



GOVERNOR JB PRITZKER'S COMMISSION ON WORKFORCE EQUITY & ACCESS

Strategic Recommendations for an Accessible, Inclusive & Responsive Workforce Development System in Illinois

APRIL 2023

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Letter from the Co-Chairs

It has been our distinct honor and privilege to lead Governor Pritzker's Commission on Workforce Equity and Access. Governor Pritzker launched this Commission upon recognizing the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people of color and the need for a streamlined, effective, and holistic state workforce development system that fully supports workers, no matter their racial, social or geographic backgrounds.

As leaders of the Commission, we partnered with a diverse group of workforce ecosystem stakeholders and undertook a comprehensive approach to consider the experiences of workers and employers throughout Illinois. We considered both what quality outcomes and success could look like for the workforce development system from the perspective of current and future users, while also developing recommendations for how state agencies could streamline their operations to offer more seamless oversight and support.

In order to truly understand the needs of workers and employers throughout the state, we used a human-centered design process to hold the Commission accountable to workers and their experiences, not simply to the problems they face. We also examined our existing governance structure and reimagined a future state workforce development system with centralized leadership and increased involvement by stakeholders representing marginalized communities.

This Commission is dedicated to the long-term success of the changes we've recommended and recognizes that racial inequity is one of the greatest barriers job seekers experience. While the people using the workforce development system are diverse, people of color are less likely to become employed even after using these programs. Illinois' diversity is one of our greatest strengths, and it's time that we invest in making our workforce development system work for every Illinoisan, no matter their background, level of experience, or where they live.

Through the work of the Commission, we've identified **accessible, inclusive, and responsive** as the three principles that, once implemented, will ensure Illinois works for the people that make Illinois work.

Signed,

Andy Manar

Deputy Governor, Budget & Economy
Office of Illinois Governor JB Pritzker

Kimberly Lightford

Senate Majority Leader
Illinois State Senate, 4th District



Introduction: Creating an Accessible, Inclusive and Responsive Workforce Development System

The Governor's Commission on Workforce Equity & Access ("Commission") was convened by the State of Illinois Governor's Office to review and improve the state's workforce development system.

Vision

The Commission was tasked with creating a vision for an equitable, accessible, and effective future state workforce development system grounded in an understanding of user and stakeholder experience, including how racial, social, and geographic inequities inform experience and outcomes across Illinois' federally and state-funded workforce programs. In alignment with this vision—and based on a stronger understanding of user and stakeholder experience—the Commission focused on developing recommendations that address the following:

- » key design enhancements to the state workforce development system,
- » the streamlining of state agencies, and
- » the governance structure and state leadership needed for execution

Through this process, the vision for Illinois' workforce development system became clear: redesign the current system to center the users, their experience, backgrounds, and overall career goals. The sections that follow describe the Commission's background, process, recommendations, and next steps for making the Commission's vision a reality.

Vision Statement:

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

The system connects people with resources within and outside the workforce development system, and provides excellent, empathetic, and comprehensive information and guidance to help people achieve their goals. The system is interoperable and addresses the whole person. It is aware of and responsive to histories of trauma and peoples' multifaceted social identities. It ensures that everyone is served with a spirit of excellence and compassion. The system connects Illinois workers to the opportunities they deserve.





Background

Broadly understood, the Illinois workforce development system consists of four federally funded programs governed by the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA), consisting of:

- » Title I—Workforce Development for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth administered by the Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO), which authorizes job training and related services to unemployed or underemployed individuals and establishes the governance and performance accountability system for WIOA.
- » Title II—Adult Education and Literacy, administered by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), which authorizes education services to assist adults in improving their basic skills, completing secondary education, and transitioning to postsecondary education.
- » Title III—Wagner-Peyser Act, administered by the Department of Employment Security (IDES), which integrates the U.S. Employment Service (Labor Exchange) into the one-stop system authorized by WIOA including equity requirements related to services for migrant and seasonal farmworkers..
- » Title IV—Vocational Rehabilitative Services, administered by the Department of Human Services (IDHS), which authorizes employment-related vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities.

In addition to these four core programs, WIOA also requires 12 additional education, service, and training programs to partner in the provision of services via the American Job Centers across the state.¹



Agency	Program Under WIOA	Description
DCEO	Trade Adjustment Assistance Act	Aids workers who have been adversely affected by foreign trade. Services are available to adversely affected workers with opportunities to obtain the skills, credentials, resources, and support necessary to become reemployed
	Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), partial	Addresses poverty among public housing residents through a set of services designed to support work including employer linkages, job placement and counseling, educational advancement, and financial counseling.
ICCB	Career and Technical Education (Perkins V)	A principal source of federal funding to states for the improvement of secondary and postsecondary career and technical education (CTE) programs. These programs develop more fully the academic, career, and technical skills of secondary and postsecondary students who elect to enroll in CTE programs.
IDES	Jobs for Veterans State Grant Program	Provides key services to veterans with significant barriers to employment, and outreach to employers to help veterans achieve employment.
	Unemployment Insurance	Provides individuals who have lost a job through no fault of their own with monetary assistance until they can secure future employment.
DHS/FCS	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	The Employment & Training (E&T) program assists TANF participants in gaining skills, training, work or experience that will increase their ability to obtain regular employment.
	Food Stamp Employment & Training	The Employment & Training (E&T) program assists SNAP participants in gaining skills, training, work or experience that will increase their ability to obtain regular employment.
Aging	Senior Community Services Employment Program	A community service and work-based job training program for older Americans. Authorized by the Older Americans Act, the program provides training for low-income, unemployed older Americans and supportive services that allow them to participate in the training and have access to employment assistance.
Corrections	Second Chance	Designed for first-time offenders. If the defendant completes the program, the charges are dismissed with prejudice. The defendant must complete an intake interview, take an initial assessment tool, and if accepted complete the requirements placed upon them by the State's Attorney's Office. There are very few programs in the state.
U.S. Department of Labor	Job Corps	A national program that operates in partnership with States and communities, Local Workforce Innovation Boards, to provide academic, career and technical education, service- learning, and social opportunities primarily in a residential setting, for low-income young people. Illinois has Job Corps Centers in Chicago and Peoria.
	Youth Build	YouthBuild is a discretionary grant program that serves 16- 24-year-old youth who are high school dropouts or those who have dropped out and subsequently re-enrolled. The program is not available statewide.
	National Farmworker Jobs Program	A nationally directed, locally administered program of services for migrant and seasonal farmworkers (MSFWs). The program partners with community organizations, state agencies, and State Monitor Advocates to provide appropriate career and training services, youth services, housing assistance services, and related assistance services, to eligible migrant farmworkers (including MSFW youth) and eligible seasonal farmworkers and their dependents.

¹Workforce Consolidation Feasibility Study: Designing a Workforce development system to Improve Customer Access & Outcomes. Illinois Workforce Innovation Board. May 2021. Pp. 30-32. <https://www.illinoisworknet.com/WIOA/Resources/Documents/Workforce%20Consolidation%20Feasibility%20Study%202021.pdf>



Illinois' workforce development system also includes several state funded training and educational programs targeted at specific populations and industries, such as the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) which focuses on developing a thriving renewable energy workforce and the Illinois Works Jobs Program Act that is designed to increase use of diverse apprentices on state-funded capital projects, creating pipelines into building trades apprenticeships. Other notable state-led workforce development programs include the career and technical education through the Illinois State Board of Education, Highway Construction Careers Training Program through the Illinois Department of Transportation, and vocational training programs through the Illinois Department of Corrections.

In 2019, Governor Pritzker issued Executive Order 2019-3 directing the four core WIOA partners – DCEO, ICCB, IDES, and DHS – to review current and potential industries targeted for economic growth and recommend how workforce resources could be better aligned to serve disenfranchised populations in communities throughout Illinois. The resulting report and action agenda helped to guide the Governor's first-term investments in workforce development, including the creation of the Apprenticeship Tax Credit, expansion of the Employer Training Investment Program, and robust investments in the state's education system, among many others.

After months of record low unemployment rates, Illinois suffered a stark decline in employment beginning in March 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the following months, Illinoisans experienced unprecedented unemployment that disproportionately impacted women and communities of color, and resulted in unequal access to economic opportunity. To better understand how to address these inequities, the Illinois General Assembly passed the **Education and Workforce Equity Act** in January 2021, Public Act 0654 of the 101st General Assembly and a key initiative of the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus, which called for the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) to "conduct a [feasibility study](#) regarding the consolidation of all workforce development programs funded by the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) into one solitary agency to create greater access to job training for underserved populations." The resulting feasibility study provided an overview of the current workforce development structure, identified opportunities for potential consolidation, included case studies of other state workforce development system models, and pinpointed areas for further research.

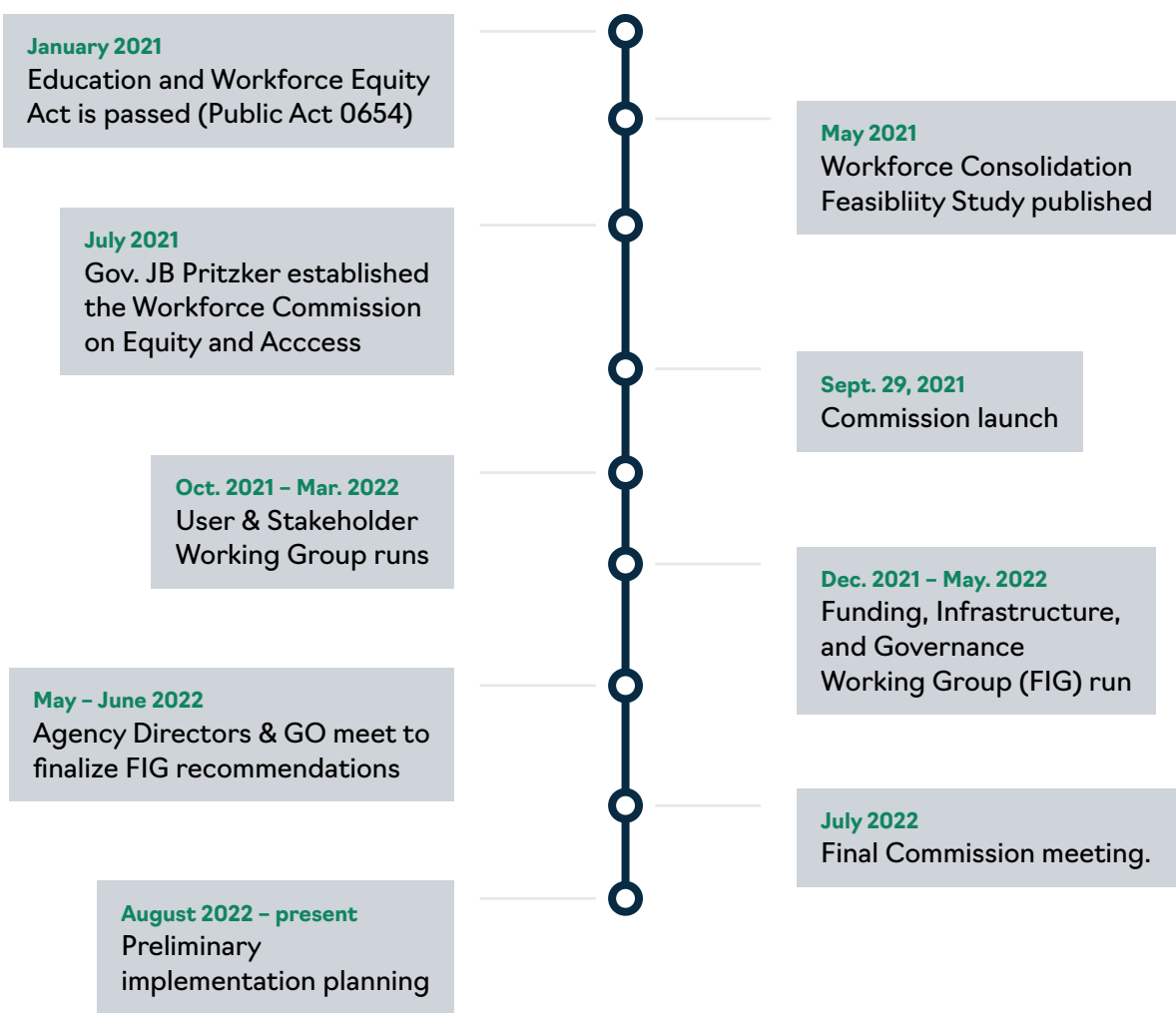


Importantly, the feasibility study recognized that state agencies administer both WIOA-funded and non-WIOA funded workforce programs, and that a broader analysis and fact gathering effort to better understand system user experience would benefit any systems integration and lead to improved labor market outcomes. The feasibility study also recommended an evaluation of the infrastructure and technology systems that support the current workforce development system for both state and federally funded programs. Acting on this, the Governor formed the Commission on Workforce Equity & Access ("Commission") to conduct comprehensive research and create a new vision and implementation process for an improved workforce development system.

Formed in September 2021, the Commission was led by Senate Majority Leader Kimberly Lightford and Illinois Deputy Governor Andy Manar and consisted of multiple education and workforce development system stakeholders and advocates from across the state to make recommendations for:

- » key design enhancements to the state workforce development system;
- » the streamlining of state agencies and their administration of workforce programs; and
- » the governance structure and state leadership needed for execution.





Process

Equity is many things: mindset, practice, tool, policy, process and outcome. Equity ensures that everyone has access to what they need so that the quality of their lives and opportunities for success improve. To achieve equity, the Commission wanted to authentically understand how people live their lives and how they could benefit most from Illinois' workforce development system. The goal was to minimize and eradicate the systemic inequities that determine a limited quality of life for people who have been historically and currently underserved and marginalized.

To ensure equity remained at the center of the Commission's process, the Commission:

- » Used a human-centered design process to anchor its inquiry
- » Designed personas to explore the specific and real-life impacts of systemic inequity and injustice
- » Remained accountable to the job seeker by including their direct experiences and voices
- » Grounded Commission meetings in a vision of what an equitable workforce development system could be
- » Ensured the meeting cadence and information-sharing process included all voices
- » Invited public comment at every meeting
- » Maintained a public website with summary materials and meeting notes
- » Acknowledged that effective support for the job seeker also requires effective support for those working with the job seeker

Comprised of thirty-five stakeholders representing employers, workforce development providers, agency leaders, and advocacy organizations, the Commission met monthly over the course of nearly a year. Two working groups—the User-Stakeholder Working Group and the Funding, Infrastructure & Governance Working Group—also met regularly, reporting back to the Commission on a monthly basis.

Goals of the User-Stakeholder Working Group	Goals of the Funding, Infrastructure & Governance Working Group
<p>Understand the user and stakeholder experience in Illinois' federal and state funded workforce programs including underlying racial and social inequities</p> <p>Identify "pain points" or points of attrition for job seekers to understand where there may be leaks in the pipeline</p> <p>Develop a vision for an equitable, accessible, and effective future state workforce development system</p> <p>Identify design improvements and enhancements for an equitable, accessible, and effective future state workforce development system</p>	<p>Recommend a vision for streamlining state agencies and related funding oversight toward workforce goals, aligned to recommendations from user and stakeholder experience working group</p> <p>Recommend a new state governance structure and scope</p> <p>Develop racial and social equity accountability measures beyond existing funding metric requirements to ensure job seekers are being prepared and placed into quality jobs</p>



The User-Stakeholder Working Group

The User-Stakeholder Working Group was tasked with developing a holistic understanding of the user and stakeholder experience, pinpointing opportunities to improve user retention, developing a vision, and identifying design enhancements that would lead to a more equitable, accessible, and effective future state workforce development system. To ensure a diverse set of perspectives, the 14-member group was comprised of Commission and non-Commission members from across the state representing community-based organizations serving individuals with criminal histories, undocumented individuals, and youth; community colleges, higher education, school districts, and literacy advocates; small businesses; American Job Centers; and workforce advocacy organizations. Together, the group set out to understand what quality outcomes and success meant for the workforce development system from the perspective of current and future users.

To accomplish their objectives, the group used a human-centered design approach. Profiles of Illinois residents, called “personas,” were created to help working group members maintain a focus on system users in their work. Derived from numerous data sources and representing multiple social identities, the use of personas enabled the working group to brainstorm how individuals from diverse perspectives and employment circumstances may interact with the workforce development system.

Through multiple listening sessions with members of the working group, each of the personas was discussed at length and individualized customer journey maps—a human-centered design tool that tells the visual story of a user’s experience engaging with a system—were developed to help illuminate common pain points and challenges within the system. The working group created a map of the employment search experience for each persona, identifying both expected and unexpected “touch points,” as well as thoughts and feelings about their journey. This process enabled working group members to empathize with the effort required of users to connect with the system in pursuit of their employment goals.

Each customer journey map was unique, though there were shared challenges across several personas. The group identified numerous “pain points,” those moments of frustration, unclarity, and demotivation in a persona’s journey that highlighted areas of improvement for the workforce development system, ways in which the opportunities and services offered could be better explained or more easily accessed or where individuals could use help navigating challenges in accessing services. From here, specific design enhancements were proposed to address the noted pain points and a new vision statement was crafted to reflect what Illinois’ workforce development system should look like.

Several focus groups were also convened throughout the Commission’s process to provide additional context and give voice to the strengths and challenges of the current system. Focus groups were held with job seekers who had “exited” from a workforce program, job seekers who had never interacted with the system, frontline staff from each of the four WIOA Title programs, and employers and employer advocates. These perspectives provided additional data points for the Commission in developing their recommendations.





The Funding, Infrastructure & Governance Working Group

With an understanding of the new vision statement and design enhancements developed by the User-Stakeholder working group, the Funding, Infrastructure & Governance (FIG) working group got to work identifying the enabling conditions necessary for implementation. The 30+ member group was comprised of state agency representatives across all four WIOA titles, related partners in the fields of corrections and immigrant rights, budget office staff, workforce advocates, local WIB officers, state equity officers, and data experts. Together, they examined other states' workforce development systems, compared governance structures across similar initiatives, and revisited the consolidation options put forth in the original [feasibility study](#). With Illinois' specific policy considerations and system landscape in mind, the FIG workgroup ultimately developed a set of directional recommendations, considerations, and guiding questions for the Commission to review.

In addition to the FIG workgroup process, the Governor's Office convened leadership across all four WIOA titles, plus other key stakeholders in the fields of education and adult and juvenile justice, to vet the feasibility of potential governance scenarios.



Personas

The representative personas were designed to explore the specific and real-life impacts of systemic inequity and injustice. They were part of the human-centered design process that was carried out by the User-Stakeholder Working Group to truly understand the needs of job seekers and how to provide the best possible experience for them.

These personas were developed by analyzing multiple data sources, including state employment data, job search engine data, and federal census data to ensure the profiles reflected the demographics and circumstances of real Illinoisans.



Alex Reyes, 35 | Naperville

Alex immigrated from the Philippines in 2004 and joined the military in 2006 as a non-citizen legal resident. He was honorably discharged with a traumatic brain injury in 2014, resulting in a divorce from his wife and a series of low-wage jobs. His injury makes it hard to find and keep work, and be taken seriously. Without a network he feels he doesn't have access to a better job.



Aloise Mendoza, 26 | Kankakee

Aloise is an openly bisexual new mother who wants to provide a stable life for her daughter. She has little to no support from family, who are not comfortable with her sexuality. She is not currently working but does get money from friends for helping with hair or makeup for occasional events. She is receiving WIC, Medicaid, and just started a TANF application.



Connie Hardig- Campbell, 38 | Metcalf

Connie is a recent widow; her husband died working on his family's soybean farm under unclear circumstances. She doesn't have a high school diploma and has no idea what to do next after having been a stay-at-home mom for the past 22 years. She is experienced in running a farm but has been cut out of her husband's family partnership. She wants to build a new life but doesn't know where to start or if it's even possible.



Dale Messick, 43 | Harrisburg

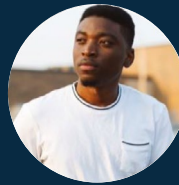
Dale and his wife look after their three teenagers and Dale's dad, who moved in with them after a black lung diagnosis. Dale has his high-school diploma and has worked maintenance for many years at Harrisburg District 03 Schools before being laid off in 2020 due to declining enrollment. He reluctantly sought unemployment for the first time and found the UI experience demeaning and frustrating. He doesn't want to be associated with taking government handouts. His lack of investment in upskilling is impacting his ability to find new work with decent pay.





Krista Townsley, 22 | Galesburg

Krista has been in and out of domestic violence shelters twice and currently lives in an abusive situation with her 3-years-old son and his father. She works part-time as a housekeeper, but doesn't have enough money for food and necessities, even with SNAP. She started meeting with a DV counselor, but their services have no links to work or training. She wants to make it on her own and provide a safe environment for herself and her son.



Marlon Moore, 21 | East Garfield Park, Chicago

Marlon works part-time with DoorDash and part-time at his uncle's clothing store, but he wants to make it as an artist. Despite receiving art awards, he's not confident about his ability to succeed in the field. In 2020, he received a misdemeanor for being out late taking photos of Black Lives Matter protests in Grant Park. He feels pressure to follow his brother's footsteps to join the military and doesn't know options are available to him.



Verna Williams, 55 | Caseyville

Verna was recently laid off from her position as a bank teller due to the branch closing. She is not emotionally or financially ready for retirement. She has a BA in sociology and wants a job where she can help people, but she's sent out hundreds of online applications and hasn't heard back. She wants to be a good role model and support to her oldest grandchild, aged 13, who lives with her and her husband.



James Aldridge, 40 | Dolton

James is married with two kids. He has a high school diploma and has completed his union apprenticeship track. He's been working full-time for the past 10 years as an electrician at AM Manufacturing Group in Munster, IN, but is frustrated with his commute. He's starting to think more seriously about saving up for his kids' college and thinks that working somewhere like the Ford plant in Calumet will bring more security.



Jason Morales, 26 | Melrose Park

Jason is the oldest of three in a third generation Mexican-American family. He is set to be released from prison after 6 years, having been convicted of aggravated battery. In prison, he earned his GED and trained in warehouse, shipping/receiving, and auto mechanics. He is uncertain how to translate his prison training into a job and concerned that his marijuana use will cause him to fail employer drug testing.

Focus Group Feedback

Throughout the Commission process and as part of the broader human-centered design process, multiple focus groups were convened with a variety of system “end-users” or stakeholders, including job seekers who participated in workforce programming; job seekers who had never interacted with the system; staff across all four WIOA titles and state workforce programs; and employers.

Job Seekers | System Users

The focus group with job seekers who have interacted with the system included 40+ individuals who participated in one or more of Illinois’ publicly funded workforce programs. Through their feedback, the Commission learned that:

- » Job seekers discover the workforce development system through many different channels—social media, faith/church groups, unemployment requirements, severance package services, and specific community organizations
- » Job seekers are unclear about what services they can access and how to access them; support is needed to simply navigate the system and that is often scarce
- » Job seekers are not satisfied with the current state-run, virtual job-matching service (e.g., Illinois Job Link) citing unhelpful match results, “fake employer” scams, and a lack of remote job listings
- » Workforce staff can make or break a job seeker’s experience within a program

However, despite job seekers saying that the workforce program they were involved with didn’t help them secure a job, an overwhelming majority said they would participate in another program in the future and/or recommend a workforce program to their loved one.

“I received job recommendations and positions that were a blanket of openings based on keywords in my resume and had no connection to my skill set and where I was looking to go.”

“Some of the opportunities that were matched to me were so out of left field that I didn’t even look at them. They didn’t even match my resume, so I assumed it was fraud.”

“Staff’s idea was me having a job—my idea was getting a job I wanted.”

“Through my severance package there was a specific week by week coaching. My coach helped me update my resume, define what I want in a job, and increase my networking.”

“Having somebody help me 1:1 was so beneficial—she provided tips on how to be assertive, how to interview well, checked-in before and after interviews.”



Job Seekers | Non-System Users

All of the nearly 40 individuals who participated in the focus groups intended for Illinoisans who have never interacted with the workforce development system were people of color, many of whom were undocumented. In discussing their labor market experience, the Commission learned that:

- » For many, experiences of hiring discrimination push them to start and run their own businesses in order to have more control over their schedules and income
- » Experiences and skill sets developed outside of the traditional education and workforce development systems tend to be undervalued. Immigrants, for example, may be nurses, farmers, engineers, or mechanics in their home countries, but end up trapped in low-skill, low-paying jobs in the U.S. due to their language barrier and/or immigration status.
- » Decisions not to engage with the workforce development system stem from a deep mistrust of government agencies, which are seen as bureaucratic and only likely to place them in the same jobs they can find themselves.
- » Community based organizations are more trusted, and many noted that job training programs that incorporate blended learning in the areas of technical skills, contextualized literacy instruction, and workers' rights education are critical in preparing them to find and retain quality jobs.



Workforce Staff | WIOA Titles I-IV

The Commission conducted four focus groups with staff from each of the core WIOA titles. Of the 57 staff who participated, 56% either disagreed or weren't sure when asked if the current workforce development system effectively centers job seekers. Asked for their assessment of some of the current workforce development system challenges, they shared that:

- » Administrative burdens and federal compliance rules (e.g., focusing on “hitting placement numbers”) impacts their ability to innovate and provides no incentive to prioritize historically disadvantaged populations
- » Having no centralized data sharing portal makes it difficult to holistically track longitudinal data of job seekers
- » Limited state investments and decreased federal funding, coupled with restrictive spending rules and guidelines, have resulted in high staff turnover, limited ability to provide up-to-date training and equipment, and constraints in providing job seekers with wrap-around supports (i.e., barrier reduction services)

The group shared several ideas for how the system could be improved for job seekers including: developing a shared intake platform and common referral process among partners; increasing marketing to promote awareness; hiring more bilingual staff; providing more digital literacy training and technology access; reducing the amount of paperwork job seekers need to fill out to receive services; and better using existing “system navigators” across programs to provide job seekers with a holistic experience.

Employers

While the focus of the Commission's human-centered design process intentionally centered the job seeker experience, the employer focus group revealed that employers also experience several of the same pain points and challenges that job seekers do. For example, businesses don't often know that the workforce development system even exists and/or lack the capacity to research and find existing programs to partner with. They also don't have the bandwidth to handle the administrative burden that comes with engaging workforce services. The group noted that many employers would benefit from a “system navigator” who could help them connect to appropriate services and answer their questions when exploring a workforce development system partnership.



Strategies for a more Accessible, Inclusive, and Responsive Workforce Development System

Based on the personas, customer journey maps developed by the User-Stakeholder working group, and focus group data, the following themes were brainstormed, that when taken together describe the vision for a more equitable workforce development system.



Out of these themes, the Commission's recommendations, intended for the Governor, policy makers, and workforce stakeholders, are organized within three strategic principles that will ensure an **accessible**, **inclusive** and **responsive** workforce development system in Illinois.

Accessible

The recommendations within the Accessible Principle focus on improving user experience by creating more points of entry to workforce services, while simultaneously increasing marketing to make potential users more aware of the services available to them and community-level engagement to reach people where they are.

During these discussions, the Commission was rightfully reminded how synonymous the term "accessibility" is with the disability community. Increasing accessibility for individuals with disabilities is tied to very specific activities, such as redesigning physical spaces to be more accommodating for wheelchairs or ensuring adaptive or assistive technology is available for the completion of specific tasks. This is different from "usability" in which existing environments are not necessarily modified but made more effective, efficient, convenient, or satisfying for existing users. As the Commission addressed the issue of accessibility, it did so from the broadest possible lens, identifying design enhancements that would increase accessibility, access, and usability, accommodating those with disabilities as well as those without.

With this in mind, and by way of example, the User-Stakeholder workgroup examined the persona of Connie, a prospective system user who is unsure about how to reengage in the workforce after becoming a widow and who will likely face multiple hurdles in navigating the state's current workforce development system. Connie's first hurdle may be just knowing that Illinois has a workforce development system that can help her. Living in a small town in rural Illinois, Connie's second hurdle might be getting connected to an American Job Center or nearby program that is convenient to visit and will ensure she has a positive experience. Connie's grief and intense self-doubt about her qualifications may require staff to use different methods of outreach and sensitivity to meet her where she's at. Additionally, staff may require intentional training on how to increase Connie's digital literacy skills to help her both choose and ultimately thrive in a job training program or educational pathway.



Accessible Principle – Pain Point #1

Many prospective system users do not know how to access the Illinois workforce development system or what services are offered. For those who have accessed the system, many have had negative experiences, resulting in an unfavorable view of the system.

Recommendations

Develop a Coordinated and Aligned Outreach & Engagement Strategy

- » Implement a cohesive, system wide workforce marketing campaign designed to reach those job seekers and employers who are not currently engaged, employing credible messengers and incorporating testimonials from successful system users. Publicize this campaign and market workforce development services on popular search engine platforms (e.g. Monster, Indeed, LinkedIn, ZipRecruiter, Craigslist).
- » Redesign and enhance outreach efforts to “meet users where they are,” specifically prioritizing messaging for: social media, faith/church groups, unemployment offices, severance package services, and specific community organizations.
- » Support the American Job Centers to proactively network and develop deep relationships with community-and faith-based organizations, and other institutions where non-users might seek assistance.
- » Bring services into communities by expanding the mobile workforce center model, like that currently being piloted in East Central Illinois by the Champaign County Regional Planning Commission. The mobile vehicle travels to various events and public locations across a five-county area to provide job seekers with career pathway information, job search assistance, and connections to local resources using Wi-Fi hot spots and laptops.² Similar initiatives have been rolled out in other states such as Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, and North Carolina.
- » Provide training to staff at American Job Centers and local workforce areas to communicate messages and engage with users in ways that make clear that services offered are a lifelong resource for all residents as they seek employment and build a career.

Staffing & System Navigators

- » Increase staffing focused on proactive outreach and user recruitment while prioritizing hiring administrators, managers, and frontline staff from a diversity of identities and with lived experience in successfully seeking services from the system.
- » Prioritize the expansion of “navigator” programs/positions (both new and existing) to support job seekers’ ability to get connected to relevant workforce programming and to access related human services’ programming.

Multiple modes of engagement

The COVID-19 pandemic shifted how users and stakeholders engage with the workforce development system. In some ways it exacerbated the digital divide but also encouraged employers and state and local workforce partners to rapidly increase virtual offerings. This recommendation proposes that all state and local workforce providers offer hybrid modes of service to match a wide range of user needs and preferences.

- » Leverage new technology for “mobile-first” and hybrid meetings to offer different attendance options for job seekers meeting with workforce staff and/or attending training.
- » Develop a mobile app to enable users to schedule appointments and update personal information in data systems similar to a medical/healthcare model.
- » Co-locate more services together in the same physical location.
- » Increase investments in digital literacy and broadband access to reduce the digital divide and allow for greater job-seeker participation in every part of the state.

Investments to reduce barriers to engagement

The Commission process revealed how, for many job seekers, barriers outside the workforce development system – such as lack of reliable transportation or childcare or internet access – prevent them from accessing workforce services. Other job seekers simply cannot afford to take time away from paid employment for career training, even if that training would ultimately yield longer-term earnings and career growth. The Commission acknowledged that recent investments by the state like the Job Training and Economic Development (JTED) program, Illinois Broadband Adoption Fund Act, and the Workforce Equity Initiative through Illinois Community College Board have funded barrier reduction efforts. However, the Commission recommended that greater, long-term state investment in barrier reduction services such as these models, will help job seekers obtain and retain a quality job.

Ensure state contingency plans are in place to address both forecasted and unexpected failures in the federal funding pipeline so that providers and clients do not experience a disruption in services.

² <https://ccrpc.org/news/2022/new-mobile-workforce-center-to-bring-the-rpcs-services-directly-to-job-seekers-in-five-county-area/>





Inclusive

Accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the country's racial reckoning, Illinois' system partners have intentionally moved to develop and adopt more inclusive practices. For example, the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) created the Equity Task Force (ETF) in October 2020 to address equity within the state's workforce development system and ensure that all customers are on pathways to success. The recommendations from this [report](#) both echoed and amplified those of the Commission. More locally, the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership undertook efforts to ensure all their one-stop partners were equipped and aligned to provide the same level and quality of service delivery to all customers regardless of their demographics. This work serves as a model for other local workforce boards across the state.

Despite these positive developments, the Commission found that users still may experience an unwelcoming, burdensome, and in some cases re-traumatizing environment when they attempt to access Illinois' workforce development services. Whether it's federally-driven compliance requirements, the lack of integrated technology, poor communication about what to expect during an appointment, or the intimidating presence of armed security guards, the current environment is not always welcoming or inclusive.

For someone like Dale who's already wary of "government handouts" and has had prior negative experiences, unnecessary steps, and a lack of information about what to expect could be the final straw, deterring him from ever seeking services again. On the other hand, for someone like Marlon, who wants to be an artist but doesn't know where to start, a well-trained staff member who can inform him about possible careers and prepare him for a skills assessment could make a huge difference in his career trajectory.



Inclusive Principle – Pain Point #1

Eliminate practices that are redundant, burdensome, and that re-traumatize users (e.g. continuously recounting personal circumstances to demonstrate eligibility and worthiness of support, resubmitting the same documents repeatedly, etc.)

Recommendations

Policies

Investigate and identify rules, policies and/or procedures that create unnecessary steps for users to access system services

- » Create shared, single-point eligibility processes when possible to avoid duplication and re-traumatization.
- » Partner with stakeholders to advocate for changes to burdensome federal eligibility requirements. Opportunities exist with the WIOA-reauthorization process expected to be considered by the U.S. Congress in 2024.

Shared Customer Information Database

Create a shared, integrated information management system for all WIOA partners/program administrators that is easy to access, requires minimum data entry, and decreases user repetition. Address cyber security issues as the system is designed.

Data management

Create one new staff position with a line of sight across all four WIOA titles that is solely responsible and accountable for ensuring quality data entry and data management; this position, as with all positions in the Illinois workforce development system, must be a living wage job.

Trauma-informed training

Require all system staff to receive training to understand how trauma works to avoid enacting policies and procedures that re-traumatize system users. The training should emphasize that trauma can be experienced in multiple ways—through one-time life events such as the death of a loved one or job loss; through recurring circumstances such as homelessness or systemic racism; or through situational experiences such as having to repeatedly record one's "deficiencies" in order to receive services.

Operating culture

Assess the operating culture of American Job Centers (AJCs) and require service providers and system staff to adopt a user-centered approach; mirror attributes of the community college learner experience that feature a user-centered approach. Specifically, empower AJCs to shift from a one-size-fits-all mentality to an individualized, experiential, contextualized and transformative experience for users that allows for hands-on learning and experimentation.

Communicate user expectations

Require workforce development system agencies and contractors to adopt an automated, personalized email strategy to provide users with timely, clear, and accurate appointment expectations, including: duration, required documentation, modality options, etc.

- » Design and implement streamlined, multimodal system entry points (e.g., in-person, email, text, etc.) with a new, short screening form to guide users (and staff) on program options and eligibility. Connect submitted data to user/case records across agencies.

Career-long services

Adopt a membership-like model at AJCs that promotes a sense of belonging and provides support to workers throughout their career.



Inclusive Principle – Pain Point #2

The condition and management of AJCs varies across the State which can cause variability in how welcoming front door reception and physical spaces appear to users.

Recommendations

Physical space

Assess the condition of AJCs across the state and ensure AJCs are warm and welcoming. Job seekers should be actively involved in the office space assessment process and any physical design improvements should adhere to contemporary user-centered design principles.

Consistent branding

Reduce user confusion by making Illinois workforce development system branding consistent across all system entry points.

Technology

Investigate and adopt other electronic pathways for accessing and interacting with the system (i.e., QR codes, an app that enables users to communicate with case managers and update their interests, needs, and progress working toward goals, etc.). Install self-serve kiosks in AJCs and other popular locations to enable visitors to identify their preferred service options.

Security guard training

Train all staff, including AJC security guards, in customer service best practices. No longer permit security guards to carry handguns.

Inclusive Principle – Pain Point #3

Assessments to determine eligibility for some services, such as the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), cause fear among system users. Used as a tool within WIOA to determine whether someone is “basic skills deficient” (per federal WIOA lexicon), these tests and assessments can feel demeaning and exacerbate a job seeker’s general test-taking fear and anxiety.

Recommendations

Clearly communicate which skills assessments will be used to determine qualifications for training

Offer and/or expand resources and supports, such as group test-prep courses and individual tutoring, to help users prepare for the assessment.

Eliminate outdated assessments, such as the TABE

Research, identify, and pilot alternative assessments that balance the objectives of federal requirements with approaches that rely on experiential and hands-on learning methods, and social-emotional learning techniques.

Advocate for changes to assessments for federally funded programs

Work with USDOL and other federal agency partners to make federally-required assessments more customer-centered, culturally responsive, and easy to understand.

Skills-based approach

Focus assessment for job applicants on skills required for specific jobs. Work with employers to adopt a skills-based hiring approach that sets specific skills or competency requirements for job roles, rather than using requirements like degree attainment.



Responsive

Illinois' workforce development system should work for users on every level. This means that staff must be responsive to a full range of user needs, supporting the development of life skills in addition to job skills and providing trauma-informed and culturally competent service delivery. For Krista, a domestic violence survivor, or Aloise, a new mom relying on WIC and Medicaid, meeting with staff who can show empathy and understanding may be just as important as the career services they can provide.

The current system has work to do in this area. Training for many occupations is not covered by federal funding which severely limits user choice and offers a prescriptive and narrow-minded view of the kinds of jobs users should pursue. Job seekers who are interested in nurturing their entrepreneurial skills or interests are also not well served by the current system. Users like Marlon who has an interest in photography and wants to pursue this passion, or Aloise who has always thought about opening her own hair or makeup business, for example, are overlooked. Illinois needs a system that gives Marlon and Aloise the information and connections to explore self-employment or translate their existing skills into jobs, even if those jobs are not ones classified as "high demand" by the federal funding agencies.

Responsive Principle – Pain Point #1

While relevant professional development training is offered for frontline staff via DCEO and IDES in the form of Workforce Wednesday Webinars, an annual statewide workforce summit, regional roundtables as appropriate, and specialized project based technical assistance, additional content and options are needed to ensure all staff are equipped to appropriately serve and respond to the full range of user needs.

Recommendations

User-centered training

Require all employees and contractors—from executives to front-line staff—to take training at regular intervals that reinforces a user-centered approach to service delivery.

- » Develop training for existing managers on how to support frontline staff's learning and growth; provide managers with coaching support or "booster" sessions to reinforce training content.
- » Develop metrics aligned with training to monitor frontline staff growth and development; use metrics to continuously refine future training strategies.
- » Make senior staff and contractors accountable for user-experience metrics in performance assessments and contract reviews.

Support career development while addressing basic life needs

Train staff to use a coaching approach with job seekers to help them both identify and address related needs and barriers that may impact their job search (e.g., food scarcity, unstable housing, medical issues, etc.).

Take a strengths-based and racial equity approach to service delivery

Prioritize training in the following areas for front line staff: trauma-informed service delivery, cultural competence and humility, self-awareness, empathy, the ability to infuse hope, employees' labor rights, implicit bias, microaggressions, and power and privilege.

Onboard new staff and develop transition plans for current staff

- » Screen applicants / new hires for implicit bias.
- » Detail expectations for staff/user interactions as a standard part of interviews and onboarding activities.
- » Evaluate whether prospective staff or administrators will understand and approach job seekers using a strengths based or human-centered approach to service delivery.
- » Develop transition plans for current staff who are unable to shift to a strengths-based, human-centered service delivery perspective to ensure continuity of services.

Morale of Front Line Staff

Recognizing that implementing new performance expectations may impact morale and retention of front line staff, work with public sector unions and other labor representatives to identify strategies for addressing frontline staff needs and requests at AJCs and other agencies.

Feedback

Establish protocols for regularly inviting and then incorporating user feedback about their experience accessing and engaging with the Illinois workforce development system. Use this data to update training strategies and staff performance expectations.

Agency coordination

Develop new or modify current positions to prioritize agency coordination of services.



Responsive Principle – Pain Point #2

As a steward of limited resources, the state has prioritized investing training dollars in high-demand occupations, which leaves out some user-choice occupations like cosmetology, styling, and photography to name a few. The state should explore/evaluate how to balance customer choice with the current eligible training structure.

Recommendations

Allocate state funding to fill gaps and provide training for occupations not covered by federal funds

Allocate state funding and build system relationships with sectoral training providers for job training and career pathways that are not currently covered by federal funding.

Connect users to employers not covered by federal funds

Facilitate user connections with employers outside of industries supported by federal funding.

Responsive Principle – Pain Point #3

There are digital literacy-related needs among system users that, if not addressed, will reduce their competitiveness in the labor market.

Recommendations

Provide digital literacy training for users

Widely promote and offer digital literacy training to users; regularly update offerings to keep pace with changing industry needs.

Provide digital literacy training for system staff

Regularly assess staff digital literacy and provide digital literacy training.

Provide multi-modal job search and application options

Provide pathways to connect with employers for users who are not comfortable with online job search engines.

Regularly update and replace technology at all American Job Centers to ensure staff and participants are being trained on the most up-to-date equipment.

Responsive Principle – Pain Point #4

The system is not well-equipped to recognize individuals with entrepreneurial skills and interests.

Recommendations

Offer certifications & non-credit credentials

To build employer confidence in hiring candidates with non-traditional resumes, increase employer awareness and recognition of Illinois' digital badging programs as a means of offering employer-recognized certification through the American Job Centers for user skills acquired informally and through previous employment.

Invest in community-college based curriculum development and delivery of non-credit certificates to provide individuals with specific technical skills, gain industry recognized credentials and help meet the needs of employers in emerging, high growth industries.

Support transitions to entrepreneurship

Expand support for transitions to self-employment and microenterprise.

- » As an allowable expense under federal WIOA law, ensure local workforce boards reimburse the costs associated with entrepreneurial and nontraditional employment training. Expand workforce staff's knowledge of and ability to connect users interested in self-employment opportunities to local resources.
- » Invest in small-business development best-practice programming across the state, such as [Elevate](#) that works to prepare diverse contractors to enter the clean energy economy or [Sunshine Enterprises](#) that provides micro-loans and business education training to Black entrepreneurs from Chicago's South and West sides.
- » Evaluate the benefits to the state of joining the voluntary [Self-Employment Assistance Program](#) offered by the U.S. Department of Labor to encourage and enable unemployed workers to create their own jobs by starting a small business.



Conditions for Implementation

The Commission's recommended enhancements to the workforce development system will require cross-agency collaboration and coordination throughout the State. The State will be responsible for creating strategic priorities, supporting the infrastructure to implement the Commission's recommendations, and directing funds to ensure that the re-envisioned workforce development system will lead to a more accessible, inclusive, and responsive experience for workers throughout Illinois.

The Commission recommends these actions to ensure the Commission's vision is realized:

- » Creation of a State Chief Workforce Officer
- » Revitalization and reconstitution of the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board
- » Allocation of state and federal funding to prioritized design enhancements recommended by this Commission

Creation of a State Chief Workforce Officer

The Commission recommends the establishment in legislation of a Chief Workforce Officer (CWO). At the direction of the Governor, this position would lead, oversee, and set strategic goals for all state and federal workforce programs administered by state agencies while driving and monitoring toward those outcomes. The person in this role would ensure that all state workforce goals align with the Commission's vision. A powerful advocate for the state's jobseekers and workforce development system users, the CWO would identify rules, policies and/or procedures that create unnecessary steps in accessing system services and dismantle barriers across the system to allow more time for actual service delivery. The CWO would create and maintain key stakeholder engagement channels and drive strategic marketing of the state's workforce development system.

The CWO would coordinate cross-agency and be responsible for educating and acting as a resource for state and federal policy makers. This position would serve as a co-chair on the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) and recommend and proactively manage membership of the revitalized IWIB in alignment with the Commission's vision. They would empower local workforce boards in alignment with the Commission's vision. They would use an equity lens and any available racial, gender, and socio-economic impact assessments in the development of policy decisions.

The Commission notes that creation of the CWO position would not prohibit any future consolidation of workforce programs but would serve as a necessary governance precursor to ensure the Commission's strategic vision and policy outcomes are met.

Revitalize and Reconstitute the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board

The Commission recognizes the vital importance of a workforce advisory board to oversee the implementation of the state's workforce development system and advise the Governor and his cabinet on policy priorities, workforce trends, and opportunities for additional investment. The Commission further recognizes the progress and transformational work of the current Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB), particularly with the establishment of the Apprenticeship Committee, the recommendations of the Equity Task Force, and the swift creation of a re-opening plan for AJCs in the wake of COVID. However, in order to reconcile the Commission's vision for the workforce development system and implement design enhancements in partnership with a Chief Workforce Officer, the Commission recommends a revitalization and reconstitution of the IWIB. Revitalization and reconstitution activities include:

- » Assigning the Chief Workforce Officer to serve as co-chair of the Board
- » Filling existing vacancies to ensure a diversity of perspectives are represented



- » (Re)engaging and recruiting small, medium, and large employers across Illinois' geographies that are representative of key and emerging industries and have interacted with the workforce development system in some way
- » Aligning the Board's strategic plan with the Governor's 5-year economic development plan
- » (Re)engaging with the state legislature
- » Broadening membership to include representatives from agencies with state funded workforce programs
- » Including workers' voices through either board or committee involvement
- » Streamlining the Board's committee structure to ensure alignment with the Commission's vision and maximize impact

Responsibilities of the new Illinois Workforce Innovation Board should include assisting the Governor in the development and implementation of a unified state plan and guiding the use of WIOA dollars within agencies, while monitoring and reporting on federal performance requirements. Additionally, the revitalized IWIB would strategically identify and elevate: burdensome federal requirements for jobseekers and employers in order to advocate for improvements, changes that can be made at the state level to eliminate employer pain points, local opportunities for improved alignment to the state-wide vision and desired outcomes for jobseekers, and emerging workforce trends to help inform and drive decisions that need to be made by the Governor and the General Assembly. In order to publicly signal a revitalized and reconstituted IWIB, the Commission recommends renaming it the "Illinois Workforce Council".

Assign state and federal funding to prioritized design enhancements recommended by this Commission

Implementing and sustaining the Commission's recommendations will require state funding and the potential reallocation of existing federal WIOA funds and their set-asides. Short-term investments will need to go towards transitional activities, including recruitment and onboarding support of the Chief Workforce Officer, initial design enhancement prioritization, stakeholder communications, and IWIB revitalization efforts.

New state investments should prioritize programs that align with and push forward the Commission's recommended vision, including programs that work to address economic racial disparities, address barrier reduction, and close the digital divide.

Conclusion

By using a comprehensive human-centered design approach to analyze Illinois' current workforce development system, the Commission identified needed improvements and formed recommendations to ensure the long-term success of a more accessible, inclusive, and responsive workforce development system.

A more accessible workforce development system that attracts job seekers like Connie from Metcalf, IL who is struggling after the loss of her husband and doesn't know where to turn or what resources exist for job support. A more inclusive workforce development system that welcomes veterans like Alex from Naperville, IL who needs a job that can accommodate the traumatic-brain injury he sustained in combat and is struggling with loneliness and isolation. A more responsive workforce development system that welcomes entrepreneurs like Marlon from East Garfield Park, IL who wants to pursue his artistic passions but doesn't know what career options exist for him.

Illinois job seekers need a workforce development system that connects them to the opportunities they deserve. From our urban centers to our rural foundations, workers should be able to equitably access quality education, training, and supportive services throughout their careers and these services should be provided with care and compassion, customized to meet each worker where they are on their career journey and to address their individual needs and circumstances. This approach will not only help that individual, but will help grow the Illinois economy and foster a skilled, competitive workforce. The recommendations for increased funding, establishment of a Chief Workforce Officer, and revitalization of the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board are critical first steps to ensuring this new vision is realized.



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Appendix

Data Sources for personas:

News sources

- Chicago Tribune
- Washington Post
- St. Louis Post-Dispatch
- Several downstate papers and papers local to personas
- Google News searches

Quantitative data

- Illinois Virtual LMI
- Census Bureau place and population characteristics data from various surveys
- CDC data on COVID incidence & vaccination
- USDA crop data and Rural-Urban Continuum
- Bureau of Labor Statistics
- ...Job openings and labor turnover
- ...Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages
- ...Mass Layoff Reports
- ...Occupational classification, job ladders, and occupational outlook

Maps and localities

- Google maps
- Career OneStop Job Center Finder
- MIT local Living Wage calculator
- Prosperity Now's community Prosperity Index
- New America's map of financial services providers
- Yelp
- Indeed job search
- Glassdoor employer reviews and salary information
- Zillow
- Apartment Finder
- Craigslist

Other

- Web searches for specific information for a persona (e.g. Dept of Veterans Affairs disability FAQs and explainers for Alex)
- Ethnographic literature that focuses on Chicago or communities similar to those of the personas.
- IL Department of Public Health and US Social Security Administration
- Unsplash.com and Shutterstock.com for persona photographs



Recommended Infrastructure & Job Descriptions

Chief Workforce Officer | Selected Responsibilities

Accountability

- » Adopt the Commission's **vision for the state's workforce development system**, which, in its focus on equity and access, calls for the system to be whole-person centered, trauma-informed, compassionate, and comprehensive to pathways to fulfilling work
- » Identify, monitor, and report on **state-wide outcome goals** - that are aligned to the equity and access-centered vision and require cross-agency efforts - while ensuring accountability to existing **federal and future state performance requirements**
- » Use an equity lens and any available data and assessments to ensure racial, gender, and socio-economic equity within the system.
- » Recommend and proactively manage membership of the revitalized and reconstituted **Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (renamed the "Illinois Workforce Council")**

Advocacy & Education

- » Educate and be the resource for federal, state, and local **policymakers**
- » Oversee and/or collaborate and be a **resource for any task forces** created that have the potential to drive toward the state's workforce vision
- » Empower **local decision-makers to work in alignment** toward the adopted state workforce vision, leveraging technology and data
- » **Partner with federal agencies to identify and advocate for the elimination of unnecessary and burdensome** eligibility and assessment requirements

Communications & Engagement

- » Oversee and coordinate **unified branding efforts**
- » Create and maintain **stakeholder engagement channels**

Administration

- » Set **programmatic priorities** within the state toward the vision and identified equity and access outcomes
- » Coordinate, align, and **support cross-agency efforts** to plan and implement prioritized design enhancements
- » Identify and maintain necessary **systems to track, monitor and report data** toward stated outcomes
- » Investigate and identify rules, policies and/or procedures that create unnecessary steps for users to access system services, **dismantling barriers across the system** to allow more time for actual service delivery
- » Establish **unified definitions and strategies**

Funding & Budget

- » Review and evaluate submitted agency budgets, and **recommend** how the Governor should direct the allocation of **state workforce funds, title fund set-aside (federal) dollars and other statewide grants** (i.e. CEJA, Re-Entry)
- » Oversee and be informed by Illinois Workforce Council on the use of **federal WIOA funding**
- » Evaluate **federal and private grant opportunities** and direct application process, alongside and supplemental to ongoing agency efforts



Illinois Workforce Council (Revitalized IWIB) | Responsibilities

Accountability

- » Co-Chaired by the Chief Workforce Officer
- » Assist the Governor in the development and implementation of a unified state plan
- » Monitor toward and report on federal performance requirements
- » Utilize racial equity impact assessment in policy decisions and embed racial, gender, and socio-economic equity in processes.

Administration

- » Determine eligibility criteria for providers
- » Recommend to the Governor the use of federal WIOA dollars
- » Create opportunity for innovation and new program considerations toward state-wide goals and vision

Advocacy & Education

- » Elevate federal requirements that create burdens for jobseekers & employers in efforts to drive improvements
- » Elevate changes that can be made at the state level to eliminate employer pain points
- » Elevate local opportunities for improved alignment to state-wide vision and desired outcomes for jobseekers



Name	Title	Organization
Andy Manar (Co-Chair)	Deputy Governor	Office of the Governor
Angela Morrison	Policy Engagement Manager	Chicago Jobs Council
Anthony Jerry Womick	Business Manager	Laborers' Local 773
Brian Durham	Executive Director	Illinois Community College Board
Cherita Ellens	Chief Executive Officer	Women Employed
Deborah Cosey-Lane	Secretary-Treasurer	Amalgamated Transit Union
Don Finn	Business Manager & Financial Secretary	International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 134
Dorval Carter	President	Chicago Transit Authority
Elba Aranda-Suh	Executive Director	National Latino Education Institute
Erica Swinney Staley	Executive Director	Manufacturing Renaissance
Grace Hou	Secretary	Illinois Department of Human Services
Jane Flanagan	Director	Illinois Department of Labor
Jason Ashmore	Secretary-Treasurer, Business Representative	International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Local 50
John Herring	Executive Director	Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living
John Rico	Co-Chair	Illinois Workforce Innovation Board
Marisa Lewis Karin Norington-Reaves	Board Liaison & Chief Policy Officer Chief Executive Officer	Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership
Kathy Lively	Chief Executive Officer	Man-Tra-Con, Inc.
Ken Trzaska	President	Lewis & Clark Community College
Kimberly Lightford (Co-Chair)	Senator	Illinois General Assembly
Kristin Richards	Director	Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity <i>formerly, Director of Illinois Department of Employment Security</i>
Laurie Phillips	President	TerraSource Global
Lazaro Lopez	Associate Superintendent for Teaching & Learning	District 214, Arlington Heights
Lisa Bly-Jones, Ed.D.	CEO	Chicago Jobs Council
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Michael Kleinik	Director	Illinois Department of Labor
Mollie Dowling	President	OAI
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Oswaldo Alvarez	Director	Illinois Legislative Latino Caucus Foundation <i>formerly, Executive Director of the Chicago Workers Collaborative</i>
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Sylvia Garcia	Former Acting Director	Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity
Tom Wendorf	Co Chair Business Engagement Committee	Illinois Workforce Innovation Board
Victor Dickson	President & Chief Executive Officer	Safer Foundation



Name	Title	Organization
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Cherita Ellens (Co-chair)	President & CEO	Women Employed
Geri Agiplay	Regional Administrator	Great Lakes Region V U.S. Small Business Association <i>formerly, Director of the Small Business Majority</i>
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Jeff Gawel	Chief Information & Technology Officer	United Way of Metro Chicago <i>formerly, Chief Information Officer at Illinois Action for Children</i>
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John Herring	Executive Director	Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living
Jose Wilson	Director of Facilitation and Organizational Learning	North Lawndale Employment Network (NLEN)
Kathy Lively (Co-chair)	Executive Director	Southern Illinois Workforce Development Board Management, Training, and Consulting, Corp. (Man-Tra-Con)
Lazaro Lopez (Laz)	Associate Superintendent of Teaching and Learning	District 214, Arlington Heights
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Sarah Hartwick	Vice President of Education & Workforce Policy	Illinois Manufacturers' Association
Sheila Quirk-Bailey	President	Illinois Central College



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Rahnee Patrick	Director, Division of Rehabilitation Services	Illinois Department of Human Services
Ruth Lopez McCarthy	Senior Immigration Fellow	State of Illinois
Dr. Sekile Nzinga	Chief Diversity Officer for the State of Illinois	State of Illinois
Terry Wilkerson	President	Rend Lake College
Tim Verry	Director, Division of Family and Community Services	Illinois Department of Human Services
Tony Fuhrmann	Director	LWIA 22, Madison County

