



ILLINOIS  
WORKFORCE  
INNOVATION  
BOARD

# WIOA ANNUAL STATEWIDE

PERFORMANCE REPORT  
NARRATIVE

PY2023

# INTRODUCTION

## PY 2021 WIOA ANNUAL STATEWIDE PERFORMANCE REPORT NARRATIVE

Program Year 2022 continued efforts of assessment, examination, and reimagining Illinois' workforce development system. Much of the work done in PY22 provided the foundation for a new, reimagined workforce development system that will support Illinois individuals, job-seekers and businesses.

Governor JB Pritzker's Workforce Equity and Access Commission concluded its work in the Spring of 2023. The Commission's original charge was to create a vision for an equitable, accessible, and effective future state workforce system grounded in an understanding of user and stakeholder experience, including how racial, social, and

geographic inequities inform experience and outcomes across Illinois' federally and state-funded workforce programs.

Through stakeholder engagement and a rigorous examination of how the workforce system functions in Illinois, the commission developed recommendations around design enhancements and the governance structure and leadership needed to center the customer. The commission held its final meeting in the Fall of 2022 and issued its recommendations in the Spring of 2023.

The future of the workforce system in Illinois as envisioned by the governor's commission will guide the creation



of a new four-year state plan during Program Year 2023. That vision is as follows:

*The Commission envisions the system as the first stop for people looking for a way to engage in fulfilling work, and every system entry point puts people on that pathway. The system meets every jobseeker's employment and education training needs by actively listening — transforming engagement from transactions to conversations, and from being guided by checklists to developing relationships.*

*The system connects people with resources within and out-side the workforce development system, and provides excellent, empathetic, and comprehensive information and guidance to help people achieve their goals. The system is inter-operable and addresses the*

*whole person. It is aware of and responsive to histories of trauma and peoples' multifaceted social identities. It ensures that everyone is served with a spirit of excellence and compassion. The system connects Illinois workers to the opportunities they deserve.*

This vision, along with specific recommendations from the governor's commission, will be implemented and operationalized during Program Year 2023 and will continue to have a lasting impact on the workforce development system.

The vision-setting was done in parallel with an on-going focus on service integration, service delivery and adaptation to an economic and labor environment that continues to undergo a historic transformation.



calculated. Additionally, the performance data is displayed against the title's negotiated target for the program year. Beyond performance, the site also includes enrollment information for each quarter during the program year disaggregated by gender and race/ethnicity. Site visitors can see the number and percentage of individuals served by these demographic variables. The site was also enhanced to additionally provide enrollment data. This information is updated on a quarterly basis for all titles, and performance data is updated quarterly for titles submitting quarterly. All data and information are updated annually.

## SECTION 1:

### *Ongoing Commitment to the WIOA State Plan Goals and Service Integration*

The following describes progress made during Program Year 2022 in achieving the state's strategic vision and goals (as described in the state's 2020 – 2024 WIOA State Plan).

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

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

The Continuous Improvement Committee (CIC) of the Illinois Workforce Investment Board (IWIB) assigned the committee's Performance Workgroup with creating a resource for committee members and other stakeholders to monitor and review ongoing WIOA enrollment data and performance outcomes across all titles in one central location. Through that work, the Performance Workgroup created the WIOA Performance and Transparency website. This resource provides site visitors a better understanding of WIOA and the services provided by each title. The site includes information about the federal guidelines that govern WIOA and the services offered through each title.

The site was also designed to provide definitions of each performance measure as well as how success is

Beyond the resource and data, representatives from each title presented to the CIC twice during PY22 to provide context to the numbers and data through sharing insights and updates about successes and challenges faced in the field. These bi-annual presentations allow staff from each title to address specific questions as well as keep the committee's staff up to date on initiatives and progress toward enrollment and performance objectives.

##### *Activity 1.2: Establish Regional Planning Areas*

The state continued to recommend that Chief Elected Officials (CEOs) and Local Workforce Innovation Boards review the patterns in WIOA funding, participant service levels, and administrative costs to consider how each would impact service delivery and the ability to meet administrative requirements.

##### *Activity 1.3: Conduct Integrated Regional Planning*

The WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team coordinated a Regional and Local Plan / One-Stop Memorandum of Understanding review process to ensure all 10 Economic Development Regions and all 22 local workforce areas adopted their vision and commitments in response to the emerging economic conditions and required updates about how partners would coordinate around ways to ensure equity and access in all methods of service delivery.

## Strategy 2: Support Employer-Driven Regional Sector Initiatives

### *Activity 2.1: Promote Employer-Driven Regional Sector Partnerships*

The Business Engagement Committee (BEC) of the Illinois Workforce Investment Board (IWIB) developed and implemented two projects to help promote these partnerships. One was the development of an executive-level training deck to introduce a wider audience of business decision-makers to the concepts, uses and advantages of Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) sector strategies. At the C-suite level, executives don't have the time and the ability to learn all the details of these concepts. But they need to understand what is meant when we say "public private partnerships," "sector partnership," or we "talent pipeline management." This led to the creation of a 15-minute training, aimed at the highest level, with limited depth, regarding what we mean when we talk about sector strategies across the state of Illinois.

Another BEC project was to establish and build-out a pilot project to identify sector strategy "champions" in each of Illinois' target industries. Specifically, creating a network of sector-based champions, and a community of practice for each target industry to ensure the alignment of publicly funded workforce development investments and efforts with the workforce needs of critical industries across the state. A pilot program was started in the Manufacturing sector, and the identified champion is the Technology & Manufacturing Association (TMA).

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

Sector-Based Business Services and Employer Initiatives were promoted using a multi-platform approach. Promotion utilized the following channels to reach employers:

- Social media;
- formal presentations at local, regional, and state-wide events;
- Local workforce area's Business Services teams outreach to local industries, training providers, and community-based organizations; and
- Pilot projects in specific economic development regions.

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

### *Activity 3.1: Promote Leading Career Pathway Models and Best Practices*

Illinois expanded the utilization and implementation of the Model Programs of Study. Programs of study are an integral component of career pathways and are defined by the requirement of a secondary to postsecondary sequence of courses. The Models provided guidance and exemplars of what a program of study could look like, as well as provide a framework for state agencies to prioritize program of study and career pathway development.

### *Activity 3.2: Expand and Improve Bridge and Integrated Education and Training Models*

Illinois continued to focused on expanding bridge offerings that provided opportunities for youth and adults who are basic skills deficient through ongoing support from the state office. A year-long Transitions Academy and ongoing technical assistance provided by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) enabled programs to develop contextualized Bridge and Integrated Career and Academic Preparation Systems programming that met the needs of local employers and local industry. To reduce barriers for adult learners' participation in Career and Technical Education, the ICCB submitted an Alternative State Plan for Ability to Benefit to the Department of Education. This plan was approved by the Department and ongoing technical assistance to ensure the ATB provision are utilized to benefit adult learners enter skilled employment.

### *Activity 3.3: Promote Innovative Career Pathway Solutions*

The Career Pathway for Targeted Populations Committee (CPTP) of the Illinois Workforce Investment Board (IWIB) met quarterly during Program Year 2022 (September 2022, December 2022, March 2023, and June 2023). Each meeting focused on a target population, highlighting best practices and models for career pathways for that target population.

- September 2022: Focused on career pathways for Justice-Impacted Individuals, held at Black Hawk Community College. The meeting involved hearing from Justice-Impacted individuals who have found job opportunities and a post-meeting tour of the Kewanee Lifeskills Re-entry Center.

- December 2022: Annual Review Meeting of the work of the CPTP.
- March 2023: Focused on Opportunity Youth hosted youth to speak on their experience at an Area Career Center and featured a presentation by the Bloomington Area Career Center and local Community Organizations. Following the meeting, there was an opportunity to tour the Bloomington Area Career Center.
- June 2023: Focused on individuals with disabilities: in partnership with the State Rehabilitation Council, the group met in Collinsville, Illinois, to discuss apprenticeships for individuals with disabilities in the Collinsville region. The meeting included opportunities for a tour at Holly's House of Hope before the meeting and a networking opportunity at Soulcial Kitchen following the meeting.

### **Promote Innovative Career Pathway Solutions**

The three workgroups of the CPTP (Disability, Justice-Impacted Employment, and Opportunity Youth Workgroups) each worked to promote innovative career pathway solutions for their respective targeted populations.

### **Disability Workgroup**

The workgroup hosted a webinar on October 12, 2022, in honor of Disability Employment Awareness Month, "Tips & Tools for Community-Based Organizations for Supporting Employers in Hiring Individuals with Disabilities." Panelists included:

Marcus Deamer, Acting Manager of DRS Workforce Development Unit; Garret Rosiek, Regional Manager, Continuous Improvement, Essendant; and LaDonna Henson, Director of Evaluation and Developmental Center at Southern Illinois University.

The workgroup also hosted a webinar series in 2023 discussing corporate culture, accommodations and universal design.

### **Justice-Impacted Employment Workgroup**

The Justice-Impacted Employment Workgroup met for the first time on August 1, 2022. They added multiple members with lived experience and focused on learning about human-centered design. They changed the

workgroup's name from Returning Citizens Workgroup to Justice-Impacted Employment Workgroup. They also concentrated on service integration by collaborating with other re-entry-focused groups throughout the State, including receiving updates on the PROWD grant, the Untapped Talent Series, and the Re-entry Council to establish a workplan.

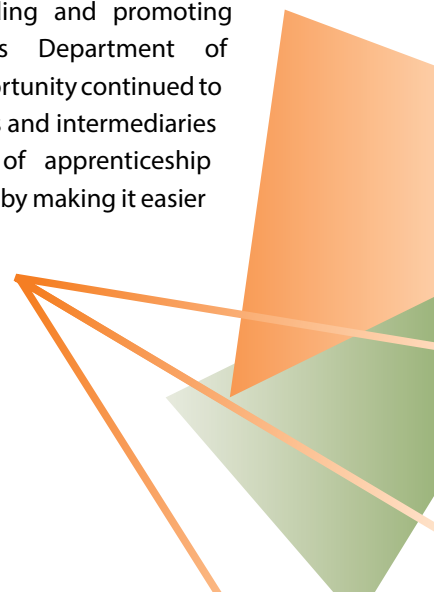
### **Opportunity Youth Workgroup**

The Opportunity Youth Workgroup began by determining barriers youth experience when entering or sustaining a career pathway after hearing from representatives from In-School and Out-of-School Youth Providers. Career awareness and transportation were the top barriers the group decided to focus on this year.

The group then hosted representatives from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the Illinois Community College Board, and the Illinois Department of Employment Services to give an overview of state-funded and sponsored programs to promote career awareness. Finally, the group hosted representatives from Will County and the Illinois Manufacturers Association to discuss their career awareness programs and services. The group is working to compile these resources into an Opportunity Youth Resource Repository on IL Workforce Academy to share with interested stakeholders.

### **Activity 3.4: Promote the Use of All Types of Apprenticeships**

The Apprenticeship Illinois Committee (AIC) of the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) continued to support efforts to building an effective apprenticeship ecosystem and holistic apprenticeship framework, which promotes all types of apprenticeships, including pre-apprenticeship, youth apprenticeship, registered apprenticeship, and non-registered apprenticeship. This ecosystem includes all four core partners, who serve on the AIC and share the responsibility for expanding and promoting apprenticeships. The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity continued to fund apprenticeship navigators and intermediaries to expedite the expansion of apprenticeship programs throughout the state by making it easier for employers to utilize the apprenticeship model as a workforce strategy and for individuals to start or progress in a career through an "earn and learn" program.



## Strategy 4: Expand Service Integration

### *Activity 4.1: Provide Coordinated and Enhanced Career Services*

The core partners at the state level continued to explore opportunities to incorporate the services of the Comprehensive One-Stop Center partners into case management and career services.

The Continuous Improvement Committee (CIC) of the Illinois Workforce and Innovation Board (IWIB) convened a Service Integration work group in response to the ever-changing workforce development system in light of the COVID-19 Pandemic and subsequent necessary changes to WIOA service delivery.

Beginning in July 2022, the Service Integration work group, led by Becky Raymond, embarked on setting state-level expectations for WIOA service integration while incorporating applications for local areas in revising the 2018 Service Integration Policy. The policy was approved in May 2023.

To date, the Self-Assessment guidelines have been updated to reflect the guidance in the revised Service Integration Policy. Core Partner Leadership has also begun meeting to develop state-level referral standards for the Illinois Workforce System.

These efforts reflect the importance Illinois places on seamless service delivery and collaboration in and between all WIOA Partners to better serve all of its customers.

The state will develop policies through the IWIB policy process to ensure that there is a customer-centered coordination of services that considers the additional needs of the targeted populations as identified in the 2020 – 2024 WIOA State Plan.

### *Activity 4.2: Provide Coordinated and Enhanced Case Management Services*

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) implemented professional development and technical assistance for all Title II Providers on assessment practices that would lead to proper instructional placement. Additional technical assistance ensured local Transition Coordinators and support staff had access to research-based practices through the implementation of virtual learning

communities. Additionally, Title II program submits an annual Area Plan which addresses coordination with core partners to aid learners in overcoming barriers to participation in education.

### *Activity 4.3: Promote Continuous Improvement and Ongoing Professional Development*

The Professional Development Committee of the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB), runs the Illinois Workforce Academy (IWA). The IWOA is designed to support Illinois' workforce system in pursuit of continuous improvement through education. The IWA provided diverse professional development that advanced foundational knowledge for all partners, and helped WIOA personnel gain the knowledge, skills, and capacity to serve customers effectively. The IWA had three goals.

1. Create, promote, and foster a system environment that values development, diversity, growth, critical thinking, and problem-solving opportunities for all employees.
2. Develop a learning platform to enhance requisite knowledge and skills to understand the unique needs of each customer and determine the best way to provide customer-centered service throughout all levels of the WIOA system.
3. Provide quality training that includes leveraging technology and resources that are appropriate to increase individual and organizational productivity through opportunities that enhance knowledge, develop skills, and enrich the system.

Through evaluation and pilot review, input was collected from the state and local workforce boards, front-line staff, and workforce system personnel. The IWA built a shared understanding of Illinois' vision and support the move to an integrated delivery system, building staff capacity through cross-training and other professional development opportunities. This capacity-building and technical assistance plan aligned with a key objective of the IWIB's Strategic Plan. It supported the assurance that all partner agencies and local leaders are adequately prepared to understand and develop an effective plan to address the customer's needs.

The Professional Development Committee coordinated regional and statewide professional development for the WIOA system as it relates to WIOA implementation, service integration, and policy. The team consisted of

WIOA partners at the state and local levels and an IWIB representative. The WIOA Professional Development Committee also plans the annual WIOA Summit in the spring of each year.

Illinois utilized technology to create and deliver weekly webinars (Workforce Wednesday Webinars) that provide a platform for all program partners to discuss topics related to WIOA and the workforce development system. The webinars provided a forum to educate attendees about workforce development programs, activities, and resources. Each week, members of the workforce development community had an opportunity to ask questions and offer suggestions for improving collaboration efforts. Continuous improvement and professional development were also expanded through regional workshops and the annual statewide summit – providing opportunities for peer-to-peer information exchange on effective practices and lessons learned, establishing and strengthening cross-program relationships, and front-line feedback to state program leadership.

Professional development, while planned through the Professional Development Committee, worked in conjunction with the CIC and other IWIB committees to showcase partnerships and identify best practices that can be replicated across the State. This engagement with the CIC led to opportunities for new topics and the identification of areas of need for evaluations and other assessments.

In addition, front-line staff were offered opportunities to participate in ongoing professional development

through topic-specific policy academies, as well as national professional development and credentialing programs, such as the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP). Furthermore, the IWIB and the interagency Professional Development Planning Team leveraged the expertise of the ICCB Adult Education and Career Technical Education programs and support available through several Illinois public community colleges and universities to provide professional development to agency partners in the appropriate administration of educational assessment of basic skill deficiencies. To the extent possible, training and information on promising practices and lessons learned were delivered through technological solutions to maximize access and cost-effectiveness.

## **Strategy 5: Promote Improved Data-Driven Decision Making**

### *Activity 5.1: Improve Employer Tools for Communicating and Accessing Information*

Illinois sought to increase the perception in the business community that Illinois' workforce system is a powerful partner, that speaks with one voice, that is easy to access and helps businesses access and build the talent they need to thrive. Common messaging helped drive this integration.

The Business Engagement Committee (BEC) of the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) gathered a diverse





group of employers and workforce practitioners to develop a common message to business that will succinctly identify the advantages of utilizing Illinois' workforce partners. A message that can preface more detailed and partner-specific information, but communicates quickly the principal value of connecting. That message is:

**We provide sustainable no-cost and low-cost strategies to recruit, hire, train and retain the skilled workforce businesses need to thrive.**

The BEC's intention in the future is to ask partners across the state and at all levels to implement this message as an entry point of their outreach materials to businesses. The "we" in this message applies to each of the workforce development partners, and particularly to all of the partners working in concert to meet the needs of business.

The BEC also worked with the core partners to support the continued development of the Illinois workNet BizHub and the Illinois Employment Business System (IEBS), both of which act to support the exchange of information between employers and the workforce development system in Illinois.

#### *Activity 5.2: Improve Access to Career and Education Guidance Tools and Information*

The WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team (TA Team) continued to monitor and provide technical support to local areas as they moved back to offering services to walk-in customers.

The TA Team and various committees of the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB), team continued to explore ongoing training and support to front-line career services and case management staff to improve access and use of these tools and resources as part of the Workforce Academy.

#### *Activity 5.3: Improve Access and Integration of Eligible Training Provider Lists*

The Eligible Training Provider Lists Workgroup (ETPL) of the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB), led by Terry Wilkerson, revised Illinois' Eligible Training Provider List Policy in response to U.S. Department of Labor (U.S. DOL) monitoring.

In December 2022, IWIB formally approved the revised ETPL Policy and the accompanying recommendations. To date, the U.S. DOL accepted the revisions, and programmers are

working towards implementing a system to reflect the modifications in the policy and ensure customer usability. The policy is set to be released in 2024.

#### *Activity 5.4: Improve Access and Utilization of Labor Market and Workforce System Information*

The 'Unemployment-to-Reemployment' Portal continued to be refined and utilized during Program Year 2022. This data visualization helps inform local decision makers on the impact of unemployment spell duration on reemployment probability by education levels. The equity lens for this approach takes advantage of the rich demographic characteristics of claimants; e.g., low wage workers, race, ethnicity, gender and geography.

The labor market economists at the Illinois Department of Economic Security supported several data visualization tools that enable workforce partners to better understand the market dynamics for the coming decade in terms of growth of industries in Illinois, as well as demand for certain occupations/workers. The Tableau-based visual allows users to view data at the state-levels, as well as drilling down into the economic development regions.

### **Strategy 6: Advance Public-Private Data Infrastructure**

#### *Activity 6.1: Enhance the State Labor Market Information System*

The Illinois Department of Economic Security (IDES) and its partners continued its interagency grant activity under the U.S. DOL/ETA Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) that links WIOA Title I and Title III program participants to WIOA program performance quarterly measures, stable job quarterly measures, and monthly employment measures. Senior agency management and local program administrators could take advantage of a dashboard that report outcomes by longitudinal cohort, demographics and local geographies.

#### *Activity 6.2: Expand and Improve the State Longitudinal Data System*

HS2Careers and College2Careers web-based applications continued to be utilized in Program Year 2022. These two products cross-match decades-long IDES employment/earnings with training/student records and augment the discussion on completers and graduates with longitudinal outcomes, such as multiple jobholding, job stability, career earnings and career job profiles.



supportive services, state funding and other resources to ensure programs are accessible and equitable for all. Examples of barrier reduction services being incorporated into workforce programs include:

- The Job Training and Economic Development Program (JTED) provided a flexible pool of funds (barrier reduction funds) to help increase family stability and job retention by covering accumulated emergency costs for basic needs, such as housing-related expenses (rent, utilities, etc.), transportation, child care, digital technology needs, education needs, mental health services, substance abuse services, income support, and work-related supplies that are not typically covered by programmatic supportive services.
- The Climate and Equitable Jobs Act continued to be operationalized during PY22. The law puts the state on a path toward 100 percent clean energy by establishing of the Energy Transition Barrier Reduction Program, which will provide supportive and financial assistance services to individuals participating in Clean Jobs Workforce Network program and Climate Works Preapprenticeship Program to overcome barriers to engaging and completing in workforce programs.

### ***Activity 6.3: Improve the Integration of Program and Case Management Information Systems***

The Illinois Data Team's worked with core partners and the Illinois Chief Information Officer, as well as the Illinois Department of Innovation and Technology (DoIT) to improve the integration of program and case management systems was temporarily halted as the Governor's Commission on Workforce Equity and Access developed recommendations around improving data sharing and information systems. The Illinois Data Team began to review the Commission's recommendations for areas where it could assist in operationalizing them.

### **Strategy 7: Increase Barrier Reduction Services**

#### ***Activity 7.1: Leverage barrier reduction resources and WIOA supportive services to increase equitable access to training and employment***

The state continued to make progress on braiding WIOA

### **CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**

The Southern Illinois University (SIU) team developed a Customer Feedback Survey. The purpose of the Customer Feedback Survey is to assess customers' overall satisfaction

with the Illinois workNet web portal and the resources and tools offered to help individuals and partners meet their employment and training goals. The feedback survey is available to all users

Overall, 80 percent were satisfied/very satisfied with Illinois workNet, while only 20 percent were dissatisfied.

The three primary reasons why individuals utilized the site were to:

1. Using Tools & Resources for Partners and Service Providers
2. Find Job Openings (24 percent)
3. Find Training and Education Opportunities (23 percent)

The three primary ways individual heard about Illinois workNet were:

1. Organization Website (19%)
2. Family or Friends (15%)
3. Other (37%)

Based on the feedback from the survey, 70% of the users were able to find what they were looking for in the site. Participants' primary concerns focused around areas of employment and training opportunities, communication and technical assistance.

## SECTION 2: Promising Practices

Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility was emphasized for all program delivery throughout the workforce development system. Supportive service and barrier reduction funds were used to address challenges individuals face in accessing training and employment.

Workforce program delivery continued to be more integrated across WIOA core and required partners, as well as with other workforce development programs.

State-funded programs housed in community colleges, Clean Energy Workforce Hubs, and local community-

based organizations increased coordination of services, primarily through local American Job Centers. System navigator roles were explored to help facilitate this work.

The RESEA program had dedicated staff who assist unemployment insurance claimants with getting back to work more quickly. IDES continued its work on program improvement, including a new focus on utilizing RESEA as an entry way for UI claimants into other workforce services.

State-funded workforce development activities, including the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, Workforce Equity Initiative, and others provided the ability to quickly address talent pipeline issues.

## SECTION 3: Performance and Evaluation

### EVALUATIONS:

#### Effectiveness in Serving Employers Pilot Update

Effectiveness in serving employers is a statewide indicator shared across all core programs and is assessed only as an overall State indicator score, and, therefore, it cannot be attributed to any one program by itself. Consequently, one program, Wagner Peyser (Title III) is reporting on behalf of all six core programs in the State.

The Departments Employment & Training Administration (DOL-ETA) indicated they planned to continue pilot approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans, however DOL-ETA guidance finalizing the performance indicator(s) was not issued during this plan timeframe, and the pilot remained in effect for the entirety of the PY 2020-2023 plan. The pilot will continue to remain in effect for the beginning the PY 2024-2027, as states are not currently required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator.

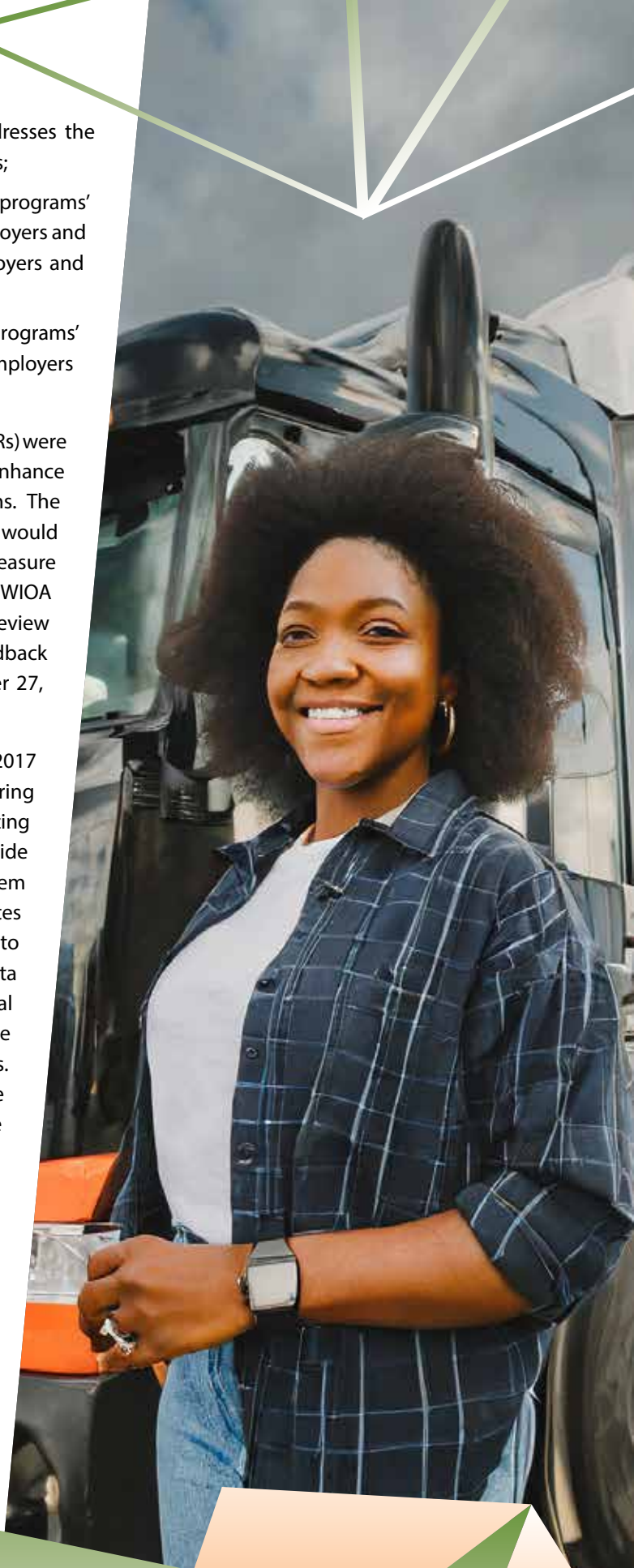
Effectiveness in Serving Employers: WIOA sec. 116(b)(2)(A)(i)(VI) established a primary indicator of performance for effectiveness in serving employers. States are piloting three approaches designed to gauge three critical workforce needs of the business community. Illinois initially chose Approach 1 and Approach 3 prior to PY 2017.

- **Approach 1** – Retention with the Same Employer – addresses the programs’ efforts to provide employers with skilled workers;
- **Approach 2** – Repeat Business Customers – addresses the programs’ efforts to provide quality engagement and services to employers and sectors and establish productive relationships with employers and sectors over extended periods of time; and
- **Approach 3** – Employer Penetration Rate – addresses the programs’ efforts to provide quality engagement and services to all employers and sectors within a State and local economy.

On September 28, 2023, two Information Collection Requests (ICRs) were published for public comment. These changes are intended to enhance and improve performance reporting under these collections. The NPRM began seeking public comments on a proposed rule that would use “Retention with the Same Employer” as the criterion to measure Effectiveness in Serving Employers for four DOL-administered WIOA title I non-core programs. Commenters were encouraged to review the changes in the documents and provide comments and feedback before the close of the 60-day comment period on November 27, 2023.

The Departments reviewed annual report data for PY 2017 through PY 2020 for each of the three approaches for measuring effectiveness in serving employers with a focus on minimizing employer burden and using information that would provide an accurate picture of how well the public workforce system serves employers. The Departments recommended that States centralize the coordination of data collection and reporting into a single agency and select one core program to report the data statewide, representing all six core programs, on an annual basis. This recommendation promoted coordination at the State level and encouraged a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments reported that the Retention with the Same Employer PY 2020 rate for the 36 States using the performance indicator was 54 percent. 36 States reported effectiveness in serving employers performance using this definition.

The Departments assessed the pilot through a Department of Labor contract that resulted in a final report titled Measuring the Effectiveness of Services to Employers: Options for Performance Measures under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Specifically, the study assessed each approach to defining the effectiveness in serving employers performance indicator for validity, reliability, practicality, and unintended consequences. Though the study did not definitively recommend one approach, in assessing the study’s findings for each of the three approaches of the effectiveness in serving employers performance indicator, the Departments



concluded that the Retention with the Same Employer approach placed the least amount of burden on States to implement, while also providing a valid and reliable approach to measuring the indicator.

Illinois will continue to pilot the Effectiveness in Serving Employers approaches (1 and 3) until DOL-ETA issue final guidance.

## Performance Accountability System

### Performance and Transparency Dashboard

As described under Activity 1.1, the Continuous Improvement Committee (CIC) of the Illinois Workforce Investment Board (IWIB) utilizes the recently created WIOA Performance and Transparency website. This resource provides users better understanding of WIOA and the services provided by each core partner. The site includes information about the federal guidelines that govern WIOA and the services offered through each title.

The site provides definitions of each performance measure as well as how success is calculated. Additionally, the performance data is displayed against the core partner's negotiated target for the program year. Beyond performance, the site also includes enrollment information for each quarter during the program year disaggregated by gender and race/ethnicity. Site visitors can see the number and percentage of individuals served by these demographic variables. The site was enhanced to additionally provide enrollment data. This information is updated on a quarterly basis for all titles, and performance data is updated quarterly for titles submitting quarterly. All data and information are updated annually.

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## SECTION 4: Statutory and/or Regulatory Requirements Waivers

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

Waiver associated with the requirement at the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Section 129(a)(4)(A) and 20 CFR 681.410 that the State and local areas expend seventy-five (75) percent of the Governor's reserve youth funds and local formula youth funds on out-of-school youth (OSY) and calculation of the local area expenditure for each local area.

### Intent of Waiver

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

Of importance to the Governor's vision, the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) Strategic Plan, and the Unified State Plan is the expansion of career pathway systems into the secondary system for opportunity youth. This waiver will allow Illinois to provide youth with barriers the necessary support to successfully equip them with the academic and technical skills necessary to improve their employability. Furthermore, Illinois anticipates that this waiver will provide greater opportunity for blending funds at the federal, state, and local levels across the partners to increase innovative strategies for improving career pathway opportunities for youth.

### Goals and Performance Outcomes from Waiver Request

As a result of this waiver, Illinois expects that:

- The number of in-school youth (ISY) served will increase; and
- Performance accountability outcomes for overall WIOA Youth (including both in- and out-of-school youth) will remain steady or increase for the majority of the WIOA Youth performance indicators.

**DOL Approval Letter**

The United States Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration (ETA) approves for Program Year (PY) 2022 and PY 2023, which includes the entire time period for which states are authorized to spend those funds, the State’s request to waive the requirement that the State expend seventy-five (75) percent of Governor’s reserve youth funds on OSY. ETA reviewed the State’s waiver request and plan and has determined that the requirements requested to be waived impede the ability of Illinois to implement its plan to improve the workforce development system. Illinois may lower the expenditure requirement of Governor’s reserve funds to fifty (50) percent for OSY.

In addition, ETA approves for PY 2022 and PY 2023, which includes the entire time period for which states are authorized to spend those funds, the State’s request to waive the requirement that local areas expend seventy-five (75) percent of local youth formula funds on OSY. Illinois may lower the local youth funds expenditure requirement to fifty (50) percent for OSY. As a result of this waiver, ETA expects that the number of in-school youth (ISY) served will increase, and performance accountability outcomes for overall WIOA Youth (including both ISY and OSY) will remain steady or increase for the majority of the WIOA Youth performance indicators. The State is also approved to calculate the lowered fifty (50) percent expenditure rate at the State level instead of individually for each local area.

**Progress Toward Achieving the Goals and Performance Outcomes**

Under this waiver authority, the state has generally seen an increase in the number of in-school youth (ISY) served every program year; however, out-of-school youth served decreased during the same timeframe.

	<b>In-School Youth (ISY)</b>	<b>Out-of-School Youth (OSY)</b>
PY 2020	1,123	5,380
PY 2021	1,284	5,354
PY 2022	1,228	4,940

Performance accountability outcomes for overall WIOA Youth (including both ISY and OSY) slightly increased in PY 2021, which is the latest year performance outcomes are available. The majority of the WIOA Youth performance indicators are on track to either remain steady or increase for PY 2022.

<b>Pro-gram Year</b>	<b>No. Served</b>	<b>Employment/Education Rate 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter</b>	<b>Employment/Education Rate 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter</b>	<b>Median Earnings</b>	<b>Creden-tial Rate</b>	<b>Measurable Skill Gains</b>
PY 2019	6,738	73.43%	73.07%	\$3,715.41	70.59%	44.25%
PY 2020	6,503	71.79%	67.78%	\$4,234.28	69.88%	52.18%
PY 2021	6,638	73.67%	69.32%	\$4,668.31	70.72%	54.71%
PY 2022 YTD	6,168	74.83%	74.36%	\$5,371.45	70.27%	63.52%

## **WAIVER #2 PROVIDING ITAS TO WIOA IN-SCHOOL YOUTH**

Waiver of 20 CFR 681.550 to allow individual training accounts (ITAs) for in-school youth (ISY).

### **Intent of Waiver**

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

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

### **Goals and Performance Outcomes from Waiver Request**

As a result of this waiver, Illinois expects that:

- Increase in the number of local workforce innovation areas that offer ITAs to in-school youth.
- Increase in the number of youth that utilizes an ITA to receive an industry-recognized and/or some other post-secondary credential.
- Increase in performance accountability measures for youth as found in section 116(b)(2)(A)(ii) of WIOA (e.g., increases in credential attainment and measurable skills gains).

### **DOL Approval Letter**

United States Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) approves, for PY 2022 and 2023, the State's request to waive the requirement limiting ITAs to only out-of-school youth (OSY), ages 16–24. In addition to these out-of-school youth (OSY), the State may use ITAs for ISY, ages 16–21. ETA reviewed the State's waiver request and plan and has determined that the requirements requested to be waived impede the ability of Illinois to implement its plan to improve the workforce development system. Approval of this waiver should not impede the State's efforts to prioritize OSY, including outreach to the OSY population.

### **Progress Toward Achieving the Goals and Performance Outcomes**

- Through PY 2022, sixteen (16) of the state's twenty-two (22) local workforce innovation areas, spread across eight (8) of the ten (10) Economic Development Regions, have ISY with an ITA, indicating a broad geographic use of the waiver.
- The number of ISY enrolled in ITAs has increased over 12% since the inception of the waiver. For PY 2022, ISY that received an ITA have successfully exited the program with the following characteristics:
  - Measurable Skill Gains: 23
  - Completed Training: 19
  - Earned Industry-Recognized Credential: 22
  - Entered Employment: 13
  - Average Wage: \$20.87



### **WAIVER #3 AMEND THE DEFINITION OF INCUMBENT WORKER BY ELIMINATING OR REDUCING THE SIX-MONTH EMPLOYMENT REQUIREMENT**

Waiver of 20 CFR 680.780 to adjust the six-month employment requirement for incumbent worker training (IWT).

#### **Intent of Waiver**

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

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

#### **Goals and Performance Outcomes from Waiver Request**

As a result of this waiver, Illinois expects that:

- Increase in the number of local workforce innovation area incumbent worker training projects;
- Increase in number of businesses utilizing incumbent worker training; and
- Increase the number of incumbent workers able to receive training.

#### **DOL Approval Letter**

ETA approves, through June 30, 2024, the State’s request to adjust the six-month employment requirement for the purposes of conducting IWT. ETA reviewed the State’s waiver request and plan and has determined that the requirements requested to be waived impede the ability of Illinois to implement its plan to improve the workforce development system. The following conditions apply to implementation of this waiver:

- IWT may only be used to provide an employee skills to advance in their job or get skills to stay in a job (layoff aversion);
- Report individual records based on the Participant Individual Record Layout for all IWT participants



through the Workforce Integrated Performance System (WIPS); and

- Track employment retention and earnings outcomes to measure whether use of this waiver has a positive effect.

### **Progress Toward Achieving the Goals and Performance Outcomes**

From program year (PY) 2021 to PY 2022 Illinois has seen the number of local workforce innovation area incumbent worker training projects greatly increase from sixty-four (64) to three hundred seventy-eight (378), the number of businesses utilizing incumbent worker training increased from sixty-two (62) to two hundred seventy-eight (278), and an increase in the number of incumbent workers able to receive training from one hundred twenty-five (125) to four thousand two hundred twenty-eight (4,228).

### **WAIVER #4 PLANNING REGION ALIGNMENT**

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

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

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

#### **Intent of Waiver**

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

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

#### **Goals and Performance Outcomes from Waiver Request**

The projected outcome of the waiver is to avoid creating

a dysfunctional and disorganized environment that ultimately would have a negative impact on service delivery and customer outcomes if realignment were forced on local Chief Elected Officials (CEOs).


#### **DOL Approval Letter**

The State’s request to waive the requirement that a planning region consist of one local workforce development area, two or more intrastate local areas, or two or more interstate local areas is approved through June 30, 2024. This waiver allows the State to assign a single local workforce development area to more than one planning region. In its WIOA state Plan and waiver request, Illinois identified regions in the state that correspond with its economy, the labor market, and other factors. However, the existing geography of designated local workforce development areas span multiple regions. The State and local workforce areas indicate local areas have experienced success in planning and delivering services in the context of the State’s identified regions in their early efforts. ETA reviewed the State’s waiver request and plan and determined that the requirements requested to be waived impede the ability of Illinois to implement its plan to improve the workforce development system.

### **Progress Toward Achieving the Goals and Performance Outcomes**

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

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



## **WAIVER #5 INCREASE ON- THE-JOB TRAINING REIMBURSEMENT**

The State is requesting a waiver of WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(H)(i) and 20 CFR 680.720(b) in order to increase on-the-job training (OJT) employer reimbursement up to 90 percent for businesses with 50 or fewer employees.

### **Intent of Waiver**

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

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

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

Many small businesses are facing unprecedented demands to keep their doors open and avoid layoffs. Extra incentives such as the increased wage reimbursement is a tool to support a strengthened recovery strategy. Illinois needs to have the flexibility to provide an increased

incentive to establish new on-the-job training opportunities during a time of uncertainty and recovery.

### **Goals and Performance Outcomes from Waiver Request**

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

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

### **DOL Approval Letter**

ETA approves the State's waiver request through June 20, 2024, for the WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth formula funds. ETA reviewed the State's waiver request and plan and has determined that the requirements requested to be waived impede the ability of Illinois to implement its plan to improve the workforce development system. Existing statutory authority permits

the State and its local workforce areas to increase the reimbursement rate for OJT contracts up to 75 percent. The State may also reimburse up to 90 percent for OJT for businesses with 50 or fewer employees. ETA expects the utilization of OJT to increase in the State as a result of this waiver.

**Progress Toward Achieving the Goals and Performance Outcomes**

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

	OJT Placements	Unique OJT Work Sites	OJT Participants w/ Training Related Job at Exit
PY 2019	343	134	320
PY 2020	353	162	232
PY 2021	424	162	170
PY 2022	488	206	258

For PY 2021, which is the latest year performance outcomes are available, employment retention rates for OJT participants that exited with a job in a related industry in which they were trained in the second (2nd) and fourth (4th) quarters following exit has increased to reach pre-pandemic numbers.

**WAIVER #6 INCREASE IN TRANSITIONAL JOBS EXPENDITURE THRESHOLD**

Waiver of WIOA Section 134(d)(5) and 20 CFR 680.195 to allow up to 20 percent of WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker local formula funds (Act and Final Rules allows up to 10 percent) to be used for the provision of transitional jobs.

**Intent of Waiver**

Transitional Jobs are an important employment strategy best used when there is higher than normal unemployment or during an economic shock, such as COVID-19, especially for hardest-hit chronically unemployed individuals. Transitional Jobs can provide employment, earned income, and connections to future unsubsidized employment to help stabilize individuals and families. Increasing the allowable amount local areas can allocate toward transitional jobs will support these efforts and offer maximum local flexibility to meet locally determined demand for using transitional jobs as an employment strategy.

This waiver would contribute to the economic recovery and provide an essential avenue for participants that are traditionally long-term unemployed or underemployed with the support they need to secure employment.

**Goals and Performance Outcomes from Waiver Request**

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

- Increase in number of employers that use transitional jobs as a tool to find skilled workers.
- Increase in number of participants using transitional jobs program as tool to gain employment and address barriers to employment.
- Increase in the number of local workforce innovation boards using transitional jobs as a strategy to serve Adults with barriers to employment.
- Increase in reported costs for transitional jobs.

**DOL Approval Letter**

ETA approves the State’s waiver request through June 30, 2024, for the WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker formula funding streams. ETA reviewed the State’s waiver request and plan and has determined that the



requirements requested to be waived impede the ability of Illinois to implement its plan to improve the workforce development system. To accurately report participants in receipt of transitional jobs, Illinois must record code value “6” in Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) element 1205 “Work Experience,” and code value “1” in PIRL element 1211.

### **Progress Toward Achieving the Goals and Performance Outcomes**

In PY 2022, one (1) local workforce innovation area provided transitional job services to twenty-one (21) participants through four (4) employers. Overall, the same local area has utilized this waiver and the number of those served through transitional jobs has decreased from the previous year.

### **WAIVER #7 USE OF STATEWIDE FUNDS FOR QUALIFYING EVENTS**

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

### **Intent of Waiver**

Illinois’s WIOA Unified State Plan articulates many of the WIOA-related statewide activities it does, or can do, when facing a qualifying event. For example, the Office of Employment and Training is responsible for applying and administering applicable National Dislocated Worker Grants (NDWG), consistent with WIOA Sec. 170 and its corresponding regulatory requirements. These grants are helpful once allocated, but in the time between the event and allocation, aid is urgently needed and there is much work to be done. If months pass before the NDWG allocation occurs, damage can be exacerbated, and work is not completed. The state is mindful of this time gap and strives to apply as soon as the state is eligible for NDWG funding assistance, as appropriate. The efficient use of time right after a qualifying event occurs is a critical variable in how well recovery is measured.

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

Under this waiver the state will have the ability to expeditiously allocate funds to a local workforce innovation board, or local board, so they may respond quickly to a disaster, emergency, or other qualifying event as described at 20 CFR 687.100(b). Only those events, and cascading events caused by a qualifying event, that have been declared as an emergency or disaster by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA),

by the chief official of a Federal Agency with jurisdiction over the Federal response to a disaster with potential significant loss of employment, or the Governor of Illinois qualify for the use of WIOA statewide funds.

#### **Goals and Performance Outcomes from Waiver Request**

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

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

#### **DOL Approval Letter**

ETA approves, through June 30, 2024, the State's request to use statewide funds for disaster-relief employment, as described in WIOA Section 170(d) and 20 CFR 687.100(b).

ETA reviewed the State's waiver request and plan and has determined that the requirements requested to be waived impede the ability of Illinois to implement its plan to improve the workforce development system. Therefore, ETA approves this waiver under the following conditions:

- The Governor, or any federal agency, declares an emergency in the local area (or areas) where the State wishes to use statewide funds for the purpose of public service employment;
- WIOA-funded public service employment opportunities are short-term in nature;
- WIOA-funded public service employment opportunities increase the likelihood of participants entering unsubsidized employment; and
- The State collects and tracks use of funds under this waiver and complies with all WIOA- required performance and fiscal reporting.

#### **Progress Toward Achieving the Goals and Performance Outcomes**

The Rapid Response disaster and emergency waiver has allowed the State and local areas to respond to disasters using readily available State Rapid Response funds and assist laid off workers with obtaining temporary disaster recovery employment as well as permanent employment. Since receiving this waiver, three local workforce innovation boards have received an award and provided disaster recovery employment to twenty-two participants at five disaster worksites. All disaster activity has concluded, and no grants were active in PY22.

# Appendix 1 Success Stories

## LWIA 1 | SHAQUITA BLANKS

Shaquita Blanks began a job as an Account Specialist with a large manufacturing company in early 2020, participated in training for three weeks, then was sent home to work remotely due to Covid. She worked from home for over a year before the company began laying off workers, including her. While receiving unemployment insurance and using food stamps to stretch her family budget, Shaquita began volunteering at the Greater Waukegan Development Coalition (GWDC), first building their event studio, then planning a 10-year anniversary gala. GWDC is a community development organization that fosters economic development in economically challenged communities.” GWDC’s management team noticed how valuable Shaquita’s contributions were to the organization and worked with Lake County Workforce Development to secure a work experience. Shaquita began her work experience as a Receptionist/Executive Assistant in January 2022. She quickly adapted to her new role and began developing relationships with key stakeholders, local legislators, and organized GWDC’s board of directors.

Shaquita continued to develop professionally by upskilling and utilizing WIOA training funds to complete office management training at Computer Training Source. Within one year, she obtained certifications in managing projects and Microsoft products including: Access, Excel, QuickBooks, Outlook and PowerPoint. Shaquita said that a flexible online learning schedule was important to her while raising her two boys. The training provider worked with her to identify classes that fit her work and home schedule.

Shaquita gained the necessary skills to apply for a direct-hire position with GWDC as Program Manager for their new Community Contracting Project in February of 2023. In this role, she works with small minority-owned businesses in Waukegan, Zion, and North Chicago, helping them to develop by accessing grants and loans. She coordinates

a 7-week training program that will help participating businesses obtain their Minority Owned Business (MBE) certification. Shaquita loves the fact that her role allows her to give back to her community. When Shaquita needed to fill a receptionist position at GWDC, she knew where to turn. She contacted Lake County Workforce Development’s business team who sent her resumes of qualified candidates. A Workforce Development customer was hired for the role.

Shaquita shared that the services she received from Workforce Development helped her achieve her career goal to work in a field that she is passionate about. Her advice to future job seekers is, “Trust that all the dreams you want, want you back.”



## LWIA 2 | JUSTIN KNAPP

It is unfortunate, but not uncommon, for a teenager to make a bad decision that would cost them years of their freedom growing up. Then 19-year-old Justin was sentenced to 16 years in prison for a decision that cost him the ability to grow up as a young adult. Years of being away from life outside had posed more barriers and adjustment than just getting a job. Unfamiliar with how the world worked, he was still determined to find his potential. He had contacted the McHenry County Workforce when he was about to be released to get assistance with employment.

Upon release, he met with Business Service to explore job opportunities. His original thought was to pursue a job and training as a tattoo artist using his artist skills. Further conversations and assessment with Business Service identified other transferable skills that he possessed. Those skills led to career exploration and then to a Work Experience as an administrative assistant intern in the McHenry County Workforce office. During the Work Experience Justin completed the remaining credits to receive his associate degree. He was also able to engage with job seekers that were referrals from Illinois Department of Corrections and from County Specialty Courts to assist them in their employment plans. He also assisted with work readiness workshops for justice impacted job seekers.

All that experience came at a time when a position for a career planner became open. He was hired full time in a new profession and his artist talent was left as a hobby. Currently, in less than a year, his job seeker caseload is 25% justice impacted customers. He has developed skills to explore career options with job seekers that feel limited because of their past. He is using his past to help others with their future.

## LWIA 3 | ABSOLUTE FIRE PROTECTION

Absolute Fire Protection is an industry leader in fire protection and prevention services in Northern Illinois with strong ties to the community. Absolute Fire Protection has a great need for skilled talent to install, test, repair, and perform maintenance on fire sprinkler systems – a critical role that encompasses many different skill sets. Absolute Fire Protection knew they needed to develop a talent pipeline for the talent and skill needed for these jobs, not only for the short-term but also for the long-term needs of their business and the community.

Absolute Fire Protection worked with The Workforce Connection and created the Fire Sprinkler Apprenticeship program. The partners worked together and spent time understanding Absolute's needs and goals to ensure the program was built out effectively and requirements were equitable and appropriate for the roles. We worked together on the selection process, which was valuable because we were able to ensure we had the right candidates for the apprenticeships. With the WIOA funding, Absolute was able to add additional positions beyond its initial projections which in turn, helped the business add capacity and depth to its team.

As an Apprentice Sprinkler Fitter, apprentices learn and earn over four years with 19 classes and credentials in addition to paid training in the field. At the conclusion of the apprenticeship, individuals earn their Journeyman Sprinkler Fitters card. Almost 18 months in, all of the initial candidates are still successfully on their way to becoming journeymen who will earn nationally recognized credentials and earn upwards of \$50 per hour once complete. We are also working to add additional classes with Absolute Fire Protection to continue to grow the team's capacity and provide more opportunities to individuals in the community.

We are grateful for the vision and leadership of Absolute Fire Protection to create this apprenticeship model to build talent and opportunity in the region.

## LWIA 7 | ROSALYN (ROSIE) SINCHE

Rosalyn (Rosie) Sinche enrolled in the Maine Township District 207 JumpStart Youth Program when she was a 16-year-old sophomore at Maine East High School. Rosie was found to be basic skills deficient and received Special Education services due to a disclosed disability. Rosie was also an English Language Learner who received free lunch at school and never worked. Early on, Rosie shared her career goals with her Career Advisor, who helped Rosie set objectives to help her reach her goal of becoming a nurse. Rosie was provided with a Paid Work Experience (PWE) in the Food and Nutrition Department at Advocate Lutheran General Hospital. This experience provided Rosie with her first employment opportunity, and helped Rosie develop her work readiness skills. Since Rosie has a strong interest in the medical field, the PWE also provided Rosie with valuable exposure to the industry. As a result of her PWE, the Food and Nutrition Department offered her a permanent position. Rosie excelled in her role and was soon promoted to a Hostess position.

During this time, her Career Advisor helped Rosie apply to a Certified Nursing Assistant program. With financial support services from JumpStart, Rosie earned a credential when she completed the program and received her CNA license. Because she is now certified, Rosie applied to new departments in the hospital. In June 2023, Rosie was hired as a Nursing Assistant at Advocate Lutheran General Hospital. She is currently employed in the Neurology/Stroke Unit and is enjoying her new role.

With the services provided by JumpStart, Rosie overcame several challenges. While she completed her last semester of traditional high school, Rosie also enrolled in an evening high school program to earn additional credits. With the support of her Career Advisor and Tutoring Services, she was able to achieve success while attending both day and night school twice per week!

Rosie has been provided with resume and job search assistance, career development, job readiness training, leadership development, post-secondary education preparation, incentives and various financial support services (school fees, tuition reimbursement, medical, uniform etc.) to help her succeed. She has worked closely with her Career Advisor to set specific and attainable objectives and has completed them in a timely and professional manner. Rosie's work ethic, diligence and empathy towards her patients make her a role model for others.

In addition to her career accomplishments, Rosie earned a credential, graduating from Maine East High School in December 2022. With her Career Advisor's assistance, she enrolled in Oakton College for the Spring term of 2023. Rosie excels in her classes and has plans to apply to Oakton's nursing program. This degree will allow Rosie to further advance her career within the medical field, while providing exceedingly quality care to her patients. Rosie looks forward to continuing to learn and grow in her current role, while achieving successful academic results to help her advance her career.





## LWIA 17 | V.I.D.A. BOTTEGA

V.I.D.A. Bottega is a small minority owned company in Champaign with big dreams, that started out with the help of the Illinois Small Business Development Center at Champaign County EDC. They heard about Incumbent Worker training as part of their membership at the Champaign County Chamber of Commerce. V.I.D.A. sought out the East Central Illinois Worknet Center to ensure their success and are now sharing their success with other business owners.

V.I.D.A. sent 5 employees to a certified 3M product training facility to learn Paint Protection Film installation, Window Tint, and more. This training allowed V.I.D.A. to become a certified 3M dealer and compete with much larger employers in their sector.

By cross training multiple employees V.I.D.A. is now able to avoid lay offs during slower periods in some departments, as now the employees can work in another department, when work is slow. Their company is now reporting a 25% increase in monthly sales and multiple new partnerships with dealerships and auto repair shops.

V.I.D.A. is the first employer in the automotive industry to utilize IWT funding in our local area to train their workforce, making them the lead automotive detailer in our local workforce system.

## LWIA 20 | BRAIDEN GALVIN

Braiden Galvin first heard about WIOA funding assistance while attending welding training at Midwest Technical Institute in Springfield, IL. MTI staff had referred him based on eligibility for funding assistance.

Braiden decided to attend Midwest Technical Institute after getting laid off in 2021 and he needed new skills to help find employment.

It took Braiden a little while to find his career calling, but once he did, he formed a plan and stuck to it. "The training definitely gave me the background and tools necessary to get my foot in the door, and begin a solid career path."

Braiden described the WIOA services as very helpful.

"It can be stressful when you're having to worry about making payments and wondering, if I am going to be able to get through all this."

Having tuition assistance from WIOA allowed him to focus more on school rather than worry about how to pay for it. In addition to the tuition support, it was good to have someone touch base with Braiden regularly. He was also grateful for transportation reimbursement for his commute to and from school.

Braiden showed a lot of determination during his training as he was also working a part-time job in the evening while attending school during the day. Braiden described how welding education and the employment opportunities since, impacted the person he is today. "I'm a lot more confident in my abilities and in myself."

After graduation from MTI's welding program he gained work experience at B and R Construction and later was accepted into the Boilermakers Union local 363 out of Belleville, IL. He has been with them about a year and the reports the works has been going really well. He's also a part of a Journeyman boilermaker apprentice program, allowing him to continue his education while gaining work experience. His assignments involve being dispatched to make emergency repairs at different power plants and oil refineries.

Braiden was very appreciative of all the WIOA supports saying, "I hope those who are unable to pay or who don't have the means, won't give up, but instead, seek out resources like WIOA to achieve their career goals."



## LWIA 21 | NORTH GREENE HIGH SCHOOL

North Greene High School, located in west central Illinois, serves students in the agricultural communities of Roodhouse, White Hall, Hillview, Patterson and other surrounding rural areas. With approximately 250 students in the high school, quality jobs for youth are not always abundant in the area.

Chuck McEvers, the industrial arts teacher at North Greene High School, began to think about how to employ high school students during the summer and accomplish some much-needed tasks in the school district buildings and community parks while also teaching valuable employment skills and preparing for life after high school.

This thought put into motion a series of things to do, including putting forth the idea to school administrators, talking to youth at the high school to see if they would even be interested in working at the school and contacting the local American Job Center (WIOA) to see if they would be interested in partnering on this project. The answer to all three of these was a yes from everyone involved: the school administrators, the youth and the Job Center & LWIA 21.

As the program progressed through its first year, the students not only earned a paycheck along with much needed work experience, they developed new life skills such as time management, organization and financial management. Working up to 25 hours per week, they were able to get to know Mr. McEvers and the other North Greene staff and began working on career pathway plans for the future.

Now in its third year, the paid work experience program at North Greene High School is currently employing 25 youth participants and has filled approximately 65 openings since those first discussions in 2021. Many of the students have graduated and moved onto different phases of their individual career pathway through post-secondary education, military enrollment, and full-time employment. All along the way, they have had the

continued support, encouragement and mentoring from Mr. McEvers and the LWIA 21 staff.

The success at North Greene High School has led to efforts to not only replicate this program at other area high schools, but also possibly braid funding efforts with Youth Build, Teen Construction Camps and other initiatives in partnership with LWIA 21's Youth Committee. Many of the WIOA partners are interested in participating as they see this as a youth paid work experience program that can also be part of a talent pipeline for the businesses in the area that so desperately need a skilled workforce. The impact of North Greene's youth program has had a positive impact on not only the school and the surrounding communities, but also the entire workforce area. It has been a shining example of true partnership, sustainability and a shared vision for the future.

## LWIA 26 | JULIE DUVALL

Julie Duvall has taken on the role of providing for her family as her son and husband are both disabled. She currently works two jobs as well as having just completed her Pharmacy Technician Program.

She started working at O’Gara House through Coleman Tri-County Services as a Direct Support Professional in 2016. She realized that as she grew older that she would not be able to do this type of strenuous work for much longer and had to find a job that would both support her family as well being a position that she could maintain. She looked at what college classes were available and decided that becoming a Pharmacy Technician would be interesting. She registered for the class and applied for the Fresh Start Scholarship at SIC and was granted it. This Scholarship paid a good part of her tuition but not all. Her college advisor suggested that she contact the WADI WIOA program. The WIOA program was able to pay the remainder of her tuition as well as her textbook, which was necessary for her class. She worked with her Career Planner throughout the process and always provided updates on her progress.

“I thoroughly enjoyed Pharmacy Tech Class,” she said. “Math was the most difficult for me, as I only had one year of high school Math. I finished with an ‘A’ and got a perfect score on my final.”

One of the requirements of the class was a 40-hour internship at a local pharmacy of her choice. She was accepted at Walgreens in Harrisburg, Illinois. At the end of her internship, Julie was approached by the store manager and was offered a leadership position at the store, which required a Pharmacy Technician License and Certification within two years. She took the position and is pursuing her Pharmacy Certification.

“It is a very interesting job. I love it and the people I work with,” she said.

She will receive a \$1.00 per hour raise as soon as she receives her certification. She also continues to work at O’Gara House as her Walgreen’s schedule permits.





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