

Introduction: Reconnecting and Adapting to Meet Evolving Workforce Needs

Illinois is using the unprecedented challenges and subsequent opportunities presented to its workforce by the COVID-19 pandemic to expand the alignment among the systems, leading to innovative solutions for both businesses and job seekers. Part of Illinois' response to the COVID-19 pandemic includes understanding how businesses had to adapt their operations and how new jobs were created, as well as what obstacles businesses, workers and job seekers faced as economic conditions and public health and safety measures evolved. Illinois remains strong, and our workforce system learned how to adapt and collaborate in ways that affirmed priorities for the next phase of operationalizing Illinois' vision, strategies and goals. Illinois continued progress in Program Year 2020 (PY20) toward a *One Workforce* approach as described in the [Training and Employment Notice 13-20](#).

Articulating operational priorities helped identify best practices, technical assistance and professional development opportunities that will continue to advance the *One Workforce* vision throughout the state. Preliminary priorities identified in PY20 will serve as foundation for PY21 discussion and collaborative decision making. They include the following:

- Completing a feasibility study and the potential implications of reorganizing Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) functions in Illinois, considering funding, policy, operations, service delivery and personnel.
- Facilitating an inclusive process of modifying the Unified State Plan.
- Organizing around priorities for the participant customer, such as common intake, suitability assessments and eligibility policies.
- Organizing around priorities for the business customer, such as coordinated business engagement and common intake.
- Organizing around priorities to frontline staff, including professional development and WIOA Summit themes consistently incorporating the *One Workforce* vision for the system.
- Prioritizing stakeholder engagement to inform decision making in all the above.
- Applying an equity lens to all the above.

The following WIOA Annual Report Performance Narrative highlights some specific outcomes and continuous efforts to implement the strategies outlined in Illinois' Unified State Plan and other plans and best practices informing a systemwide approach.

Section 1: Illinois' Vision and Goals in Workforce and Education

Subhead 1: Unified State Plan Vision, Principles and Goals for the Workforce System

Upon taking office in 2019, one of Governor JB Pritzker's first acts was to lay out a vision for workforce development and job creation. In the months following, his administration worked with Illinois' WIOA partners to review and update the vision, principles, and goals for the workforce system and create an action agenda to address them. The updates represented the first phase of the planning process leading to the new WIOA Unified State Plan submitted to DOL/DOE in March 2020. The following was strongly influenced by the governor's vision and the IWIB Strategic Plan.

Illinois' Vision Statement: Foster a statewide workforce development system that supports the needs of individuals and businesses to ensure Illinois has a skilled workforce to effectively compete in the global economy.

Our Guiding Principles:

- Demand-Driven Orientation
- Strong Partnerships with Business at All Levels

- Pathways to Careers of Today and Tomorrow
- Cross-agency Collaboration and Connections
- Integrated Service Delivery
- Equitable Access and Opportunity for All
- Populations
- Clear Metrics for Progress and Success
- Focus on Continuous Improvement and Innovation

State Goals: As was detailed in the report responding to the Governor’s Executive Order 3, charting a new course for Illinois’ economic future requires that we learn from the past. We must scale up practices that have proven effective, re-engineer those that have not delivered on promised success, and abandon those with little to no return. The six lessons learned will help guide our path forward and form the basis for the statewide goals found in Appendix 1.

Goals for Achieving the State’s Strategic Vision

1. *Unite workforce development partners around regional cluster strategies:* Regional cluster strategies will focus resources on the industries with the highest potential to add jobs and increase prosperity in regions across Illinois. These strategies bring together the public and private sectors in each region to build on their unique strengths.
2. *Prepare Illinois’ workers for a career, not just their next job:* Regardless of background, life circumstances, or education level, Illinois workers can be prepared for high-demand careers by developing core academic, technical, and essential employability skills throughout their lifetimes.
3. *Connect job seekers with employers:* Assist Illinois businesses to find the productive workers they need, through more efficient training and better services for job seekers and employers.

State Strategies to Achieve These Goals: Six essential state strategies underpin Illinois’ commitment to engage and support all parts of our education, workforce, and economic development systems.

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

Strategy 2: Support Employer-Driven Regional Sector Initiatives

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

Strategy 4: Expand Service Integration

Strategy 5: Promote Improved Data-Driven Decision-Making

Strategy 6: Advance Public-Private Data Infrastructure

To ensure that the IWIB can lead the efforts of Illinois in these six strategic areas, it identified a need to strengthen its members’ effectiveness and impact and local workforce boards’ membership. During this reporting year, the IWIB began identifying appropriate outreach methods between the IWIB and local boards and the technical assistance and resource needs that will allow board members to better understand their functions and responsibilities in realizing the vision for Illinois’ workforce system. These efforts also will promote greater accountability and continuous improvement for effectively conducting their business. Appendix 1 provides a more detailed description of the state’s principles, goals, and strategies. In conjunction with Appendix 1, Appendix 2 offers a high-level overview of the framework for WIOA activities and integration, committees and workgroups, interagency teams and contractor roles within the workforce system.

Subhead 2: 2020 – 2022 IWIB Strategic Plan

Since 2003, Illinois has been moving toward the alignment of workforce, education, and economic development. The Governor-appointed Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB), mandated by WIOA, includes leaders from business, industry, state agencies, education, labor, and community-based

organizations with the goal of evaluating and meeting the workforce needs of Illinois. WIOA requires that state workforce boards take a leadership role in guiding the workforce system through policies, strategies, and performance that address the needs of businesses, consumers, employees, residents, and partners. Boards have the responsibility of overseeing the development, implementation, and modification of the Unified State Plan, convening all relevant programs, required partners and stakeholders, and providing oversight and strategic leadership for the state workforce development system.

In Illinois, this initial growth is guided by a committee and task force structure, in which IWIB representatives from private/public partner programs implement policy recommendations to strengthen Illinois' workforce system.

The IWIB continued to implement its 2020-2022 Strategic Plan, which is included as Appendix 3 and can be found at <https://www.illinoisworknet.com/WIOA/Pages/IWIB-Resources.aspx>

The strategic plan is built around a formal Vision and Mission for the IWIB and priority areas served as the board's framework to make strategic decisions to lead the workforce system.

Vision: Illinois will strive to be a national workforce development leader by creating a cohesive, business led system that equally supports job seekers and businesses through regional economic prosperity and global markets.

Mission: "The Illinois workforce system's purpose is to integrate education, workforce and economic development resources and services that support economic growth and job creation for individuals, businesses and communities in the state."

IWIB identified five priority areas and four goals to focus its work.

Priority Areas and IWIB Goals

Priority areas include:

1. Integrate service delivery, improving access and opportunity for all populations.
2. Promote business demand-driven orientation through a sector strategy framework, grounded in strong partnerships within a business and among business at all levels of the system.
3. Grow career pathways to enhance opportunities for Illinoisans to stimulate the economy.
4. Monitor, track, and assess clear metrics for progress and success to inform continuous improvement and innovation efforts.
5. Ensure accountability as a board and as system partners for outcomes and transparency through marketing and outreach to the system.

Goals include:

1. Equitable access
2. Business engagement
3. Customer-centered design
4. Technology Workforce Board development

Section 2: COVID-19 Pandemic Response

Subhead 2: Pandemic-Related Workforce Challenges and Adaptations

Unemployment Insurance and Service Delivery Adjustments

IDES implemented seven new unemployment programs in addition to the regular state Unemployment Insurance (UI) program in response to the pandemic during PY20. The new federal programs and their launch dates are:

- Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC): April 2020
- Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC): April 2020
- Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA): May 2020
- Extended Benefits (EB): June 2020
- Lost Wages Assistance (LWA): September 2020
- WorkShare IL: April 2021
- Mixed Earners Unemployment Compensation (MEUC): July 2021

FPUC, PEUC, and PUA all experienced federal legislative and policy changes over the course of the past year, including the brief suspension of programs in December 2020 that required significant additional work communicating with clients to limit the impact on benefits. The volume of initial claims across the regular UI program in Illinois exceeded roughly 2.5 times the volume of initial claims during the Great Recession. As of June 30, 2021, over 700,000 continued claimants were seeking UI benefits across all IDES programs. Pandemic-related workload across all programs translated to roughly 8.5 initial claims per minute during the first year of the pandemic.

To manage the unprecedented volume of claims, implement new federal programs, and integrate ongoing federal policy and program changes, IDES used multiple strategies including vendor support for new program platforms; expansion of call center capacity; temporary assignments of existing staff to UI claims work; and a multilingual virtual agent accessible on the IDES website. Over the course of the year IDES also rolled out multiple new resources to assist claimants and employers navigate programs including infographics; email and text notices; explanatory sheets and glossaries; services for claimants with limited English proficiency; a translation widget; and stakeholder outreach. In addition to focusing on the work related to benefits, IDES continued to profile claimants for the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment Grants program which quickly shifted from in-person to remote delivery of employment services and successfully implemented an individualized career services model.

Service Delivery

The shift from employed to unemployed in Illinois greatly exceeded recent historical precedent with initial claims per 1,000 population increasing from less than 1 in 2019 to more than 16 in April 2020. IDES worked closely with WIOA partners across the state to implement virtual job fairs and hiring events; assisted local areas to promote Title I services to job seekers and claimants; facilitate job postings by employers at IllinoisJobLink.com (IJL); promoted WorkShare, Illinois' short-time compensation program; provided data and information for workforce planning; and direct communication with employers to connect them to Get Hired Illinois and hiring incentive programs.

Throughout PY20 IDES assisted in the use of IllinoisJobLink.com referrals. Information about virtual job fairs, hiring events, job openings, and online job search tools were all promoted by IDES staff. Individualized job search assistance was provided without interruption to all claimants required to participate in the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment Grants program. Specialized information and resources for programming for returning citizens and young people was provided as needed, including actively assisting employers and apprenticeship programs with hiring incentives

through the Federal Bonding and Work Opportunity Tax Credit Programs. Outreach services for Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFW) was limited by the pandemic, but outreach staff continued to work with community organizations, and provided a virtual orientation video and information packets that could be shared with workers.

The IJL team regularly collaborated with its WIOA partners in job seeker and employer outreach activities. Throughout PY20, the IJL team developed and executed virtual statewide training for LWIA partners that helped the partners to identify and connect with WIOA eligible dislocated workers registered in IJL to provide skill upgrade training. After the training, Local Workforce Innovation Area (LWIA) staff were empowered to independently access IJL reports that targeted job seekers by demographics and geographical areas for outreach and provide services.

The IJL team provided leadership and expertise to developing ways to improve information and access to online resources for job seekers and unemployment claimants, including working with the Department of Innovation and Technology to design and implement a robust virtual agent both online and by telephone that is accessible in multiple languages.

Every aspect of WIOA implementation transitioned from in-person services to virtual services. A non-exhaustive list of service delivery challenges is included in Appendix 4.

Updates to Illinois workNet Website for Individuals and Businesses

In response to the changing workforce environment, the Illinois workNet portal continues to be modified to provide a clearinghouse of relevant information tailored to workers, jobseekers, businesses, and workforce system professionals. Updates throughout PY20 included audience-specific pages with links for ease of access. A list of updates is included as Appendix 5. Additionally, the Illinois workNet Service Report for Program Year 2020 is included as Appendix 6.

Layoff Aversion and Dislocated Workers: Expanding Rapid Response with Virtual Tools

Rapid Response Services provide valuable aid during economic transition caused by economic events or by natural, other disasters, or emergency events. While the COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented challenges for the planning and delivery of Rapid Response services, Illinois continued to meet and expand services outside the traditional response services during PY20.

Illinois quickly adapted a virtual service delivery model due to the pandemic and the resulting public health safety measures. This model was used to disseminate program and benefits information safely and effectively to dislocated workers at a time when the need for services is greatest. Customized company layoff webpages were created for layoff events so that individuals affected could view information on specific local events, services, resources, and to complete an online questionnaire to connect to a local workforce partner near them. Rapid Response workshops are recorded and posted to company-specific web pages so that employees unable to attend the live presentation could view the information at their convenience.

Coping with and recovering from the economic strain of the pandemic requires a tech-forward approach to supporting workforce development. Launched in November 2020, the Illinois Employment Business System (IEBS) is a layoff and business intelligence platform designed to serve users in two ways. First, the system leverages Dunn and Bradstreet business data to empower business and economic developers to proactively identify, profile, and target businesses for outreach and delivery of program services. Second, IEBS serves as the State's layoff tracking system, enabling Rapid Response staff to efficiently manage layoff events by providing dashboards, labor market information, and extractable reports.

A Rapid Response Workgroup, composed of state staff, continues to review, and develop innovative strategies and recommendations to improve Illinois' delivery of the Rapid Response program within the virtual environment. By coordinating efforts through the Rapid Response team approach, affected workers are immediately linked to their local American Job Center and the Dislocated Worker and Trade services. The local staff at the AJC administer both the Dislocated Worker and Trade programs, allowing for all activities to be represented and appropriately budgeted to local areas.

Layoff Aversion and Dislocated Workers: Funding Opportunities

To continue to support the LWIAs facing the financial impacts from the COVID-19 response, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) identified additional Statewide Rapid Response funds to support the provision of career services in the one-stop delivery system and carry out activities to facilitate remote access to training services provided through the one-stop delivery system. Additional Statewide Rapid Response funds were made available to facilitate remote access to training services provided through the one-stop delivery system, and support enhanced efforts to connect jobseekers to employment, career counseling, and job search assistance. Strategies included increased outreach activities, expansion of supportive services, support for workers in targeted industries (i.e., supply chain training), and employer support through layoff aversion activities.

The State of Illinois continues to make Statewide Rapid Response Funds available to support the COVID-19 Recovery efforts and the priorities outlined in TEN 8-20 (click on 20-NOT-04 in the Notice Tab of the following web page: <https://apps.illinoisworknet.com/WIOAPolicy/Policy/Index/103>). All LWIA's are eligible to apply for funding that is focused on strategies to rapidly connect jobseekers to work; strategies to expand supportive services; strategies to support workers in targeted industries; and strategies to support employers.

Layoff Aversion and Dislocated Workers: Short-Time Compensation

In April, 2021, the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) launched WorkShare Illinois. The program is commonly referred to as Short-Time Compensation (STC). This is an unemployment option and is voluntary for the employer, providing the flexibility to reduce employee hours rather than placing them into a permanent layoff. WorkShare IL is an alternative to layoffs for employers experiencing a reduction in available work. The program preserves employees' jobs and employers' trained workforces during times of economic downturns.

Eligible employees experiencing a reduction in hours will collect a percentage of their unemployment compensation (UC) benefits to replace a portion of their lost wages. WorkShare IL cushions the adverse effect of the reduction in business activity on workers by averting layoffs and ensures that these workers will be available to resume prior employment levels when business demand increases. Employers may also utilize the program in bringing employees back to work less than full time provided they are currently receiving UC or eligible for UC benefits.

DCEO agreed to partner with IDES by promoting WorkShare IL, providing collaborative opportunities and access to staff and infrastructure. DCEO contacted existing employers in which they have relationships to assist enrollment in the program. There are currently twenty-eight states that have this compensation program established in law that meet the new federal definition with twenty-seven having operational programs, of which Illinois is one. Section 502 of the Unemployment Insurance Act (820 ILCS 405/502) authorizes IDES to establish a STC program by rule.

DCEO facilitates ongoing meetings with LWIAs and federal and state agency partners to address and respond to the COVID-19 related impact on the local workforce system. Continuous improvement on existing or identifying new strategies helps to support early intervention by Rapid Response teams. Rapid

Response teams coordinate with IDES staff to identify businesses at risk of initiating layoffs to provide information about the short-term compensation program, known as WorkShare Illinois. WorkShare Illinois information is also provided to businesses during the initial phase of Rapid Response as an alternative to layoffs. Additionally, as Illinois has reopened local economies in phases, many businesses have been unable to bring all staff back at full capacity and full hours right away. The WorkShare Illinois program can help employers who are reopening business operations and want to bring back temporarily laid off staff.

Layoff Aversion and Dislocated Workers: Enhanced Business Services through Get Hired Illinois and Virtual Job Fairs

As economic recovery efforts continue, a common consideration is how to reach employers and job seekers as the concepts and mechanisms of remote service delivery evolve. Enhanced business services and strong partnerships have helped to leverage Illinois WIOA resources and increase opportunities for job seekers and businesses.

DCEO's Office of Employment and Training (OET) and Regional Economic Development field staff (Team RED) worked together to help companies remain competitive by leveraging connections and interactions with businesses to identify opportunities for early intervention. The mutual goal remains to help businesses access WIOA services to avoid layoffs and provide WIOA participants the opportunity to obtain self-sufficiency after a layoff.

In May 2020, Governor Pritzker, DCEO and IDES launched Get Hired Illinois, a web portal designed to connect workers with available job and career training opportunities across the state of Illinois. Governor Pritzker also announced that beginning in June 2020, Illinois residents would have free access to online workforce development courses via a partnership with Coursera. Coursera is an online global learning platform that partners with more than 200 universities and organizations around the world to offer anyone access to courses, projects, job-ready certificates and degrees. With Illinois facing record unemployment because of COVID-19, the Coursera partnership and Get Hired portal served as important measures in the state's overall efforts to get people back to work. The portal blended IDES and DCEO resources to provide a one-stop-shop for both job seekers and employers, providing information on job opportunities as well as unemployment resources. The page was designed to be user-friendly for job seekers of all levels and backgrounds and allows employers to upload jobs, virtual career fairs and training opportunities.

Employers could utilize resources at no cost to connect to job seekers such as job boards and Illinois workNet Virtual Job Fairs (VJF) to provide information sessions to recruit potential candidates for job openings. VJF was launched in May 2020 as part of the Get Hired initiative. Employers across industry sectors could host individual or collaborative virtual events. By setting up an employer booth and hosting a VJF, employers could connect to job seekers across economic development regions.

Relevant Grants: National Dislocated Worker Grants

National Dislocated Worker Grants (DWGs) are discretionary grants awarded by the Secretary of Labor under WIOA. DWGs provide resources to states and other eligible applicants to respond to large, unexpected layoff events causing significant job losses. The funding temporarily expands the capacity to serve dislocated workers, including military service members, and meet the increased demand for WIOA employment and training services, with a purpose to reemploy laid off workers and enhance their employability and earnings. Additionally, some grants provide funding to create temporary employment opportunities to assist with clean-up and recovery efforts, in response to large, unexpected economic events which cause significant job losses

Illinois received two separate \$8.3 million grants under the National Dislocated Worker Grant program that were implemented in PY20 to support a COVID-19 pandemic response. All 22 Local Workforce Area grantees were invited to submit applications for funding from both the Disaster Recovery NDWG and the Employment Recovery NDWG.

Relevant Grants: Disaster Recovery NDWG (Appendix 7)

Illinois awarded eight Disaster Recovery grants to LWIAs to support communities' COVID-related humanitarian, disaster recovery assistance needs and workforce-related impacts of COVID-19. Communities in need of temporary workers to assist with humanitarian needs and COVID-19 mitigation efforts identified opportunities for 347 project participants who will receive employment and training assistance that would lead to permanent employment following completion of their temporary job. Such humanitarian and disaster recovery assistance include food delivery and other services to affected or quarantined/isolated individuals, especially the elderly and those with chronic health conditions or other vulnerabilities; community health worker aides for temperature screening, social distancing, and other COVID-19 protocols in public buildings and non-profit organizations; cleanup and sanitization activities including cleaning and sanitizing schools, public buildings, nonprofits providing community assistance, etc.

Relevant Grants: Employment Recovery NDWG (Appendix 7)

Illinois also prioritized services to low-skilled workers that lost their job due to COVID-19 and provided them with comprehensive employment and training services through the Employment Recovery NDWG. These grants will provide training services to 930 dislocated workers with a focus on individuals that are low wage/low skilled. Services consist of career planning, training, work-based learning, support services, and follow-up services.

Incumbent Worker Training (IWT)

IWT is designed to meet the needs of an employer or group of employers to increase the skill levels of employees to advance or retain employees. Available funding can help offset the costs of training existing employees.

PY20 IWT activity saw a reversal of the recent trend of increased projects, employers and workers trained that began when ITW became a fully allowable activity under WIOA versus being only allowed via special waiver under the Workforce Investment Act. This sudden slowdown of activity was due to the mandated social distancing required to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. In PY20, 39 projects were directly affected by the pandemic with enough severity to be flagged by local workforce areas and other grantees. Of these projects, five were cancelled outright due to the pandemic.

As PY20 progressed, IWT activity began to increase in line with the overall economic recovery. For the first time, all 22 local workforce areas had an active IWT project in a single program year, which indicates continued expansion throughout the state. A map of Illinois showing the 22 local workforce areas is included as Appendix 8 and may be referred to when local workforce areas are cited. Barring unforeseen economic challenges, we anticipate IWT will have a return to form in PY21.

The table and charts in Appendix 9 provide the number of employers, projects, employees enrolled and estimated project costs by sector. Manufacturing maintained a significant majority in all categories of IWT, followed by Healthcare, Professional Services, Transportation / Distribution / Logistics and Architecture & Construction. Information on activity related to the current waiver is covered in the section on waivers.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

The Illinois Department of Human Services - Division of Rehabilitation Services (IDHS-DRS) VR program found success in a year where that was not easy to expect. Given the structural impact of the pandemic and resulting shutdowns, being able to successfully place over 3,800 customers with disabilities into gainful employment was a testament to the hard work displayed by all within the VR community.

IDHS-DRS continued its program to support community providers in engaging customers regularly to ensure they continue working towards their personal and professional goals. IDHS-DRS worked directly with many of the key stakeholders within the Developmental Disabilities community to revamp its career counseling, service delivery and outreach processes. This led to a much more engaging and beneficial counseling curriculum that is anticipated to lead many more individuals currently receiving sub-minimum wage seeking gainful employment through VR services.

Phased Reopening of American Job Centers

A WIOA Interagency Technical Assistance Team continuously obtained feedback from partners around the state about the status of service delivery through American Job Centers, as well as questions related to health and safety protocol, staff training and shared costs reflected in the local MOUs. The Checklist for Reopening American Job Centers (Appendix 10) that coordinated with the Governor's "Restore Illinois" plan was also updated throughout PY20, particularly as safety concerns and inherent challenges of a high volume of UI claimants affected service delivery. State agency directors, executives, legal teams and program administrators in Spring 2021 collaboratively established standard criteria regarding public health and safety protocol when AJCs reopened to the public in any capacity. Ultimately, this collaborative process culminated with the issuance of a statewide policy (WIOA Notice No. 20-NOT-09 | Appendix 11). This WIOA Notice included a required form to ensure local workforce boards, chief elected officials, leaseholders, one-stop operators, required partners at the state and local levels were aware and agreed to the safety and service delivery protocol when employees returned onsite and when a center was planned to reopen to the public.

Section 3: Ongoing Commitment to Unified State Plan Goals and Service Integration

Subhead 1: Progress on Implementing Other Strategies of the 2020 Unified State Plan

Unified State Plan Progress Reports

The IWIB Continuous Improvement Committee (CIC) collaborated with a designated work group for the development of the Unified State Plan and the WIOA Annual Report to track commitments and take a systemic look at where energy needs to be to achieve Illinois' vision. A quarterly report card was developed to help all stakeholders track the status of waiver requests, effectiveness in serving employers, customer satisfaction data, performance accountability data, and other important components of Illinois' workforce system such as sector strategies. A high-level dashboard summarized activities that were on track, warranted technical assistance to proactively improve outcomes, or warranted corrective actions to improve outcomes.

Equity Task Force Update

One priority of Illinois' 2020 Unified State Plan, in alignment with the Governor's 2019 Economic Development Plan, was to reduce the equity gap by investing in, providing support to, and taking down barriers for economically disadvantaged populations. In PY20, the IWIB Equity Task Force met for the first time on October 28, 2020. The task force meets bi-monthly and is composed of members from State agencies, community partners, and employers. The task force develops recommendations for Illinois' workforce system that align with the education system and establish goals that will reduce inequity for the populations we serve. There are five priorities of the task force. These priorities follow:

By February 2021:

1. *Charge 1:* Examine programs, policies, and practices to infuse issues of equity and inclusion into these programs, policies, and practices as authorized by law
2. *Charge 2:* Assess and recommend education and workforce tools that can track program access and outcomes and disaggregate data to reveal disparities in policies and program delivery
3. *Charge 3:* Make recommendations regarding inclusive and diverse approaches, including professional development of staff, to ensure use of an equity lens in serving their diverse populations

After February 2021:

4. *Charge 4:* Create shared definitions for a set of key terms
5. *Charge 5:* Establish equity goals for the system

The task force also established target populations to focus its efforts, including populations in the following table.

WIOA	Disenfranchised Groups
Women	LGBTQ Community
Rural Residents	Homeless and homeless youth
People of Color	Low Income Individuals – unemployed and under employed including GIG workers
Individuals with Disabilities both cognitive and physical	Foster Care Youth and Alumni
Veterans	Migrant and Seasonal Worker
Justice-impacted populations	Individual working to achieve their High School Equivalency
Immigrant populations	

In December 2020, the task force established three workgroups: data, policy, and program. The data workgroup focused on assessing and recommending education and workforce tools that can track program access and outcomes and disaggregate data to reveal disparities in policies and program delivery. The policy workgroup examined programs, policies, and practices to infuse issues of equity and inclusion into these programs, policies, and practices as authorized by law. The program workgroup focused on making recommendations regarding inclusive and diverse approaches, including professional development of staff, to ensure use of an equity lens in serving their diverse populations.

In June 2021, the task force voted to present an equity lens and working vision of equity to the IWIB Executive Committee. The Executive Committee voted to accept the following based on the recommendations of the Equity Task Force:

“An equity lens is an ongoing process for analyzing or diagnosing the impact of the design and implementation of policies on under-served and marginalized individuals and groups, and to identify and potentially eliminate barriers.”

University of Minnesota University Policy Library Definition

Equity is “the state, quality, or ideal of being just, impartial and fair. The concept of equity is synonymous with fairness and justice. It is helpful to think of equity as not simply a desired

situation or lofty value. To be achieved and sustained, equity needs to be thought of as a structural and systemic concept.”

Annie E. Casey Foundation

The program workgroup of the task force focused on professional development opportunities within the workforce system through WIOA Wednesday Webinars, the Illinois Workforce Academy, and the WIOA Summit. The workgroup will develop a list of recommendations and best practices related to workforce equity professional development.

Service Integration

As established in the 2020 Unified State Plan, integrated service delivery remains a guiding principle to serve business and individual customers more effectively. In PY20, DCEO continued to support Local Workforce Boards’ efforts to integrate more fully. Following a statewide local area service integration assessment performed in PY19, grants were awarded to local areas to pilot integration efforts. An evaluation of those grant projects to identify best practices was in the final stages at the end of PY20. The results will highlight effective local area approaches for further integration.

Eligible Training Provider Lists (ETPL) and Pro Path

As part of the Unified State Plan Strategy 4 to Expand Service Integration, a specific activity was to improve access and integration of the Eligible Training Provider Lists (ETPL). In PY20, the IWIB ETPL Policy Workgroup met several times to continue developing a new policy.

The Workgroup addressed many areas during the reporting period related to the eligible training providers and eligible training programs. The Workgroup created a new set of criteria to define demand occupations that was approved by the state board and issued a new Demand Occupation Training List effective July 1, 2021. The criteria prioritized efforts to:

- Support informed customer choice, stronger connection to regional business needs for training and alignment to other state education and workforce initiatives through an improved scope of programmatic information collected from providers;
- Incorporate information on credentials available through programs and earned by participants, including, where possible, competencies associated with those credentials through the Pro Path Illinois project, which is supported by a Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) grant;
- Increase the transparency and quality of training provider performance data and outcomes for various constituents, including state policymakers, LWIBs, employers, caseworkers, and potential training participants.
- Develop an approach for utilization of performance measures in determination of ETP eligibility
- Collaborate across workforce and education partners to generate all student data outcomes reporting in compliance with DOL requirements.
- Create a process flow mapping as the beginning step to create new ETPL policy and procedures that will include collaboration with the IWIB’s Continuous Improvement Committee and Equity Task Force to conduct an equity audit to ensure that the policy is meeting the needs of customers facing a broad range of barriers to employment and address prior DOL monitoring findings.

Illinois was awarded a Workforce Data Quality Initiative Round VII grant to DCEO, which it applied to the Pro Path Illinois initiative to re-engineer the technological platform for training program and training provider data transparency. Illinois remains committed to using Pro Path Illinois to empower under-employed and unemployed youth and adults with comprehensive and actionable information on career pathway programs.

Advancing Public-Private Data Infrastructure: Illinois Employment Business System (IEBS)

The DCEO, in partnership with the IDES, continues development of IEBS, which is a cloud-based agile software platform supporting Illinois' Unified State Plan Strategy of enhancing Labor Market Information System. IEBS offers a suite of systems and modules to assist with strategies that are employed by rapid response and business development specialists.

In PY20, the Layoff Module replaced the Dislocated Event Tracking System. The new module provides a streamline process for tracking layoff events, recovery efforts, and business data analysis, helping promote improved, data-driven, decision-making. Other enhancements include the Overview Dashboard, which gives a high-level breakdown and analysis of the layoff activity in the state, and the Workflow Dashboard, which is utilized by the State and Local Rapid Response staff to see all layoff event related activity that has been assigned to them. Progress made in PY20 laid a foundation for the next major development in IEBS, which will be its Business Outreach module. The new module will build on an existing database of 600,000 that IEBS brings in from Dunn & Bradstreet, enabling users to create customized lists for tracking businesses and coordinating outreach and referrals.

Advancing Public-Private Data Infrastructure: Vocational Rehabilitation Workforce Development Planning and Business Development

Part of Illinois' commitment to the coordination, alignment and provision of services to employers advances the 2020 Unified State Plan Strategy 6, which is to Advance Public-Private Data Infrastructure. In PY20, the Illinois Department of Human Services Vocational Rehabilitation Workforce Development team further developed its Planning and Business Development Unit, which continued to drive innovative practices through cooperation with workforce system stakeholders. In PY20, the unit continued to grow the potential employer base for customers and served as much-needed intermediaries between Vocational Rehabilitation practitioners and the business community during a time when maintaining and broadening channels of communication was more important than ever. The team worked with WIOA partners to implement tools to effectively engage businesses that have immediate needs for employees with the skills required by Vocational Rehabilitation customers. By ensuring Title IV is included in this work, the team created opportunities for people with disabilities to have a more equal playing field in achieving gainful employment. That progress will be essential to the VR program's goal of increasing the quality of jobs obtained by our customers in coming years.

Advancing Public-Private Data Infrastructure: Youth Career Pathway Program

As part of the same Strategy 6 to Advance Public-Private Data Infrastructure, the Illinois Youth Career Pathway Program continued its efforts to integrate workforce services, education, and economic development to address the challenges youth face in obtaining marketable and in-demand skills. This includes providing opportunities to the targeted populations outlined in the Unified State Plan.

During PY20, the DCEO Office of Employment Youth department completed the following:

- Closed out Career Pathway Grants from the previous grant cycle through our fiscal and data management accountability system.
- Created a new Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) to address additional needs of participants including areas heavily impacted due to COVID-19 and high unemployment numbers for youth.
- Provided technical assistance to local areas, community-based organizations and school districts applying for state youth funds.
- Collaborated with reviewers to create a recommendation list for future Youth Career Pathway Grants.

DCEO's Office of Employment and Training (OET) received 39 applications totaling \$14,257,905. Twenty applications were selected totaling \$4,431,000, assisting 442 participants. Seventeen of the 20 applications have never received funding under the Youth Career Pathway Grant opportunity. The applications were reviewed by a team of business owners, IWIB members, post-secondary educators, core partners, and OET staff members using the criteria in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). By funding these 20 applicants, Youth Career Pathway programs are now represented throughout the entire state.

WIOA Statewide Innovation Grants

The 2020 Unified State Plan Strategy 6 to Advance Public-Private Data Infrastructure included the integration of labor market information with State education and workforce longitudinal data systems, as well as program and case management systems. In PY20, OET issued a grant to the Champaign County Regional Planning Commission to explore options for better utilizing labor market information for workforce planning and test a proof-of-concept for spatial analysis of Title IB service delivery to targeted populations. The grantee, Title IB formula grant recipient, worked with special participant data queries provided by OET to successfully map the location of clients in relation to rates of unemployment, poverty and use of food stamps by ZIP codes within the local area. This type of analysis is completed based on participant demographic characteristics such as gender, race, age etc. in local areas with capacity to work geographic information system (GIS) data. A brief overview of the proof-of-concept is provided in Appendix 12.

Technical Assistance and Professional Development: PY20 virtual WIOA Summit and WIOA Wednesday Webinars

The WIOA professional development committee hosted a Virtual WIOA Summit in April 2021, with the theme of service integration: collaboration and innovation. Over 1,000 local core partner staff, stakeholders and board members joined. The summit theme reflected the commitment to collaboration and the unified mission fostered by WIOA. The summit leadership team, composed of representatives of each WIOA core partner, worked together to create this dynamic and engaging conference to be useful and informative to anyone working across the vast range of aligned WIOA partner services. The summit was intentionally designed to assist our local core partner staff and board members by providing practical guidance on service integration.

All session recordings, presentations, and materials can be found at <https://ilworkforceacademy.com/wioa-summit/>.

Additionally, Illinois featured 13 WIOA Wednesday Webinars specifically on the topic of service integration with over 1,000 live attendees. Additional information regarding these WIOA Webinars is included in Section 6, Subhead 2, and a list of the WIOA Wednesday Webinars is included as Appendix 13. Even more Illinois workforce professionals were able to access the resources following the live events at <https://icsps.illinoisstate.edu/wioa/wednesday-webinars/2-home/101-2021-wioa-professional-development>

Section 4: Performance and Evaluation

Subhead 1: Performance and Transparency Dashboard

During PY2020 the Continuous Improvement Committee (CIC) of the Illinois Workforce Investment Board (IWIB) created a Performance Workgroup tasked with creating a report to assist stakeholders in examining outcomes across the core partners related to the WIOA Performance Indicators. As a part of this work, the CIC asked the workgroup to also provide easily accessible information about the definitions of each measure as well as the targets established by each title through negotiations with

federal officials. While individuals involved in the day-to-day work of administering WIOA programs are aware of this information, the CIC group also wanted to ensure that other interested parties could easily access this information and utilize it.

To that end, the CIC's Performance Workgroup, working in collaboration with the Southern Illinois University (SIU) – workNet team to leverage and expand upon existing technology and resources from the IwN integration platform, created the [WIOA Performance and Transparency](#) website and dashboard. The website is designed to provide information for stakeholders on a host of areas including the following:

- An overview of the federal agencies that oversee each core program and the goals of WIOA
- An overview of each of WIOA's core partners and the services they provide
- An overview of each WIOA Performance Indicator, the definition for each measure, and how success is counted for the measure

In addition to the information available about WIOA, the dashboard component provides visitors to the site the ability to look at each performance indicator by program year and by each title through an user-friendly interface and visual. The dashboard provides an option to look at information isolated to a single program year through a "Snapshot" view or to look at performance across multiple program years by each title through a "Timeline" view. In each view the user can hover over a visual to see data displayed related to the established target goal, performance, and status of meeting the measure by title. The dashboard also allows the underlying data being utilized to power the visual to be exported into a spreadsheet so users can have access to the data for further analysis if desired.

The Performance Workgroup continues to work closely with the CIC committee to explore ways to maximize the use of the new resource and address performance-related questions from the committee and larger IWIB Board.

Subhead 2: Illinois Performance Accountability and Transparency Page (IPATS)

The DCEO continued the development and pilot of a WIOA Performance and Data Validation system per Section 116 of WIOA. The Illinois Performance and Accountability System (IPATS) establishes performance accountability indicators and performance reporting requirements to assess the state and local areas' effectiveness in achieving positive outcomes for individuals served by the local workforce development areas. It tracked participant activity and display dashboards and timing alerts based on customer service activity tracked to Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) performance measures. The system was initially developed for the Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs, but it has the flexibility and integration capacity to utilize the WIOA six core programs, as well as other required partners such as the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program.

The true benefit of IPATS is in the ability of career planners and case managers to identify current services and outcomes quickly and easily for their participants. A dashboard provides a high-level overview, filterable at the state or local level or by career planner, with the ability to export the data and information contained within for tracking and maintenance of participant files. Also, through a high-level performance view, program administrators can track preliminary and year-to-date performance outcomes, allowing the identification of areas where performance are projected as on-track to meet or exceed goals or that may need addressed through targeted career planning and case management policy and procedures.

Subhead 3: Program Year 2020 Performance Outcomes

PY20 performance outcomes were for the first time determined by applying a State Statistical Adjustment Model (SAM). Illinois' Title I Workforce Development program Exceeded-Met/Failed its Adjusted Levels of Performance for all WIOA performance measures for Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. Using a DOL developed Negotiation Tool during performance negotiations, goals were set for both PY20 and PY21. The adjustments were derived by applying the SAM to the negotiated goals and are intended to reflect actual characteristics of participants served and the actual economic conditions experienced.

The Adult Education and Family Literacy (AEFL) Act was unable to meet the Educational Functioning Level targets set with the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) for measurable skill gain. The target for this measure was 46 percent, but AEFL's performance for this measure was 33.9 percent. It is important to note that a significant number of individuals could not be post-tested to measure this metric due to COVID-19-related restrictions. Programs were required to end in-person instruction in mid-March, making post-testing that would have normally occurred during the final quarter of the year infeasible. The performance metrics related to the follow-up measures were in baseline and did not have established targets for PY19. Targets for these measures were negotiated for the first time in Spring 2020 and appear in Appendix 14.

The Illinois Wagner-Peyser program fell below in two of three Negotiated Rates of Performance for WIOA performance measures in Program Year 2020. The two performance measures were the Employment Rate 2nd and 4th Quarter after Exit. Illinois Exceeded in the Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit. Illinois attributes the decline in performance due to COVID-19 and its impact on job availability, as well as the need for Illinois Department of Employment Security staff to respond to the unprecedented demand for unemployment insurance services from hundreds of thousands of claimants; and implement and manage several new federal unemployment programs.

Illinois Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVGS) program fell below in four of the six Negotiated Rates of Performance. These primary indicators are three for the Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialist services to Veterans/Other Eligible and three for Wagner Peyser Services to Veterans/Other Eligible. The two performance measures for the DVOP Service to Veterans/Other Eligible that fell below were the Employment Rate 2nd and 4th Quarter after Exit. DVOP Services Exceeded in the Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit. The three for Wagner-Peyser Services to Veterans/Other Eligible also had two of the three performance measures fell below. The two performance measures were the Employment Rate 2nd and 4th Quarter after Exit. Wagner-Peyser Services to Veterans exceeded in the Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit. All six of these primary indicators of performance measures remained in "baseline" for the program year. Although Illinois fell below on four performance measures, these measures were within the 90 percent threshold of the Negotiated Rate of Performance.

Administered through the Illinois Department of Human Services – Division of Rehabilitation Services (DHS-DRS), the Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program saw extensive improvement in key metrics during what was a very difficult year for our state and society at large. IDHS-DRS VR was able to improve our MSG rate from 42.1 percent in PY19 to 59.8 percent in PY20. This improvement was thanks to tremendous cooperation amongst remote working staff throughout the agency and the network of educational institutions and employers that maintained high levels of service. IDHS-DRS VR was able to implement innovative practices to efficiently drive VR program to new heights, while learning processes that will ensure continuous improvement for years to come. IDHS-DRS VR saw a noticeable increase in median earnings from PY19 to PY20 and will continue to implement trainings and innovations that seek to improve the quality of the jobs attained by VR customers. IDHS-DRS VR expects these efforts to lead to greater increases in median earnings and stronger performance on job retention metrics.

Subhead 4: WIOA Negotiated Performance Measures

For the first time under WIOA, the state negotiated performance goals with representatives of the twenty-two Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIB) and Chief Elected Officials. These negotiation teams were composed of LWIB staff, Title I Administrators and performance managers, and in some instances included LWIB chairs or members and chief elected officials.

Local negotiations occurred in October 2020 for PY20 and PY21 and were preceded by the issuance of a formal process for local negotiations that contained a timeline of events and required actions leading up to and following the formal negotiations. Issuance of a formal notice on the negotiation process, which included submission of proposed negotiated goals by each LWIB, was followed by technical assistance and outreach provided by the Office of Employment and Training, on behalf of the IWIB and statistical experts from the Center for Governmental Studies (CGS) at Northern Illinois University.

Negotiations for PY20 and PY21 were finalized with OCTAE and Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy program in May 2020. For performance associated with Measurable Skill Gain as well as the follow-up measures associated with 2nd and 4th Quarter Employment Post-exit, Median Earnings in 2nd Quarter Post-exit and Credential Attainment targets were established for PY20 and PY21 using a statistical adjustment policy and with targets that reflect continuous improvement. The specific targets for each measure are outlined in Appendix 14.

The Title IV, Vocational Rehabilitation Program, continues in a baseline status with all but its Measurable Skill Gains performance goal for PY20/21. Illinois will continue to use the rate of 62.2 percent to establish the PY20 and PY21 expected level of performance for that measure. DHS-VR will continue collecting baseline data for all other indicators for PY20 and PY21 in coordination with the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).

Subhead 5: Effectiveness in Serving Employers Performance Indicators

Effectiveness in Serving Employers began as a pilot program in PY16 and PY17. States were required to collect information on two of the three indicators or develop their own indicator. The two indicators chosen by Illinois were 1) Employer Penetration Rate and 2) Retention with the Same Employer. These performance goals (not yet defined by DOL and the U.S. Department of Education) are to be based on indicators identified in WIOA Section 116 (b)(2)(a)(4). Baseline data is being reviewed to assist in determining performance goals. In PY 2020, Illinois achieved a 63.5 percent retention rate with the same employer in the 2nd and 4th quarters after exit for nearly 36,520 participants. During the same period, the penetration rate for more than 385,491 businesses was 2.9 percent. Additional information on Illinois' success with the two pilot approaches is included in Appendix 15.

Subhead 6: Business Perceptions of the Workforce System

Another consideration during the COVID-19 pandemic was what investments, frameworks and connection points were needed to shift from the reactive nature of operating within a pandemic to the ideal of a proactive, coordinated strategy for business engagement. Proactive outreach was needed to share data about employers, workers and jobseekers by region and industry. Before that could happen, clarity was needed about roles, business engagement procedures and data connections. Recognizing the governance and structure of the groups conducting business outreach also needed to be more integrated

and strategic, a comprehensive inventory (Appendix 16) was taken in PY20 to identify which groups were conducting different types of activities related to business engagement, Rapid Response and remote service delivery. The inventory evoked discussions among state and local business outreach groups about role clarity, reduced risk of redundancies, and policies and training opportunities to improve service delivery and impact. The longer-term outcome was to work toward shared goals and common ways to measure impact of the outreach activities.

Subhead 7: Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) – Longitudinal Analysis

Local Statistical Adjustment Model

In accordance with USDOL-ETA Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) No. 11-19, consulted with the Northern Illinois University Center for Governmental Studies (CGS) to develop the Local Statistical Adjustment Model (SAM) to be applied to PY20 performance and utilize in future local performance negotiations. Using the State PY20/21 Negotiations Tool as a template, CGS developed a model that has been tested on PY19 data and outcomes. Once PY2020 outcomes are available, the model will be updated and tested for accuracy to ensure fairness in applying it across the twenty-two local area's outcomes. The SAM will incorporate unique data from each LWIA that will produce a tool with relational adjustments by LWIA that recognize the characteristics of the participant pool and economic conditions in which they are being served.

The tool will be applied to outcomes to identify positive or negative differences that are then added to the negotiated levels of performance to determine adjusted levels of performance. This adjustment factor compares the estimated performance as predicted by the SAM at the beginning of the program year to the performance outcomes re-estimated at the end of the program year to identify the difference and adjustment factor.

Elements of the tool were provided to the local negotiation teams to consider as they developed and submitted proposed performance goals and prepared for negotiations with the State. The tool will also be utilized in the next round of local negotiations to occur in 2022 for PY22 and PY23.

Subhead 8: Evaluation Work Group under the Continuous Improvement Committee (CIC)

The IWIB Evaluation Workgroup was formed out of the work of the Evaluation Peer Learning Cohort of PY19 and includes representatives from each of the core partners. This workgroup operates as a subcommittee of the IWIB Continuous Improvement Committee. The workgroup created a draft Evaluation Framework during PY20 that is intended to be used across the IWIB to evaluate programs, policies, and processes. The framework is based on guidance from the DOL on evaluation for state workforce agencies.

The framework incorporates principles of diversity, equity and inclusion and is based on guidance from the IWIB Equity Task Force. It will be presented through an online portal.

Each section of the portal includes abstracts, video overviews, and links to further resources and information. The online portal allows for the Evaluation Framework to remain a living adaptable document that can be continuously updated and integrated.

Subhead 9: Local and State Approaches to Customer Satisfaction Data Collection

Local approaches to customer satisfaction data collection

Local approaches were taken to assess satisfaction of WIOA services received. The LWIBs focused on integration of services for job seekers and to improve employer access to the skilled workforce they need. Customer satisfaction survey results were used to implement strategies to improve service integration between WIOA program partners and providers at the state, regional, and local levels. These surveys are used throughout the State at various levels of service. The surveys were distributed to customers who utilize services at the American Job Centers (AJCs). Examples of surveys are included as Appendix 17(a)(b)(c). Services to employers and job seekers may include the Resource Room, workshops, job fairs or those enrolled in training programs. Surveys were available in-person, via a link on a computer, or virtually through Constant Contact, SurveyMonkey, and other similar programs. Survey results were analyzed and discussed during AJC team meetings. Services are shaped by feedback from business and/or job seekers and updates are made as needed for continuous improvement.

State Customer Satisfaction Survey

In April 2021, the Southern Illinois University (SIU) team developed a Customer Feedback Survey via SurveyMonkey. The purpose of the Customer Feedback Survey was to assess customers' overall satisfaction with the Illinois workNet site and the resources offered to help individuals and partners meet their employment and training goals. Efforts to bring awareness about the survey included marketing the survey on the announcement section and footer of the Illinois workNet site. In addition, a news item was sent to 118,000 individuals via email, including an incentive for participants to win a chance to receive an Illinois workNet Kit. From the survey results, a total of 491 participated. Overall, 70 percent were satisfied/very satisfied with Illinois workNet, while only 6 percent were dissatisfied. The three primary reasons why individuals utilized the site were to:

- Find job openings
- Explore career options
- Find training and education opportunities

Based on the feedback from the survey, participants' primary concerns focused around areas of employment and training opportunities, communication, and technical assistance. Seventy-nine percent of the participants stated they were likely to recommend Illinois workNet to friends and colleagues to find resources to help them achieve their employment and training goals.

Section 5: Statutory and/or Regulatory Requirements Waivers

Illinois submitted a series of waivers as part of the 2020 Unified State Plan and as standalone waivers. In summary, the status of each waiver is listed here and is followed by a more detailed description of each.

Unified State Plan Waivers

1. Allow eligible training providers to not collect performance data on all students in a training program. Approved June 28, 2018, through June 30, 2021
2. Out-of-School Youth expenditures reduction to 50 percent of Youth allocation. Approved June 28, 2018, through June 30, 2021.
3. Allow a local workforce area to be included in more than one planning region. Approved January 8, 2019, through June 30, 2022.
4. Allow ITAs for In-School Youth. Approved May 17, 2019, through June 30, 2022.
5. Adjust the six-month employment requirement for incumbent worker training (IWT). Approved May 29, 2020, through June 30, 2022.

Standalone Waivers

6. Increase the employer reimbursement rate for on-the-job training. Approved August 17, 2020, through June 30, 2022.
7. Increase the expenditure limit for transitional jobs. Approved August 17, 2020, through June 30, 2022.
8. Allow rapid response statewide funds to be used for disaster relief employment. Approved August 17, 2020, through June 30, 2022.

Allow eligible training providers to not collect performance data on all students in a training program.

Under the current waiver, Illinois has improved consumer choice by increasing the number of reportable training providers over the past 2 program years by an average of 10 percent annually and the number of training programs by an average of almost 8 percent annually.

Out-of-School Youth Expenditures Reduction to 50 percent.

As a result of this waiver, the number of In-School Youth served remained steady even though there were major impacts on schools and providers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Conversely the total number of Out-of-School Youth served during this timeframe, including those going into occupational or pre-apprenticeship training, has decreased, which further bolsters the need for the reduction in expenditures for that group from 75 percent to 50 percent. Performance accountability outcomes for overall WIOA Youth (including both in- and out-of-school youth) are projected to slightly decrease or remain steady for the majority of the WIOA Youth performance indicators. However, at this time the effects of the pandemic on registrant numbers and performance have yet to be fully realized.

Allow a local workforce area to be included in more than one planning region.

The IWIB Continuous Improvement Committee is responsible for ensuring the waiver's specific goals and outcomes are realized. Outcomes of the waiver will continue to be reported in future WIOA Annual Reports. The waiver's intent is not to impose an unviable mandate on local CEOs and workforce boards unable to restructure their county alignment. The waiver's projected outcome is to avoid creating a dysfunctional and disorganized environment that would ultimately negatively impact service delivery and customer outcomes if realignment were forced on local CEOs.

Allow ITAs for In-School Youth.

Through Program Year 2020, 17 of the state's 22 local workforce areas, spread across 8 of 10 Economic Development Regions, enrolled In-School Youth into Individual Training Accounts (ITAs), indicating a broad geographic use of the waiver. The number of students enrolled in ITAs has increased over 12 percent since the inception of the waiver. In PY 2019, In-School Youth that received an ITA have successfully exited the program with measurable skill gains (16), completed training (11), earned industry-recognized credential (14), and entered employment (11).

Adjust the six-month employment requirement for incumbent worker training (IWT).

IWT is work-based training and upskilling designed to ensure that employees of a company can acquire the skills necessary to retain employment and advance within the company, or to acquire the skills necessary to avert a layoff. Illinois was awarded a waiver to amend the definition of "incumbent worker" by adjusting the six-month employment requirement. Even though this waiver was approved during the pandemic, 12 employers trained 22 workers in projects where more than half of the workers were with the company less than six months.

Increase the employer reimbursement rate for on-the-job training (OJT).

OJT is a proven model for providing individual customers with information, instruction and training needed to meet the unique needs of the business that prepared them to be retained upon successful completion. Illinois implemented a sliding reimbursement scale to the employer based on its size and capability. Under this waiver, employers with 50 or less employees would be reimbursed up to 90 percent, those with between 51 and 250 employees up to 75 percent reimbursement and all other employers up to the statutory limit of 50 percent. As a result of this waiver, the number of OJT placements (including those in apprenticeships) has steadily increased, and the number of unique OJT employer worksites is projected to increase almost 20 percent from the previous Program Year. Additionally, most of the OJT placements have been in the manufacturing sector.

Increase the expenditure limit for transitional jobs.

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. Since the inception of the waiver two local workforce innovation boards have provided transitional job services to 23 adult participants through three employers.

Allow rapid response statewide funds to be used for disaster relief employment.

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. To date, three local workforce innovation boards have received an award under this waiver and provided disaster recovery employment at four disaster worksites.

Section 6: Promising Practices

Subhead 1: Points of Intersection between WIOA Activities

WIOA PY20 provided an opportunity to take inventory of the range of stakeholder groups engaged in setting the vision, strategy, policies, operations and professional development of Illinois' workforce development system. A WIOA Organizational Chart (Appendix 2) illustrates the current stakeholder groups and relationships and how they interact with the State's vision, strategy, policy, operations and professional development. The effort brought into focus natural points of intersection. For example, the IWIB Business Engagement Committee's Communications Work Group improved coordination with the Apprenticeship Illinois Marketing Committee. As the IWIB Business Engagement Committee considered business outreach, Vocational Rehabilitation partners elevated attention on engaging businesses that supported individuals with disabilities. The effort also identified challenges to address in PY21 such as a systems approach to coordinated intake, particularly while service delivery was expected to continue with a hybrid of in-person and remote service delivery.

The Customer Support Center (CSC) on Illinois workNet (IwN) continued to offer workforce and education partners the opportunity to facilitate programs using implementation tools to help their customers reach training and employment goals. The CSC (<https://www.illinoisworknet.com/csc>) provides a common system where partners can work together to streamline services for individuals and employers. Using a combination of role and access management allows appropriate staff to access their customers' workforce readiness information. The global CSC tools includes an invitation/agreement process, assessment, career planner, resume tools, worksite placement, success stories, and outcomes. Global tools are available at no cost to partners. Tools are customized and used to implement special state and local programs including Apprenticeship Illinois, Youth Career Pathways (YCP), the Illinois Department of Humans Services Youth Investment Program (IYIP), and the Illinois Department of Humans Services SNAP Employment & Training Program (ISETS). Customized tools include online

intake applications, eligibility and suitability determination, assessments, outcome documentation tools, a career plan builder, worksite placement, account management, referral/scheduling, dashboards, notifications, case notes/messages, and reporting. When designing an asset for a special program, we focus efforts on how to incorporate it globally for all programs, i.e., Attendance time / date tracking. Additional customized CSC enhancements during this program year included adding data fields and reports required to submit Department of Labor Workforce Integration Performance System (WIPS) reports. Research and project planning have identified enhancements required to expand the base system tools to meet the needs of SNAP Employment and Training providers.

Subhead 2: Professional Development

Professional development for the workforce system is designed by the WIOA Professional Development Committee. The committee includes representatives from DCEO, the Illinois Community College Board, the Illinois Department of Human Services, and IDES. The committee is charged with coordinating regional and statewide professional development for the WIOA System as it relates to WIOA implementation, service integration and policy. In addition, the committee facilitates and supports the Wednesday Webinar series in which they determine topics for the webinars through analysis of evaluation of previous events. Every Monday an announcement is shared with the WIOA system (800+ recipients) on upcoming WIOA professional development. All webinars are recorded, shared with registrants and can be viewed at <https://icsps.illinoisstate.edu/wioa/wednesday-webinars/2-home/64-2020-wioa-webinars>. Lastly, these webinars are archived on Illinois workNet at <https://www.illinoisworknet.com/WIOA/Resources/Pages/Archived-Training.aspx>. The evaluations from each of the webinars are reviewed quarterly by the WIOA Professional Development Committee to ensure the needs of the system are being met.

As the state embarked on the challenge of moving an entire workforce system online, the committee assisted the WIOA system by moving all professional development to a virtual delivery. The Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support (ICSPS) developed a three-part series titled *Thriving in a Virtual Workplace*. The series was presented on March 25, 2020, April 1, 2020, and April 8, 2020. Videos, slides and resources are archived on the ICSPS site and on workNet. There were 16,954 hits on the recordings and resources by July of 2020 and the series grew through the summer. A list of WIOA Wednesday Webinars is included in Appendix 13.

Subhead 3: Agreement on PY20 MOUs

As during the development of Program Year 2019 Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs), in PY20, the Interagency Technical Assistance Team worked proactively with local workforce boards, chief elected officials and required partners to identify local areas at risk of impasse during the development of MOU amendments and cost-sharing negotiations. Although COVID-19 caused unseen variables including adaptations of service delivery methods, implementation of personal protection devices and procedures and increase in security and awareness, an agreement was facilitated in all 22 local areas. Because of proactive measures and collaboration among all partners associated with the MOU processes, the Interagency Technical Assistance team was able to identify concerns and act before issues could arise, significantly reducing the number of local areas needing state-level remediation teams to address areas of a potential impasse.

Subhead 4: Sector Strategies (TPM)

In PY20, DCEO contracted with a Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) Practitioner/Fellow to promote and expand talent pipeline strategies through regional sector-based public and private partnerships. The Talent Pipeline Management, initiated by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, is an end-to-end

process that gives employers a framework to organize common pain points and be a better partner to providers for developing a work-ready talent pool. TPM drives on the insights, strategies, and tools used in supply chain management to become a talent supply chain.

The pandemic restricted travel for TPM training, so the TPM Fellow provided online orientation training to the Navigator trainees and other workforce partners with plans to move forward with an Illinois TPM Academy when travel will be allowed. The orientation training included six one-hour sessions focusing on organizing for employer leadership and collaboration; project critical job demands; align and communicate job requirements; analyzing talent supply; building talent supply chains; and engaging in continuous improvement and resiliency planning.

Sector partnerships have been established regionally in healthcare, manufacturing, transportation, distribution, and logistics. Focusing on the most hard-to-fill, high-demand positions, each sector partnership evaluates required competency, credentialing, and demand-supply and develops solutions with training providers to address the concern Illinois will continue to promote the use of Sector Strategies to create regional sector-based public/private partnerships to address common concerns and take advantage of common opportunities for businesses.

Subhead 5: Youth Career Pathways

The IWIB Career Pathways for Targeted Populations Committee (CPTP) hosts quarterly meetings for members focused on a specific industry and target population. The focus of the committee is in the following three areas as outlined in the Unified State Plan:

Activity 3.1: Promote Leading Career Pathway Models and Best Practices

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

Activity 3.3: Promote Innovative Career Pathway Solutions

The March 2020 meeting of the CPTP highlighted Opportunity Youth employment prospects in manufacturing by featuring a business in Will County, National Tube Supply, that partnered with local workforce agencies and educational institutions to provide paid job and training opportunities to youth. Through a panel discussion on service integration and a description of National Tube Supply's strategies, a model for employing Opportunity Youth, engaging them in a career pathway, and establishing local partnerships was demonstrated.

The CPTP hosted a May 2020 WIOA Wednesday Webinar highlighting service integration. The panel consisted of employers, workforce partners, and DRS representatives from throughout the State who collaborate to engage customers, in many cases youth, with support in career pathway awareness and seeking job opportunities.

Members of the CPTP also participated as reviewers for the DCEO Youth Career Pathways Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). Throughout the Summer and Fall of 2021, the CPTP plans to collaborate with the Business Engagement Committee and Apprenticeship Illinois Committee to continue focusing on service integration, continuous improvement, and career pathway awareness as it pertains to youth. They will especially look at second chance hiring for justice impacted youth and youth with physical and/or cognitive disabilities.

Subhead 6: Apprenticeships in Illinois

Apprenticeship and work-based learning programs are part of a larger strategy to help Illinois' companies develop their talent pipelines. This is supported through federal apprenticeship grants to expand the scope

and to accelerate the pace of growth of apprenticeships in Illinois. In addition, the Governor's Executive Order 3 and IWIB's Apprenticeship Committee prioritized apprenticeships.

Apprenticeship Illinois: Illinois Employment Business System (IEBS)

Significant resources have been invested in more integrated platforms that can better track real-time data related to business status, labor market information, workforce information systems and rapid response filings. Current phases are further developing the IEBS, which offers user-friendly access to Dunn & Bradstreet global business data, Illinois Department of Employment Security Labor Market Information (LMI) data, and current state workforce layoff data to rapidly assess and respond to situations and make informed decisions. The continued development of IEBS supports strategic analysis of opportunities and risks by more specific search criteria such as geography, industry, business status, business size and targeted populations. This advancement enables IEBS to support proactive outreach objectives for engagement and layoff aversion activities.

Apprenticeship Illinois Mapping

Organizations that administer apprenticeship and work-based learning activities range from state agencies, educational boards, private and employer-led initiatives, advocacy organizations, chambers of commerce, industry organizations, unions, and other networks. A summary of the groups currently active in Apprenticeship Illinois initiatives is included as Appendix 18. Another layer of complexity is that each entity differs in the types of apprenticeship and work-based learning activities they conduct, whether they are registered or non-registered apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeship or bridge programs, youth apprenticeships, or other forms of work-based learning. The nature of their involvement also varies. Entities can be funders, practitioners, intermediaries, navigators, or advocates.

An interagency process was initiated in 2020 to engage a cross-section of Apprenticeship Illinois stakeholders. Taking inventory of the different entities and work-based learning activities has helped compile information about program focus, geography, funding, and partnerships. The intent is for the data to be sortable by industry, sector, demographics, geography, or other factors that can help strengthen relationships between organizations that interact with registered and non-registered apprenticeship programs and activities. Ultimately, the inventory and continued mapping process will increase awareness and create opportunities for collaboration.

Apprenticeship Expansion through the Illinois Community College System

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) supports the development, implementation, and evaluation of the broad spectrum of work-based learning through adult education, career and technical education, and non-credit workforce programming. Various funding streams support these efforts, which have been identified as a priority within the Unified State Plan, the State's CTE Plan and the Adult Education Strategic Plan. These efforts range from career development experiences, internships, pre-apprenticeship, and apprenticeship programs.

Specifically, a statewide effort to develop and scale apprenticeship programming has been an interagency effort. Nearly two-thirds of Illinois' 48 community colleges provide apprenticeship opportunities through various employers throughout the state. The primary focus of these apprenticeship programs has been in the construction/manufacturing trades (around 85 percent-90 percent).

1. To continue these expansion efforts, in October 2018 the ICCB applied to the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) for the Scaling Apprenticeship Sector Strategies Grant (July 1, 2019-June 30, 2023). The project focuses on high-demand occupational pathways in the Information Technology Pathway Sector and uses a model that will allow multiple on ramps for apprentices at various skill levels. The model includes pre-apprenticeships bridge programs; pre-apprenticeship

related instruction such as integrated education training (integration with the adult education program); and apprenticeships, both non-registered and registered.

For the PY20, the participating colleges in this grant served 593 participants, 119 of which are participating in registered or non-registered apprenticeship programs.