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John Bel Edwards, Governor
Ava Cates, Secretary

Office of the Secretary

February 15, 2022

Mr. Frank Stluka
Acting Regional Administrator
Office of Employment and Training Administration
United States Department of Labor
525 S. Griffin Street, Room 317
Dallas, Texas 75202

Re: 2020 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Annual Report

Dear Acting Administrator Stluka:

I am pleased to present the 2020 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Annual Report for the State of Louisiana. This document covers the hard work, achievements and challenges of the Louisiana Workforce Commission from July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021.

During this time, the State of Louisiana has faced unprecedented challenges head on. From COVID-19 to Hurricanes Laura, Delta, and Zeta our team has stepped up to the plate and made sure the people of Louisiana got help when they needed it most.

From our main office to our local area offices, these disasters have had a statewide impact. Rising to the challenge, the Louisiana Workforce Commission deployed staff to shelters statewide, supported mass feeding operations, and staffed our mobile unit deployed across Louisiana to ensure citizens have timely access to Disaster Unemployment Assistance.

The Annual Report provides an opportunity to show how the state is implementing the strategies outlined in the Combined State Plan helping to prepare Louisiana workers, educators and workforce partners for the improving employment trend that is projected through at least 2023.

The report will showcase that the State of Louisiana has been diligent in their efforts to ensure that the workforce needs are met and exceeded across the state.

Sincerely,

Ava Cates
Secretary

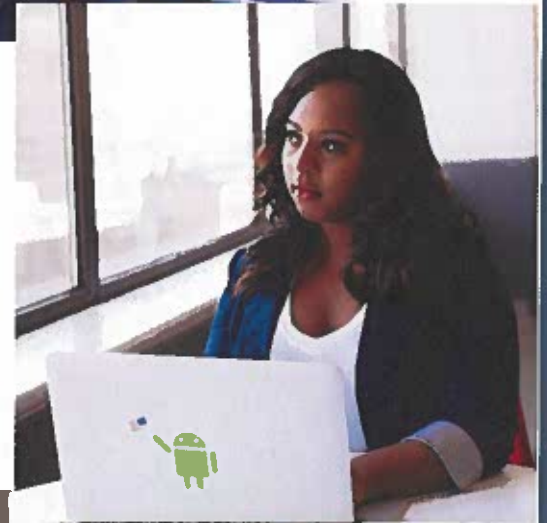
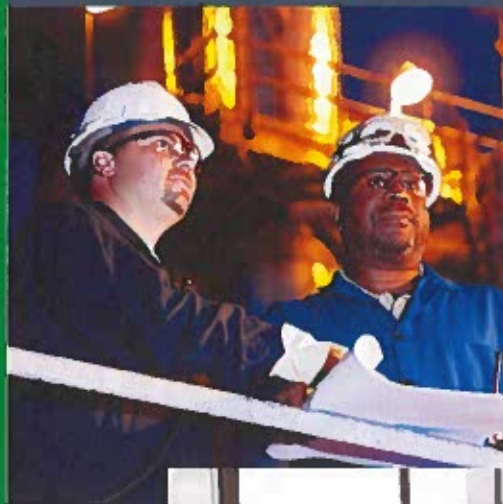
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

2020 Annual Report



LOUISIANA
WORKFORCE
COMMISSION

The Department of Labor



STRATEGIC VISION

The Louisiana Workforce Investment Council (WIC), the state's workforce board, supports development of an employer-led, demand-driven workforce development system based on occupational forecasts in which training, education and services for job-seekers prepare Louisiana residents for high wage, high-demand career opportunities in Louisiana.

Louisiana's stakeholders envision a workforce system that will provide pathways for all Louisianans. Today's economic landscape and workforce is constantly changing and the demands shift on a regular basis for a growing economy. All will have access to education, training and the supportive services needed to prepare for and secure high-demand occupations that pay family-sustaining wages. We will make Louisiana the best place in the country to get a job or grow a business, and our goal is to be the country's best workforce agency.

Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) works consistently to support and remain committed to workforce progress as a priority of Louisiana. Louisiana's economy is steadily evolving. Parallel to our evolution are the changing needs and demands of our state and nation, resulting in a shift in the business needs and skills demand to meet businesses' needs today and in the future.

To achieve this, LWC set forth Strategic Goals and Objectives. The following outlines the objectives that received particular focus and contributed to success.

Goal: Establish Career Pathways as a model for skill, credential and degree attainment for Louisiana citizens to secure jobs that provide opportunities for economic independence and family stability.

The objective for this goal in which LWC was largely successful during the 2019 program year included:

1. Louisiana Workforce Commission working in partnership with the Louisiana Board of Regents, are co-chairs of Governor Edwards "Education and Workforce Task Force" Members include state and local workforce agencies, education, economic development, chambers, and employers. The Task Force works together to align workforce, education, and economic development activities promoting career pathways models and implementing best practices. Work includes reviewing workforce, education, and economic strategic plans, identifying employer needs and training gaps, and evaluating and providing recommendations on work-based and occupational training opportunities. These efforts support a diverse population and creates career pathways that lead to increased credential attainment and job opportunities. With the change in service delivery and advances through technology, strategies include enhancing virtual and online platforms supporting postsecondary coursework.
2. Louisiana Workforce Commission continues to engage employers, business associations, and organized labor in creating demand-driven career pathways through the Governor's initiative to expand work-based learning and apprenticeships. The Registered Apprenticeship Unit, through grant funds from the State Apprenticeship Expansion (SAE) Grant, the Apprenticeships State Expansion (ASE) Grant and the State Apprenticeship Expansion 2020 (SAE 2020) Grant, Louisiana has expanded the utilization of registered apprenticeships by increasing the number of apprentices by 14 percent statewide. Through concentrated efforts, apprenticeship programs have increased through the development and implementation of new non-traditional programs such as Apprenti Louisiana, Oceaneering International, Inc., Ochsner Clinic.

Foundation, and the Alliance for Media Arts + Culture, Inc. this expanding industry sector training for workers and meeting industry sector standards and demands.

Goal: Expand career services and opportunities for populations facing multiple barriers to close the gap in educational attainment and economic advancement through career pathways and improved career services and the expansion of bridge programs.

The objective for this goal in which LWC was largely successful during the 2019 program year included:

1. Through a partnership with the Louisiana Department of Corrections (DOC). LWC has expanded its footprint in the delivery of integrated re-entry and employment strategies through DOC's Day Reporting Centers. Staff housed at these facilities provide WIOA and other employment and training services to formerly incarcerated individuals (justice-involved) in an effort to reduce recidivism and meet the skill and workforce needs of business and industry. Employers are able to use business supports including work based training (On-the-Job Training and apprenticeships.) Fidelity Bonding and Work Opportunity Tax Credits.

Through these efforts, using our integrated service delivery system with community and State partners, implementation of new industry sector relationships, quality career and training services, and continuous quality improvement Louisiana met or exceeded overall performance in all measures

WIOA TITLE I - V PERFORMANCE AND ACTIVITIES

WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT WAIVERS

During Program Year 2020, the Louisiana Workforce Commission did not request any additional waivers related to performance.

WIOA Title I

Performance

Pursuant to WIOA, all states submitting a state plan must propose expected levels of performance for each of the prescribed indicators. Federal guidelines describe the primary indicators of performance as key factors in achieving the goals of WIOA.

Data determining primary indicators of performance are collected from Louisiana's management information systems, Unemployment Wage Records, and from the State Wage Interchange System. These systems gather exit information on participants and provides real-time data elements for case management and performance reporting.

The following tables displays Louisiana's negotiated rate for each of the required indicators of performance along with the actual statewide outcomes achieved. Pursuant to federal policy, states achieving at least 90 percent of the negotiated goal are considered to have met the goal. Louisiana's PY 2020-2021 performance met all performance criteria for Adults and the Employment Rate Fourth Quarter After Exit and Credential Attainment for Dislocated Workers. Youth met the Employment Rate Fourth Quarter After Exit and exceeded the Median Earnings Second Quarter After Exit. Wagner-Peyser participants only met the median earnings second quarter after exit. Program Year 20 saw a drop in performance in all categories from Program Year 19. This can be attributed to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Although employment and wage data was taken at a time where many offices and businesses were closed, Louisiana still met or surpassed expectations for nine of the fifteen measures.

WIOA Title I and Title III PY 2020 Statewide Results

	Negotiated Performance Level PY20	Statewide Performance PY20	Percent of Goal Attained
<u>Adult</u>			
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	67.0%	60.2%	90%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	67.0%	64.0%	96%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$6,000	\$5,900	98%
Credential Attainment	64.3%	75.5%	117%
<u>Dislocated Worker</u>			
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	67.0%	54.9%	82%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	68.0%	68.0%	100%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$7,800	\$6,881	88%
Credential Attainment	70.5%	81.2%	115%
<u>Youth</u>			
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	73.5%	65.1%	89%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	72.0%	69.3%	96%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$2,900	\$3,079	106%
Credential Attainment	58.0%	49.1%	85%
<u>Wagner-Peyser</u>			
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	60.0%	51.1%	85%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	62.0%	51.4%	83%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$5,000	\$4,733	95%

WIOA Title I and Title III PY 2020 Over the Year Progress

	Statewide Performance PY19	Statewide Performance PY20	Gain (Loss) PY20
Adult			
Participants Served - Career Services	5,128	3,576	-1,552
Participants Served - Training Services	2,558	2,455	-103
Exiters - Career Services	4,719	2,016	-2,703
Exiters - Training Services	1,764	1,358	-406
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	71.3%	60.2%	-11.1%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	70.5%	64.0%	-6.5%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$6,095	\$5,900	(\$195)
Credential Attainment	73.1%	75.5%	2.4%
Dislocated Worker			
Participants Served - Career Services	1,673	1,868	195
Participants Served - Training Services	596	1,313	717
Exiters - Career Services	1,436	984	-452
Exiters - Training Services	387	651	264
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	72.7%	54.9%	-18%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	72.0%	68.0%	-4%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$7,898	\$6,881	(\$1,017)
Credential Attainment	77.3%	81.2%	4%

	Statewide Performance PY19	Statewide Performance PY20	Gain (Loss) PY20
Youth			
Participants Served - Career Services	1,961	2,083	122
Participants Served - Training Services	764	809	45
Exiters - Career Services	1,214	800	-414
Exiters - Training Services	447	385	-62
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	71.9%	65.1%	-7%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	76.6%	69.3%	-7%
Credential Attainment	57.1%	49.1%	-8%
Wagner-Peyser			
Participants Served - Career Services	47,273	30,866	-16,407
Participants Served - Training Services	2,809		-2,809
Exiters - Career Services	46,624	29,878	-16,746
Exiters - Training Services	1,889		-1,889
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	57.9%	51.1%	-7%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	61.5%	51.4%	-10%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$4,835	\$4,733	(\$102)

LOCAL PERFORMANCE

Upon completion of the state's negotiation with U.S. Department of Labor on state performance goals, performance target negotiations were conducted with each LWDB. As a result, expected levels of performance and goals were agreed upon for each local board. The following table summarizes outcomes based on local boards achieving 90% of their respective negotiated performance goals.

WIOA Title I and Title III Program Year 2020 Local Workforce Development Area Results

Measure	State Goal	# LWDBs Achieving Goal	% of LWDBs Achieving Goal
<u>Adult</u>			
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	67.0%	11 of 15	73.3%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	67.0%	11 of 15	73.3%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$6,000	12 of 15	80.0%
Credential Attainment	64.3%	15 of 15	100.0%
<u>Dislocated Worker</u>			
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	67.0%	4 of 15	26.6%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	68.0%	13 of 15	86.6%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$7,800	6 of 15	40.0%
Credential Attainment	70.5%	13 of 15	86.6%
<u>Youth</u>			
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	73.5%	9 of 15	60.0%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	72.0%	13 of 15	86.6%
Credential Attainment	58.0%	11 of 15	73.3%
<u>Wagner-Peyser</u>			
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	60.0%	2 of 15	13.3%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	62.0%	1 of 15	6.7%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$5,000	10 of 15	66.7%

Common Exit

Louisiana has a Common Exit policy mandating common date of exit for participating across the WIOA Title I, WIOA Title III, and Trade Adjustment Assistance programs. Consistent with ETA guidance, participants enrolled or co-enrolled in one or more of the foregoing ETA programs remain as participants in all programs in which there is a common period of participation until the participant has not received a service in any Common Exit program for ninety days. After ninety days' elapse without receipt of a service in any of the Common Exit programs, the participant will exit all programs, retroactive to the date of the last service received in any enrolled or co-enrolled program.

EFFECTIVENESS IN SERVING EMPLOYERS

In the Employment and Training Administration (hereinafter "ETA") Effectiveness in Serving Employers pilot measure, Louisiana elected to report Employer Penetration Rate and Repeat Business Customers Rate across all programs.

Louisiana reported an Employer Penetration rate of 27.5% for Program Year 2020. This calculation was made by extracting the total number of employers with twenty or more employees receiving at least one of a set of core categories of services including job posting, employer based training, resume search, labor market information, incumbent worker training, seminars & workshops, and apprenticeships divided by the number of employers in Louisiana with twenty or more employees based on Labor Market Information data. We chose this threshold for total employees due to the enormity of the number of employers with fewer than twenty employees, especially self-employer sole proprietors and family businesses who are far less likely to hire a substantial number of new employees. Further, the rate of penetration would be likely be close to or statistically similar to 0, thus useless for analysis, had a denominator of all Louisiana employers been used. However, we have this data available if needed.

Louisiana reported a Repeat Business Customer Rate of 50.3% in Program year 2020. The Repeat Business Customer Rate was calculated by counting number of businesses that utilized the foregoing core categories of services (for Employer Penetration Rate calculation) or any recorded employer service in our MIS system in the prior PY as the denominator. Of those in the denominator, the businesses that also received any of the mentioned core categories of services (for Employer Penetration Rate calculation) or any recorded employer service in our MIS system in PY20 were counted as the numerator.

COST OF WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACTIVITIES

During Program Year 2020, Louisiana expended \$19,747,028 on WIOA Title I Career Services and \$12,994,356 on WIOA Title I Training Services for a total of \$41,047,167 in WIOA Title I participant service expenditures. During Program year 2020, Louisiana expended \$8,305,783 on WIOA Title III Career Services, bringing the total PY2020 expenditures for WIOA Title I and Title III participant services to \$41,047,167.

Please see the charts on the following page for additional details regarding participant and exiter levels, by program, and costs, by program.

WIOA Title I and Title III Cost Summary

WIO Title I and Title III Cost Summary				
Cost Summary Adult				
Service	Participants Served (Cohort Period: 7/1/2020-6/30/2021)	Participants Exited (Cohort Period: 4/1/2020-3/31/2021)	Funds Expended (Cohort Period: 7/1/2020-6/30/2021)	Cost Per Participant Served (Cohort Period: 7/1/2020-6/30/2021)
Career Services	3,576	2,016	\$7,427,837	\$2,077
Training Services	2,455	1,358	\$5,743,888	\$2,340
Percent training-related employment+ (Cohort Period: 7/1/2019-6/30/2020)	21.70%	Percent enrolled in more than one core program (Cohort Period: 7/1/2019- 6/30/2020)	92.00%	Percent Admin Expended: 12.50%
Cost Summary Dislocated Worker				
Service	Participants Served (Cohort Period: 7/1/2020-6/30/2021)	Participants Exited (Cohort Period: 4/1/2020-3/31/2021)	Funds Expended (Cohort Period: 7/1/2020-6/30/2021)	Cost Per Participant Served (Cohort Period: 7/1/2020-6/30/2021)
Career Services	1,868	984	\$10,269,337	\$5,498
Training Services	1,313	651	\$5,994,607	\$4,566
Percent training-related employment+ (Cohort Period: 7/1/2019-6/30/2020)	19.70%	Percent enrolled in more than one core program (Cohort Period: 7/1/2019- 6/30/2020)	92.90%	Percent Admin Expended: 11.60%
Cost Summary Youth				
Service	Participants Served (Cohort Period: 7/1/2020-6/30/2021)	Participants Exited (Cohort Period: 4/1/2020-3/31/2021)	Funds Expended (Cohort Period: 7/1/2020-6/30/2021)	Cost Per Participant Served (Cohort Period: 7/1/2020-6/30/2021)
Career Services	2,083	800	\$2,049,854	\$984
Training Services	809	385	\$1,255,861	\$1,552
Percent training-related employment+ (Cohort Period: 7/1/2019-6/30/2020)	19.40%	Percent enrolled in more than one core program (Cohort Period: 7/1/2019- 6/30/2020)	80.50%	Percent Admin Expended: 14.20%
Cost Summary Wagner-Peyser				
Service	Participants Served (Cohort Period: 7/1/2020-6/30/2021)	Participants Exited (Cohort Period: 4/1/2020-3/31/2021)	Funds Expended (Cohort Period: 7/1/2020-6/30/2021)	Cost Per Participant Served (Cohort Period: 7/1/2020-6/30/2021)
Career Services	30,866	29,878	\$8,305,783	\$269
Training Services				
Percent training-related employment+ (Cohort Period: 7/1/2019-6/30/2020)	19.70%	Percent enrolled in more than one core program (Cohort Period: 7/1/2019- 6/30/2020)	20.50%	Percent Admin Expended: N/A

DATA VALIDATION

Louisiana receives WIOA funding from the United States Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration based on achieving negotiated performance. ETA's expectations are that work is done in a timely manner and correctly reported on a quarterly basis.

Many aspects of daily work for WIOA programs affect performance reporting for WIOA programs. As part of quality control, OWD will review these functions to determine whether LWDA's are adequately and appropriately meeting deadlines and documentation requirements.

The Office of Workforce Development (OWD) provides quarterly regional training and on-site technical assistance to any LWDA deemed deficient in any of the problem areas related to data collection and quality assurance.

Many elements of WIOA enrollment require appropriate documentation be placed in participant files. Documentation sources can be identified within the case management system HiRE – Helping Individuals Reach Employment.

TITLE II ADULT EDUCATION

The Louisiana Technical and Community College system continues to support the integration of activities sponsored under the AEFLA in multiple areas relative to adult education, career development, and employment and training activities.

In accordance with WIOA regulations, shared infrastructure costs of the One-Stop Delivery System was accomplished through equipment contribution at the local level. The WorkReady U-Adult Education comprehensive literacy center in each region provided an interactive kiosk at each certified One-Stop. The interactive kiosk provides direct telephone access and a chat feature for on-demand assistance to trained enrollment management specialists.

TITLE III WAGNER PEYSER

The Louisiana Workforce Commission reemployment services rapidly evolved to the changing environment caused by the global COVID19 Pandemic. For much of the program year 2020 Wagner-Peyser services were either delivered virtually or over the phone, while maintaining the integrity of the integrated service delivery model. As a result, the American Job Center system benefited from the abundance of referrals from the Wagner-Peyser program to the American Job Center network of partners.

Throughout the program year, the Wagner-Peyser program was the premiere component within American Job Center which enabled partner programs to maintain a steady stream of participants when traditional means of outreach were inadvisable.

Employment and intensive services are provided to an array of customers and co-enrolled customers with varying degrees of service requirements. This integrated approach enables Wagner-Peyser to seamlessly provide services to customers with significant barriers to employment such as: homeless veterans, out of school youth, at risk adults, reentry customers etc. Programs that intersect and co-enroll with Wagner-Peyser services are listed and described below.

JOBS FOR VETERANS STATE GRANT (JVSG)

The Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) is committed to serving veterans, transitioning service members, and their families by providing resources to assist and prepare them to obtain meaningful careers and maximize their employment opportunities. This commitment is an important part of fulfilling our obligation to the men and women who have honorably served our country.

The State drives priority of services in referring veterans and other eligible persons to employment opportunities through a standardized review process. Every veteran that qualifies for services are seen by a Disabled Veteran Outreach Representative (DVOP) and given Individualized Career Services under the framework of case management. This process is comprised of a comprehensive assessment and individual employment plan based on the need of each individual veteran. Field leadership receives results of this process quarterly for action when necessary. In addition, Local Veteran Employ Representatives (LVER) are conducting training to the field on veterans' priority of services to the non-veteran staff in the local offices. LVERs are pursuing employers to enroll in the Hire Veterans Medallion Program, which incentivizes companies to hire veterans and provide them with a reward from the Department of Defense.

The State continues to provide Individualize Career Services under the framework of case management for Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) referrals in accordance with directives. The Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Specialist (DVOP) assigned to the St. Bernard American Job Center coordinates and monitors case assignment as part of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Veterans Administration Regional Office (VARO).

The State embraced the JVSG refocusing through the efforts of the JVSG staff members and their American Job Center partners, the state achieved a 99% Intensive Services Rate compared to the goal of 94%. The driving factor behind this success were the American Job Center staff members conducted initial assessments on incoming Veteran job seekers and only referrals of those identified to have a Significant Barrier to Employment (SBE) to a DVOP.

Below is a comparison of the key JVSG metrics between Program Year 2019 and Program Year 2020.

Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG)

<i>Measure</i>	<i>Negotiated Goal</i>	<i>Statewide Performance PY19</i>	<i>Statewide Performance PY20</i>	<i>Gain (Loss) PY20</i>
Covered Entrants		878	871	(7)
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	52.2%	57.2%	57.2%	(.0%)
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	50.5%	56.8%	56.0%	(0.8%)
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$5,100	\$5,675	\$5,640	(\$35)

Source: ETA 9173

The JVSG program has collaborated with the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) Grant Awardees, Volunteers of American (VOA) of New Orleans and the Elle Foundation of Shreveport, to ensure individualized career services are provided to all those enrolled in the program.

The State JVSG program has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the local Army Military Installation on Fort Polk; to provide office space for a DVOP twice a week to provide assistance with transitioning veterans to ensure they have access to services.

REEMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENT

The Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program identifies unemployment benefits claimants who are likely to exhaust all unemployment benefits and transitioning veterans receiving Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Service members (UCX), and connects them with reemployment services to help them quickly return to work.

The RESEA program uses statistical modeling to rank unemployment benefits claimants based on their likelihood to exhaust all unemployment benefits. This process includes a statistical evaluation of numerous work and related factors, including but not limited to length of workforce attachment, occupational field, industry, wages, and location. Claimants are assigned a score, with a higher score indicating a greater risk of exhausting unemployment benefits.

In 2020, RESEA operations and personnel were impacted by changes necessitated by the COVID crisis. We are having issues with the reporting due to the manual work around as the metrics are being tracked manually. Due to the extended closure of American Job Centers across the state, there was not an opportunity to provide in-person RESEA visits. Most of the American Job Centers remained closed to the public during 2020, but had target dates for reopening. In the meantime, OWD had been pursuing virtual platforms to provide these subsequent services.

RESEA Service Point letters were suspended effective Monday, March 16, 2020 due to the Pandemic and executive orders from Governor Bel Edwards. On Wednesday, March 18, 2020, RESEA staff were trained to receive Unemployment Insurance Calls due to the high call volume from claimants affected by COVID-19 job closures. RESEA staff resumed providing RESEA services on Monday, October 26, 2020 and are continuing to provide Reemployment services via telephone and by appointments for AJC's who are open to the public.

There were 299,369 individuals profiled for RESEA services in Program Year 2020. Due to the impact of the COVID crisis, 24% of scheduled services were successfully completed.

The new RESEA program service flow was restructured, in 2019, to engage participant's sooner after filing a claim, provide more robust services, and require one stop to co-enroll individuals in Title I employment and training services at 10 weeks of unemployment.

The activities provide selected claimants include orientation, staff assistance with developing an individualized reemployment plan, conducting an unemployment benefits eligibility assessment, providing the claimant with customized labor market information, and other staff-assisted career services at an American Job Center (AJC).

REINTEGRATION OF JUSTICE - INVOLVED PERSONNEL

Wagner-Peyser funds provide full time dedicated staff working directly in or coordination with Day Reporting Centers (DRC). LWC currency supports four centers in St Tammany, Caddo, East Baton Rouge and combined Orleans/Jefferson parishes.

Staff provide individualized career services to formerly justice-involved persons that contribute to their successful transition to society. A comprehensive assessment and employment plan including follow-up every 30 days ensure gainful employment.

Staff also conduct outreach and advocacy on behalf of the individual to coordinate with local service agencies to provide various needs such as housing, clothing, transportation, legal assistance, etc. coordination with the

local shelters – housing, other partners

A statewide training initiative with the Department of Public Safety & Corrections and LWC is in the early stages of development. This collaboration will bring an American Standard Welding program and a Marine Transportation program across three correctional facilities that would provide justice-involved personnel a credential before their release date to ensure gainful employment.

LOUISIANA REHABILITATION SERVICES

The mission of Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) is to assist persons with disabilities in their desire to obtain, maintain, or advance in competitive integrated employment and achieve independence in their communities by providing rehabilitation services and working cooperatively with business and other community resources.

Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) continues to strive for excellence in its endeavors to assist persons with disabilities in becoming competitively employed in integrated environments and reaching their maximum level of independence. LRS values providing flexible and timely services consistent with "informed choice" of the individual and in recognizing individual needs and cultural differences.

Title IV- Vocational Rehabilitation Program (VR)

Vocational Rehabilitation provides a planned sequence of individualized services to assist persons with disabilities reach employment. It is a partnership between a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and the individual with a disability. They work together to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) that is specific to the unique strengths, resources, concerns, abilities, interests, and informed choice of the individual. The plan identifies the VR services the individual needs in order to achieve their employment goals.

These are comprehensive services that go far beyond those found in typical job training programs, and include such services as:

1. assessment, career guidance and counseling;
2. work readiness and placement;
3. vocational and other training;
4. prosthetics, orthotics, transportation;
5. interpreters and readers; and
6. assistive technology.

As a result of the VR program, 1,205 individuals obtained employment in Program Year 2020. The average hourly earnings of these individuals was \$13.86; with average annual earnings of \$24,319. Of those obtaining successful employment, 58.2% obtained employment in Louisiana's top demand occupations. This can be attributed in part to training provided to the Rehabilitation Counselors to ensure that they are knowledgeable when providing vocational guidance to individuals so they may choose a career goal that is in demand.

Order of Selection

When LRS does not have sufficient funding and/or staff to serve all eligible consumers, federal regulations mandate that individuals with the most significant disabilities be given priority for services. LRS determines who has the most significant disabilities by using an Order of Selection having five categories ranging from most

severe to least severe. An individual's limitations resulting from their disability is considered in terms of barriers to employment. Using this information, the individual is placed in the appropriate Order of Selection Category. In Program Year 2020, LRS continued to have Categories 1 – 4 open and Category 5 remained closed. There were no clients placed in Category 5 during Program Year 2020. Categories 1 – 4 remain fully open. LRS has begun promulgation to change the number of Order of Selection categories from 5 to 3. This change will occur in Program Year 21.

Transition

In Program Year 2020, LRS continued to provide services to students with disabilities as they transition from high school into adulthood to pursue training and employment. LRS is mandated to expend 15% of the VR federal allotment to make available five core Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), including job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary educational programs, workplace readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy. During this time period, LRS provided services to 4,616 students with disabilities.

LRS makes these services available through VR counseling staff, fee for service agreements with Community Rehabilitation Programs, and through Third Party Cooperative Arrangement contracts with school districts. LRS currently has 13 active Third Party Cooperative Arrangements with local education providers to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services and is continuing to pursue additional contracts with local education providers.

Customized Employment

The effort to build vendor capacity to provide Customized Employment (CE) services across the state is emerging slowly. As part of the plan to make affordable training in Customized Employment available to LRS vendors across the state, the Louisiana State University Human Development Center (LSU-HDC) is being trained in the ACCESS Customized Employment Training System. This is a competency based, online, training system developed by the University of South Florida (USF). Upon completion of this training LSU-HDC will be able to train and certify LRS vendors to provide CE services to LRS consumers. Plans for an initial meeting that was scheduled to be held in New Orleans were canceled due to the spread of the pandemic briefly delaying the start of the training. The meeting was later held virtually and was soon followed by the commencement of the training and mentorship.

The LSU-HDC staff completed the online training modules and began working with LRS consumers to complete Discovery, the first phase of the Customized Employment process. Unfortunately, Hurricane Ida has caused another delay as consumers have either been displaced or have been forced to postpone services until repairs are made on their homes. Once the consumers are ready to resume services, LSU-HDC will start the next phase of the process that involves conducting planning meetings for the development of the customized plan for employment that will ultimately be used for job development.

The Louisiana Development Disabilities Council has again been able to sponsor certification and mentoring for more LRS Vendors through Marc Gold & Associates for Discovery and Customized Job Development. Vendors in the Discovery group are waiting to be paired with LRS Consumers to work with as their learning partners. The Job Development group has been temporarily interrupted as a result of Hurricane Ida.

State as a Model Employer (SAME)

Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) is actively involved with the State as a Model Employer (SAME) task force in accordance with Executive Order JBE 18-08. The purpose of the SAME is to develop and recommend strategies to increase the recruitment, hiring, and retention of individuals with disabilities in Louisiana State Government.

The LRS designated Point of Contact, the Statewide Employment Coordinator, for the initiative serves as a conduit to facilitate the sharing of information between LRS and state agency designees relative to persons who are job applicants and who have been determined eligible for LRS' vocational rehabilitation program. The point of contact also notifies Human Resource Managers when LRS consumers apply for jobs at their respective agencies/departments.

In Program Year 2020, forty (40) LRS consumers obtained or maintained employment with the State of Louisiana, which is a slight decrease compared to the previous year. These individuals are employed throughout state government, to include universities, state police, hospitals, and correctional facilities. The Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services and Louisiana Workforce Commission were the top two state employers this past year.

Workforce Development

Louisiana Rehabilitation Services is actively involved with the 15 local Workforce Development Areas. LRS is represented on each of the boards and VR staff members have a presence in the American Job Centers.

Building relationships with employers and with the business community continues to be a premise in the Employment Initiative as our connections with the Human Resource personnel and hiring managers ultimately connect our consumers with viable jobs. The Rehabilitation Employment Development Specialists and the Statewide Employment Coordinator continue to foster connections with employers and HR personnel though doing so has been somewhat challenging due to COVID restrictions.

Ticket to Work

LRS continues efforts to assist Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiaries to meet employment goals. LRS continues to collaborate with Employment Networks to ensure Ticket-to-Work is successful in Louisiana. A number of LRS staff received additional training in Program Year 2020 as it related to Social Security (SS) beneficiaries and how employment impacts cash benefits. LRS continues to be committed to referring our consumers that have SS benefits to WIPA Services (Work Incentives Planning and Assistance) as the information obtained from WIPA will enable our consumers to make informed decisions regarding employment and how employment will impact their cash benefits and medical insurance. LRS staff understands that WIPA provides our consumers with SS benefits with valuable information on the work incentives and services available to help them achieve their employment goal. Furthermore, LRS has a Cost Reimbursement Coordinator, and the Cost Reimbursement Coordinator continues to receive ongoing training along with the other CR Coordinators in the 50 other states. The Cost Reimbursement Program was authorized in 1981 and it is only available to State VR agencies. The two purposes of the CR program are:

- To make SVR services more readily available to SS beneficiaries with disabilities.
- To generate savings to the Social Security Trust Fund for SSDI beneficiaries, and to the General Revenue Fund for Supplemental Security Income recipients.

In Program Year 2020, LRS received \$2,303,128.73 from the Social Security Administration's reimbursement program.

Rehabilitation Engineering/Assistive Technology

Rehabilitation & Assistive Technology (RT/AT) services include computer assessment, activities-of-daily-living evaluations, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), home and job- modification evaluations, adaptive driving and transportation evaluations, educational technology assessments, vehicle Rehabilitation Engineering/Assistive Technology modification evaluations, and assessments for seating and wheeled mobility systems. LRS provides these on a fee-for-services basis and utilizes professionals and technical experts on a regional basis.

LRS continues its relationship with the Louisiana Assistive Technology Network (LATAN) with an expanded program, funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration, to provide statewide demonstration-learning, lending, and purchasing assistance of assistive technology. LATAN provides a device-rental service for LRS consumers to use assistive technology devices on a trial basis. LATAN is an approved Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) vendor/provider for wheelchair, seating, and positioning assessments, as well as assessments for home modifications for accessibility. In the past two years, LATAN has been active in assisting LRS consumers and other elderly-disabled individuals to receive needed rehabilitation technology in their evacuation, sheltering and mitigation phases of several hurricane disasters that have severely impacted our state.

Randolph-Sheppard Business Enterprise Program

This program provides employment opportunities for the blind by establishing and maintaining Business Enterprise Facilities. The program currently operates 69 facilities throughout the state, employing 48 individuals.

The COVID-19 Pandemic and subsequent closure of most Randolph Sheppard food service facilities continues to have a devastating effect on sales and profitability for our Randolph-Sheppard blind managers, not only in Louisiana, but across the nation. Most facilities completely closed in March, 2020, and remain either partially or completely closed to this day.

Of the facilities which are 100% dependent on vending machine sales, low building occupancy due to telecommuting by employees has diminished sales by at least 50 percent in most instances. This year, the majority of our managers received Financial Relief and Restoration Payments to compensate them for at least a portion of their inventory and income losses from calendar year 2020. It is hoped that with these funds, blind vendors will be able to completely re-stock their facilities once they re-open completely.

Independent Living Part B Program

Independent Living Centers located across the state provide core services: information and referral; IL skills training; peer counseling; individual and systems advocacy; and services that facilitate the transition from nursing homes and other institutions to the community. 3,466 individuals received independent living services at an average cost of \$87.65 per consumer during Program Year 2020.

Independent Living Older Blind Program

The four rehabilitation centers contracting for the provision of Independent Living Older Blind (ILOB) services provided services such as orientation and mobility training; low vision evaluations and handheld and electronic magnifiers; training in performing activities of daily living, etc. to a total of 1,244 individuals 55 years of age or older and having significant visual impairments.

Many consumers of Independent Living Older Blind services are among the most vulnerable when considering the effects of COVID-19. Not only are these individuals older, the requirement to receive services is that one must be 55 years of age or older, most of these individuals also have significant health conditions, including diabetes, which have caused their failing vision. As a result of this, some consumers are reluctant to receive in-person services, especially in groups. To compensate, contractors have worked to provide remote services when they can be provided in a safe and effective manner.

ADDITIONAL PROGRAM ACTIVITIES/SUPPORTS

National Dislocated Worker Grant – COVID-19 Disaster Dislocated Worker Grant

Adapting to the impact of the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenge for the state of Louisiana. Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDA) were quickly faced with limitations in the provision of workforce services. Protective measures were implemented by the Governor, which included mask mandates, social distancing, and Stay at Home executive orders. This significantly impacted Louisiana's economy and resulted in major temporary and permanent layoffs across multiple industries. Louisiana's unemployment insurance claims increased substantially beginning in March 2020 and continued increasing as more workers became unemployed through the 2020 program year due to COVID-19. Louisiana paid out more than \$8 billion in unemployment benefits to more than 800 claimants between March 2020 and April 2021. As more unemployed workers file claims, this will have a long-term effect on Louisiana's workforce and economy.

The Louisiana Workforce Commission was awarded a National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) under the category of Emergency/Disaster in May 2020 as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency. The Office of Workforce Development manages the COVID-19 Disaster Dislocated Worker Grant (DWG) within 11 LWDAs through sub-recipient awards and contracted service provider CSRS, Inc., a disaster recovery consultant serving as the statewide employer of record.

Under this grant, the state plans to serve 3,100 eligible DWG participants with temporary disaster-relief subsidized employment including clean-up, recovery and humanitarian efforts.

LWC, along with stakeholders and program partners, have identified labor market needs, specifically in industries hardest hit due to COVID-19, which include Accommodations and Food Services, Retail Trade, and Health Care and Social Assistance. Through employment and training services, eligible participants are provided postsecondary occupational opportunities focusing on in-demand occupations and credential attainment, on-the-job training, apprenticeships, entrepreneurial training, and customized training opportunities to recover from the unexpected job loss and quickly revitalize Louisiana's labor force. Supportive services are also provided to enable individuals to participate in disaster relief employment and employment and training services, which includes transportation and childcare assistance, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and other related assistance.

THE TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE (TAA)

The TAA program helps adversely affected workers (AAW), who may lose or have lost their jobs because of international trade, find other suitable employment. These workers suffer reduced work hours or lose their jobs due to a decline in production or sales, or the outsourcing of jobs to foreign countries. The TAA program offers a variety of benefits and services to eligible workers including job training, income support, job search allowances, relocation allowances, and a tax credit to help pay the costs of health insurance. Another TAA

benefit is the RTAA wage subsidy, which is available to certain AAWs 50 years of age and older who obtain qualifying reemployment.

TAA is a critical partner of the WIOA Dislocated Worker and Adult programs. As such, co-enrollment of workers covered under certified petitions (TAA-certified workers) in partnership with the WIOA Dislocated Worker or Adult Program is a priority of LWC and its TAA program. The TAA program refers and encourages Trade affected participants to access all appropriate services offered through their local One Stop Centers. In addition to the services offered by TAA, services offered by the local One Stop Centers include, but may not be limited to, labor market Information, training referrals, career planning, and follow-up services to assist them in reentering the workforce.

In PY 2020, Louisiana TAA filed five (5) new petitions. Three (3) out of the five (5) petitions filed were certified, covering an estimated 553 workers. During the program year, Louisiana had eleven (11) active petitions effecting 891 workers. In addition, Louisiana provided TAA services to workers under three (3) out-of-state certified petitions. Between July 1, 2020 and the end of June 30, 2021, the TAA training program served approximately 70 participants.

Five (5) participants completed TAA training during the program year and received their Certified Driving License (CDL) credential. The Transportation Industry employs them all.

Trade Activity – FY2020 (October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021)	
New Petitions Filed	5
Petitions Certified	3
Estimated Workers Affected	553
Pending Petitions	2
Number of Active Petitions	11
Total Workers Affected	891
Out of State Petitions Recognized	3
TAA Training Fund Expended	\$388,776.43
Total TAA Participants Served	70
Total RTAA Participants Affected	15
Total Co-enrollments as of 9/30/2021	56
Total TAA Training Completions	5

STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES

RAPID RESPONSE (RR)

Rapid Response (RR) acted upon 56 notifications of a possible layoff occurrence in Program Year 2020. 45 of those came from Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act notices while the others came from news articles, rumors, or other notifications. Hospitality and Tourism accounted for 32% of the layoffs in Program Year 2020, followed by Transportation at 16%, Retail Sales at 8% and Manufacturing at 7%.

Rapid Response delivered 53 separate activities (6 of which were Job Fairs) for 14 different companies that provided 933 intensive services to impacted individuals. Services provided to the affected workers included general orientation sessions, resume writing workshops, job search workshops and interviewing skills workshops. During this time Rapid Response held its first virtual orientation sessions through Zoom and

continues to offer sessions both virtually and in-person. Rapid Response also started recording recruitment videos from prospective employers to send to laid off workers instead of in-person recruitment. These videos are also available to view on the agency homepage and YouTube. Additionally, in order to meet individuals' needs in a COVID-19 environment, 16 virtual drive-through and in-person job fairs were held.

Whether the orientations are held in-person or virtually, Rapid Response still invites staff from Unemployment Insurance, the local American Job Center, Trade Adjustment Assistance and our Veteran's program to participate. We have also invited Louisiana Rehabilitation Services, Louisiana Housing Authority, and Medicaid when appropriate. Rapid Response also assists in the gathering of information and submission of a Trade petition and works with our Trade Adjustment Assistance Unit to help facilitated Trade Adjustment Assistance services with the employer and impacted workers.

Rapid Response continues to encourage the hiring of recently laid off works through the "Hire A Laid Off Worker" (HALOW) initiative. Staff promotes the use of the HALOW database during their weekly outreach to employers. Rapid Response coordinators work with Industry Sector Specialist and Business Service Representatives to target companies to showcase available services and build a contact network of prospering businesses that could be used for quick placement of workers affected by a layoff. Rapid Response also coordinates with state and local economic development organizations on layoffs. This coordinator has allowed Rapid Response to set up direct interaction between hiring employers and available workers. This interaction comes in many forms: job fairs, employer specific hiring events, candidate referrals, and employer participation in orientation efforts.

JOBS FOR AMERICA'S GRADUATES LOUISIANA (JAG LA)

JAG-LA works with Louisiana students as early as grade 7 through grade 12 and provides services to out-of-school youth who did not thrive in the regular education setting. The core program is dedicated to providing opportunities for students challenged with life and learning hurdles, including academic, social, behavioral and economic. **JAG-LA's** mission is to identify students who face barriers and guide them on to a successful path toward continued education, a meaningful career and productive adulthood.

Jobs for America's Graduates-Louisiana (JAG-LA) Program is an affiliate of the National Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) Program, the nation's largest dropout prevention program and career readiness program serving youth 12-21 years of age.

JAG-LA 2021-2022

JAG Model	Number of Programs	Estimated Students Served
Multi-Year Program	86	5,160
Middle School Program	45	2,700
Out-of-School Program	16	560
TOTAL	147	8,420

BUSINESS SERVICES

REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

The LWC Apprenticeship Division expanded to 75 apprenticeship programs that provided employment and training to approximately 4,700 registered apprentices across Louisiana in the year. Historically, Louisiana's apprenticeship programs have been centered around occupations with the Construction sector. Louisiana Workforce Commission continues to cultivate prospects in expanding programs to other industry sectors. As result of our efforts, the following programs were added to the state's registered apprenticeship list.

- ADT Commercial (Security System Installer)
- PHI Americas (A & P Mechanic)
- Spark Mindset (Cloud Operations Specialist)
- The Urban League of Louisiana (Cybersecurity Specialist and Java Developer)

The Apprenticeship Division currently has three U.S. Department of Labor grants to expand Registered Apprenticeship and supplement WIOA funds, including On-The-Job contracts, tuition for training, and supportive services. Grant initiatives involve creating consortia programs, increasing the number of programs and apprentices, improving apprentice retention, and improving the quality of programs.

Approximately 100 individuals were provided supported services and/or stipends in Program Year 20 to supplement WIOA funding and the initial periods of apprenticeship when wages are lowest. These supportive services included, but were not limited to: tools/supplies, gas reimbursement, and child cares.

INCUMBENT WORKER TRAINING PROGRAM (IWTP)

Louisiana's Incumbent Worker Training Program (IWTP) creates training partnerships among the LWC, business and industry, and training providers. The IWTP benefits business and industry by assisting in the skill development of existing employees, thereby increasing employee productivity and company growth. Program funding is through a portion of Unemployment Insurance tax contributions dedicated solely for customized training.

IWTP/SBET FISCAL YEAR PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

Fiscal Year	Total Contracts & Awards	#of Participants Trained	# Employers Represented	# of Jobs Retained	# of Jobs Created	Average Wage Increase
2021-2022	9,103,390.00	12,222	95	12,011	733	8.00%
2020-2021	12,269,273.00	33,754	142	15,853	578	13.10%

FY21-22=IWTP-72 contracts for \$8,876,080; SBET 423 awards for \$ \$1,000,655

FY20-21=IWTP-109 contracts for \$12,269,273; SBET 943 awards for \$ \$2,155,291.68

Success Stories

Small Business Employee Training (SBET)

Matt L Guinn Construction, LLC - As a small business owner in a very competitive industry Matt L Guinn Construction, LLC would like to express our sincere appreciation for the Incumbent Worker Program-Small Business Employee Training (SBET).

We have just completed our third application, and we were pleased with the results the two previous years in which our training was funded through SBET. In the past, our company did not provide any type of training to our employees simply because it was not in our budget to do so, however, because of SBET we can do so now, and we are able to move our company forward in a more positive and safe manner. The last two years in which the training was funded through SBET we noticed that we had fewer incidents and injuries with our employees, and we have also had better employee retention.

Again, we are very thankful for the program in working with our small business to provide training to our employees.

Frey Construction & Dirt Service, LLS - We recognize the strong need to ensure that all our employees have the latest safety training, so they are well educated and able to work safely and go to their families at the end of the workday. Unfortunately, we could not provide that in the past because of the limited safety training budget.

Through our evaluation and recognition of this need, we consulted with iSAFE, LLC to help us identify ways to get our employees training most effectively at the most cost-effective way possible. That is when we learned about the Louisiana Workforce Commissions Incumbent Worker Training Program-Small Business Employee Training Program. Our employees are paramount to our organization so if one of them is injured it not only is devastating to us emotionally but is also devastating in the fact that we now have incurred additional insurance costs and time to train another employee to replace the injured employee. Last year we were able to complete 42609 man-hours without a recordable or lost time incident. That is very impressive to us as an organization.

Incumbent Worker Training Program(IWTP)

Chris Delaune Chief Nursing Office with NLA Priority Management Consortium - Very pleased with the education and advancement opportunities that are provided with the grant. Each year we are able to go beyond what we could do for education and advancement of our staff and seeing them grow to new titles and job opportunities is exciting.

T Calhoun Industrial Engineer/Safety Mgr. Module X Solutions, LLC - I am immensely grateful for the training provided to our workforce through the IWTP Grant! This is an excellent program and Louisiana employers are fortunate to have it!

THE WORK OPPORTUNITY TAX CREDIT (WOTC)

Program Synopsis Work Opportunity Tax Credit

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) Program makes a federal tax credit available to employers who hire individuals from eligible target groups. LWC is responsible for facilitating this process in Louisiana. WOTC operates under federal law and directives from both the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) and the Internal Revenue Service. LWC, employers, employer's legal representatives, and newly hired employees are all stakeholders in the success of this program.

In order for employers to benefit from this program, their newly hired employees must be identified as part of at least one of the current active target groups specifically defined by USDOL and certified by LWC.

List the top three goals that the program addresses and LWC leveraging opportunities:

1. Goal one: Provide a Federal tax credit to participating employers (reducing their income tax liability) for hiring individuals from certain target groups who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment.
2. Goal two: Incentivize workplace diversity and facilitate access to good jobs for American workers.
3. Goal three: Assist targeted workers in moving from economic dependency into self-sufficiency as they earn a steady income and become contributing taxpayers.

Relevant Historical Information

WOTC was created in 1996, by the Small Business Job Protection Act. The program routinely expires and is often slow in renewal, resulting in the reoccurring circumstance wherein the state must often operate the program with funding coming in arrears.

Since inception, the program has been renewed 13 times:

1. The Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997 extended its original 12-month term an additional 9 months.
2. The Tax and Trade Relief Act of 1998 reauthorized and extended it 12 months.
3. The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 extended WOTC for an additional 20 months.
4. The Job Creation and Worker Assistance Act of 2002 retroactively reauthorized it to the beginning of the year and extended it for a total of 24 months.
5. The Working Families Relief Act of 2004 retroactively extended WOTC to the beginning of the year and through 2005.
6. The Tax Relief and Health Care Act of 2006 retroactively extended it again to the beginning of 2006 and through 2007.
7. The Small Business and Work Opportunity Tax Act of 2007 extended WOTC for 44 months.
8. The Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization and Job Creation Act extended it 4 months through the end of 2011.
9. The American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 retroactively extended WOTC to the beginning of 2012 and through 2013.
10. The Tax Increase Prevention Act of 2014 retroactively extended it to the beginning of the year and through the end of 2014.

11. The Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes Act of 2015 retroactively extended WOTC to the beginning of 2015 and through 2019.
12. The Further Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2020 extended WOTC through 2020.
13. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 reauthorized WOTC through 2025.

During its life, state workforce agencies have issued more than 30 million WOTC certifications, representing millions of historically underemployed Americans going to work, and more than \$1 billion in tax credits earned by US businesses.

According to USDOL statistics, the average WOTC hire's tenure is 2.3 years. It also shows that from 2017-2020 approximately 5.2 million certifications were issued for the SNAP target group. Therefore, the total federal savings for just the SNAP target group (approximately 67 percent of WOTC certifications) is around \$40 billion over that period. Additionally, the estimated state savings over the last ten years from all WOTC certifications is around \$3.5 billion, nationally. Louisiana benefits inclusively.

Based on program history of an ever-evolving list of target groups including various modifications for veterans, SNAP and TANF recipients, designated community residents, at-risk youth, and the long-term unemployed, the WOTC program shows a high degree of flexibility as a policy tool.

As for the future of WOTC beyond 2021, due diligence with research, applications and deadlines will be paramount. Typically, WOTC is reauthorized annually. For the first time Congress reauthorized WOTC for 5 years through December 2025, indicating that there may be growing support for WOTC on a congressional level and support for the push to make WOTC permanent. Staying abreast of these opportunities can significantly impact Louisiana for years to come.

WOTC Unit Operations

1. Partners – Any business or industry who employs individuals from target groups.
2. Financials – LWC WOTC operations are funded by a Calendar Year Grant from USDOLETA, currently January 1, 2018 through December 31, 2019, for a total of \$290,187.
3. Locations – The program is housed in Baton Rouge at LWC Administrative Offices; WOTC staff routinely travel to make presentations to business, industry, and other interested groups statewide.

II. WOTC Program Metrics

WOTC CERTIFICATION WORKLOAD		
Applications Denied	55,335	
Applications Certified	40,369	
WOTC Target Group	Number of Certified Individuals Employed	Total Tax Credit
IV-A TANF Recipient	639	\$1,533,600
Veteran Receiving SNAP benefits	56	\$134,400
Disabled Veteran	7	\$33,600
Disabled Veteran Unemployed for 6 months	4	\$38,400
Veteran Unemployed for 4 weeks	164	\$393,600
Veteran Unemployed for 6 months	490	\$2,744,000
Veteran with Vocational Rehab Referral	4	\$9,600
Veterans not in a subgroup	40	\$96,000
Ex-Felon	1,558	\$3,739,200
Designated Community (Poverty) Resident	928	\$2,227,200
Vocational Rehab Referral	495	\$1,188,000
SNAP Recipient	34,383	\$82,519,200
SSI Recipient	325	\$780,000
Long-term TANF	42	\$378,000
Unemployed Veteran	-	\$0
Disconnected Youth	-	\$0
Long-term Unemployed	1,234	\$2,961,600
Total Calendar Year 2020	40,369	\$98,776,400

III. Outcomes

Louisiana was one of 12 states to receive additional grant money from USDOL in 2021. The grant amount of \$100,000 was issued for the purpose of reducing and eliminating backlog, which resulted in efforts to upgrade the online system and hire additional staff.

Each certified application represents an individual from a targeted group (significant employment barriers) that has attained employment.

IMPLEMENTING SECTOR STRATEGIES

Louisiana launched 5 Industry Sector Partnerships across the 8 regions of the state. Two more regions are in the planning phase of launching new partnerships.

Region 1 and 3 - The Certified Utility Line Worker Program

The Center for Energy Workforce Development (CEWD) and the Louisiana Energy Workers Consortium (LEWC) identified a need for workforce development for energy industry line workers statewide in 2017. In response to the identified need, the Louisiana Workforce Commission launched an initiative, connecting Workforce and Economic Development and partnering with the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS) to develop and deliver certified training programs.

In 2020-2021 the Louisiana Energy Workforce Consortium held monthly calls to explore “re-energizing” their consortium work, analyzing curriculum, outcomes and future plans. Participating in the meetings are the energy industry employers, Community Colleges, Louisiana Workforce Commission representatives, and members of the LEWC. Current contacts listed for LEWC are Shawn Quinn from Entergy and Lee Hendrix from Entergy.

- Region 1 – Delgado Community College completed 6 cohorts of 16 participants with an LWC and local workforce development area (JOB 1) investment of \$184,896. [This was the original investment for 1 cohort. Do you want me to put a total number together? It would be an educated guess at best.]
- Region 3 – Fletcher Technical Community College completed 8 cohorts of 15-16 participants with LWC and local workforce development areas (First Planning District, Jefferson Parish, River Parish, and LAT 31) investment of \$289,847. [This was the original investment for 2 cohorts.]
- 100% employment of the 2020 Delgado cohort.

Region 2 - Information Technology

Apprenti Louisiana is the first Information Technology (IT) apprenticeship program in the state. Since its implementation in Louisiana in 2019 with a focus on Cybersecurity, many additional occupations have been added to the training curriculum. The three added occupations include: Computer Programmer, Information Technology Specialist, and IT Generalist. 19 apprentices were active in these roles from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021.

- Apprentices per occupation –
- Computer Programmer – 6
- Cybersecurity Support Technician – 3
- Information Technology Specialist – 1
- IT Generalist – 9

IBM also registered an apprenticeship program in Louisiana through reciprocity. IBM had 29 Application Developer apprentices in Louisiana during this timeframe.

The creation and completion of successful registered IT apprenticeship programs throughout Louisiana leads to the state being more competitive in the IT arena. The continued growth of this sector will put Louisiana at the forefront of receiving large IT contracts in the future.

Coastal Restoration

Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) is committed to serving all Louisianans, including those that would like to work in the coastal restoration sector. LWC, in partnership with Coastal Protection and Restoration Agency (CPRA) will identify the needs from businesses awarded contracts for coastal projects throughout the state. LWC will have a series of employer recruitment and engagements activities such as, but not limited to: job fairs, on the job training (OJT) and more throughout the duration of the ultimate effort to limit coastal land loss and related flood risk as well as maximizing the amount of land sustained and restored.

Objectives

- Acquire job orders from coastal employers
- Have a Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) card financial aid application created
- Educate local American Job Centers on TWIC program for coastal jobs
- Collaborate with local colleges to explore training and program options to produce a better-skilled coastal workforce
- Create a roundtable discussion for future careers and skills that will be needed in the coastal sector

Deliverables

- Qualified Job seekers entering the work field with credentials such as the Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) card
- Assist employers in sourcing candidates from Louisiana to fill jobs created by this initiative
- Sustaining Louisiana land by limiting the land loss and reducing the flood risk
- Establishing framework that can help other agencies understand their relationship to LWC and coastal change
- Partner with local colleges to create programs that will result in skilled workers for the coastal restoration sector

MIS has already created code for Coastal Restoration and jobs can be tracked in HiRE and HiRE has a link in construction for the homepage to direct job seekers directly to open coastal positions. Policy and procedures have been written for issuing TWIC cards to qualified candidates and are awaiting review and approval.

RESILIENCE COORDINATOR FOR A RESILIENT LOUISIANA

Megan Warde has been designated person for Louisiana Workforce Commission working with Mr. Charles Sutcliffe and coordinators from other state level cabinets to apply a resilience lens to the systems, protocols and objectives within our agency and partner agencies. Ms. Warde is also assisting Mr. Sutcliffe with a climate task force and is helping LWC find coastal jobs.

Region 4 - Statewide OJT Pilot

There is a high demand for emergency medical service personnel throughout Louisiana. This includes emergency medical technicians, paramedics, first responders and support personnel. The demand has increased due to the pandemic. Acadian Companies is one of the largest EMS providers in the state with over 2500 employees covering all of regions 1 through 6. They have a large training academy in Lafayette that is operated in partnership with South Louisiana Community College and several satellite campuses throughout the state. Training is costly and involves both classroom and hands on experience.

The company has attempted to use the WIOA OJT program to help source applicants and offset some of the training cost but results have been mixed. A meeting with the company in June 2020 revealed that varying policies have caused some confusion by the company.

In order to increase the number of people obtaining emergency medical service training, assist the employer and increase company participation in the WIOA OJT program, it was decided that a pilot program would be launched to create a statewide OJT contract. A single LWDA would act as the fiscal agent for the contract. Other LWDA's would be able to "sign on" to the contract entering into OJT agreements with the company. This would allow the company to work with a single point of contact for purposes of reimbursement while each LWDA would case manage the participants for their area.

After several meetings and working groups the statewide OJT contract was competed. LWDA 40 in Lafayette has agreed to be the fiscal agent for the program and recruitment has begun. While students have not yet reached the point in the training cycle for the OJT, we have already seen interest from multiple LWDA's in participating and an increased number of ITA's. 11 WIOA eligible candidates were screened and enrolled in ITA's in May 2021. These students will transition to OJT after completing the classroom portion of their training.

Region 7 – Manufacturing

The Northwest Louisiana Manufacturing Sector Partnership was launched in November of 2016. These employers decided to concentrate on two goals: (1) Increasing the Flow of Local Talent into Manufacturing Careers and (2) Marketing Modern Manufacturing. This team partnered with the Manufacturers Managers Council of Northwest Louisiana and NLEP (North LA Economic Partnership) to pursue these initiatives.

One project they focused on was the promotion & expansion of North Louisiana Manufacturing Week. In October of 2019, it produced significant results. For example, *Manufacturing Week went from two weeks to three weeks.*

With the lingering effects of the Covid Pandemic, unfortunately, Manufacturing Week in Northwest Louisiana was cancelled in 2020.

Northwest Louisiana Manufacturing Week Results

Description	2014	2019	2020
School Systems	2	10	Event Cancelled
Student Participation	150	1,401	Event Cancelled
Tour Sites	7	35	Event Cancelled
Tours Given	8	62	Event Cancelled

P.S. Manufacturing Week in Northwest Louisiana was held this year (October 2021), but that event is outside the time frame for this report.

This year's result:

Description	2021
Student Participation	659
Manufacturing Companies	16
Training Programs Hi-Lighted	6
Total Tour Hours	28

Region 7 – IT

The North Louisiana IT Sector Partnership was launched in late January of 2019. The Group changed the name to CIO (Chief Information Officer) Roundtable. The team decided on three areas of focus: (1) Marketing I-20 and Northwest Louisiana Cyber Corridor, (2) Building the Talent Pipeline, and (3) Industry Needs (Improve Collaboration with Academia in the Region, Enhance Local Vendor Networking and Grow Affinity Groups).

The team is utilizing a sub-group, TECHBY20, to pursue most of these goals. With NLEP's (North Louisiana Economic Partnership) assistance, their 1st Major Attempt is a Symposium titled "Mapping Our Technology Ecosystem" scheduled for November 13, 2019. The initial goal of this symposium is to showcase the vibrant technology ecosystem in North Louisiana.

The North Louisiana TECHBY20 Symposium was held on November 13, 2019. Nearly 200 representatives were in attendance. Very successful event.

Region 8 - Healthcare

The Northeast Louisiana Healthcare Sector Partnership was renamed the NELA Healthcare Alliance.

The NELA Healthcare Alliance represents nearly 40 diverse healthcare organizations in Northeast Louisiana. The alliance is comprised of hospitals, long term care facilities, skilled nursing facilities, home health organizations and others who together, in addition to providing critical needed healthcare to community members, provide nearly twenty percent of all jobs in our region. These healthcare organizations have come together in an ongoing network (The Northeast Louisiana Healthcare Alliance) to tackle the most pressing healthcare issues of this region together, including workforce issues, networking opportunities, and pressing policy topics that warrant a collective action.

Successes/Achievements:

- Submitted Alliance Support for a regional candidate for the Louisiana Board of Pharmacy to the Governor for appointment. Dr. J. Robert Cloud was confirmed by the Governor as his appointee to serve in this capacity.
- WDB-83, on behalf of the Healthcare Alliance, applied for and was awarded a Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation Collective Impact Grant of \$300,000, and a Living Well Foundation Grant award for \$44,000 for funding opportunities to support adjunct faculty to teach nursing clinicals at regional healthcare facilities. The clinicals will be conducted at nontraditional times (evening shift & weekends) as to not compete with existing clinical rotations and utilizing qualified nurses to teach the clinicals. This will be a regional effort benefitting multiple training providers, utilizing multiple healthcare facilities and most importantly taking a step to addressing the critical nursing shortage we are experiencing regionally by expanding the capacity of accepted applicants for each training provider. Total project budget of 618,000 with cash and in-kind match.
- Hosted a seminar in partnership with Ochsner's for regional security guard training for approximately 20 participants to address active shooter threats in the healthcare facility setting. (Acute Care Committee)
- Instrumental in the development and installation of two new in-demand occupational training programs identified by the Alliance as critical for the region: 1) Medical Assistants and 2) Behavioral Technicians. (Education and Training Committee)

- Awarded the 2019 International Economic Development Council (IEDC) Bronze Award for collaboration and partnership for the NELA Nursing Adjunct Faculty Project funded by the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation of Louisiana and Living Well Foundation.
- The Alliance hosted its second annual Nursing Symposium up skill incumbent nurses. The event was held at ULM with 70+ nurses in attendance. Nurses were able to acquire 5 credit hours toward their CEU requirements at NO COST!!
- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Alliance developed a Community Awareness Campaign to encourage our community to seek the emergency medical care and essential health services they need. The NELA Healthcare Alliance Facebook page was created to help facilitate the messaging. Also, under development, is a new NELA Healthcare Alliance website.
- Benchmarking Project supported by Ascendium Education Group <https://www.nextgensectorpartnerships.com/s/NELA.pdf> One of 6 national sector partnerships high-lighted in this benchmarking study.

Louisiana Governor's Advisory Council on Rural Revitalization

Governor John Bel Edwards established the Governor's Advisory Council on Rural Revitalization. The council was divided into nine subcommittees: Agriculture, Economic Development, Education, Finance, Healthcare, Infrastructure, Clean Water, Finance, Workforce Development and Broadband. The council's mission was to identify and advise the governor on the most prominent industry issues relative to rural Louisiana, and develop effective solutions on best practice methods, stakeholder buy-in, and resource availability. Workforce development disparities affect earning potential and may lead to skills mismatches. While several programs have been initiated to improve job training, opportunities to improve access to job trainings or apprenticeships can be explored further.

1. Educate rural communities about the various workforce development programs available statewide through government, private, nonprofit programs and partnerships. Prioritize workforce development programs which are focused on maximizing employment, retention and increasing credential attainment. Additionally, need exists to create a web based portal that houses all information about workforce development programs. The scope of programs listed should include: apprenticeships, customized training programs, incumbent working training, on-the-job training (OJT), internships or work experience.
2. To best encourage rural revitalization interested parties must provide or facilitate delivery of supportive services to assist with meeting workforce challenges and needs. Services such as transportation, childcare, dependent care, housing, and needs-related payments, are necessary to enable an individual to participate in work related activities.
3. Create regional specific promotional campaigns to increase awareness of workforce needs and available opportunities in rural communities. Targets could include rural: high schools, chambers of commerce, nonprofits, and religious organizations. Examples of workforce needs in rural Louisiana include but are not limited to certified nursing professionals, and certified water or wastewater operators. Targeted marketing campaigns could drive up recruitment to meet the unfulfilled need.

4. Create innovative service delivery strategies such as broadband access and distance learning by partnering with local broadband providers and public Wi-Fi entities i.e. local libraries to ensure that internet access is available for virtual learning and training opportunities.
5. Small businesses are vitally important to local economies by bringing both growth and innovation. It is vital that stakeholders promote small businesses especially in rural communities. By creating a rural small business focused department the footprint of revitalization within the community will increase. To do so efforts must be made to coordinate with local, state, and federal partners to educate rural communities and businesses on various business incentives including potential tax reductions, worker supportive services, worker training and recruitment. Small businesses of all types build the bedrock of a diverse local economy, including those owned and operated by: women, minorities, and veterans. State resources and databases should be leveraged to the best of their ability to assist in the viability of these businesses including the Veterans First Business Initiative and various specialty small business certifications.