

WIOA REGIONAL & LOCAL PLAN

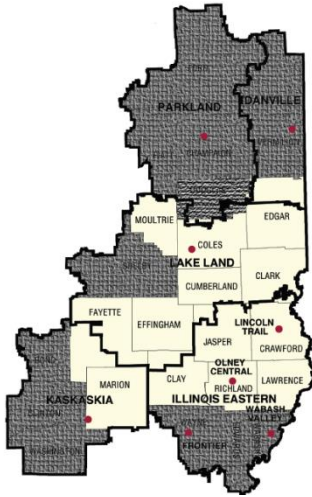
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REGION 7
LOCAL WORKFORCE INNOVATION AREA 23

2020 - 2024
2022 Modification



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In compliance with the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the State of Illinois' vision for workforce and WIOA local and regional implementation, the LWIA 23 Board, and the core and required partners and stakeholders of Economic Development Region 7 (EDR 7), respectfully submit this Regional and Local Planning Guide for program year 2020-2023 to the Illinois Department of Commerce.



While creating this regional plan, the EDR 7 core partners and stakeholders focused upon service integration which combines strategies to align and simplify access to one-stop center services. The members further reviewed the plan to ensure that support for employers and customers is provided in a coordinated and professional manner. This regional plan allows for service integration to occur across entities which deliver specific services or programs, and also allows for change across time to meet customer needs.

Additionally, core partners and stakeholders addressed the challenge of an economic region that spans a large rural area. EDR 7, also called the “southeastern region,” encompasses 13 counties. The rural distribution of the region presents some challenging aspects to coordination and provision of services under WIOA guidelines.

STATE AGENCY CAPACITY

The following is a list of the state agencies and boards that are responsible for the administration of the workforce, education, and economic development programs outlined in WIOA.

Illinois Department of Commerce (DCEO)	Illinois Community College Board (ICCB)	Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES)	Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS)	Illinois Department on Aging	Illinois Department of Corrections (DOC)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker Programs (Title IB) • Employment and Training under the Community Services Block Grant Program • Trade Act Programs • Regional Economic Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult Education and Family Literacy (Title II) • Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wagner-Peyser Employment Services including Labor Market Information (Title III) • Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers Program • Veterans Employment and Training Services • Unemployment Insurance Services • TRA - Trade Readjustment Assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehabilitation Services for Individuals with Disabilities (Title IV) • Temporary Assistance for Needy Families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Community Services Employment Program (Title V of the Older Americans Act) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sec. 212 of the Second Chance Act of 2007

Illinois Department of Commerce (DCEO)

DCEO is the state agency that leads economic development efforts for Illinois and is responsible for the WIOA Title IB activities. Key program activities include distributing WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth formula funds, Trade Act funds and National Emergency Grants to 22 local workforce areas, monitoring the local areas' use of WIOA funds, and providing technical assistance to local areas. DCEO is responsible for the administration of both the required and allowed Governor's Statewide Workforce Activities, as outlined in WIOA. DCEO issues formal guidance to the local areas through policy letters and notices designed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery. DCEO also provides staff support to the state workforce board and its committees and ad hoc task forces. As part of the Bureau of Community Development, DCEO also oversees the employment and training programs under the Community Services Block Grant Program (CSBG).

Illinois Community College Board (ICCB)

The ICCB has the responsibility of overseeing Title II activities under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act. Services provided include, but are not limited to, assessment, basic skills instruction, English language acquisition instruction, high school equivalency instruction, career awareness, workforce preparation, online instruction, bridge programs, as well as accelerated education and vocational training programs. Currently, there are 86 providers of Adult Education and Family Literacy in Illinois that consist of community colleges, community-based organizations, regional offices of education and other approved providers.

The mission and vision of Adult Education is to provide every individual in Illinois access to Adult Education and Literacy services. In Illinois, more than 1.4 million adults have less than 12 grades of formal education, and approximately three million Illinois residents speak a language other than English in their home. In Economic Development Region 7, this translates to approximate 30,000 residents with less than 12 grades of formal education (including diploma or high school diploma equivalency), and approximately 9,550 residents who speak a language other than English in their homes. The high school equivalency and English Language Acquisitions courses assist community members with the first step into education.

The ICCB seeks to prepare adult learners to compete for jobs of the present and the future. To accomplish this, it is necessary to provide high-quality, accessible, cost-effective educational opportunities for the individuals and communities served, while being held accountable by the students, employers, lawmakers, and taxpayers of Illinois.

Illinois' community college Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs serve more than 131,000 students. Programs offer flexible scheduling, work-based learning, and stackable credentials that provide a pathway from education to employment not only for recent high school graduates, but also for returning adults, veterans, and workers wanting to update their skills. Sixty-three percent of Illinois high school students taking CTE courses in 2017 enrolled in postsecondary education after graduating high school. Roughly two-thirds of all Illinois community college graduates earned a CTE degree or certificate in 2018. More than thirty thousand students successfully completed dual credit CTE courses in 2018 that earned them college credit, saving time and money toward their degrees. In Illinois, federal Perkins funds are divided 60/40 between the secondary and post-secondary CTE systems, where administration is shared between the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB). The 57 Education for Employment (EFE) regions and the 39 community college districts receive funds through these state agencies.

The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) was signed into law in 2018 and took effect on July 1, 2019. CTE in Illinois is funded through this federal Act and through state CTE appropriations. The purpose of this Act is to develop more fully the academic knowledge and technical and employability skills of secondary education students and postsecondary education students who elect to enroll in CTE programs and programs of study. The Act supports preparation for high skill, high wage, or in-demand occupations in current or emerging professions; promotes services and activities that integrate rigorous and

challenging academic and career and technical instruction; increases State and local flexibility; provides for the collection and dissemination of best practices; provides for technical assistance that promotes leadership and improves the quality of CTE teachers, faculty, administrators, and counselors; supports partnerships among secondary schools, postsecondary institutions, baccalaureate degree granting institutions, area CTE schools, local workforce investment boards, business and industry, and intermediaries; provides individuals with opportunities throughout their lifetimes to develop, in conjunction with other education and training programs, the knowledge and skills needed to keep the United States competitive; and increases the employment opportunities for populations who are chronically unemployed or underemployed, including individuals with disabilities, individuals from economically disadvantaged families, out-of-workforce individuals, youth who are in, or have aged out of, the foster care system, and homeless individuals.

Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES)

IDES encourages economic growth and stability by providing vital employment services to Illinois residents and employers. With guidance from the United States Department of Labor, IDES is the State Workforce Agency (SWA) and administers the WIOA Title III, Wagner-Peyser Act. Key grant funded programs include Reemployment, Hire the Future, Re-entry, Fidelity Bonding, Work Opportunity Tax Credit and others. IllinoisJobLink.com, the IDES labor exchange system, offers free job posting and recruitment. IDES is responsible for labor market and career information in Illinois through cooperative agreements with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). IDES also delivers information through the Career Information System (CIS Illinois) to identify in-demand occupations and explore career pathways. The Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSF) program, administered by IDES, provides federal funding to hire dedicated staff to provide individualized career services and opportunities tailored to veterans and eligible persons. Working with other state and federal agencies, IDES provides staff assisted employment service activities and outreach in the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFW) program. Dedicated staff ensure equitable service for farmworkers by informing them of their workers' rights, field checks, employer visits and maintaining a formal complaint procedure. IDES efficiently and effectively administers Unemployment Insurance (UI) to eligible individuals to prevent the negative effects of economic downturns on businesses and the unemployed. IDES also processes the federal Trade Readjustment Allowance (TRA) funds providing income support payments to Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) recipients.

Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS/DRS)

Vocational Rehabilitation administers Title IV activities and is the state's lead agency for serving individuals with disabilities. Vocational Rehabilitation works in partnership with individuals with disabilities and their families to assist them in making informed choices to achieve full community participation through employment, education and independent living opportunities. The primary focus of Vocational Rehabilitation is to assist individuals with significant disabilities in obtaining and retaining competitive, integrated employment through an individualized planning process.

Illinois Department of Human Services' Division of Family & Community Services (DHS, FCS) is also the state administrator of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. The Department operates statewide Family and Community Resource Centers serving TANF customers, linking them to: time-limited cash assistance for basic needs; transitional services to help families become independent; screening for issues related to substance abuse, mental health, and domestic violence; as well as referrals to address those issues. Employment and Training activities under TANF include: assisting qualified individuals in applying for cash assistance, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, and medical assistance; evaluating and assessing eligibility for work and training programs; and evaluating eligibility for supportive services, such as transportation and child care. Each TANF and SNAP customer who is engaged in workforce development services receives such services according to a responsibility and service plan.

Illinois Department on Aging (IDOA)

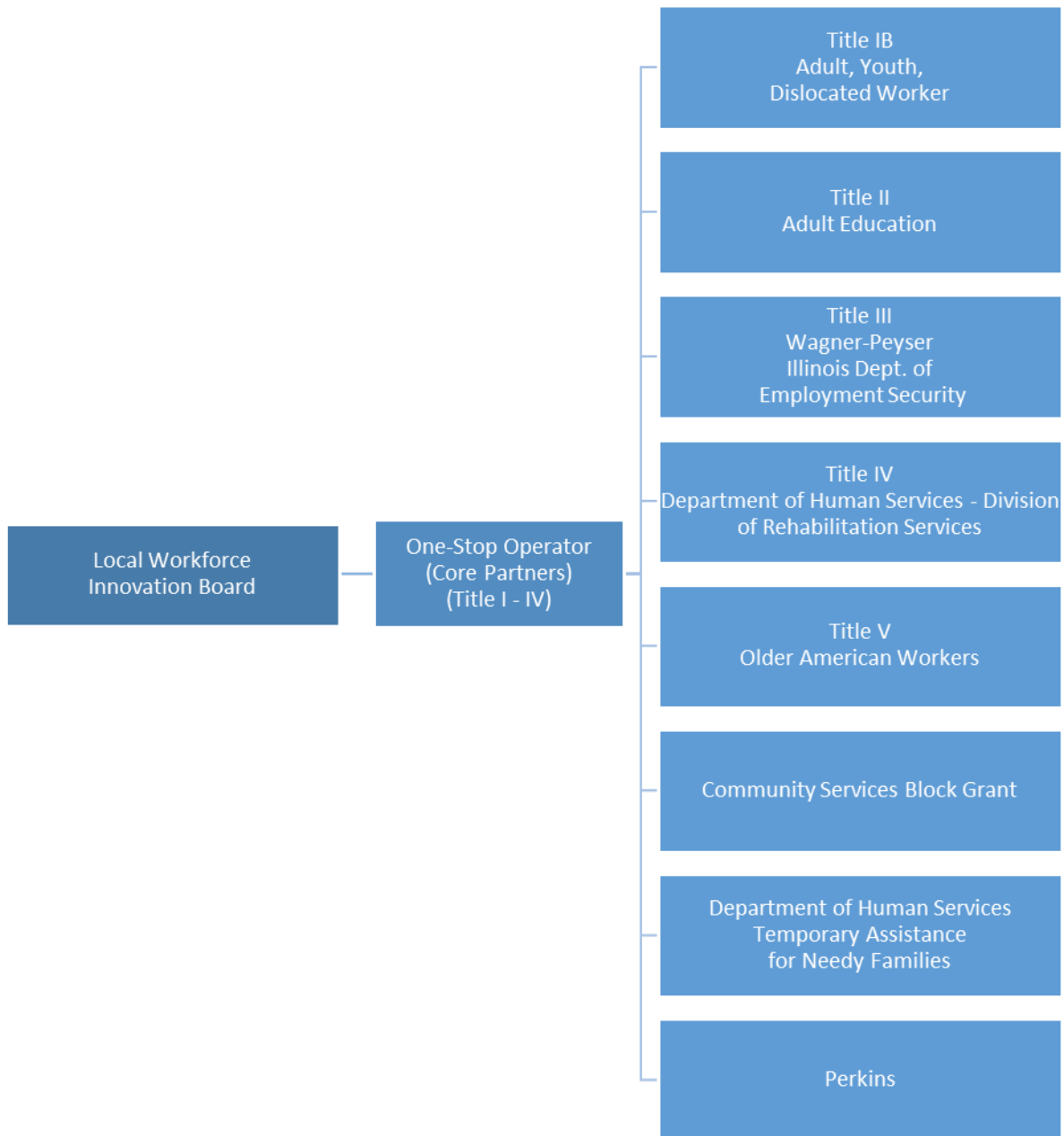
The mission of the Illinois Department on Aging (IDOA) is to serve and advocate for older Illinoisans and their caregivers by administering quality and culturally-appropriate programs that promote partnerships and encourage independence, dignity, and quality of life. In accordance with the federal Older American's Act regulations, IDOA has divided Illinois into 13 Planning and Service Areas (PSAs). The 13 PSAs in Illinois are each managed and served by an Area Agency on Aging. IDOA works in partnership with 12 not-for-profit corporations and one unit of local government, the City of Chicago. Area Agencies on Aging have the primary task of planning and coordinating services and programs for older people in their respective areas. The Area Agencies receive funding from IDOA based on a formula which takes into consideration the number of older citizens and minorities in that area, as well as the number living in poverty, in rural areas, and alone. Like IDOA, Area Agencies are not, as a rule, direct service providers. Area Agencies contract with local agencies which provide services to the older people who are living in the same community.

Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC)

The mission of the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) is to serve justice in Illinois and increase public safety by promoting positive change in offender behavior, operating successful reentry programs, and reducing victimization. Corrections administers the Second Chance Act Program, which allows governments and communities to coordinate reentry efforts, enhance existing housing and support services, engage in evidence-based practices, and create innovative strategies that will serve the growing needs of this population, ultimately increasing public safety and reducing recidivism.

In EDR 7, DCEO funds the Local Workforce Innovation Board (LWIB) 23 through WIOA Title IB. LWIB 23 contracts with CEFS Economic Opportunity Corporation (CEFS) to serve customers with WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth Formula, and Trade Act funds, as well as National Emergency Grants. DCEO provides monitoring and technical assistance to the LWIB. Lake Land College acts as the grant recipient/fiscal agent for LWIB 23. The Local Workforce Innovation Board (LWIB 23) and the core WIOA partners have developed the following plan in accordance with the State Unified Plan (State of Illinois Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Unified State Plan for Program Years 2020-2023), as well as guidance from DCEO and other respective state partners' leadership. This plan is expected to be a working document and will be updated, revised, and expanded as needed and approved throughout the next four years.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REGION 7 PARTNERS



CHAPTER 1 – ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

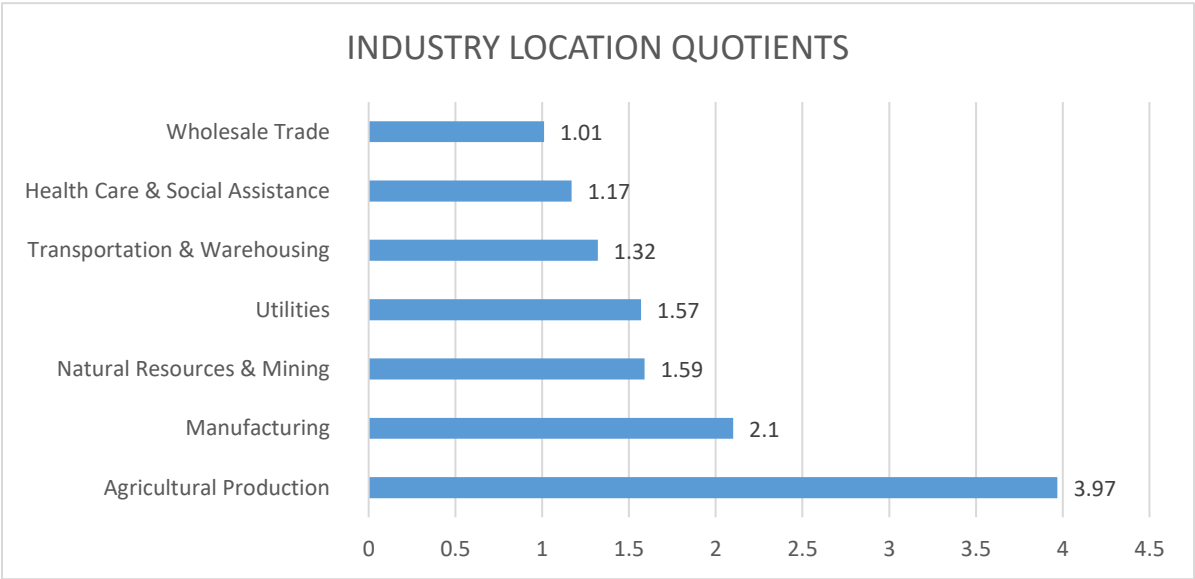
(CH 1)(A)(1)(g) In creating the EDR 7 Regional Plan for program year 2020-2023, economic conditions encompassing both existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations were investigated. Supply and demand data was reviewed in the Occupational Employment Projections report provided by the Illinois Department of Employment Security as well as the Supply Gap Analysis and other reports in the 2020 Regional Plan Data Packet for EDR 7. The data reports included statistics on the number of jobs established within the region, favorable location quotients, job growth numbers, job annual replacements, and information regarding leading, emerging and maturing industries.

Data provided to the EDR 7 Region by respective district community colleges was not overly analyzed. It was found in some cases that the provided community college data included information garnered from within the college’s district, but outside the EDR 7 region.

(CH 1)(A)(1)(a) With the information stipulated above, and data provided via the Illinois Department of Commerce, the targeted industries, occupations, and skills were determined for the EDR 7 region. Those targeted industries, high-impact industry clusters, and in-demand occupations were determined to be: 1.) Manufacturing, 2.) Logistics, 3.) Healthcare (including childcare), 4.) Construction, and 5.) Education.

Those occupations found to be in-demand include 1.) General Manufacturing, 2.) Welding, 3.) Truck Transportation (CDL), 4.) Nursing, 5.) Carpenters, 6.) School Teachers (P-12), and 7.) Childcare.

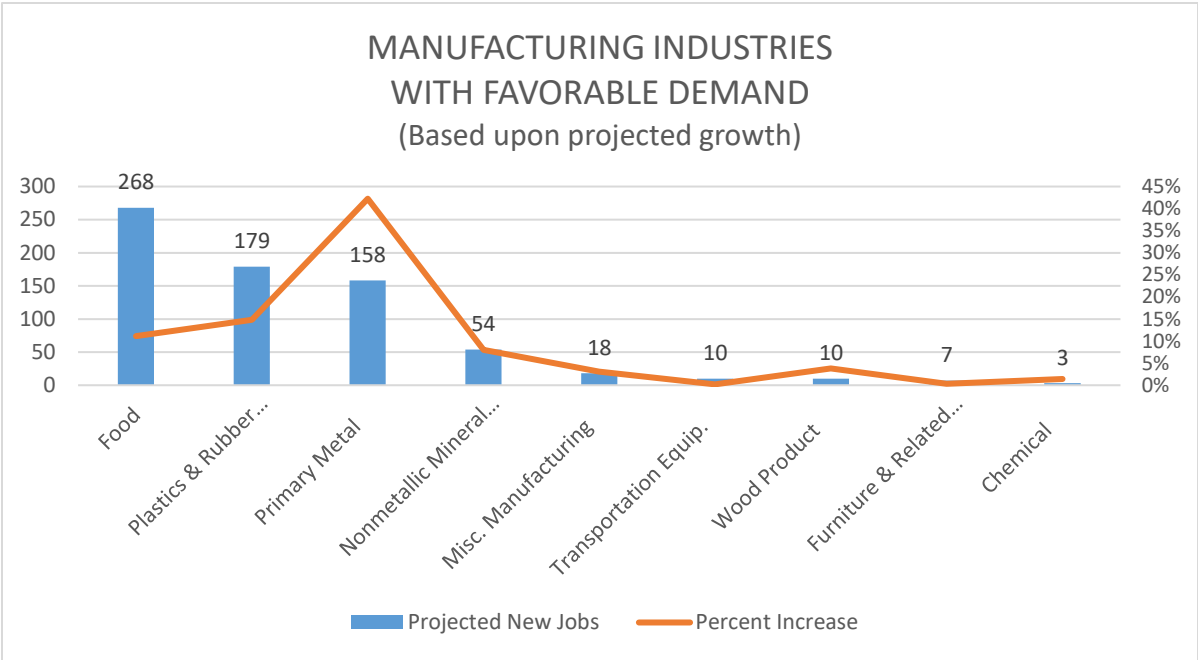
(CH 1)(A)(1)(b) Location Quotient (LQ) data indicates where sector employment is most and least concentrated. The LQ value indicates how concentrated employment in a given sector compares to the nation. A value of 1.0 indicates employment is in line with the overall national employment for that sector. A value of greater than 1.0 means the sector’s employment is more heavily concentrated in EDR 7 than in the nation. The Industries which have been identified as having favorable location quotients in the EDR 7 Region include Agricultural Production, Manufacturing, Natural Resources and Mining, Utilities, Transportation and Warehousing, Health Care and Social Assistance, and Wholesale Trade as demonstrated in the graph below:



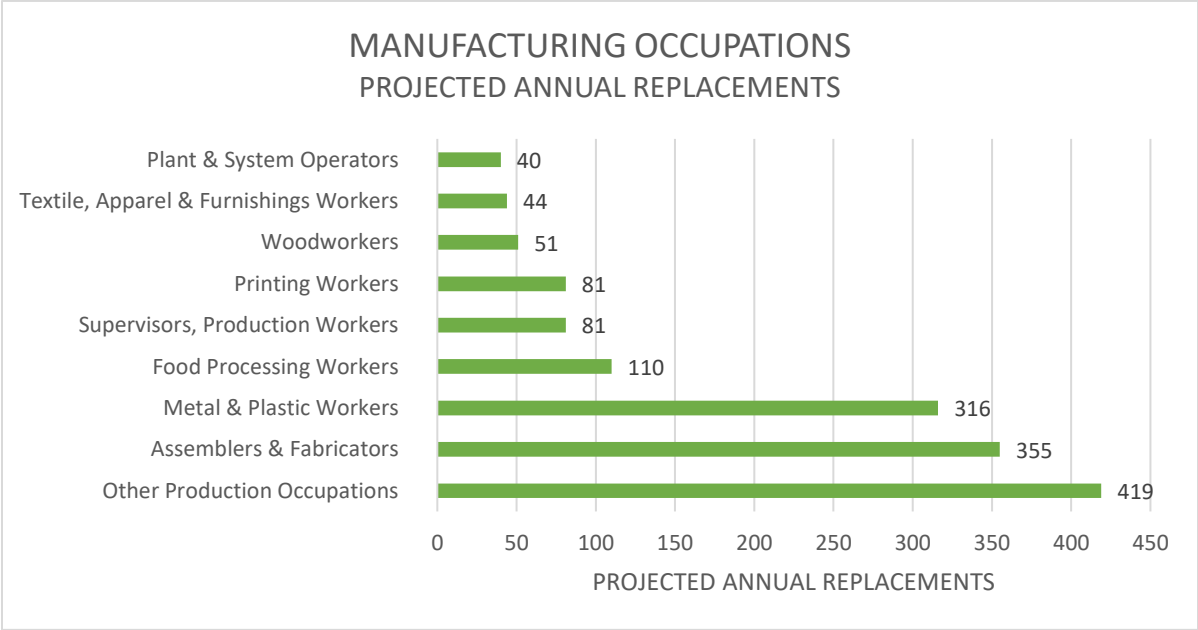
MANUFACTURING

(CH 1)(A)(1)(c) Within the targeted industry of manufacturing, the industries below have favorable demand projections based upon 2016-2026 growth:

- Food
- Nonmetallic Mineral Products
- Wood Products
- Plastics and Rubber Products
- Miscellaneous Manufacturing
- Furniture & Related Products
- Primary Metal
- Transportation Equipment
- Chemical



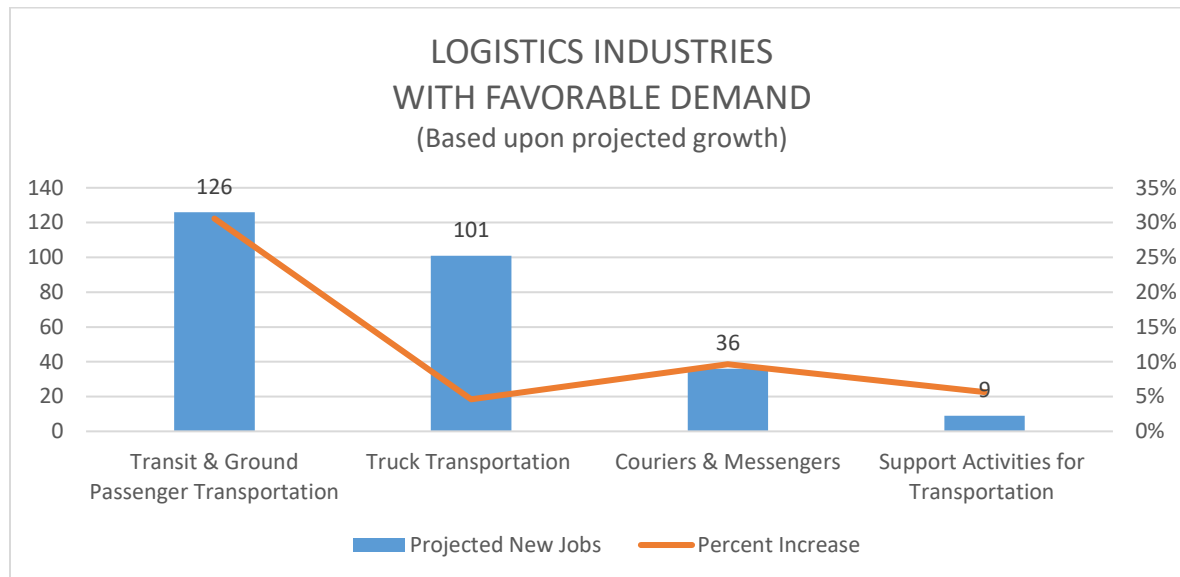
(CH 1)(A)(1)(d) Within the manufacturing industry, the following graph demonstrates occupations which were found to have favorable demand projections based upon annual replacements:



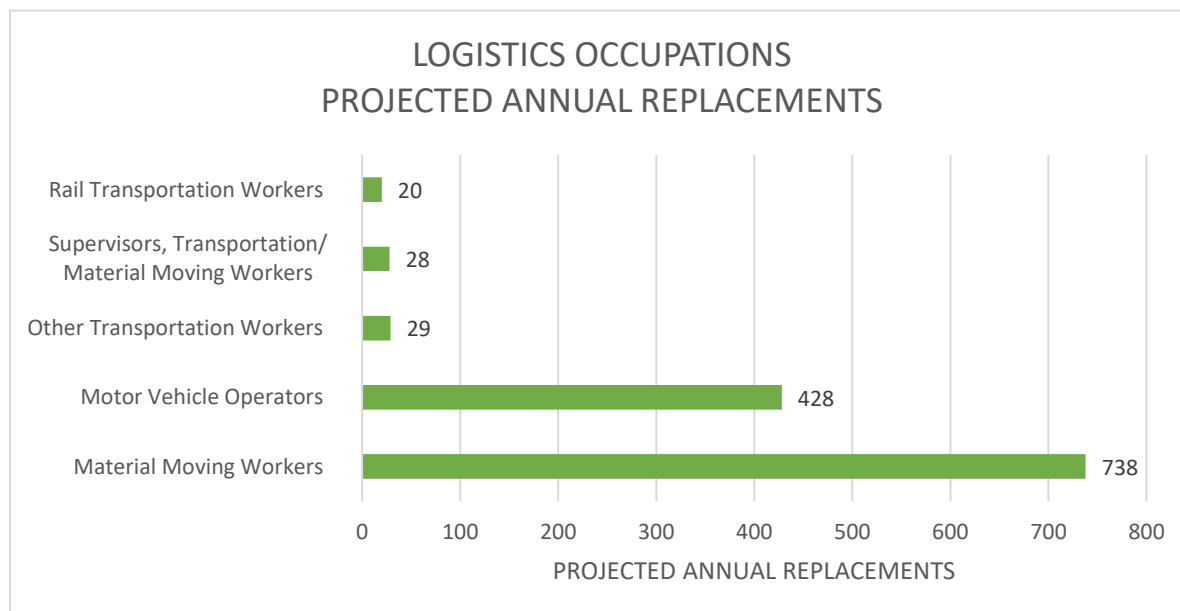
LOGISTICS

(CH 1)(A)(1)(c) Within the targeted industry of logistics, the industries below have favorable demand projections based upon 2016-2026 growth:

- Transit & Ground Passenger Transportation
- Truck Transportation
- Couriers & Messengers
- Support Activities for Transportation



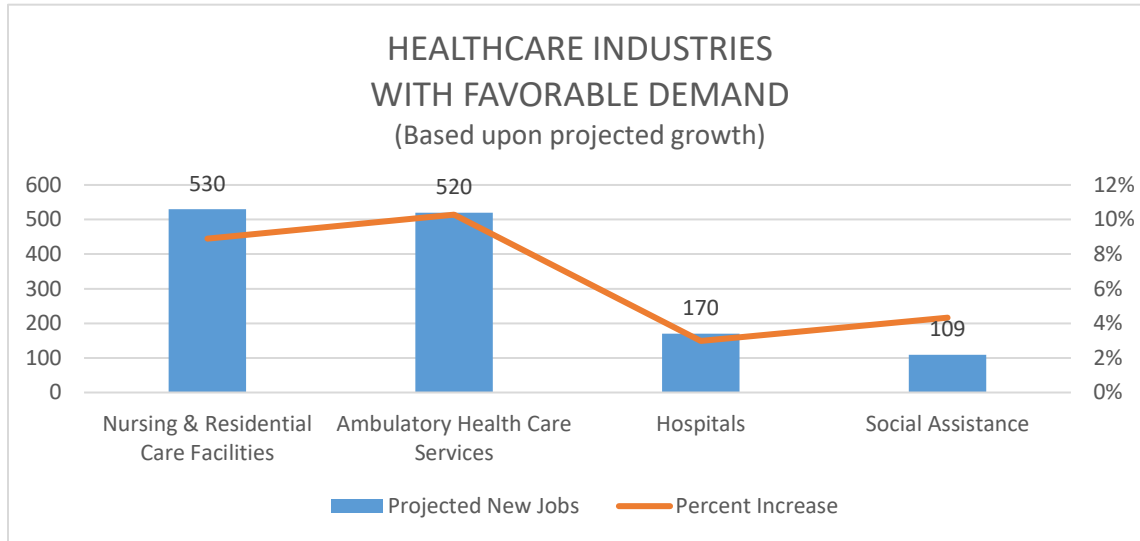
(CH 1)(A)(1)(d) Within the logistics industry, the following graph demonstrates occupations which were found to have favorable demand projections based upon annual replacements:



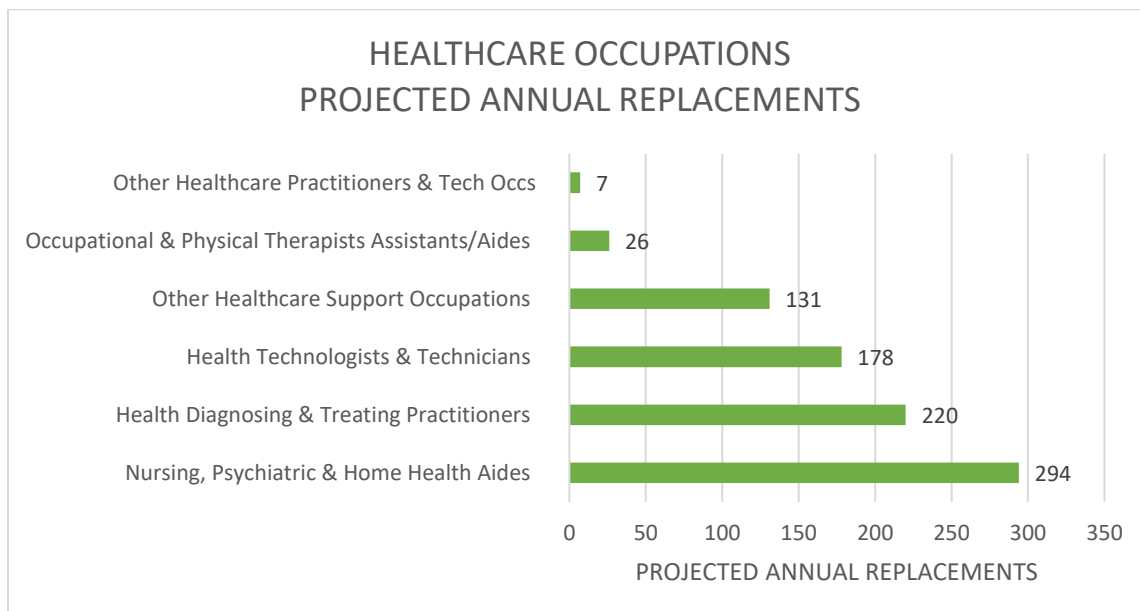
HEALTHCARE

(CH 1)(A)(1)(c) Within the targeted industry of healthcare, the industries below have favorable demand projections based upon 2016-2026 growth:

- Nursing & Residential Care Facilities
- Ambulatory Health Care Services
- Hospitals
- Social Assistance



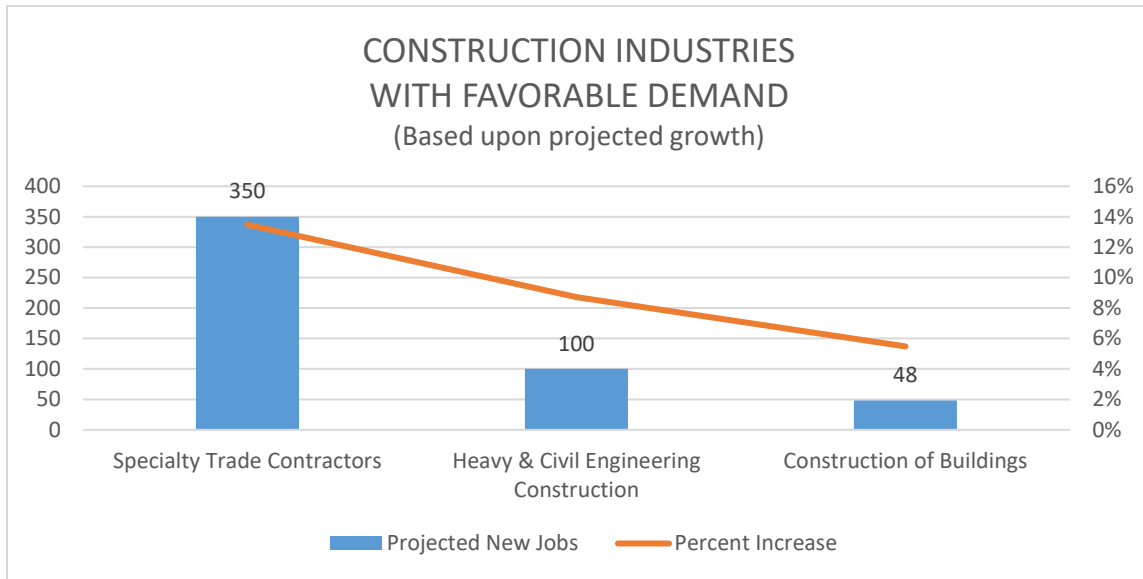
(CH 1)(A)(1)(d) Within the healthcare industry, the following graph demonstrates occupations which were found to have favorable demand projections based upon annual replacements:



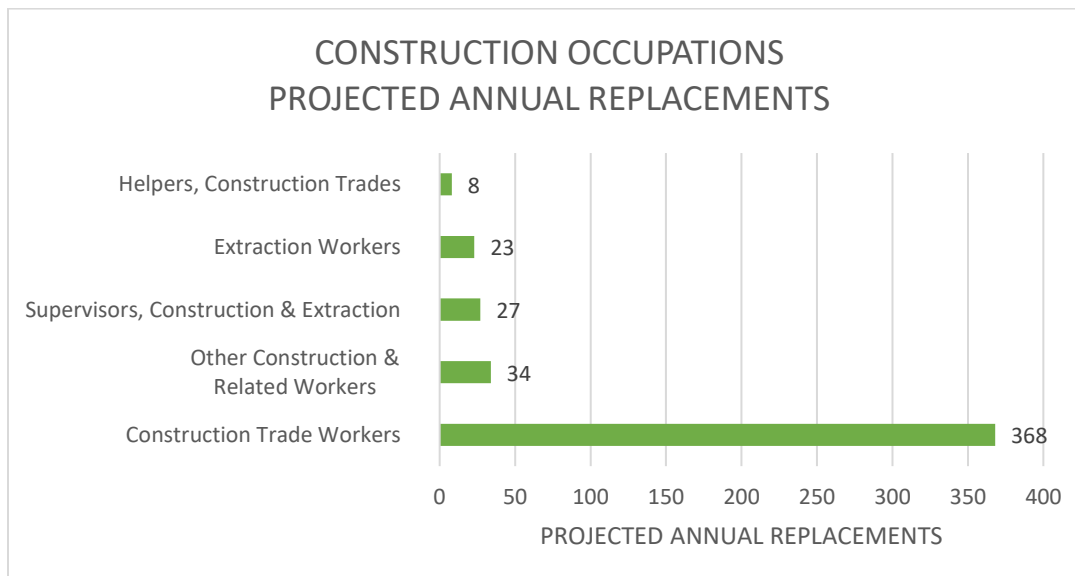
CONSTRUCTION

(CH 1)(A)(1)(c) Within the targeted industry of construction, the industries below have favorable demand projections based upon 2016-2026 growth:

- Specialty Trade Contractors
- Construction of Buildings
- Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction

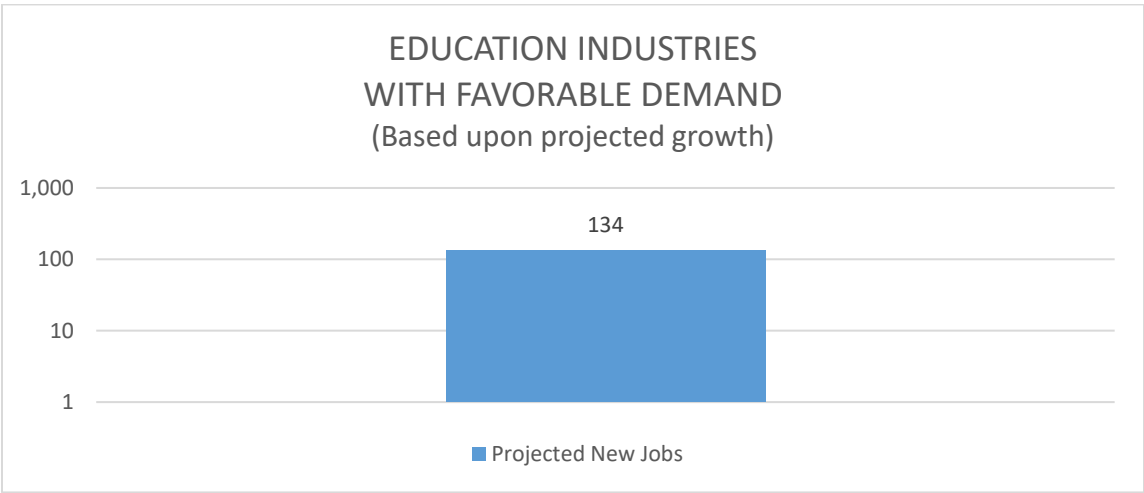


(CH 1)(A)(1)(d) Within the construction industry, the following graph demonstrates occupations, which were found to have favorable demand projections based upon annual replacements:

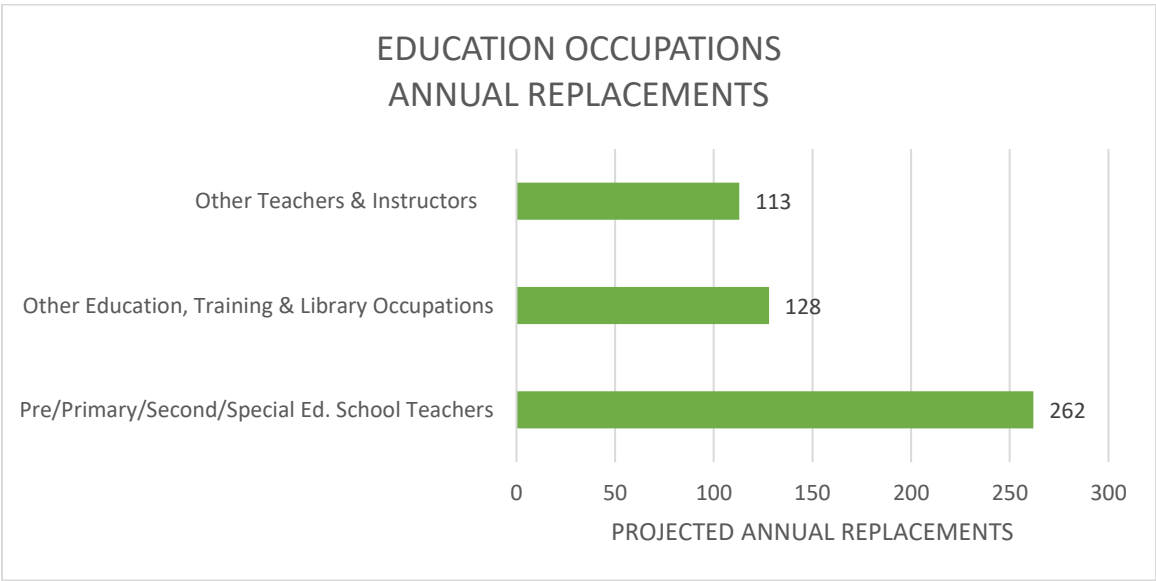


EDUCATION

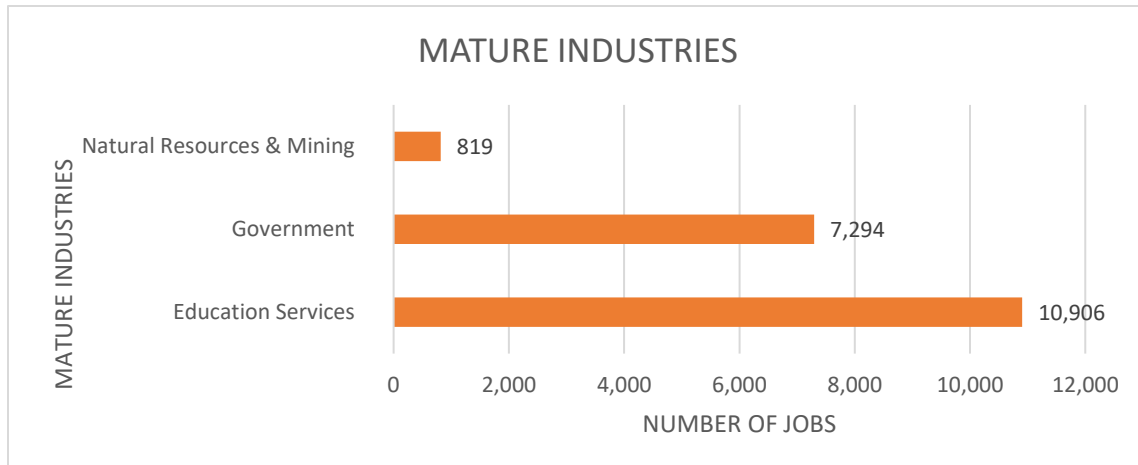
(CH 1)(A)(1)(c) The targeted industry of education also shows favorable demand of a one-percent increase based upon 2016-2026 projected growth. Education Services is expected to add 134 new jobs to the 10,906 existing positions.



(CH 1)(A)(1)(d) Within the education industry, the following graph demonstrates occupations, which were found to have favorable demand projections based upon annual replacements:



(CH 1)(A)(1)(e) Industries that are mature, but still have significant importance to the Region’s economy include:



(CH 1)(A)(1)(f) Based upon 2016-2026 data (Occupational Employment Projections, IDES), emerging industries in the EDR 7 Region include Construction, Retail Trade, Professional and Business Services, Leisure and Hospitality, and Other Services:

CONSTRUCTION:	NEW JOBS	CURRENT JOBS
Specialty Trades Contractors	350	2,598
Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction	100	1,146

RETAIL TRADE	NEW JOBS	CURRENT JOBS
Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers	175	2,070
Gasoline Stations	130	1,749
General Merchandise Stores	95	3,556
Misc. Store Retailers	94	494

PROFESSIONAL & BUSINESS SERVICES:	NEW JOBS	CURRENT JOBS
Accounting, Tax Prep. & Payroll Services	63	969
Architectural & Engineering Services	44	322
Computer Systems Design	34	146
Management Scientific & Tech Services	41	218
Other Professional	57	434

LEISURE & HOSPITALITY:	NEW JOBS	CURRENT JOBS
Food Services & Drinking Places	1,161	9,080

OTHER SERVICES:	NEW JOBS	CURRENT JOBS
Repair & Maintenance	225	1,607
Personal & Laundry Services	103	557

(CH 1)(A)(2) In April 2018, *Workforce in Motion*, a subgroup of the community revitalization group, *Mattoon in Motion*, sent out a survey to over 200 businesses and manufacturers in the Mattoon-Charleston (Coles County) area. The survey was utilized to ascertain the most needed applicant skills sought by businesses and manufacturers.

From the data generated by the survey, employee soft skills were the most prevalent deficiency found among applicants. Employers believed applicants to be lacking in motivation, punctuality/dependability, conflict resolution abilities and communication skills. Additionally, “hard” or occupational skills found lacking according to the survey included: critical/analytical thinking, project management, presentation skills, and maintenance/mechanical skills.

Manufacturing-related industries and the construction trades are facing a shortage of employees due to a lack of technical/mechanical knowledge among applicants. USDOL Registered Apprenticeships provide a suitable course for both the employer and the employee to acquire and develop much needed skill sets. As this is a relatively new career option for industries in EDR 7, there are few apprenticeships registered in the region. Consequently, creation of apprenticeships and expansion of existing apprenticeship opportunities need to take place. For those incumbent workers in the manufacturing/construction industries, the challenge continues to be maintaining skills with ever-changing technologies in the workplace. To meet the needs of these workers, consistent pathways to training opportunities need to be created. In response to the need for a talent pipeline, LWIA 23 and Lake Land College were awarded the Apprenticeship Expansion Grant in 2022. The grant funding will allow a designated Apprenticeship Navigator to serve EDR 7. The following workforce partners comprise the Economic Development Region 7 Apprenticeship Consortium:

- Local Workforce Innovation Area 23 (LWIA 23)
- Lake Land College
- Kaskaskia College
- Illinois Eastern Community Colleges
- Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES)
- Illinois Department of Rehabilitation Services (IDRS)
- Effingham Regional Growth Alliance (ERGA)
- Paris Union School District
- East Central Illinois Development Corporation (ECIDC)
- Richland County Development Corporation (RCDC)
- Paris Economic Development Corporation (PEDCO)

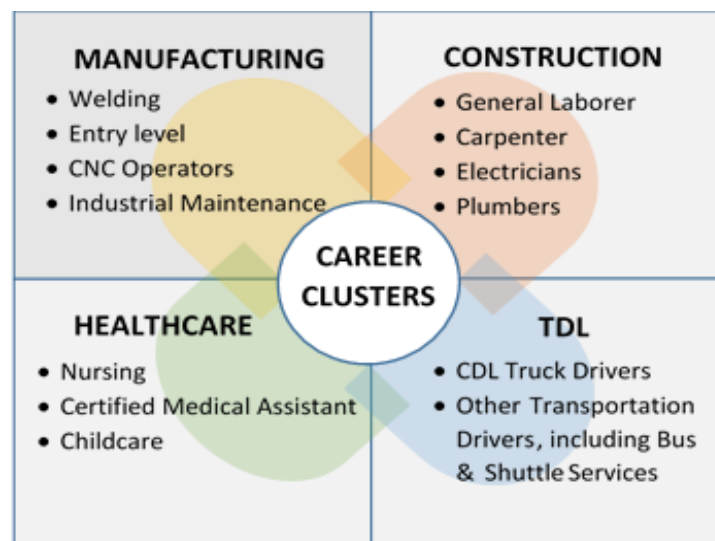
The new Apprenticeship Navigator will build capacity and support the business ecosystem in key industry sectors. The new Apprenticeship Navigator will work at the regional level, being the key point of contact in their area for the expansion of apprenticeship programs. Our Navigator will build relationships with regional employers to expand the use of apprenticeship as a work-based learning strategy. Our Navigator will build and maintain effective partnerships among businesses, the workforce system, education/training providers, and other stakeholders.

The primary objective of the Navigator is to expand apprentice sponsorship by employers and intermediaries in existing and new occupations within their region. The Navigator will support workforce demand by utilizing apprenticeship as a workforce development tool for businesses.

The goal of the project is to develop at least five new apprenticeships, expand existing apprenticeships, and to overall raise awareness and visibility of what apprenticeships are and the advantages they pose to businesses, the workforce, and the local economy. The Navigator will focus first on apprenticeships in EDR 7's most in-demand industries (based on Labor Market Information and the EDR 7 Regional Plan): Healthcare; Logistics; Education; Construction; and Manufacturing. Every effort will be made to identify non-traditional occupations across all sectors. The Navigator will work closely with established intermediaries to cultivate stronger partnerships and facilitate the development of new apprenticeships.

The Transportation and Logistics industry faces difficulties due to the federal rule change governing commercial driver's license (CDL) training providers. This rule change will force all CDL training providers to be federally approved and align curriculum with new federal guidelines. Further, the licensure procedure for those students who complete the training will be lengthened slowing the rate of growth of new drivers.

EDR 7 TARGETED CAREER PATHWAY CLUSTERS



(CH 1)(A)(3)(a)

(CH 1)(A)(3)(b) For all career pathway clusters (manufacturing, construction, transportation and logistics and healthcare) certain skills needed are universal. They include:

- Employability (clear background check, negative drug screening)
- Baseline employment skills in respective employment sector
- Organization, communication, time management skills
- Understanding of employer's culture and mission
- Physical capabilities to perform job duties

COVID-19 impacts have resulted in a change of definition of "employability". Local employers are expanding their search to include individuals who may not have a clear background, have gaps in work history, or are lacking in professional etiquette.

(CH 1)(A)(3)(c) Utilizing the data from the *Workforce in Motion* survey (April, 2018), applicants were found to be lacking in many of the skill sets local businesses and manufacturers require.

In the questionnaire, 55 percent of those surveyed stated "critical/analytical thinking" was the predominant 'hard' or occupational skill applicants lacked. This was followed by "presentation skills" (32%), "basic computer literacy" (24%), and "maintenance/mechanical skills" (25%). Additionally, in-demand soft skills were also

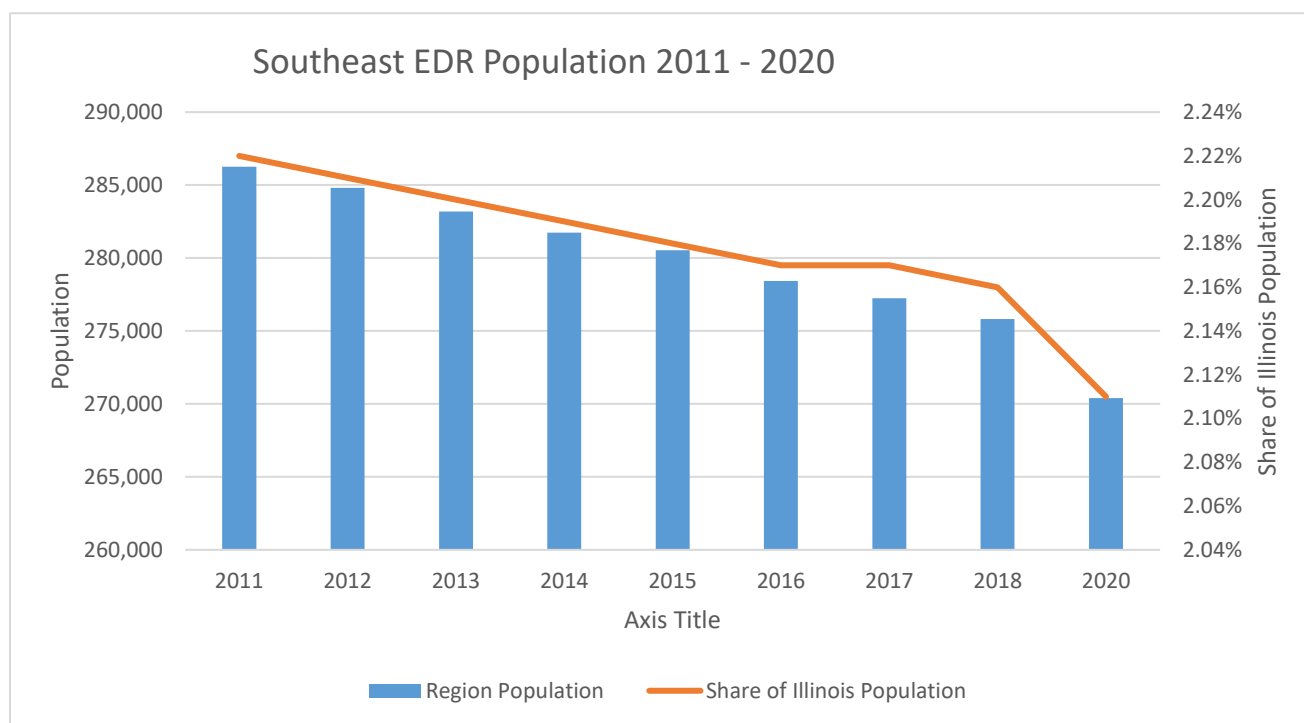
deficient. Sixty-seven percent of respondents cited “motivation” was lacking in applicants, followed by “time management” (55%), “dependability” (55%), and “communication skills” (46%).

Coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting skilled labor shortage, regional workforce development leaders report that a growing trend of local employers include reducing certain requirements for job candidates. Specifically in the manufacturing sector, employers who have traditionally only considered applicants with a high school diploma or GED are now considering candidates who do not possess those credentials.

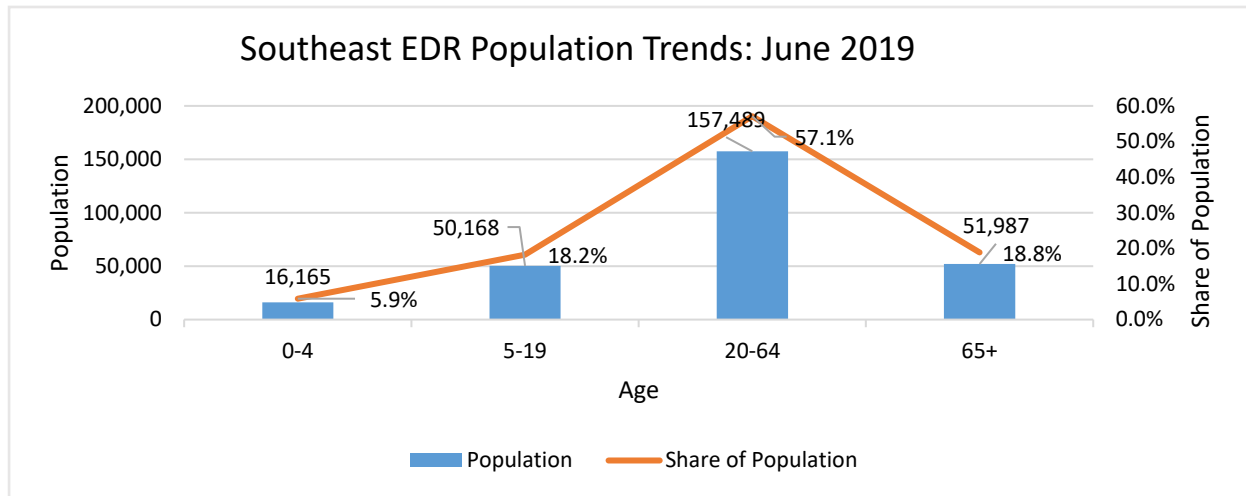
(CH 1)(4)(a) EDR 7’s workforce availability and demographics present some employability challenges to the rural area. Data released by the U.S. Census Bureau, as of December 30, 2018 show Illinois’ population dropped by 168,700 people from 2010-2019, the largest raw decline of any state and more than the entire population of Naperville, Illinois’ third-largest city.

Of just over 270,000 individuals in EDR 7, approximately twenty-two percent live in the only four cities which have a population of over 10,000 people:

- Charleston: 17,286
- Effingham: 12,252
- Mattoon: 16,870
- Centralia: 12,182



EDR 7's population is declining as well. From 2011 through 2020 the region's population decreased by 16,447 people. The Economic Development Region Data packet highlights the fact that the median age in the region and in the state is steadily increasing; in 2013, 17.2% of the region's population was 65+ years old compared to 18.8% in 2018. Our population is aging while simultaneously decreasing overall. That population decline, especially the loss of prime working-age adults, presents serious risk of economic harm for Illinoisans who remain in the state. As of June 2019, the age of the approximately 275,000 individuals in EDR 7 was dispersed as follows:



Current labor force data from 1990 to pre-COVID-19, shows unemployment is at an all-time low of 4.7 percent. Fifty-seven percent of the EDR 7 workforce falls within the ages of 20-64. Of that age grouping, 40 percent are age 50 or over, and 54 percent are aged 25 and over and have had at least some post-secondary education. Eleven percent of region residents aged 25 and over have less than a high school diploma or equivalent.

According to The Occupational Employment Projections, our region can expect a negligible annual compound growth of just 0.25% in the Manufacturing sector due to negative annual compound growth rates in ten Manufacturing occupations:

- Welding/Soldering (-1.06%)
- Assemblers & Fabricators (-1.04%)
- Team Assemblers (-1.00%)
- Structural Metal Fabricators & Fitters (-2.00%)
- Engine & Other Machine Assemblers (-1.76%)
- Electromechanical Equipment Assemblers (-2.00%)
- Electronic Equipment Assemblers (-1.57%)
- Coil Winders/Tapers & Finishers (-1.42%)
- Aircraft Struct/Surfaces/Rigging Assemblers (-1.99%)
- Assemblers & Fabricators (-0.99%)

The low projected growth rate of Manufacturing, the second largest industry of the region, is a matter of concern.

The Transportation, Logistics, and Distribution industry is projected to have an annual compound growth rate of 0.46% in the next six years. Within that industry, two occupations are projected to grow in our region:

- Truck Drivers (+0.75%)
- Bus Drivers, School or Special Client (+1.67%)

The Building & Construction industry is projected to experience growth in the EDR 7 as well. Five occupations will see growth:

- General Maintenance & Repair Workers (+0.75%)
- Plumbers, Pipefitters, & Steam Fitters (+1.70%)
- Electricians (+1.00%)
- Construction Laborers (+1.00%)
- Carpenters (+0.44%)

The Healthcare industry is another growing industry in the region. Data shows the growth is expected to come from two occupations and their annual compound growth rate:

- Medical Assistants (+1.11%)
- Registered Nurses (+1.36%)

Education is also forecasted to see annual growth over the next six years. Three occupations within that industry will see positive annual compounded growth rates:

- Teacher Assistants (+0.38%)
- Preschool Teachers (+0.91%)
- Pre/Primary/Second/Special Ed. School Teachers (+0.37%)

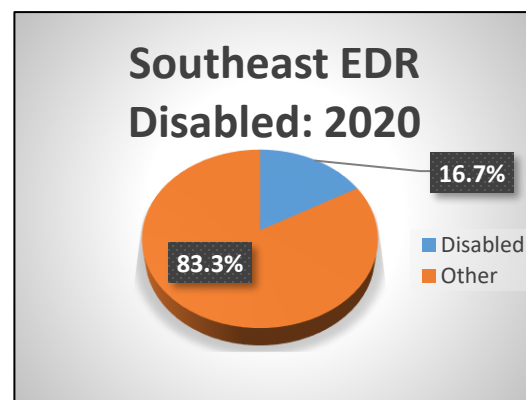
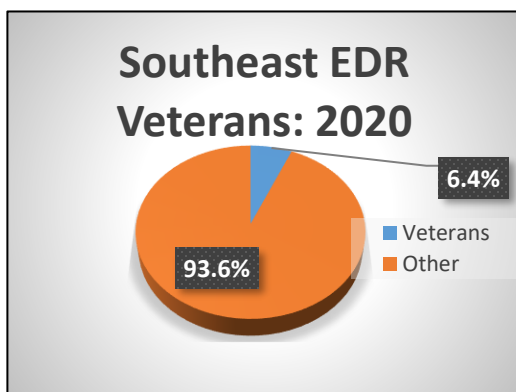
(CH 1)(A)(4)(b) Within EDR 7, special populations represented include veterans, disabled individuals, individuals at or below poverty level, individuals who speak a language other than English, and both currently incarcerated and ex-offenders. Veterans and their families, disabled individuals, low-income individuals, individuals who are basic skills deficient, and current inmates/ex-offenders in IDOC/IDJJ are priority populations.

VETERAN POPULATION

- 6.4% (17,394) of the population are veterans. Down from 8.0% in 2013
- 49% are less than 65 years of age.
- 45% have a high school education or less.

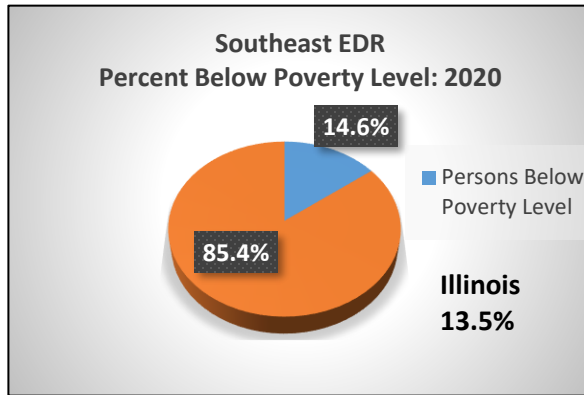
DISABLED POPULATION

- 16.7% (45,090) of the population are disabled. Increased from 12.6% in 2013
- 57.1% are less than 65 years old.



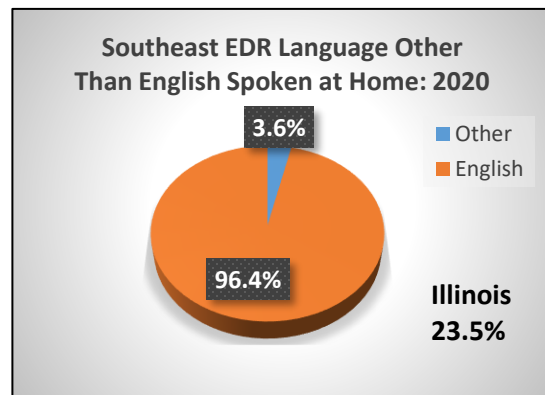
LOW INCOME

- 14.6% (39,577) of the population are below poverty. Decreasing from the 2017 data reports.



NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING HOME

- 3.6% speak a language other than English in their home. An increase from 3.4% in 2017.



To meet the needs of the special populations within the region, EDR 7 provides weekly scheduled opportunities at the One Stop location. Additionally, varied events and programming are held in order to maximize exposure and interactions with the populations.

VETERANS	JOB FAIRS DEDICATED STAFFING AT ONE-STOP LOCATION JOB SEEKING WORKSHOPS (INTERVIEW SKILLS, RESUME WRITING)
DISABLED	DEDICATED STAFFING AT ONE STOP LOCATION DRS STAFF AVAILABLE WEEKLY AT ONE STOP LOCATION
ADULT EDUCATION SERVICES	MULTIPLE LOCATIONS OPEN TO GENERAL PUBLIC AND VIA REFERRAL BY PARTNERS RESOURCE/JOB FAIRS WITH DHS CLIENTS AT MULTIPLE LOCATIONS IN EDR 7
IDOC (AND IDJJ)	RE-ENTRY SUMMITS LAKE LAND COLLEGE PROVIDES VOCATIONAL TRAINING AT OVER 20 LOCATIONS; REMEDIAL COURSEWORK WITHIN THE TWO IDJJ SITES
PERKINS	PROVIDES SERVICES TO DISABLED, LOW INCOME, AND NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKING POPULATIONS THROUGH ENROLLMENT IN APPROVED PROGRAMS
IDES	PROVIDES INFORMATION REGARDING TAX CREDIT AND FIDELITY BONDING TO BUSINESSES HIRING INDIVIDUALS WITHIN SPECIAL POPULATIONS HOLDS JOB READINESS WORKSHOPS

(CH 1)(B)(1) Development and implementation of sector initiatives for in-demand industry sectors will be created through the convening of employers, foundations and regional institutions. EDR 7 will assemble these entities to lead sector partnerships and coordinate investments. Examples of entities utilized to form the creation and use of sector initiatives include:

- Career and Technical Education Advisory Committees* at regional community colleges to assess skills and training needed for identified in-demand industry sectors.

- *The Business Services Team* utilizes sector roundtables, conducts needs assessments and works to create and maintain relationships with regional businesses and manufacturers to create sector initiatives. The Business Services Team also works with the Department of Labor to determine the current and upcoming labor trends to analyze potential sector initiatives.
- *The Perkins Program* conducts a comprehensive local needs assessment every four (4) years, with a supplemental review conducted every two (2) years.
- *Department of Rehabilitation Services* (DRS) provides business consultants.
- *Southeastern Region* partners hold targeted and coordinated hiring events by sector.
- *Vandalia ONE* (Vandalia, IL) is a community and educational collaborative that gathers local cross-sector stakeholders to develop career pathways from 8th grade through community college. The group currently focuses on the in-demand sectors of transportation, healthcare, and education among others.
- In partnership with *Effingham Regional Growth Alliance*, an economic development organization, workforce development leaders conduct outreach visits with local employers across several sectors throughout Effingham County.
- *Effingham Regional Career Academy* (ERCA) and Mattoon's Leaders Innovating for Tomorrows (LIFT), local collaborations between secondary education, post-secondary education, and the local workforce to develop relevant occupational skills and Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) to strengthen the local workforce and fill in skills gaps.
- *Business Navigator Alliance* is a regional collaboration, helping small businesses in South Central and Southeastern Illinois to take advantage of available relief and funding resources for pandemic recovery. The Business Navigator Alliance is comprised of the following community organizations: Effingham Regional Growth Alliance; Coles Together; Crawford County Development Association; Marshall Area Chamber of Commerce; Paris Economic Development Corporation; Sullivan Chamber & Economic Development. The Alliance provides technical assistance and monthly webinars to provide the knowledge and support that small businesses need to be competitive in applying for the necessary resources to recover from the pandemic-induced recession.
- Lake Land College/LWIA 23 in consortium with several community organizations will serve as the local *Apprenticeship Navigator* to guide local employers through the process of establishing DOL-registered apprenticeships. A common concern from local businesses is that employees are not as loyal and more difficult to retain than in years past; developing new apprenticeships will be promoted as a remedy to the concern.
- Local community colleges, Kaskaskia College (KC), Lake Land College (LLC), and Illinois Eastern Community Colleges (IECC), form a partnership to fulfill the responsibilities of *Apprenticeship Intermediaries*. Through new grant funding, the collaborative will support the creation of new apprenticeship programs and expand current apprenticeships in our region and beyond *EC JOBS* is a new initiative in Effingham County to bridge private industry and education, career exploration.

(CH 1)(B)(2) Established and active industry sector partnerships in the EDR 7 region include the following entities:

- ECIDC, East Central Illinois Development Corporation
- SCIGA, South Central Illinois Growth Alliance
- Kaskaskia College currently provides related training instruction for apprenticeships with Magna International, North America Lighting, Nascote Industries, and Antonline.
- Kaskaskia College Adult Education department has bridge programs with contextualized education in Nashville and in partnership with the Centralia Youth Build
- Effingham Regional Career Academy
- Center for Business and Industry, Lake Land College
- Greater Wabash Regional Planning Commission
- Paris Economic Development Corporation

- RCDC, Richland County Development Corporation
- Effingham Regional Growth Alliance (ERGA)
- Coles Together
- Elevate – a small business incubation center
- Mattoon in Motion
- Chambers of Commerce across LWIA 23: Sullivan Chamber; Marshall Chamber; Lawrence County; Jasper County Chamber; Crawford County; Richland County; Fayette County Chamber; City of Casey Economic Development; Effingham Chamber of Commerce
- Regional Offices of Education (ROE)
- Eastern Illinois Education for Employment Systems 340 (EIEFES 340)

(CH 1)(B)(3)

Several educational institutions are working to create sector-based partnerships. Illinois Eastern Community Colleges is currently developing a Center for Business and Industry. Additionally, Kaskaskia College will be implementing integrated training education for CNA, Culinary, and Welding programs which will begin during the 2020-2023 Regional Plan duration.

Perkins V requires the regional community colleges to conduct advisory committee meetings for all CTE programs. These sector partnerships are not business-led; however, they play an integral role in industry/sector-education alignment. The role of the advisory committees comprised of stakeholders play a direct role in regional planning by analyzing current sector happenings, identifying gaps and forming strategies to improve the problems affecting the sectors.

Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center (IMEC) is a sector-based partnership in EDR 7. IMEC is a team of improvement specialists and technicians dedicated to providing manufacturing organizations in Illinois with the tools and techniques to create sustainable competitive futures. The experienced hands-on team at IMEC works closely with its clients to plan critical business improvements in the areas of Leadership, Strategy, Customer Engagement, Operations, and Workforce.

Illinois Manufacturing Association is a sector-based advocacy agency for Manufacturing interests in Illinois. The partnership with IMA members manifests in recruiting and training opportunities. Through partnership with IMA, the LWIB is able to stay abreast of current policies and events impacting the Manufacturing sector. This is helpful in planning and strategizing within the EDR.

Illinois Rural Health Association (IRHA) is a sector-based collaborative association whose mission is to strengthen health systems for rural residents and communities through advocacy, education, networking and leadership. The partnership between IRHA and LWIB opens doors of communication and networking opportunities in which needs are addressed and information/resources are shared. The communication is helpful in short-term and long-term planning within the region.

Identifying and supporting additional business-led sector-based partnerships in the region is a priority of the LWIB Director in PY2020-2023.

(CH 1)(B)(4) Other public-private partnerships exist in the region that could support sector strategies as follows:

- **Effingham Chamber Workforce Readiness** which works with area businesses and manufacturers to assess employee skill sets needed. As an external stakeholder, the participants play an indirect role in planning.
- **Entrepreneur programs within the schools**, such as: CEO and Excel (Clark and Edgar counties) help introduce students to business opportunities. As an external stakeholder, the participants play an indirect role in planning.
- **Marshall Career Readiness school initiative** which prepares students for workforce training and career readiness upon graduation from high school by promoting career planning and exploration. As an external stakeholder, the participants play an indirect role in planning.
- **Organized professional society groups such as SHRM and CFO** can provide information as to the skills and abilities needed not only in the organizations they represent, but in those of their group members. As an external stakeholder, the participants play an indirect role in planning.
- **CTEC-Construction Trades, Effingham County** is a non-profit educational program dedicated to equipping students with skills and experience needed to secure a job within the construction trades upon high school graduation. As an external stakeholder, the partnership play an indirect role in planning.
- **Labor Union representatives** from targeted in-demand sectors on the LWIA Board can aid in developing training and employment opportunities. As an external stakeholder, the participants play an indirect role in planning.
- **Effingham County Childcare Committee**, part of the Effingham County board's effort to research and identify underlying issues with the childcare services in Effingham County, and to develop a plan to overcome the workforce-related hurdles.

In general, WIOA staff will coordinate with other entities that offer supportive services to increase awareness of what each entity can provide to customers so as to not duplicate services and maximize funds efficiently. Specific policies and procedures will only generate from formal partnerships with an MOU and a direct role in regional WIOA economic development planning.

(CH 1)(B)(5) Multiple neutral conveners with the capacity to help establish sector partnerships exist in the region and provide direction in planning through their direct work with EDR 7 industries and businesses including:

- *LWIA 23 Board members and Chief Elected Officials* provide oversight to all partners to ensure accessibility to and delivery of services available to community members and customers.
- *Chamber of Commerce organizations* throughout the region all focus on working with member businesses to facilitate and enhance relationships within their respective communities in areas such as workforce development and economic growth.
- *University of Illinois Extension* creates and provides accessible, practical educational programming within the EDR 7 region.
- *Community Colleges and Universities* support the development of CTE programming and creation of higher education curriculum which benefits the workforce.
- *Primary and secondary educational (K-12) institutions* provide career exploration and preparation, along with vocational skills training.
- *Effingham Regional Career Academy* provides targeted educational opportunities in high demand industries which provides a pipeline of skilled individuals for area employers.
- *Crawford County Development Association* is a community-based economic development organization which works to attract businesses and manufacturers to the community.
- *Clark County Economic Development Organization* works to attract businesses and manufacturers to the community.
- *Various civic organizations* provide economic support to individuals who are ineligible for partner services, including assistance with transportation, housing and food uncertainty. *Vandalia One* is a community and educational collaborative that gathers local cross-sector stakeholders to develop career pathways from 8th grade through community college. The group currently focuses on the in-demand sectors of transportation, healthcare, and education among others.

(CH 1)(C) The COVID-19 pandemic created a massive and immediate shift in the local workforce and, thus, labor market information. Thousands of workers and employers were directly impacted by lockdowns. Some were able to continue their work through teleworking or remote working arrangements. Many others saw a reduction or complete loss of their livelihood. Others still, for example workers in health or public security, experienced a colossal increase in working burden in the face of the crisis.

Trying to track and describe all these changes is a considerable challenge for officials across the state and even the nation. The restrictions necessary to combat COVID-19 simultaneously created substantial obstacles to normal data collection approaches and operations as well as an undeniable need for current information. Furthermore, the situation continues to evolve rapidly, making normal planning impossible. The sudden change in our local labor market renders even the most recent Economic Development Region Data Packets basically useless as the data is already old by the time the newest packet is published.

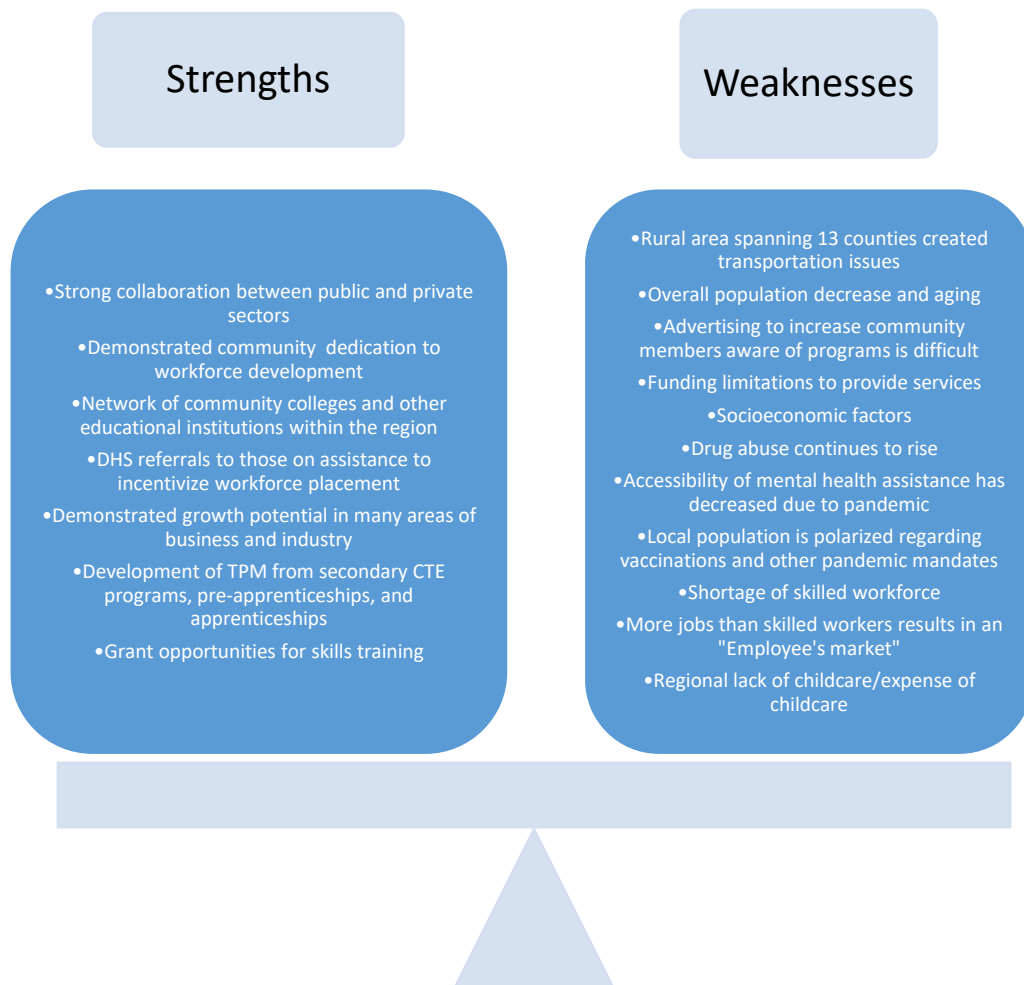
The difficulty in obtaining regional data from state officials, and having that data be obsolete by the time we receive it has re-emphasized the importance of collecting data on the local level. Going forward, the workforce leaders of EDR 7 will collaborate to develop a consistent, relevant approach to gathering and sharing local, real-time data. Leaders will identify useful information to capture, best methods of capturing and tracking information, efficient sharing of data, and best approach to thorough analysis.

(CH 1)(D) Regional workforce leaders use labor market information in development of the regional plan. Labor market information analyses for EDR 7 illuminated many inequities in our communities, which influence our goals for access to workforce services across populations. According to the 2021 EDR 7 Data Packet (page 12) children under the age of 5 (21.6%), females (16.4%), African Americans (37.9%), and individuals lacking a high school diploma or equivalent (28.9%) are more likely to live below poverty in our region. Correlations between

education attainment and earned wages are evident. Thus, workforce partners are committed to providing workforce services in a way that addresses these disparities. Plans for strengthening our workforce will focus on increasing access to education and training to those experiencing poverty. Our workforce leaders are morally obligated to create an equitable workforce system by ensuring all jobseekers can access training and employment via an accessible, coordinated workforce system. EDR 7 will strive to advance equity through targeted and strategic outreach efforts to the identified populations facing barriers to success and creating opportunities for individuals facing poverty to train for in-demand occupations with self-sustaining wages. Workforce leaders take on the responsibility to encourage all community services, local employers, and public departments to conduct formal equity analysis to determine service gaps.

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGIES FOR SERVICE INTEGRATION – REGIONAL COMPONENT

(CH 2)(A)(1) Regional service strategies, including use of cooperative service delivery strategies and the connection of job seekers with employers, are utilized throughout the region. EDR 7 workforce development activities, including those in education and training, have both strengths and weaknesses as shown below:



(CH 2)(A)(2) Regional partners provide workforce development activities to address workforce education and skill needs (including to those of individuals with barriers to employment) by:

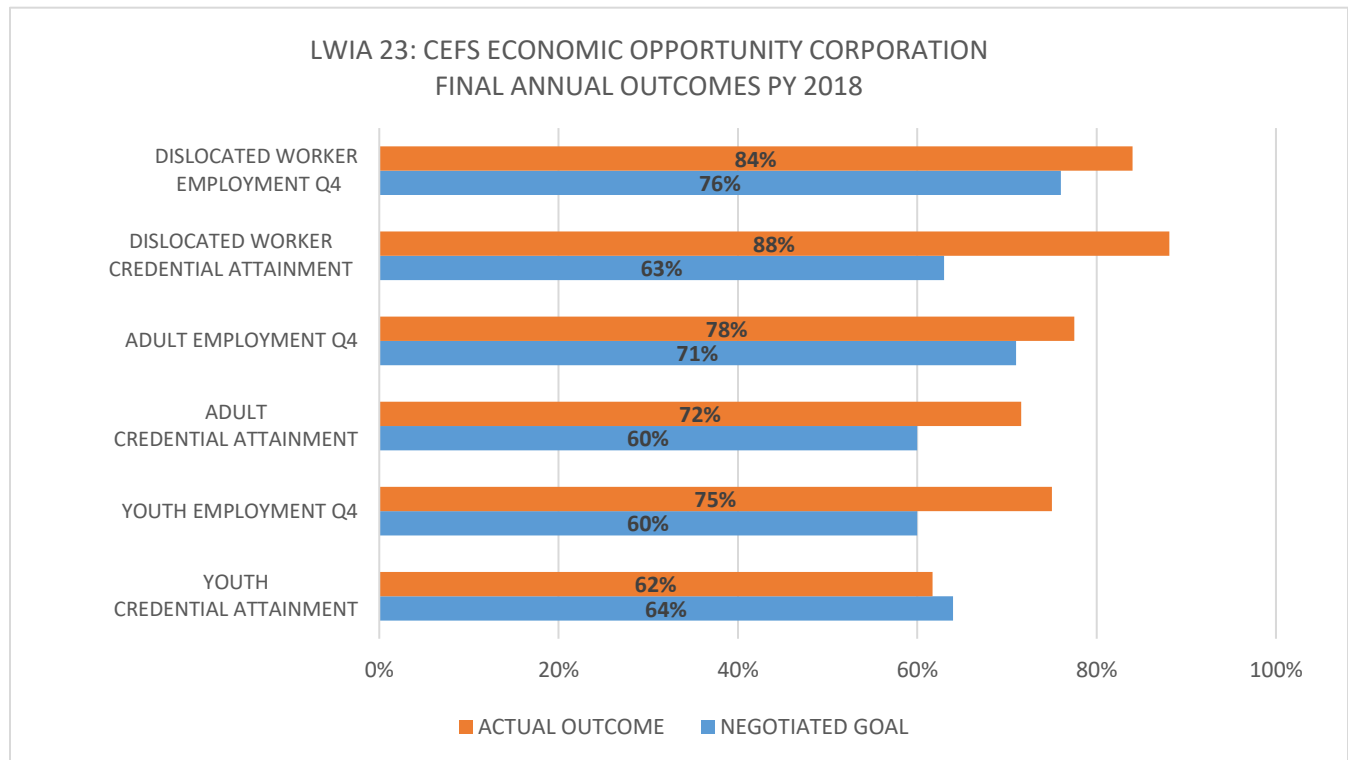
- Providing career and technical career education;

- Collaborating with the EDR 7 partners, including cross-training among partners, to better facilitate service delivery;
- Transitioning of employees and/or students to the next phase of education or to the workforce;
- Understanding needs of employers through activities of the integrated Business Service team, such as regional roundtable meetings and professional advisory committees;
- Offering one-on-one soft skills training and assistance;
- Assisting with workforce promotional events such as Manufacturing Day, varied regional high school CEO-type programs, and coordinating job-shadowing opportunities.
- Offering Online Services: apply online; meet with customers virtually; offer online webinars; virtual outreach events; and virtual Job Fairs
- Encouraging virtual file sharing via encryption technology for security
- Assisting and supporting customers in the adaptation to the new technology of virtual services
- Offering employability skills training to secondary and post-secondary students through Perkins-purchased curriculum
- Implementing job exploration and career pathways before secondary school; i.e. EC-JOBS aims to provide career exploration and interest assessment to Effingham schools as early as 5th grade
- Lake Land College offers Adult Education courses, both in virtual and hybrid modalities for the first time ever

(CH 2)(A)(3) EDR 7's capacity to address the needs of employers includes:

- Providing incumbent worker training, roundtable meetings to assess workforce needs, on-the-job training and work experience.
- Utilizing the Business Service Team to determine workforce needs.
- Supporting the creation and use of apprenticeships when available.
- Collaborating with high schools to provide co-op programs for educational credit.
- Implementing vocational training programs.
- Through the Apprenticeship Expansion Grant, employ a Navigator to guide local employers through the process and benefits of establishing registered apprenticeships.
- Offering several secondary CTE programs and developing a TPM system for local employers through new initiatives such as ERCA and LIFT in addition to already-established vocational programs such as Vandalia One.
- Development of new EC-JOBS initiative, connecting employers with potential employees.
- Guiding students into career pathways and providing career exploration opportunities such as entrepreneurial experiences (CEO, ClassE, Eccel, etc.), work-based learning such as C-Tech, and onsite tours of local businesses such as Manufacturing Day.
- Business Navigator Alliance provides professional outreach to businesses negatively impacted by COVID-19 and technical assistance in applying for state and federal economic relief programs. Numerous economic development organizations serving even the farthest corners of our rural region.

(CH 2)(A)(4) Existing training programs in EDR 7 prepare job seekers to enter and retain employment with regional businesses as evidenced by the following data provided by CEFS Economic Opportunity Corporation. The graph below shows credential attainment met both the threshold goals and the negotiated goals established as performance measures for youth, adult and dislocated workers:



(CH 2)(A)(5) To ensure quality of service delivery to the customers of LWIA 23, each program partner commits to implement the following goals and activities: Ensure communication occurs across all One-Stop partners; Communicate job expectations to staff; Share customer information; Staff is valued and respected; Utilize customer input to design and deliver services.

Commitments of each program partner to implement the selected strategies described in the “Action Plan for Improving Service Integration in the Region.” The LWIA 23 partners completed in 2019 and early 2020 the process of conducting local assessments and developing Action Plans for Service Integration in each of the one-stops and throughout the Region. All partners in each workforce area commit to implement the strategies in the local areas’ Action Plans. Major priorities in the Region include communication across partners, which includes improving and expanding technological capabilities that can facilitate referrals; clear communication of job expectations to staff; facilitate sharing of customer data; value and respect staff; utilize customer input to design and deliver services. Because many of the challenges of integrating services across multiple areas and multiple programs cannot truly be solved at the local level, the Region continues to request from the State technological solution(s) that are system-wide, cross-program and customer-centered such as a single system-wide case management system. The LWIAs identified goals for service integration in their action plans. In January and February of 2022, LWIA 23 partners reconvened to assess their current priority of plan goals and to update this Regional Plan. The partners thought through how the goals may have changed in regard to the COVID-19 National Health Emergency and workforce equity. The partners also discussed altering goals with these two topics in mind. The following is the compiled list of the goals in order of priority across the EDR 7:

- *Communication across all One Stop partners-*
 - Use technology to share information via social media and websites, which has become even more significant due to the COVID-19 National Health Emergency

- Develop/improve communication vehicles such as newsletters, meetings, calendars, partner meetings
- Leverage Business Services Team for LWIA 23 to review referral system and develop a feedback process
- Create and utilize brochure of partners services
- Increase knowledge of Career Pathways using common language across partner
- *Communicate job expectations –*
 - Establish core staff competencies
 - Continue of partner meetings for updates, share feedback
 - Require new staff to attend OSC orientations
 - Establish a vision for customer service
 - Update Asset Map quarterly
- *Customer data sharing –*
 - Explore using IWIS as shared database/case management system
 - Hold quarterly Business Services Team/employer roundtables
 - Analyze results from customer satisfaction survey; share analysis with One-Stop Operator and Consortium Committee
- *Value and respect Staff –*
 - Solicit frontline staff input into policy at the Local level
 - Ensure staff provided with time to discuss customer service, continuous improvement service integration, working relationships at regular staff meetings
- *Utilize customer input to design and deliver services –*
 - Continue to use/revise/update existing customer satisfaction tools
 - Consider development of a universal intake form
 - Seek opportunities to implement an automated tracking system
 - Utilize online forms and applications
 - Assess value of creating an FAQ on partner programs for customers to use
 - Discuss and share customer input with One-Stop Operator, LWIA 23 Consortium Committee, and the LWIA 23 Business Services Team.

(CH 2)(B)(1) Transportation and other supportive services are coordinated with EDR 7 through various partners and organizations. Partners within EDR 7 provide transportation and/or other supportive services. For example when an individual is participating in an approved TANF work and training activity, DHS will provide supportive service for transportation. Organizations which could provide supportive services include community action agencies (E.g. ERBA, CEFS, BCMW), social service agencies (E.g. Catholic Charities, Goodwill, Salvation Army), and civic or religious organizations.

(CH 2)(B)(1) In order to promote coordination of supportive services delivery, DHS is available to provide case coordination to improve transportation for TANF clients. Further, EDR 7 utilizes a referral system as is governed by the Consortium Committee.

(CH 2)(C)(1-2) In an effort to coordinate the services with regional economic development services and WIOA service providers, the following were invited and actively engaged in regional planning (none of the invitees declined participation):

- All EDR 7 partners
- Southeastern Region-based Chamber of Commerce entities
- Crawford County Development Association
- Clark County Economic Development Organization
- Vandalia One
- Coles Together
- DCEO Team RED representative
- Effingham Regional Growth Alliance

Due to the COVID pandemic, the Economic Development Region 7 Planning Team met virtually via Zoom for all planning meetings. The planning meetings provided a valuable space to discuss challenges and opportunities all partners faced since March 2020. The few partners who were unable to attend planning meetings due to schedule conflicts were able to review meeting notes and provide feedback via email and phone calls to LWIA 23 Director. COVID-19 necessitated all partners to pivot to new methods of meeting and collaborating. The Pandemic work-environment prepared all partners to collaborate seamlessly even when working asynchronously.

(CH 2)(D) The coordination of administrative costs arrangements, possible pooling of funds for administrative costs, etc. for the One-Stop center has been determined. All partners have agreed to use full-time equivalency (FTE) as the basis for determining cost-sharing and infrastructure. All partners will be responsible for their fair share of the Infrastructure and Delivery System costs for the Comprehensive One-Stop based on their agencies FTE's or a minimum of .25 FTE as required by the State Interagency Group. FTE's are determined by the amount of staff that are physically located in the building for each agency that offer Career Services. If an agency has no staff member located in the building, they have agreed through negotiations to a .25 FTE to calculate their share of the costs. All partners will be billed biannually. National Able (Title V) has placed a participant as a greeter in the Comprehensive One-Stop Center. This participant's wages will be used as a non-cash contribution for the Delivery System costs. Staffing is not an allowable, non-cash contribution for the Infrastructure costs.

The current PY 19 administrative costs are shared between Title I and IDES, per previous MOU agreements. Customer requests for services at the One-Stop are being gathered and compiled on a monthly basis.

(CH 2)(E) The COVID-19 pandemic affected our regional strategies in that we had to find new, innovative ways to reach both employers and job seekers, understand the unprecedented challenges presented to our region, and identify new solutions or approaches in a dynamic, uncertain environment. Regional leaders quickly found that restrictions on face-to-face meetings, in-person conferences, and large congregations made it impossible to continue "business as usual" thus were forced to pivot immediately and implement standard strategies virtually, asynchronously, and flexibly. For instance:

- Virtual job fairs grew exponentially; they were offered by radio stations, local businesses, schools, and non-profit agencies. It is apparent that implementing virtual job fairs offers the benefits of reaching a greater audience and allowing flexibility for employers and job seekers alike. With these improvements over solely in-person job fairs, we expect that the next two years will see continued use of a hybrid model utilizing both in-person and virtual aspects into job fairs.
- Illinois workNet provides digital space for employers to post job openings and recruit candidates. Employers can post their information into virtual "job booths" for ease of transitioning from advertising availabilities into hosting a virtual job fair.
- Social media platforms have been used to a new extent in reaching the public. Studies show that 72% of American adults have a social media account. While the pandemic made it difficult to find "pockets" of job seekers, using social media and targeted marketing was a new method to get messaging directly to target populations.
- LWIA 23 developed a podcast, *WIN: Workforce Innovation News*, to highlight multiple facets of workforce development and discuss new challenges and opportunities presented in EDR 7.

- Heavy reliance on virtual services and messaging brought a greater emphasis to the “Digital Divide” in our region. The Digital Divide affects our population in two ways: 1) some cannot afford internet access and 2) some rural areas do not have the infrastructure to support high-speed internet needed for the increased bandwidth of virtual offerings. Populations impacted were students, job seekers, and employers. In response to the recently identified challenges, basic computer skill classes are offered at no cost to participants through a grant project at Eastern Illinois University; CEFS has a pilot grant for digital navigation and funding for equipment; local schools and colleges offer technology lending libraries; and local communications companies are working to expand fiber optic internet delivery across the rural areas of the region.
- IDES has been providing one-on-one Re-Employment Services and Eligibility Assessments over the last 2 years. Prior to Covid-19 mitigations, this format was a large workshop held twice a month with upwards to 30 people in each session. IDES has also adopted an online scheduling feature, to schedule limited "In person" services to keep with the mitigation requirements.
The exponential increase in demand for IDES services during the pandemic revealed the need for new and increased just-in-time communication strategies to the unemployed. Because every unemployed person's experience and need is unique; IDES has looked at multiple ways to improve communications with a focus on those individuals who experience barriers to accessing public services. IDES improved web-based information (making IDES website mobile-friendly; adding information about other types of assistance; using plain language; and providing information in the top 6 languages spoken in IL). The options that we offer are considerate of barriers that people in poverty typically face (transportation, care giving, digital and language access) and are intended to reduce the time associated with receiving services, reduce the chances of not getting benefits in a timely manner; and provide information about how to find WIOA partner services and financial resources from other sources (SNAP, TANF, utility relief, etc).
- In March 2020, the Illinois Department of Employment Security's (IDES) Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) program began enlisting the use of digital tools that facilitated remote work and streamlined day-to-day administrative operations. The use of this technology, as part of a “new normal” in state activity, allowed for customer service provisions to take place that, due to COVID 19's impact, had been restrictive at best. As this dramatic shift to telework and virtual event planning and implementation began to emerge as common practice, lessons were learned and improvements to our delivery model took place. These changes have left its mark on our day-to-day operations.

(CH 2)(F) A workforce equity lens is incorporated throughout EDR 7's regional plan. In fact, equity is ingrained in the very fiber of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Each regional workforce leader expresses a commitment to equity and intentional coordination of service delivery strategies to job seekers and employers. Review of the most recent *Economic Development Region 7 Data Packet* emphatically shows disparities in income, education attainment, and poverty levels for households with a female head and for People of Color when compared to men-lead households and Caucasian individuals. Using an equity lens, targeted and specific outreach will focus on those populations facing disparities. Considering the target populations, workforce agencies and partners will implement the following new tactics or expand on current tactics such as:

- Survey Head Start parents (predominantly single mothers, low-income, low education attainment) during in-home visits to identify interest and opportunity for additional support services such as Adult Education, skills training, unemployment benefits, or disability services. The intended result will be increased and intentional referrals to partners.
- Contact local employers in areas with Spanish-speaking populations to offer workplace ESL courses while simultaneously offering occupational Spanish skills to native English speakers in efforts to break down communication barriers on the job.

- Work with local employers who hire individuals without a high school diploma or GED to offer workplace GED classes.
- Focus initial Apprenticeship Navigator efforts in establishing apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships in the healthcare field where we see heavy populations of women and women of Color in low paying positions like certified nursing assistants and in-home health caregivers. Offering career pathways to higher paying positions such as LPN and RN to the most in-need populations will increase equity in pay and skills.
- Illinois Career Information System switches to Spanish with a single click, allowing ease of access for Spanish-speaking participants.
- Continue case management style of assessing need and providing assistance to overcome barriers to success as this is the most effective method of addressing inequities on an individual level. Each partner agency provides superlative case-by-case support to help individuals along their identified career paths. WIOA partners will continue to serve those most in need of services.

CHAPTER 3: VISION, GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES— REGIONAL COMPONENT

(CH 3)(A) The strategic vision for Economic Development Region 7 (EDR 7) and Local Workforce Innovation Area 23 (LWIA 23) is to provide business-driven talent and data-driven solutions that integrate education, workforce, and economic development resources across systems to provide businesses, individuals, and communities with the opportunity to prosper and contribute to growing the regional and state economies. Our vision aligns with the State of Illinois' vision, as declared in the 2020-2024 State of Illinois WIOA Unified State Plan, to 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.

Utilizing essential labor market data, this Regional Plan provides equal opportunity and equitable access for area residents to achieve economic independence and improved quality of life. These opportunities are provided through a collaborative workforce development system built on the solid foundation of strong partnerships with local businesses, integrated services, robust career pathways, and cross-agency connections. The combined efforts of all players in the local workforce will promote life-long learning and proactively addresses the talent and technical skill needs of employers in our region.

This is achieved through a comprehensive Illinois workNet Center and access sites throughout our 13-county region. These locations provide business driven services, with emphasis on developing and strengthening career services for businesses and job seekers, strive for continuous improvement, and provide accountability for results. By providing training and education to those who are unemployed or underemployed, as well as offering supportive services - such as mileage reimbursement, child care, uniforms, etc. - to assist special populations facing increased obstacles to success, the LWIB will nourish and expand the local skill and talent pool for high-demand occupations in the region. Effingham is the location of a centralized, comprehensive center, and this site will be responsive to the needs of customers as they arise. Access (satellite) sites are located throughout the 13 counties. Office sites may change as determined necessary in order to meet the needs of customers.

As Economic Development Region 7 reacts to the COVID-19 pandemic and the new atmosphere created by the National Health Emergency, we found leaning into our workforce development system of partners more imperative than ever. As a region, we will continue to foster a team perspective for workforce development. Title I partners are committed to working closely with our area's Team RED representative and area economic development organizations to proactively address the workforce needs and requirements of local employers.

The team approach will be used to coordinate with employers in our five identified sectors as well as expanding beyond to those sectors hardest hit by the pandemic, including hospitality. Our regional team will employ targeted and strategic outreach with a focus on developing multiple talent pipelines for local employers.

(CH 3)(B) The number one goal of the service delivery system is a shared commitment between the Local Workforce Innovation Board (LWIB) and the partner agencies. Developing a plan of action ensures the system becomes the primary Local Workforce Area resource to which employers and job-seekers turn for workforce development services.

The partners agree that the goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce (including youth and special populations with barriers to employment) relating to performance accountability measures include:

- Increasing employment, retention, and earnings of participants;
- Increasing attainment of recognized credentials by participants;
- Improving the quality of the workforce;
- Reducing welfare dependency with outreach from partners;
- Enhancing the productivity and competitiveness of the region and state;
- Increasing economic self-sufficiency;
- Meeting skill requirements of employers by providing work-based training;
- Developing a pathway for the future workforce; and
- Communicating with local business to evaluate skills needed for workforce.

The goals outlined in the regional plan are geared towards compliance with the performance accountability measures that are based on performance indicators. The goals in the regional plan promote increased communication and collaboration between partners. This teamwork will provide optimum services to customers, including securing and retaining employment after exit. Training programs for high demand industry sectors are promoted to increase the prospect of employment and higher wage earnings with a degree or certificate in these sectors. Performance data is monitored on a monthly basis and communicated to the Board and Planning and Oversight Committee quarterly.

To collectively agree on common performance measures, core partners will meet prior to formal negotiations with the Governor to determine the levels of performance all agencies can adhere to. Once an agreement is reached, the core partners will designate an individual or individuals to represent the group in negotiations with the Governor. The negotiation results will be communicated to all core partners within 24 hours.

(CH 3)(C) The following regional and local strategies have been developed by EDR 7 to achieve the vision and goals by demonstrating a commitment of integration of services by partners:

GOAL	STRATEGIES
To continue to develop a more active collaboration among partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve communication among the partners through regular Consortium Committee meetings to avoid/eliminate duplication of services. • Collaborate on services to businesses, thereby establishing a unified approach to business services through the Business Service Integration Team. • Communication by IDES of current job orders of area businesses. • Continue a commitment to integration of partners by facilitating cross-training and greater awareness of other partner's services and increased levels of communication, utilizing the service matrix/asset map and braided funding to assist with this process. • Continue to utilize an asset map that is updated regularly by the Consortium Committee to promote an integration of services between partners. • Continue to base decisions upon data and analysis. • Assess the possibility for a common client tracking system, allowing for referral and shared information in handling customer services, contributing to overall progress, shared accountability, and eliminating duplication of services. • Offering applicants presentation of choices, consideration for referrals, and career and training services. • One-Stop team develop case management plan for individual clients. • Utilizing virtual services and technology to bring partners from across the region to the table and facilitate communication where geography is the biggest obstacle.
To improve responsiveness to business community and needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodating the community members and businesses with flexible office hours and locations. • Open channels of communication between partners and the business community regarding employer needs through economic development organizations. (Community college boards and employer committees, chambers of commerce, and advisory committees.) • Develop a collective integrated approach among partners in EDR 7 to meet employer needs, and track business contacts through Illinois Job Link. • Demonstrate a commitment to integration of partners by coordination of business services among partners through the Business Service Integration Team. • Utilize a broad basic training that can be built upon for individualized business needs and existing processes to ensure initiatives will be employer-validated and provide stackable credentials. Continue building strong relationships with P-16 education to create a pipeline for future employees through stackable credentials. • Business Service Integration Team works with area businesses to organize roundtables for each target sector including manufacturing, TDL, and healthcare. The roundtable process would assist with duplication of effort,

GOAL	STRATEGIES
	<p>allow for sharing of best practices, and assist with consolidation as a result of the asset map analysis. It would also assist with creating a climate of continuous improvement and allow for work with employers and community colleges to develop stackable credentials. The first healthcare roundtable was held January 2020.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop relationships with businesses and manufacturers to determine pathways which aid in recruiting employees. • Leverage virtual meetings and technologies that allow the EDR 7 workforce partners to be more flexible and accommodating of our local employer's schedules and meeting restraints.
<p>To develop continuous improvement strategies to enhance current practices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain Planning and Oversight Committee to review spending, budget and program statistics on a regular basis. • Continue Youth Committee quarterly meetings to maintain referrals, eliminate duplication of services, outreach for programs, and needs of area. • Continue meetings of front-line staff for cross training and facilitate communication at direct service level. • Community outreach to educate community members about partner services. • Continue involvement of the Business Service Integration Team. • Better utilization of the unified referral form shared among all partners. Analyze feedback from customers and front-line staff to improve services provided. • Planning, coordinating, and providing services to maximize the utilization of resources by exploring new technology resources, such as continuous improvement through assessing accessibility and effectiveness of online services and virtual outreach. • Continue to measure customer satisfaction and share with WIOA partners and the Board. • Assessing current marketing media and improve as necessary; i.e. creation and implementation of LWIA 23 Business Services marketing folder, enhanced website, social media presence, and podcast and to adjust as necessary. • In response to a rapidly changing workforce environment, actively re-engaging local employers across sectors with roundtable-style discussions, gathering data obtained from focus groups, and surveying local businesses.
<p>To expand work based learning initiatives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase Incumbent Worker Training programs as funding allows – promote IWT projects as a manner to address the skills gap for employers suffering during the skilled labor shortage induced by the pandemic. • Provide On-The-Job training programs – promote OJT projects as a manner to help entry-level workers get to work and to help employers retain workers through training. High costs of turnover and an “employee’s choice market” have put a burden on employers which OJT reimbursements may alleviate.

GOAL	STRATEGIES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of apprenticeship programs. • Develop Industry and sector strategies. • Work with education to implement guided Career pathways and stackable credentials. • Career exploration for adult and youth creating a pathway for education and the workforce. • Provide youth and adult work experience - promote Work Experience as a potential support for local employers as well as an opportunity to work directly with future talent pools before they enter the workforce. • Coordinate to provide wrap around services to customers and businesses which include work based learning initiatives such as on the job training, incumbent worker and work experience. • Design business services and strategies through the Business Service Integration Team to meet the needs of local business and industry in EDR 7.
To Strengthen linkages between One-Stop delivery system and Unemployment Insurance programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct joint orientations with UI claimants and Title I customers. • Integrate phone systems, allowing for smooth call transfers and quick connections. • Regular review of referral process for effectiveness and potential improvements. • Informational cross-training One-Stop staff for different programs within the One-Stop. Developing a thorough understanding of all programs (not to be confused with cross-training of actual duties and implementation of differentiated agencies). • Conduct combined Rapid Response meetings with employees and employers. • Title I trained to assist participants with the use of the electronic job-matching system, illinoisworkNet.com, providing them with job search assistance and local labor market information. • Data-sharing agreements and prospective integrated case management information systems.

The Southeastern Region supports the needs of individuals and businesses by utilizing a workforce development system which ensures the creation of a globally competitive skilled workforce. This support is provided by both public and private entities throughout the region.

EDR 7 partners, county-wide and community services work to provide an environment for small businesses and in-demand industry sectors/occupations to engage grow and expand. Examples include:

- *Clark County Development Organization (CCDO)*, comprised of community leaders, local government and organizations, works to promote business growth in the county.
- *East Central Illinois Development Corporation (ECIDC)*, works to spur economic growth and address regional concerns which impact jobs and the economy, by supporting and attracting businesses and industry in the region, while providing educational opportunities to membership, governmental units, and residents.

- *Effingham County Economic Development Advisory Board and Grant Research* provides research to promote business retention and growth, facilitate business contacts, administer the county's business revolving loan fund, and provide grant research to businesses in the county.
- *City of Casey Economic Development Office* offers assistance with starting a business, advertising, and marketing help (including social media platforms), identification of available supportive grants and application assistance with same, and Enterprise Zone Assistance. The office also supports a private online social network peer group for business owners, representatives, and organization leaders to seek advice and other input.
- *Mattoon in Motion, Workforce Development* aids area employers, residents, and employees through innovative programs involving businesses and educational institutions, the group also raises awareness of available jobs, needed skills, and business opportunities.
- *Chamber of Commerce organizations* throughout the region work with partners to assess and assist workforce development and skills needs in their communities.

EDR 7 coordinates workforce development programs with economic development by working with existing public and governmental organizations or agencies, such as:

- SCIGA, South Central Illinois Growth Alliance
- Effingham Regional Career Academy
- Center for Business and Industry, Lake Land College
- Greater Wabash Regional Planning Commission
- Paris Economic Development Corporation
- Coles Together

Additional services to assist and engage small businesses and in-demand industry sectors include:

- Free counseling sessions on business start-up, financial, operational and employment assistance provided by expert counselors from area colleges and government agencies.
- Touchdown Space for Busy Entrepreneurs with a fully equipped office containing computer links to colleges, government agencies, business development services, employment resource sites and training modules.
- Interview space for off-site confidential interviews.
- Business Resource library, supplied by local libraries, containing books, magazines and various audio-visual materials on subjects that range from how to write a business plan to leadership.
- Free on-line Resume Service, Notary Public and Certificate of Origin Assistance.

(CH 3)(D) Within EDR 7, there are several organizations that are promoting entrepreneurial skills training and micro enterprising services. EDR 7 partners will work with current organizations to provide referrals and support to individuals and businesses seeking entrepreneurial skills training and micro enterprising services:

- The Greater Wabash Regional Planning Commission covering EDR 7 counties of Crawford, Richland, and Lawrence has an economic plan with a strategy of creating a support system including programs and resources for entrepreneurs within the region.
- The SEED (Sustainable Entrepreneurship through Education and Development) Center at Eastern Illinois University (Charleston), provides free entrepreneurial coaching and mentoring, in addition to internship and scholarship opportunities.
- The Business Essentials Support and Technology Center (BEST), located at the Effingham Chamber of Commerce provides information, assistance, and services to individuals interested in starting a business and, for existing businesses, access to resources critical to making smart business decisions.
- The Elevate CCIC Innovation Center, funded through a Google grant and the USDA Coles County office, aids startup businesses in the region by creating a mixed-use, co-working space that provides resources

and opportunities to nurture innovation and economic prosperity in the region through a collaborative community of entrepreneurs.

High schools in Effingham and Mattoon have formed entrepreneurship clubs to help participants acquire 21st century skills of problem solving, teamwork, self-motivation, responsibility, higher-order thinking, and communication. Juniors and seniors in area high schools acquire a project-based experience by working with the local business community. The yearlong courses utilize business and education partnerships to provide an overview of business development and processes. Business investors provide funding, expertise, meeting space, business tours and one on one mentoring.

Additionally, iCREATE K-12 curriculum and community CREaTE Teams are being piloted by the University of Illinois Extension in Clark, Crawford and Edgar counties. These innovative programs help promote awareness, knowledge and skill building to create a habit and culture of young entrepreneurial-based thinking.

Regional strategies to increase apprenticeships and other work-based learning opportunities include:

- The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) initiative for regional business roundtables by combining economic development regions to roll out apprenticeship programs with the revised navigator and intermediary roles.
- Coordinating meetings with business and industry and the area representative of the USDOL Office of Apprenticeship.
- Informing county leadership on the apprenticeship initiative and concept by providing information at County Board meetings.
- Working with economic development organizations to conduct regional business forums in order to introduce apprenticeship opportunities and detail work-based learning funding sources.
- Educating the private sector WIB members about apprenticeships and seeking their assistance in creating interest in their respective counties.
- Coordinating with community colleges in LWIA 23 to act as a resource to businesses and industries desiring to develop apprenticeships and related curriculum.
- Providing work experience for youth based on youth interests and skills.

LWIA 23 will employ an Apprenticeship Navigator to lead the LWIA 23 Apprenticeship Consortium of local partners in raising awareness of apprenticeship benefits and opportunities to local employers and job seekers. Through DCEO's Apprenticeship Expansion Grant, the Navigator position will be the initial contact for all things apprenticeship and will guide local businesses through the development of registered apprenticeships. The Navigator will work closely with local intermediaries – Lake Land College's Center for Business and Industry, Kaskaskia College, and Illinois Eastern Community Colleges – to support individuals through apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs. The new Navigator can expect the support of all regional workforce development partners and the LWIA 23 Business Services Team (BST). Our goal is to establish at least five new apprenticeship programs by June of 2024. The initial project will be to focus on career pathways and apprenticeships in health care, specifically supporting home health caregivers and nursing assistants on a pathway to Licensed Practical Nursing and Registered Nursing. Also a top priority, will be to implement Talent Pipeline Management with young adults interested in vocational training resulting in an earn-and-learn apprenticeship model for local employers.

(CH 3)(E) The Southeastern Region will work with the education system to establish several pathways in order to shorten the time from credential to employment, such as:

- Guided pathways
- Stackable credentials
- Focused short-term training
- Apprenticeships and on-the-job training, and
- Providing a pipeline for employers

(CH 3)(F) In support of the state goals to align and integrate education, workforce development, and economic development, the EDR 7 team will:

- Work with current projects on a local level. Due to the size of EDR 7, it is extremely difficult to ensure that all local parties are acting in the same manner. There is also diversity within industry that may make this difficult. Therefore, to keep business engaged, our communications must be clear, concise, meaningful, and value-added.
- Integrated Business Service Team is collaborating with partners and employers.
- Educate local education leaders on labor market indicators.
- Utilize Perkins Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment to educate local education leaders.
- Utilize and expand skills gap surveys.
- Work with youth programs and regional planning groups that have goals and strategies to develop a consortium that includes the business community; K-12 community and higher education; create a Partners in Education group (PIE) for each of their community college areas; develop opportunities for tours/internships/job shadowing between K-12 and the business community; give the region's K-12 students the tools, knowledge, and a plan necessary for successful employability upon high school graduation; work with Leadership programs in the region's K-12 schools; in partnership with community colleges, providing dual-credit opportunities for target sectors for EDR 7.
- Integrated Business Service Team meets with economic development leaders to communicate services provided to community members.
- Expand career pathway opportunities through more accelerated and work-based training and align and integrate programs of study leading to industry-recognized credentials and improved employment and earnings.
 - Increase and expand Incumbent Worker program through the collaboration and integration of partners and business services.
 - Utilize business services team to assist with expanding career pathways.
 - Post-education survey to employers to establish if employee meets their needs.
 - Guided pathways developed at community colleges.
 - Stackable credentials increase opportunities.

- Expand career services and opportunities for populations facing multiple barriers to close the gap in educational attainment and economic advancement through career pathways and improved career services and expansion of bridge programs. The following will be possibilities that will be available to customers:
 - One strategy for EDR 7 is for WIOA to work closely with local community college partners in bridge programs providing work based learning during the bridge program.
 - Vocational Rehabilitation can assist with career assessment services and training opportunities to persons with disabilities.
 - DHS/TANF can assist with training opportunities.
 - Provide individualized education and employment plans.
 - All partners will work with customers that have multiple barriers to employment and share data to cross reference potential services to the customer from other partner agencies.
 - CSBG: Providing individualized case management for those that are facing multiple barriers to provide holistic approach. (CEFS provides these using their Homeless Case Managers.)
- Expand information for employers and job-seekers to access services by improving the Illinois public-private data infrastructure to support the alignment and integration of economic development, workforce development and education initiatives. To help support sector partnerships and career pathways, EDR 7 offers the following:
 - Utilize the service matrix/asset map and market services to all sectors of the public.
 - Utilize continuing skills gap survey results of the business community to assess needs and changing economic demands.
 - With State guidance, develop or utilize existing web based programs for coordination of services to individuals and businesses, including streamlining of services.
 - Facilitate workshops for businesses and job seekers informing them of program services available to assist in their needs.
 - Work with community colleges to provide training when needed i.e. GED and ELA courses. Promote an integration of services by co-enrolling customers with local partner programs and outreach to employers to determine skill requirements.

(CH 3)(G) The COVID-19 pandemic introduced difficulties to coordinating the regional workforce, education and economic development activities. In the spring of 2020, “shelter in place” orders and closures prevented long-established activities from occurring, specifically EIEFES and Lake Land College’s *8th Grade Career Conference*. For an extended period of 2020, many organizations and individuals were in survival mode as they figured out the new environment and its challenges. As the region adapted to the restrictions, we saw a drastic pivot to virtual meetings, digital presentations, and unorthodox visits in open-space outdoor areas, digital voting, and new modalities to coordinate and host activities. Necessity required the region to try new technologies; however, we all saw value in the increased accessibility and efficiency of virtual events. Over the next two years, LWIA 23 and regional workforce partners will continue to offer virtual and/or hybrid modalities to increase convenience, efficiency and access for participants. Providing choices to partners, businesses, and individuals will increase participation and foster collaborations across the workforce.

(CH 3)(H) A workforce equity lens is incorporated in the implementation of regional workforce, education, and economic development strategies in that all partners identify disparities and advocate for inclusion for those most in need. Drilling into regional data, workforce partners are painfully aware that women earn less than male-led households; People of Color are more likely to experience poverty and less likely to obtain postsecondary education than Caucasian populations in our region.

Economic Development Region 7 does not boast a metropolis, rather the region is chiefly rural and spans a vast geographical area of approximately 6,600 square miles. Transportation, specifically lack of mass public transportation systems, pose obstacles for rural residents to get to work, school, or resources in person. Long

drive times to meet in a central location pose time constraints on local business and education partners, making it difficult for even those with reliable transportation to join in-person meetings on location. Adoption of hybrid meeting modalities will increase accessibility for job seekers, customers, and partners alike.

Education partners offer options for distance learning, with the intent on making education accessible for students without transportation or responsibilities that require them to stay at home. Several programs at the colleges and high schools offer assistance to increase access to online capabilities through lending laptops or providing free WiFi hotspots. Asynchronous classes provide flexibility for students to work and care for their families while working on classwork in a time that fits their hectic schedules. Such flexible modalities will significantly affect women with families, with intentions to mitigate the disparities in income and education. Local community organizations now offer online applications in addition to the standard paper application. A new development in the pandemic is the ability to share sensitive documents via encrypted email while maintaining security integrity.

Economic development organizations in the region embraced informational webinars free to any local business on a variety of pertinent topics. Webinar topics include but are not limited to: access to capital for starting a business; apprenticeships; Illinois' Business Enterprise Program (BEP); COVID-19 relief resources; FAME component of Advantage Illinois; and many more. This tactic brought information and resources directly to local small businesses that faced the brunt of the pandemic's economic impact. Economic development organizations committed to using multiple modalities in spreading awareness of state and federal programs available to small business owners. Economic development partners continue to emphasize opportunities for equity-focused initiatives, such as Fund for Advancement of Minority Enterprises (FAME) and Business Enterprise Program (BEP) for businesses owned by minorities, women, and persons with disabilities.

The over-arching lesson learned during the COVID-19 National Health Emergency was to show grace and compassion as we all faced struggles. That lesson will continue to influence implementation of workforce strategies and tactics for the next two years and beyond.

CHAPTER 4: OPERATING SYSTEMS AND POLICIES – LOCAL COMPONENT

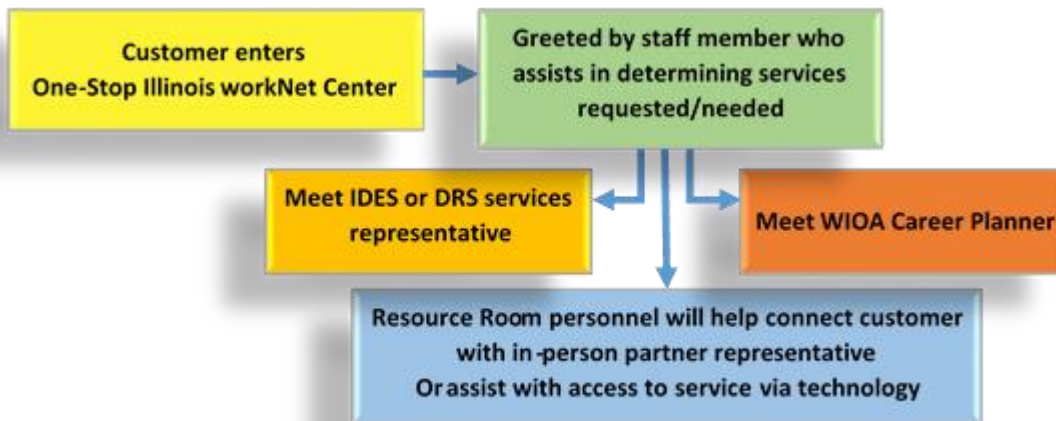
(CH 4)(A) *The Local Workforce Innovation Area 23 **Memorandum of Understanding** provides a description of the one-stop delivery system, and other information that is essential to the establishment and operation of effective local workforce development systems as required by the WIOA Rule (20 CFR Part 678.705). The Memorandum of Understanding and any subsequent modifications is incorporated by reference into this plan. (See ATTACHMENT A: Memorandum of Understanding)*

*The Local Workforce Innovation Area 23 **Service Integration Action Plan** provides a description of how local workforce partners will align and coordinate services as required by the State of Illinois Service Integration Policy (WIOA Policy Chapter 1, Section 13). Information from the initial Service Integration Action Plan is included below. Any subsequent modifications to the Service Integration Action Plan are incorporated by reference into this plan. (See ATTACHMENT B: Service Integration Action Plan)*

(CH 4)(B)(1) Identifying, implementing and transitioning to an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system for programs carried out in LWIA 23 will continue to be a topic of interest for the region. Numerous discussions, both formal and informal, have revolved around the issue of integrated information systems. Within our Service Integration Self-Assessment Action Plan (Attachment B), we acknowledge a common database with uniform application will enable agencies to track customer progress and potential early warning alerts for vulnerable students/customers/clients. There are major obstacles preventing the adoption and implementation of an integrated system despite the universal opinion that all partners and

stakeholders would benefit dramatically. All state partners would have to agree to the shared system, however it would not be feasible on a local level without allowing significant populations to fall through the cracks. LWIA 23 spans across thirteen counties, parts of three community college districts, parts of four Regions of Education, and two IDHS regions. The efforts required to get the entire LWIA onto an integrated system are beyond that of a region and will have to span multi-regions in multi-agencies. The initiative needs to begin at the State level to produce viable, useful, accurate database interface. The LWIB will continue to explore options and strategies that may work for our unique region, but ultimately will continue to advocate for and highlight why we need better integration of case management information systems at the State level.

(CH 4)(B)(2) The LWIB will facilitate access to services provided through the One-Stop delivery system, including those in remote areas, through the use of technology and other means. This will be accomplished as follows:



CEFS has satellite WIOA offices in Fayette, Coles, Marion, Crawford, Richland, and Lawrence counties and a One-Stop Illinois workNet Center in Effingham County with Career Planners present. All WIOA Career Planners have access to laptop computers that allow the Career Planners to complete intakes and assessments anywhere in the 13 county area. If a customer is unable to travel to meet CEFS personnel, a Career Planner will go to the customer. Due to the COVID-19 National Health Emergency, the One-Stop closed its doors to the public for much of 2020-2021. When the One-Stop reopened for in-person visits, it was restricted to visits by appointment only and disallowed walk-in visitors. The closure of the One-Stop negatively affected the referral process and ability to offer a net of supportive services to dislocated workers. CEFS adapted by implementing an online application and offering to meet customers via Zoom or at outdoor open-air venues convenient to the customer. CEFS will continue to offer services in whatever modality suits the customer for the next two years and beyond.

Customers seeking DHS services can access DHS services through the internet, call for services, or come in person to one of the DHS offices. Customers seeking specific vocational rehabilitation services can also arrange to meet with vocational rehabilitation counselors in other locations. By using the web-based case management system with access via remote technology through laptops with air cards or similar means, counselors can meet with customers almost anywhere. Customers seeking IDES services can access services in-person or through technological methods.

All other partner services will be available via technology. All partners recognize the importance of being flexible to adjust to circumstances at the moment to meet the need of the individuals we serve.

To expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals with barriers to employment, the LWIB will approve new programs that are submitted and vetted by the Planning

and Oversight Committee based on customer and market demand. A committee has been established to deal with resolving disability related issues. The LWIB and Consortium Committee will also review the data measures to ensure that customers have access to the desired services. To facilitate the development of career pathways and co-enrollment in core programs, as appropriate, data will be monitored and tracked to ensure that referrals improve between core partners. The LWIB will improve access to activities leading to a recognized post-secondary credential (including a credential that is an industry-recognized certificate or certification, portable, and stackable) by obtaining input from industries in our area, recruiting business sector members to the LWIB, involving local development entities and educators to secure labor needs, and developing a work-ready labor force with minimal training needs to meet industry demands. Through the Adult Education ICAPS programming, and coordination with WIOA/CEFS services, much of this is already being done.

(CH 4)(C)(1) The LWIB will coordinate activities of supportive services among partners through the Consortium Committee as explained above. A per-mile rate is reimbursed to WIOA customers who need transportation for training activities, such as classroom training, OJT, and work experience. WIOA will also pay for rural public transportation service passes if customers need regular and reliable transportation to and from scheduled trainings. Childcare assistance is provided if the customer applies for and is denied Project Child services. Other supportive services such as clothing, tools, physicals, and background checks are provided to customers as required by training activities or to obtain employment. Individual supportive services are determined based on customer need. (See ATTACHMENT C: Supportive Service Policy)

(CH4)(C)(2) Students enrolled in an IET model will be provided with basic math and reading skills, including comprehension, to support GED completion while attain basic skills needs for employment. Lake Land College AEFL offers Basic Nursing Assistant and Basic Welding and has receive an IET grant for FY 21 to develop, implement and deliver manufacturing skills. Kaskaskia College and Illinois Eastern Community Colleges continue to develop new programs based upon labor market information in the college districts. Students enrolled in English Language Acquisitions courses are also encouraged to enroll in IET programs to further develop employable skills.

The COVID-19 National Health Emergency negatively influenced the region's ability to identify and serve our targeted populations. In the first half of the pandemic, the hospitality sector experienced a massive blow to their normal business traffic as "shelter in place" and social distancing mandates resulted in closed facilities, decreased customer demand, and rising costs of Personal Protection Equipment. Numerous individuals lost their income and were reliant on unemployment benefits. However, the increased demand on Illinois Department of Employment Security and the potential risk to their staff required IDES offices, including our One-Stop center, to close down. The One-Stop closure generated intense difficulties and disrupted the standard process of providing dislocated workers with WIOA services at the time of UI enrollment. Without the main vein of referred dislocated workers, WIOA services were sent to UI claimants through IDES email blasts and social media postings. The modified process was not as successful as the traditional One-Stop referral process once was. Since then, IDES has supplied a UI case manager at the Effingham Library made possible through grant funding. The UI case manager will remain at the Effingham Library until June 30th 2022, and may remain there if grant funding allows. CEFS and other WIOA partners will work with the library-based case manager to provide UI claimants with WIOA information and offer supportive services needed.

Real time responses and feedback are suggestive that email is not the ideal method to communicate with affected populations. Further consideration of alternative communications is in progress. Adult Education programs at IECC have implemented text-messaging communications, which appear to be promising. Multiple partners are testing and monitoring the use of geofencing outreach in efforts to message targeted audiences on social media and other online platforms. WIOA partners will continue to share innovative ideas that work and even attempts that have not been successful in outreach to targeted populations.

The closure of the One-Stop and the broken link of referrals has highlighted the importance to explore additional methods beyond emails to reach targeted populations, such as dislocated workers. CEFS will continue to offer the new modalities for the foreseeable future and will expand on processes and methods that prove successful. The lesson learned is to be flexible and willing to try innovative ways to reach those in the most efficient manner. The workforce environment is ever-changing and the workforce partners must remain dynamic to adapt and be of service.

(CH 4)(C)(4&5) LWIB 23 supports the State strategy to shorten the time from credential to employment through several actions. Our partnering community colleges offer stackable credentials, dual credit/early college credit opportunities, and credit for prior learning or work experience. Through career planners, WIOA assists mature workers and underemployed workers in matching their current skill sets with hiring requirements of local employers. LWIB partners will dedicate time and resources to investigating how targeted marketing can identify segments of the labor force who may not require extensive education or training to qualify for jobs in high demand occupations. The process will require identifying who the market segments are, where they are, and to which forms of media are they most responsive. From the initial results, we will be able to deliberately design and implement a focused, targeted marketing campaign to draw that market segment in and support them in finding better employment matches. The same process can be applied to determining the most effective marketing methods for informing college and university students about Prior Learning Assessments.

(CH 4)(D) The LWIB plans to delegate the responsibilities for the coordination of services and to avoid duplication of services to the One-Stop Operator (core partners). The One-Stop Operator meets regularly to coordinate activities among partners. The One-Stop Operator will report to the Consortium committee who in turn reports to the full Board every quarter the activities among partners and how the activities are being coordinated. An asset map listing of all partner services and local contacts has been developed and is being utilized by all partners. Through the Consortium committee, all partners report their performance measures as available.

(CH 4)(D)(1) Title I – Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth

Under WIOA Title I, LWIA 23 provides Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth employment and training activities through CEFS Community Action Agency, as described in the MOU.

Adult & Dislocated Worker

CEFS conducts case assessments and case management procedures for participants. Each customer will have an Individual Employment Plan, which will include: short and long-term goals, achievement objectives, types of service needed, and employment and follow-up services. Reading and math tests are given to assist with further case management decisions. A Career Scope test is administered to establish where the customers' strengths are and to help them with a career decision. Counseling is also provided to each customer on an individual basis. Career Planners handle all aspects of customer service from orientation, intake and eligibility determination, assessment, case management and counseling, referrals and advocacy, provision for support services, placement to employment, and follow-up. This strategy has been very successful over many years, ensuring personalized service, coordination with other resources in the community, and accountability. This provides a remarkable overall customer experience.

All WIOA customers are eligible for self-assisted career services. If a customer needs staff-assisted career services, an application and assessment are completed and the customer is registered. Career Scope is used as an assessment tool and completed for all customers interested in training. Each customer is given a Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) Math and Reading to assist in the assessment process. An Individual Employment Plan is completed on all customers including the following information: field of interest, short and long-term goals, length of training program, type of supportive services needed, employment and follow-up services

needed. A self-sufficiency review form is also completed. At this point based on these assessments the best training option is decided. Veterans are a priority.

Youth

In collaboration with CEFS (Title I provider), LWIA 23 provides services to both Youth In-School (Ages 14-21) and Youth Out-of-School (Ages 16-24). Through partnerships with local businesses, the Pathways Program, and ERBA, CEFS connects with youth to provide skills and training for the workforce. Youth/young adult customers may receive vocational training in WIOA-approved programs, GED tutoring/attainment, job search assistance, resume development, paid work experience, mentoring and development of leadership skills, job readiness training, financial literacy, and additional supportive services such as uniforms, transportation, child care, required learning materials/tools, and more as needed.

(CH 4)(D)(2) Title II – Adult Education and Literacy

Adult Education continues to look at labor market information to assess business and industry demands in LWIA 23. Currently, ICAPS programming is offered at various locations in LWIA 23. Adult Education will continue to look for new and innovative ways to collaborate with WIOA partners to offer students the opportunity to achieve their HSE while gaining workforce skills. Two of the employment sectors identified in the Regional Plan are Manufacturing and Healthcare. In support of these two in-demand industries, Lake Land College Adult Education offers the Basic Welding Certificate, in the manufacturing sector and Certified Nursing Assistant credentials, in the health care sector. During spring 2020, Adult Education will begin offering Manufacturing Skills to further fulfill workforce training for this in-demand industry.

Students in the ICAPS programming earn credentials while enhancing their computer literacy and soft skills. In addition to the workplace skills studied, the student takes industry tours, and learns from both the adult education advisors and transition specialist what knowledge, skills and attributes are needed to work in the sector.

Dual credit insight and lessons learned vary depending on the area. Dual credit programs have benefits for students wishing to complete a high school diploma while setting their sights on college. The imperative of the programming rests in communication between the Director of Dual Credit and internal stakeholders to understand the process and benefit to students. The adult student population can utilize dual credit to complete their high school diploma. Successful at the secondary school level, this program could be modeled into a structure and framework into which would benefit adult students who wish to receive dual credit opportunities.

Marketing of prior learning assessments needs to be pursued across multiple platforms to reach intended students and community members. Specifically, communication with local community colleges and the WIOA partners is needed so potential students and clients could receive pertinent education information. The use of the college and WIOA partners' technology including, but not limited to, website, email blast, list serv, and text messages would provide a base level route of information dissemination. This initial contact would provide an explanation of prior learning assessments, along with examples which demonstrate the process and what is required. The colleges and the adult education partners would work with the area Regional Office of Education to assess the transcripts and help the students understand the pathway.

Continual communication between adult education and EDR 7 partners will assist in targeting in-demand occupations and related training educational programs. Allowing clients/participants from other partner programs access to short-term training would create a continual applicant pipeline into the workforce. Working with the Title 1 partner to attain OJT and/or incumbent worker training will assist individuals who need enhanced skill sets to increase workforce potential.

In LWIA 23, the community colleges, including Lake Land College, Kaskaskia College and Illinois Eastern Community Colleges, hold the funding for Title II--Adult Education and Literacy. The Area Planning Council meets twice per year to disseminate information regarding students eligible for WIOA services. The core and required partners share information to eliminate duplication of services while discussing opportunities for students. During the spring of each year, all Area Planning Councils are required to present the APC plan to the LWIB Board to show the services offered in each area by each of the Title II providers. If more than one provider is offering services in the same area, the LWIB Board will determine the services offered.

(CH 4)(D)(3) Title III – Wagner-Peyser

IDES' Employment Services and outreach is a program designed to sustain economic growth by expanding employment opportunities to qualified job seekers that meet the demands of the employers. The program's objectives aim to reduce the loss of productivity by filling job openings as quickly as possible and to shorten the duration of an individual's unemployment. For job seekers who are not job ready, Employment Services, in cooperation with other workforce partners, assist clients to access training, employability development services, and other supportive services needed to realize their employment goals. Wagner-Peyser staff will assist with the intake process by assessing the client's needs, assisting with UI claims, and registering with Illinois Job Link in order for the claimant to immediately begin searching for work. Staff will also provide Labor Market Information to educate clients on the current employment outlook and determine if further training will be necessary to enhance employment opportunities. Clients may be directed to work-readiness workshops or referred to partner agencies and/or supportive services, depending on the needs of the client.

(CH 4)(D)(4) TITLE IV – Vocational Rehabilitation

Vocational Rehabilitation works in partnership with individuals with disabilities and their families to assist them in making informed choices to achieve full community participation through employment, education and independent living opportunities. The primary focus of Vocational Rehabilitation is to assist individuals with significant disabilities in obtaining and retaining competitive, integrated employment through an individualized planning process.

Illinois Department of Human Services/Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) provides services to individuals with disabilities who desire employment and are age 14 and over. DRS offers services to youth through STEP (Secondary Transition Experience Program). STEP also includes instruction in self-advocacy, job exploration counseling, workplace readiness training, counseling on post-secondary education, and work-based learning experiences. Services include Job Placement Assistance, Vocational Counseling and Guidance, Information and Referral Services, Assessment and Evaluation, Job Retention Training, and Mental and Physical Restoration Services. These services are also available for youth with disabilities who do not participate in STEP. DRS also provides services to adults with disabilities. These services include Vocational Counseling and Guidance, Information and Referral Services, Assessment and Evaluation, Job Placement Assistance, Job Retention Training, and Mental and Physical Restoration Services. Through these services, customers may also receive assistance such as short- and long-term training programs to receive a certificate or degree, on-the-job evaluation, on-the-job training, job coaching and placement follow-up.

Customers seeking vocational rehabilitation services can access IDHS/DRS services through the internet, call for services, or come in person to one of the IDHS/DRS offices. Customers seeking specific vocational rehabilitation services can also arrange to meet with vocational rehabilitation counselors in other locations. By using the web-based case management system with access via remote technology through laptop computers, counselors can meet with customers almost anywhere.

(CH 4)(D)(5) Strong working relationships continue to grow amongst LWIA 23 WIOA, Perkins, Adult Education, and Eastern Illinois Education for Employment #340. The directors of these programs often meet, confer, share

information resources, and engage each other in planning and decision-making. Perkins offers supportive services to Special Populations, which generally overlap WIOA's target populations. In determination to provide optimal wrap-around supports, Perkins and CEFS often refer customers/students to each other and make conscientious efforts to avoid duplication of services. Through a case management approach and communications between the two programs, students/customers are offered an equitable, individual plan that fits their needs with the goal to remove as many barriers to success as possible.

The Director of LWIA 23 is interested in attending Career and Technical Education program's advisory committees in the future. During PY20, the Director will request invitations to the advisory committees through the appropriate Perkins representative at each of the region's colleges. By the end of PY23, the goal is to be a regular attendee at the meetings of in-demand CTE programs. By having a presence at the advisory committees, WIOA strategies can be better broadcasted to CTE instructors and business partners as well as further breaking down silos.

(CH 4)(D)(6) To advance robust coordination between workforce and educational services throughout the region, the Perkins programs of the three community colleges in EDR 7 will complete a Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA), a data-driven strategic planning tool with all appropriate partners to assess for equity gaps and collaboration opportunities. The LWIA 23 Director was on the CLNA team for Lake Land College and contributed to discussions as well as participated at ICCB/OCCRL sponsored workshops. Other partners were represented on the team as well, such as the local Education for Employment Director and Adult Education Director. For the development of this plan, the Perkins representatives from all three of the region's community colleges were invited and actively engaged. While the timelines of the Perkins V Local Application PY 21-25 did not align with the WIOA Region and Local Plan 20-23, it was a hot topic to prepare for future planning and allow the education and workforce plans to develop concurrently and symbiotically.

(CH 4)(E) Title I – Adult and Dislocated Worker Service

All customer eligibility, intake, and orientation is consistent across access sites and at the comprehensive One-Stop Center. Eligibility consists of providing proof that the customer is at least 18 years of age, is authorized to work in the United States, and is in compliance with the Selective Service Act. Veterans are a priority for services followed by customers who are basic skills deficient. The application and assessment of basic skills, aptitudes, and abilities are then completed. At this time, the customer is required to be enrolled in a Title I program. The Family and Community Development (FCD) Model is used to complete an extensive assessment of customers' needs across multiple dimensions in his or her life. The assessment battery is the key to effective case management, allowing the career planner to determine the individual and family needs beyond workforce issues and to provide or arrange services that nurture progress toward self-sufficiency.

Assessment and case management continues throughout enrollment through each customer's Individual Employment Plan, which includes: short and long-term goals, achievement objectives, types of services needed, and employment and follow-up services. Additional testing, including reading and math tests, are given to assist with further case management decisions. A Career Scope test is administered to identify the customers' strengths and to help them with career decisions. Individual counseling is also provided to each customer. Career Planners handle all aspects of customer service from orientation, intake and eligibility determination, assessment, case management, counseling, referrals and advocacy, provision for support services, placement to training and/or employment, and follow-up. This strategy has been very successful over many years at ensuring personalized service, coordination with other resources in the community, and accountability, therefore providing a remarkable overall customer experience.

All WIOA customers are eligible for self-assisted career services. If a customer requires staff-assisted career services, an application and assessment are completed, and the customer is registered. The Career Scope assessment tool is completed for all customers interested in training. Each customer is given a Test of Adult

Basic Education (TABE) in Math and Reading to complete the assessment process. After assessments are completed and reviewed, training options are decided upon in the development of the Individual Employment Plan, which is completed on all customers and includes the following information: field of interest, short and long-term goals, length of training program, type of supportive services needed, and employment and follow-up services needed. A self-sufficiency review form is also completed for the Individual Employment Plan.

The WIOA customer is then registered for training services:

Classroom Training: Classroom training is provided to customers in a LWIB approved-training program in a high-growth and high-demand occupation field. The Individual Training Account (ITA) amount is \$8,500 per fiscal year, per customer, with exceptions on a case-by-case basis.

OJT: On-The-Job training is provided to customers who are starting a new job and have a skills gap between current job skills and job skills required to complete the new job. OJT contracts are developed with goals and objectives for learning new skills and can be provided for up to six months.

Work Experience: Paid work experience is provided to customers who have no past work experience, have no recent work experience, or have a poor work history. Each month, goals are set to learn soft work skills needed to obtain and retain unsubsidized employment. At the end of each month, progress toward these goals is reviewed by the customer, career planner, and worksite supervisor, and new goals are set for the next month.

Other training provided to employers is Incumbent Worker Training (IWT). Each year, the LWIB may allocate an amount of Dislocated Worker or Adult funds for IWT, up to the percent allowed by law.

Emerging from the COVID-19 Pandemic, the local workforce now faces a shortage of skilled workers. Facing this new challenge, WIOA services are poised and ready to support job-seekers and employers alike by supporting occupational-skills training and by connecting job-seekers with employers.

Through targeted outreach and customer enrollment, Title I partners aim to address the deficient of skilled employees in the local workforce. Adult and Dislocated Worker programs provide supportive services and mentorship to job-seekers as they navigate the workforce and progress on their chosen Career Pathway. This will include the aforementioned classroom training, On-the-Job Training, and Work Experience. The mentorship provided by Career Planners includes a built-in accountability checker and incentivizes individuals facing barriers to persevere and maintain gainful employment as well as self-sufficiency.

Title I will work with all workforce partners as part of the Business Services Team to engage with local employers to assess their needs to achieve growth. Incumbent Worker Training will encourage local employers to upskill their current staff and promote from within their companies. Apprentices in any newly developed apprenticeships will be vetted to determine if they qualify for WIOA services. By proactively vetting apprentices, WIOA funding may be used to alleviate financial burden for employers to provide training. The development of pre-apprenticeships will be considered to create an intentional talent pipeline from local schools to the local workforce. Through continued funding and support of training initiatives, WIOA programs will positively influence the local workforce's recovery from the COVID-19 National Health Emergency.

Annual Training Expenditure Requirement for Dislocated Worker and Adult funds

CEFS (Title 1 service provider) has a budget and monthly encumbrance process that manages funds to ensure all target expenditure levels are met and not exceeded. This includes the expenditure requirement for direct training as per WIOA Policy Chapter 8, Section 49. The financial encumbrance process is a guide in providing services to customers throughout the year.

Lake Land College and CEFS work hand in hand with financial requirements of Title 1. At the beginning of each fiscal year, CEFS and Lake Land College develop a program budget for all programs. This expenditure requirement is taken into account when the budget is developed. Enrollment is forecasted for all programs. Career planners are allowed to enroll customers based on this forecast.

Lake Land College monitors this requirement on a monthly basis, which is shared with the full board as part of the monthly oversight reports packet. In PY 18, 68.7% of Adult and Dislocated Worker expenditures were spent on direct training.

Transfer of Title IB Workforce Funds

Transfer funds between adult and dislocated worker funding streams:

1. Once allocations are known for the program year, the Service Provider (CEFS) and Fiscal Agent / Grant Recipient (Lake Land College) meet to discuss program needs of the two funding streams. Items taken into consideration are funds carried forward from previous program year, current fund obligations, and future market of participants.
2. Once information is analyzed, a determination is made if funds should be transferred to best meet the needs of our workforce area. Decisions made are communicated with the Planning and Oversight Committee and Chief Elected Officials. The local area limit available to transfer annually is equal to the maximum allowed by the Illinois Department of Commerce.

CEFS Rapid Response Team

The LWIB will follow the Rapid Response procedures developed by DCEO. The Illinois Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act ("Illinois WARN") effective January 1, 2005, requires employers to give a 60-day notice of a plant closing or mass layoff to employees, their unions, DCEO's Bureau of Workforce Development and the Illinois Department of Labor. The Illinois WARN applies to employers with 75 or more full-time workers. If a closing or layoff results in 24 or more affected workers, the Illinois DCEO Rapid Response Unit will initiate and coordinate rapid response activities. If a closing or layoff results in 24 or fewer affected workers, CEFS will take the leadership role to coordinate Rapid Response services between the employer, IDES, Public Health, DRS, and any employee union representative. The CEFS WIOA Director, WIOA Operations Manager, and TAA Coordinator will lead the CEFS Rapid Response team.

The CEFS Rapid Response team will meet to identify customer needs and basic demographics. Based on the customer needs, the Rapid Response Team will initiate an on-site orientation, at the employer's convenience, with all rapid response agencies present. Each agency will present provided services and required deadlines in order to receive services at the orientation. After the initial on-site orientation, CEFS will send multiple career planners to provide intakes, job-search assistance, and initial counseling at the work site. If on-site services are not feasible during the layoff period, then arrangements will be made to provide services at the local WIOA office at the convenience of the employees. This rapid response process will help to ease the employee transition from layoff to the dislocated worker program. CEFS will provide on-site services until the layoff begins, and services will then continue at the nearest CEFS WIOA office.

(CH 4)(F) Title I - Youth

Below are the required elements and descriptions of youth WIOA services to be provided by the CEFS WIOA Program in the Illinois workNet Center and at WIOA satellite offices:

- Tutoring, study skills training, and instruction leading to secondary school completion, including drop out strategies
- Alternative secondary school offerings
- Paid and unpaid work experiences including summer employment, pre-apprenticeship programs, internships, job shadowing, and On-the-Job Training

- Occupational skills training at local colleges
- Leadership development opportunities
- Supportive services
- Adult mentoring for duration of at least 12 months
- Follow-up services for one year
- Comprehensive guidance and counseling as well as referrals to counseling
- Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities
- Financial literacy education
- Entrepreneurial training
- Services providing labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors such as career awareness, career counseling, and exploration services
- Activities to help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training

The most successful of these activities is paid work experience. After intake and assessment, an Individual Service Strategy is developed, which identifies any special needs accommodations required by the customer. Youth are matched with work sites that meet their needs and offer youth the opportunity to succeed. During the first day of work, the career planner, youth, and worksite supervisor develop work skill goals for the first month of work.

Career planners are in constant contact with worksite supervisors and Career planners visit the worksite at least twice a month to meet with the youth and worksite supervisor to develop and evaluate new work skill goals; the ultimate goal is for the youth to develop all skills necessary for obtaining unsubsidized employment. When youth reach all goals and have necessary skills to obtain unsubsidized employment, job search assistance starts and paid work experience ends. Many times during this process, the youth in paid work experiences are also receiving support services, financial literacy education, and GED attainment.

Eastern Illinois Education for Employment #340 and the Perkins program at Lake Land College collaborate annually to organize the 8th Grade Career Conference. Over 2,000 eighth graders from across the Lake Land district attend the job fair-style event to learn about future career options. Careers from all sixteen Career Clusters are represented at the Conference, which takes place over the course of two days. This is a highly anticipated and well-loved tradition that allows middle school students vital career exploration of paths and choices within our communities.

In a similar vein as *the 8th Grade Career Conference*, EFE 340 coordinates a yearly *Construction Trades Expo* which traditionally is hosted by Lake Land College. The *Construction Trade Expo* is an annual event where students participate in hands on activities related to various technical fields. Numerous local unions participate each year. Students spend about ten minutes in each of the nine stations. During that time, they learn how to do a particular job, gaining hands-on exploration of trade's careers in-demand in our region.

In partnership with EIEFES, Lake Land offers Early College/Early Bird Automotive/Design & Drafting/Welding program on campus for high school students. In partnership with EFE 340, high school students have the opportunity to enroll in Health Occupations courses, potentially earning a Basic Nurses Assistant certificate before they graduate high school. High school students may participate in small business management courses through dual credit or dual enrollment and explore business careers through ClassE, CEO, or similar business simulation experiences.

In transition to implementing a Guided Pathways model, Lake Land College has completed the program mapping process. Faculty and academic counselors have worked together to ensure that programs have hands-on learning experiences built into every program through internships, supervised learning experiences, or other

experimental learning opportunities. Additionally, the College works with industry partners to build in industry credentials. Guided Pathways to Success (GPS), while expanding K-12 and university partnerships, provides a clear pathway to meaningful educational or career outcomes. The Guided Pathways Model is an integrated, institution-wide approach to student success based on intentionally designed, clear, coherent and structured educational experiences, informed by available evidence, that guide each student effectively and efficiently from her/his point of entry through to attainment of high-quality postsecondary credentials and careers with value in the labor market. Central to the pathways model are clear, educationally coherent program maps—which include specific course sequences, progress milestones, and program learning outcomes—that are aligned to what will be expected of students upon program completion in the workforce and in education at the next level in a given field. Students are helped from the start to explore academic and career options, choose a program of study, and develop a plan based on the program maps. These plans simplify student decision-making, and they enable colleges to provide predictable schedules, frequent feedback, and targeted support as needed to help students stay on track and complete their programs more efficiently. They also facilitate efforts by faculty to ensure that students are building the skills across their programs that they will need to succeed in employment and further education.

In addition, the Eastern Illinois Area of Special Education (EIASE) hosts LIFE Academy for students who have major physical and/or physical disabilities ages 3-21 and the Adult LIFE Academy 18-21. This program helps students to learn a variety of self-care activities such as learning how to cook, make phone calls, do laundry, go shopping, how to clean a home, make a bed, personal hygiene and so much more. Adult LIFE Academy also runs the Recycling Center Program where some students learn to sort recyclable materials that are either sold or made into weather-resistant picnic tables and benches. These students work with a job coach and visit local businesses to pick up materials and find new customers. Here they learn valuable job skills, such as teamwork, following directions, safety, communication, etc.

Many secondary schools within the region offer Special Education Cooperative Education, through EIASE, for students who have IEPs. These students are placed in business partner host sites where they work during the end of the school day. Most placements are paid and all offer high school credit for participation. This program teaches students to be work-ready: they create resumes, practice completing applications, learn work ethics, gain basic employment skills and of course have hands-on work experience at local businesses.

Minimum Expenditure Rate for Out-of-School Youth

CEFS conducts a monthly budget and encumbrance process that manages funds to ensure all target expenditure levels are met. These financial processes have been effective in the workforce program for over 38 years. The financial encumbrance process allows planning and continued services to customers throughout the year. Currently PY19, over 80% of expenditures has been spent on out-of-school youth. Lake Land College (fiscal agent) and CEFS (youth service provider) work together to meet the financial requirements of Title 1. At the beginning of each fiscal year, CEFS and Lake Land College develop a program budget and forecast enrollment for the youth program, both in-school and out-of-school. Career planners enroll youth based on this forecast, and all partners will assist with possible referrals to identify out-of-school youth.

Youth activities incurred severe impacts by the COVID-19 National Health Emergency. Public high schools across the region closed their doors to traditional in-class learning and pivoted to virtual learning while the students logged in from home. Local families also relied heavily on older children to help monitor and support younger students in the household as well as fill in as childcare for parents who worked in “essential” sectors. High school students continued to face high burdens in the home and did not seek employment even when schools went back to traditional classes. Both In-School and Out-of-School Youth programs saw low levels of participants during the height of the pandemic. As we continue to recover and resume more normalcy, LWIA 23 Business

Services Team promotes Youth Work Experience to local employers as a manner to rebuild their staffing levels, train the future talent pool, and reduce training costs.

In strenuous efforts to meet the 80% obligation and expenditure requirements in PY20 and beyond, LWIA 23 and CEFS designed an aggressive outreach campaign to target Youth and Adult participants. DCEO granted a waiver to the 80% obligation and expenditure regulation, which allowed additional time to serve youth as they came out of the pandemic. Title I partners continue to apply three strategies to increase Youth participants in WIOA programs: strengthening partnerships; expanding outreach efforts; and increasing supportive services. A myriad of tactics are in implementation to support the three strategies; one of which is to seek, proactively, new work experience opportunities and establishing strong ties with local employers. Additional tactics can be seen in the LWIA 23 PY 20 Obligation Waiver Narrative (See *Attachment I: Obligation Waiver Letter and Narrative*)

(CH 4)(G) Priority Populations

(See ATTACHMENT D: Priority for Adult Training)

In accordance with the Jobs for Veterans Act, priority and services will be delivered first and foremost to qualified veterans in LWIA 23.

All required WIOA partners identify the following targeted populations in accordance with the State Unified Plan:

- Long-term unemployed
- Low-income adults
- Individuals with disabilities
- Public Aid Recipients
- Out-of-school youth
- Migrant and seasonal farmworkers
- Re-entry individuals (ex-offenders)
- English Language Acquisition (ELA) or English Learners and those facing cultural barriers
- Older individuals
- Homeless
- Single parents
- Youth in foster care or aged out of the system
- Displaced homemakers
- Low-literacy adults
- Low-skilled
- Basic Skills Deficient
- Active duty military dependents

EDR 7/LWIA23 will consider the above targeted populations as priority. Within the WIOA partner programs, services are available to assist these targeted populations. Specifically, while CEFS Adult and Dislocated Worker programs serve various populations, it has a policy in place to provide services for those most in need. CEFS utilizes a priority rating sheet to document all known barriers and targeted populations. The priority rating sheet is completed at time of application identifying all barriers. Each barrier is assigned a specific point value and documented on the form by the Career Planner. The priority rating sheet is calculated, adding all points together for a total score and is part of the customer's file. When selecting for "enrollment into training activities", priority is given to those customers with the most points as documented on the priority rating sheet. In order to best serve the customers in LWIA23, the local board has agreed to follow the State Unified Plan when identifying target populations and barriers.

Drilling into regional data, workforce partners are painfully aware that women in EDR 7 earn less than male-led households; People of Color are also more likely to experience poverty and less likely to obtain postsecondary education than Caucasian populations in our region. Analysis of the disaggregated data and review of current policies and programs reveal opportunities to develop apprenticeships in health care fields and potentially education as well. Establishing apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships in career pathways where concentrated populations of women and women of Color are likely to work in low paying positions, like certified nursing assistants and in-home health caregivers, will begin to bridge the wage and skill inequities in our region. The

regional workforce leaders will take a continuous improvement approach in data analysis and seeking additional opportunities to address inequities in our communities. Future outreach efforts will be strategic and targeted to populations experiencing disparities.

CEFS serves out-of-school youth, ages 16 through 24, who are not attending any school as defined by state law and have at least one of the following barriers: high school drop-out; within the age of compulsory school attendance, but has not attended school for at least the most recent complete school year calendar quarter; subject to the juvenile or adult justice system; homeless; runaway; pregnant or parenting; foster child or aged-out of foster care; an individual with a disability, or a low-income individual with basic skill deficiencies; an English learner; or requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure and retain employment.

In the adult program, individuals 18 and older are served, and many of these individuals have low basic work and academic skills. Many come from part-time or minimum-wage jobs and are looking to upgrade their employment and skills to become self-sufficient. Veterans are top priority for CEFS as well as those who are basic skills deficient. CEFS serves adults who have been incarcerated and are seeking employment. CEFS also serves special adult populations, including minorities, disabled, and customers who are general job seekers or skilled workers looking for better-paying jobs. CEFS serves drop-outs, GED graduates, high school graduates, and recent college graduates. Also served by CEFS are dislocated workers who have quit, been laid off, or terminated from their job as long as the customer remains eligible for unemployment insurance.

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) serves low-income customers who often have multiple barriers, such as the lack of a high school diploma or GED, a disability, little or no work skills, and the previously incarcerated. Services are provided through Community Action Agencies:

- BCMW in Marion County
- ERBA in Clark, Coles, Crawford, Cumberland, Edgar, Jasper, Lawrence, and Richland counties
- CEFS in Clay, Effingham, Fayette, and Moultrie counties

All WIOA required partners are working together through the Consortium Committee to create a seamless and integrated system of services to best serve those most in need.

To ensure equitable access to workforce and educational services throughout the region, Lake Land College Perkins Program is in the process of coordinating data-driven strategic planning with all appropriate partners to assess for equity gaps. Using disaggregated data from the College, as well as the WIOA Data Packet, partners will use an equity lens to identify disparities regarding race, gender and target population status. Any disparities found will be addressed in the Perkins V Local Application PY 21-25.

Appropriate partners are currently working with the Lake Land College Perkins Program to complete a Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment to develop equity goals for the educational service and prepare plans to achieve them.

During the Perkins V Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment, the local Education for Employment System will be engaged to identify opportunities to increase STEM career exposure to area high school students. Lake Land College Perkins Program already partners with Eastern Illinois Education for Employment System 340 to organize the annual 8th Grade Career Conference which provides career exploration to local eighth-grade students. All Career Clusters are represented at the Conference with heavy emphasis on STEM careers. Eastern Illinois Education for Employment also organizes the Construction Trades Expo each year. Effingham County Chamber of Commerce, Coles Together and several major industrial employers offer students the chance to participate in Manufacturing Day events where high school aged children visit a job-fair style conference as well as go on tours of local manufacturing facilities.

Partners will continually explore mentoring programs and evaluate current programs for their efficacy in the adult populations, and specifically adults who have been displaced or are moving to a new career. Each Title partner utilizes a mentorship model in some manner. Title I uses a case-management approach to all individuals receiving services. WIOA services are provided to individual customers depending on their own specific needs. In other words, each unique case is viewed through an equity lens to determine the barriers preventing the individual customer from reaching their goals and customized supports are administered. Title II partners employ Transition Specialists to support Adult Education students in their journey from GED attainment to the workforce or post-secondary instruction. Transition Specialists also approach each individual with an equity lens to determine their exact needs and bridge gaps. Title III promote equity through Employment Specialists who work with veterans and other special populations who need additional supports. Title IV also takes a case management approach to mentor individuals through their progress to obtaining their goals. Each Title partner fully supports the concept of mentoring and guiding individuals through the obstacles they face as they push towards their career pathways. Case managers, Career Planners, Employment Specialists, and Transition Specialists all have different titles, but each serves in a mentor role. In a bid for continuous improvement, Title partners frequently reflect on how the mentorship approach can be improved or expanded.

To ensure workforce program staff are trained on data-driven approaches used to address equity gaps, One-Stop Operator meetings will be used to evaluate data. This evaluation will be reported back to the Consortium Committee, which will then present to the Board. Further, information from Title partners is shared at monthly cross-training meetings.

In an effort to ensure workforce services are strategically located in relation to the population in need, partners will utilize offsite locations and technology when needed. Additionally, given the rural area of LWIA 23, partners will travel to customers, if necessary.

Work-Based Learning Strategies

Before the start of each fiscal year, Lake Land College and CEFS develop a budget. Work-based learning activities are included in the budget for youth, dislocated worker, and adult training activities. Enrollment is also projected from this budget. A Lake Land College WIOA service representative and CEFS WIOA Program Manager, as well as other program staff, meet regularly with businesses to discuss work-based learning opportunities.

When a rapid response takes place, work-based learning such as OJT is discussed and staff members talk with related area businesses about participating in OJT with customers who were laid off. OJT contracts are then developed as a result.

Career planners develop work sites for paid work experiences, which are often developed after the customers' needs are identified. Or, worksites are developed first and then appropriate customers are matched to the worksite. CEFS has over 171 worksite agreements in the 13-county region.

Apprenticeships are designed to meet business needs for a highly-skilled workforce. They can be registered, non-registered, or in pre-apprenticeship form. Business and industry benefit from apprenticeships as they reduce employee turnover by fostering greater employee loyalty, increase productivity, and improve the bottom line. Workers gain career opportunities and improving wages by obtaining credentials for skills through this work-based learning model.

(See ATTACHMENT E: ITA Policy and ATTACHMENT F: Provider Certification Policy)

(CH 4)(I) Funds for Incumbent Worker Training

The local area will take into account funds available, business demand, and individual need for services, to determine the amount of funds to set aside for incumbent worker training. As allowed under WIOA Section 134(d), a maximum of 20% of Dislocated Worker and Adult funds can be allocated. The intent is to also apply for additional funds outside of WIOA (i.e. National Emergency Grant) as they become available.

LWIB chooses not to use funds for transitional jobs or to pay for performance contracts.

(CH 4)(J)

The Local Workforce Innovation Board and CEO Consortium changed format of board meetings to align with statewide gathering restrictions and amendments within the Open Meetings Act (OMA). Meetings were held virtually, voting was done by roll call, and attendee login information was made available to the public.

CEFS policies grew to include virtual service delivery and increased Youth incentives, Youth Work Experience wages, and supportive services across all WIOA funding streams in response to the pandemic, subsequent inflation, and rising competitive wages.

Title II partners reviewed and updated attendance policies to allow more grace during the pandemic particularly for illness and COVID-19 quarantine periods. Adult Education programs transformed in-person instruction policies to allow for virtual and hybrid instruction as well as online testing. These changes will continue for the foreseeable future as they increase accessibility for students.

(CH 4)(K)

All of the policy changes precipitated by the COVID-19 National Health Emergency have proven to be valuable in that they increase equity and accessibility for all stakeholders. The LWIB will continue to offer hybrid options to attend board meetings as long as the Open Meetings Act allows. CEFS will continuously assess the manner in which they provide services and rates of incentives to remain robust and effective. Title II partners acknowledge that implementing hybrid instruction options provides options that will allow an equitable delivery for a myriad of students.

CHAPTER 5: PERFORMANCE GOALS AND EVALUATION—LOCAL COMPONENT

Following are actual service levels for PY18 – PY20:

<u>PY18</u>	<u>PY19</u>	<u>PY20</u>
210 Adults	183 Adults	190 Adults
106 Dislocated Workers	99 Dislocated Workers	113 Dislocated Workers
147 Youth	107 Youth	116 Youth
60 Trade	31 Trade	19 Trade
64 Incumbent Workers	99 Incumbent Workers	51 Incumbent Workers

Since the creation of the Daily Client Report in June of 2019, an average of 628 customers are visiting the Effingham One-Stop on a monthly basis.

(CH 5)(A) The following are the performance measures for PY20:

<i>Performance Measurement</i>	<i>Negotiated Goal</i>	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Status</i>
Adult Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit	84.0%	91%	Exceed
Adult Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit	81.0%	87%	Exceed

Performance Measurement	Negotiated Goal	Actual	Status
Adult Median Earnings Rate 2nd Quarter	\$6,200	\$8,021	Exceed
Adult Credential Attainment Rate	65.0%	63%	Meet
DW Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit	84.0%	91%	Exceed
DW Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit	81.0%	86%	Exceed
DW Median Earnings Rate 2nd Quarter	\$7,800	\$9,103	Exceed
DW Credential Attainment Rate	76.0%	82%	Exceed
Youth Employment/Education Rate 2nd Qtr. after Exit	66.0%	75%	Exceed
Youth Employment/Education Rate 4th Qtr. after Exit	66.0%	76%	Exceed
Youth Credential Attainment Rate	60.0%	51%	Fail

Note: The negotiated performance measures are effective for PY20

Since the inception of the Workforce Investment Act program (up to and including WIOA), LWIA 23 has annually met or exceeded all performance measures.

Following are actual percentages of Adult and Dislocated Worker funds spent on training from PY16 through PY18:

PY18 – 68.7%

PY19 – 62.6%

PY20 – 63.7%

The State of Illinois' required training percentage is 50%.

(CH 5)(B) Within EDR 7, existing service-delivery strategies will be reviewed and analyzed to determine what strategies will be expanded upon based on the promising return on investment (ROI).

Each of the partners will continue with their respective services. No specific service strategies have been certified viable for expansion as of Year One of the four year plan. During the course of the first half of the plan time line, LWIB partners intend to design and develop methods of evaluation for promising return on investment. Collectively, the team will examine how services can be collaboratively reviewed and expanded upon to meet ROI. The first step is to define what a “promising” return on investment means in regards to each partner and for each service. Secondly, identifying accurate methods to generate and collect appropriate data for measurement. Finally, results from the analysis will allow all partners to recognize which strategies warrant expansion. This collaboration will occur from the consortium level of partners to the direct service staff in various communities, with a focus on networking with the partnership and improving communications.

Previous methods used to review and analyze ROI have been very general and broad-spectrum. As opposed to disaggregating data for each service or strategy, a cumulative approach was taken. Return on investment was reviewed for funding streams at large.

LWA 23 RETURN ON INVESTMENT				
	PY16	PY17	PY18	
Adult	\$ 1.09	\$ 0.83	\$ 1.05	
Dislocated Worker	\$ 2.61	\$ 2.13	\$ 3.19	
Total	\$ 1.43	\$ 1.67	\$ 1.37	

Title I will continue to provide Individual Training Accounts (ITA), supportive services, work experiences, On-the-Job Training (OJT), and Incumbent Worker Training (IWT). OJT, work experience, and IWT programs will continue to grow as collaborations develop with partners and businesses in the communities. A priority will be to link partner resources in order to market these services as a partnership. For example, community colleges, in cooperation with local region business services, need to be able to talk with businesses about funds available for incumbent worker training when businesses ask for such training. The Business Service Team will continue to partner with employers when hiring the unemployed, thereby taking advantage of the OJT and work experience programs offered by other partners. Moreover, Adult Ed continues to expand Integrated Career & Academic Preparation System (ICAPS) programming in the future. An expansive asset map has been developed and is expanding to include community partners. An increase in shared referrals among partners is a desired goal of this collaboration. A future goal is to have a more automated referral system. Another future goal is to collaborate with Perkins to develop the Perkins local application and align it with the WIOA Regional Plan.

New service strategies will be developed to address regional educational and training needs based on promising ROI. These strategies will be based upon asset mapping and the increased collaboration of the required partners and community partners in the area.

To determine the return on investment of the various education and training programs, several methods have been, and will continued to be, utilized. To ensure customer satisfaction, partners individually gather customer surveys to determine if the service(s) were applicable and helpful. These surveys, along with online questionnaires (ie. Survey Monkey) will be used to determine the need for new or updated program offerings. Further information will be garnered using the DAISI system. DAISI will allow Adult Education partners to identify trends in enrollment and possible barriers to completion. IWDS will work to determine customers' economic and social barriers, such as: housing, training costs, need for childcare, and lack of transportation.

The EDR 7 partners will assist customers with overcoming or removing barriers to training and/or education, in the most cost effective manner possible. To do so, EDR 7 partners will share expenses through adequate communication and referrals between partner services. Members of EDR 7 will also facilitate and manage co-enrollment among the partners, rather than duplicating services.

EDR 7 will continue to increase and strengthen partnerships between education, service providers, and businesses to foster communication and receptivity to evolving employer/employee needs. The Business Service Team holds sector-based roundtables to gather information to increase awareness of employer needs and concerns. An expansion of the asset map from state to regional, and even to local levels, will help with collaboration of services.

At the present time, no delivery strategies will be eliminated. The LWIB will eliminate training programs on the state provider list that are not in high-demand within our region. The asset mapping of services will assist in determining current duplication of services, gaps in services, and potential collaborations for providing services to customers, especially on a local level.

(CH 5)(D)

The COVID-19 pandemic considerably impeded our region's cooperative services delivery and connection of job seekers and employers. In the spring of 2020, "shelter in place" orders and closures hindered long-established referral processes amongst the partners. For an extended period of 2020, many organizations and individuals were in survival mode as they figured out the new environment and its challenges. As the region adapted to the restrictions, we saw a drastic pivot to virtual meetings, virtual job fairs, and new modalities to coordinate and host activities. Rapid Response efforts traditionally held on-site moved to a hybrid delivery of hard-copy packets and virtual orientations. Necessity required the region to try new technologies; however, we all saw value in the

increased accessibility and efficiency of virtual job fairs. Over the next two years, LWIA 23 and regional workforce partners will continue to offer virtual and/or hybrid modalities to increase convenience, efficiency and access for participants. Providing choices to partners, businesses, and individuals will increase participation and foster collaborations across the workforce.

(CH 5)(E)

A workforce equity lens will be incorporated in future analysis of performance goals and implementation of evaluation activities across LWIA 23. Performance Measures are the gold standard of evaluations for WIOA partners statewide; however, they are not necessarily based on equity beyond serving individuals facing barriers to employment. The Title I service provider currently issues Customer Service Surveys to all WIOA customers; CEFS has determined that the Surveys do not include equity or accessibility measures and thus need to be reviewed with that equity lens. CEFS also assesses the needs of customers not only at enrollment, but also continuously throughout their participation with WIOA. Equity is ingrained in the holistic, customized assessment of barriers that change and evolve.

CHAPTER 6: TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS AND ASSURANCES

The COVID-19 Pandemic, significantly impacted WIOA-eligible populations. An analysis of the Resource Center Visitors Report before and during the Emergency Order paints a stark contrast. From April of 2019 to March of 2020, 4,771 customers were served at the One-Stop Center. From April 2020 to March 2021, only 106 customers were served at the One-Stop Center. The closure of the One-Stop resulted in a 98% decrease in visitors during the pandemic. The One-Stop is the most substantial referral source for WIOA partners, thus the drastic decline of visitors directly affected Title I's ability to reach administrative requirements such as the 80% obligation and expenditure rate, and the 75% Youth-Out-of-School / 25% Youth-In-School rates.

Accessibility to services were affected severely. With many offices and agencies closed to in-person appointments or meetings, applications and documentation had to move to a strictly digital atmosphere. Not all individuals had access to the technology or infrastructure to apply for services easily. Title III experienced an overwhelming influx of Unemployment Insurance applications online and endless phone calls from people struggling with the online services. Title I improvised by meeting some clients outside in open-air venues (while remaining masked and socially distanced) and offering locked drop-boxes for submission of paper documents. Meetings and check-ins transitioned to phone calls, Zoom/video calls, and meeting at outdoor locations.

Due to mandated closings in PY20, work experience sites were unable to accommodate WIOA employees and it was difficult to find new work experience hosts. Even when essential occupations were available, many eligible customers were not able to work due to health concerns, or because the lack of child care. Public schools went to "remote learning" in March 2020 and did not resume full-time in-person learning until fall of 2021. Many childcare facilities were closed with just a few remaining open with an emergency waiver. Economic Development Region 7 was already facing a childcare crisis before the pandemic, and the crisis was exponentially exacerbated by closures, illness, and lack of staff. Closure of school buildings and childcare facilities left parents with the tough decision to give up pursuit of career opportunities while they facilitated remote learning and cared for children who were unable to be at home unsupervised. The closure of public schools extended to local community colleges and universities as well. Individuals facing barriers to success were hindered further by their own course work moving to a virtual modality. Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs that rely heavily on work-based learning experiences faced restricted work experience sites making practical experience a heavy burden on students. This particularly hit health care programs with intensity. Local clinics and hospitals were

filling up with COVID-19 patience and staffing was stretched thin. Students missed valuable and necessary clinical experiences thus resulting in more academic difficulties.

The COVID-19 National Health Emergency brought many challenges to EDR 7. Workforce partners have learned to be nimble in an ever-evolving environment. Workforce partners are committed to working collaboratively to strengthen partnerships, facilitate communication, reopen the One-Stop Center, and provide a net of supportive services to community members who face barriers to employment. Going forward, LWIA 23 will seek new potential partnerships or strengthen existing ones with community organizations such as: Child Care Resources & Referrals (aka CCRS/CCAP); Youth Build; County Health Department; Pregnancy Life Center/Lighthouse Pregnancy; YMC; Fit-2-Serve; CTE Advisory Committees at local Community Colleges; New president at Richland County Development Corporation. Expanded outreach efforts will continue as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, including radio announcements; WIN: Workforce Innovation News podcast; informational presentations/webinars/conferences; and leveraging the LWIA 23 Business Services Team to reach all corners of EDR 7.

Emerging from the pandemic, the local workforce now faces a shortage of skilled workers. Facing this new challenge, the workforce partners are prime to support using Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) as a business solution that prioritizes better alignment between the education and workforce systems and creates shared value for students and workers, education and training providers, and employers. Talent Pipeline Management is a demand-driven, employer-led approach to close the skills gap that builds talent supply chains aligned to dynamic business needs. The demands of today's economy require a strategic alignment between classroom and career, so through this approach, employers play an expanded leadership role as "end-customers" of our education and training systems. TPM is a workforce strategy for our time that can meet the needs of an ever-changing business environment. LWIA 23 staff, including the Director and the Apprenticeship Navigator, will go through TPM Academy with the ultimate goal of implementing TPM initiatives in the region thus building employer capacity community-wide. TPM Collaboratives in the Healthcare and Manufacturing industries are already in development through collaboration with the Business Services Team. In additional support for strengthening the connection between education and industry, LWIA 23 employs an Apprenticeship Navigator who guides local employers through the process of establishing Department of Labor-registered apprenticeships. The Navigator works closely with local Apprenticeship Intermediaries at Kaskaskia College, Illinois Eastern Community Colleges, and Lake Land College.

(CH 6)(A) Fiscal Management

The Chief Elected Officials selected Lake Land College, Mattoon, Illinois, as Fiscal Agent/Grant Recipient, effective July 1, 2014. Lake Land College is the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds.

LWIA 23 follows the grant recipient/fiscal agent procurement policy. (See ATTACHMENT G: Purchasing and Bidding Policy)

LWIA 23 follows a competitive proposal policy to select sub-grantees and contracts. (See ATTACHMENT H: Competitive Proposals Policy)

(CH 6)(B) Physical Accessibility

EDR 7 will comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. EDR 7/LWIA 23 will construct a One-Stop Certification Team that will consist of the Local Board Chair or their designee and at least two other individuals representing LWIB members, board staff and / or local partners with specific expertise serving populations with barriers. They will use the state-approved One-Stop Certification checklist to evaluate the One-Stop

facility in Effingham. Once the checklist has been completed, the results will be taken to the LWIB's quarterly meeting for approval.

DRS staff will assist with a physical survey of the building utilizing the state accessibility checklist. Similarly, DRS staff will assist with identifying and offering low/no-cost solutions for improvements to the physical environment, programmatic materials, services, etc. DRS will assist with training One-Stop staff regarding disability and accessibility issues. The Consortium Committee has developed a sub-committee to assist with disability accommodations. This committee is comprised of DRS staff and providers who offer services in the local communities of the 13 county area. These providers may assist with providing services to employers regarding disability issues on the job, job coaching to employees with disabilities, etc. As many businesses have employees with undocumented or unidentified disabilities, this committee will work with businesses as needed to assist with employees in general.

The Consortium Committee has been tasked with ensuring that services will be integrated and accessible in the local One-Stop to enhance the provision of services to all individuals, including individuals with disabilities. Cross-training of staff, utilizing technical assistance available from vocational rehabilitation, and use and sharing of information and cooperative efforts with employers will assist with collaboration and coordination of services.

Local service providers will carry out the requirements for integration of and access to the entire set of services available in the local One-Stop system.

(CH 6)(C) Plan Development and Public Comment

The LWIB provided a 30-day public comment period prior to submission of this plan, including an opportunity for input into the development of the local plan, particularly for representatives of businesses, education, and labor organizations. EDR 7/LWIA 23 advertised the plan's availability for public comment in the local newspaper, Effingham Daily News, on February 27th, 2020. The newspaper announcement directed interested individuals to the EDR7/LWIA 23 website (www.lwa23.net). The plan was posted on the LWIA 23 website for 30 days prior to the submission of the plan. No public comments were received during the 30-day window.

Modifications to this plan were made in 2022, in consideration of the impact of the COVID-19 National Health Emergency. The Regional Planning Team met in January and February 2022 to discuss modifications. The LWIB provided a 30-day public comment period prior to submission of the modified plan. Again, the modifications were announced in the local newspaper, Effingham Daily News. The announcement directed interested individuals to the LWIA 23 website (www.lwa23.net) where the modified plan was posted until submission to DCEO on March 25, 2022. No public comments were received during the 30-day window.

(CH 6)(D) Describe how a workforce equity lens is or will be incorporated in with meeting the administrative requirement of the WIOA programs:

Equity is interwoven in the very fabric of WIOA programs and services. Case management approach to supporting residents in overcoming barriers to success in a holistic, customize manner is a tried and true method of addressing inequities. Title partners work together to create targeted outreach efforts to reach those most in need of assistance. New technologies implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, brought light to innovative ways to increase accessibility of services to individuals. Regional workforce development leaders are committed to using an intentional approach to improving equity throughout our daily operations and in development of new initiatives directly addressing disparities. As a region, we will prioritize bringing opportunities to marginalized individuals. Each new workforce endeavor will be assessed with an equity lens to uphold accountability.

For the remainder of the current plan period, regional workforce leaders will meaningfully involve community resources in development of equity-focused opportunities, such as:

- Collaborate and support local ROE Homeless Youth (Mckinny-Vento) Liasons
- Engage with secondary and post-secondary CTE partners to open pipelines for target populations
 - Reverse job fairs by sector
 - Pre-apprenticeships and Talent Pipeline development
- Bundle Title I services with Mattoon Library Secretary of State Family Literacy Grant
- Partner with secondary education counselors to offer supportive services to students dropping out
- Pool resources with Area Planning Commission to bundle services for target populations