DW: Jesse Olopai

Jesse had been laid off as a Table Games Dealer for over two years when he decided it was time to shift gears and explore a new career path. He set his sights on becoming a Correctional Officer, a role that offered stability and a chance to make a difference. Through Customized Training, we partnered with the Department of Corrections to establish Cycle 9 of the Correction Academy. This collaborative effort provided Jesse with the opportunity to gain the necessary skills and knowledge for his new career. As part of this training program, Jesse completed an Associate in Basic Law Enforcement. Equipped with this education and hands-on experience, he transitioned into his role as a CO1 (Correctional Officer 1). Jesse continues to excel in this position, demonstrating commitment and resilience in his new career path.

4TH QTR YOUTH: Pritzel Carreon

Pritzel attended Tinian Junior Senior High School, where she chose Cooperative Education as an elective during her senior year. This class provided her with an opportunity to gain valuable work experience, which she previously lacked. Additionally, she became eligible for WIOA services due to her Basic Skills Deficiency and her status as a recipient of Medicaid and the Nutrition Assistance Program.

As a WIOA Youth Participant, Pritzel received career counseling, guidance, and career exploration support while earning income through the program. During this time, she gained hands-on experience as a Front Desk Attendant at Uncut Fitness. She completed this training

while meeting her graduation requirements, ultimately earning her high school diploma in May 22, 2024

Shortly after graduation, Pritzel utilized the skills she developed in her Cooperative Education class, along with the support of the WIOA program, to secure a position as a Consumer Sales Representative at Docomo. She continues to excel in her role, showcasing her growth and dedication in the workforce.

Challenges

In Program Year (PY) 2023, the CNMI's state workforce system faced several challenges that required resilience and adaptability. A primary obstacle stemmed from ongoing economic difficulties, particularly the slow recovery of the tourism industry, which plays a critical role in the local economy. Business closures and reduced operations in key sectors such as hospitality led to limited job opportunities, making it harder for job seekers to secure stable employment. Additionally, rising inflation and increased costs of living added pressure on both job seekers and employers, complicating efforts to promote economic stability and workforce development.

Despite these challenges, the CNMI workforce system remained dedicated to delivering high-quality services. By adapting to economic shifts, navigating policy changes, and addressing implementation hurdles, the system continued to support job seekers and employers. Moving forward, CNMI is committed to strengthening industry partnerships, building staff capacity, and leveraging available resources to enhance its workforce development efforts.

Pay for Performance

The CNMI has not yet implemented the Pay for Performance provisions of WIOA.