

PY2024 – PY2027
Workforce and Innovation Opportunity Act
(WIOA) Plan

Northwest Indiana Workforce Board (EGR 1)

Regional Plan

[Enter Submission Date]

Plan Contents

- Workforce Development Board Approval
- Executive Summary
- Section 1: Workforce and Economic Analysis
- Section 2: Strategic Vision and Goals
- Section 3: Local Area Partnerships and Investment Strategies
- Section 4: Program Design and Evaluation
- Section 5: Compliance
- Section 6: Participant Information, Costs, and Supplemental Funding

Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) Approval

LWDB/Local Area Information

LWDB/Local Area Name	Northwest Indiana Workforce Board
LWDB Chair	Karen Kopka
LWDB Executive Director	Lisa M. Daugherty
One-Stop Operator	Dominique Smiley
Regional Chief Elected Official	Commissioner Barb Regnitz

By signing below, the LWDB Chair signifies approval of this Plan and authorizes its submission to the Indiana Department of Workforce Development.

Board Chair Printed Name

Board Chair Signature

Date

Executive Summary

Each local area must submit an executive summary of their plan.

The Northwest Indiana Workforce Board oversees workforce development activities in a seven county region in Northwest Indiana, delivered in the American Job Centers branded in Indiana as “WorkOne”. The region encompasses both urban and rural areas. The two largest workforce areas are centered in Lake and Porter Counties. There are many regional partners in the region that have a strong and growing focus on solving workforce/employer needs. Northwest Indiana Local Plan is a progressive strategy shaped by current labor market landscapes, partnerships, best practices, and a human centered approach. Covering the program year of 2024-2027, this plan addresses critical needs within the local and regional workforce development system. The past few years of the recovery was characterized by young people and adults making gains economically after struggling to succeed for many years and employers having difficulty finding workers for job openings as unemployment sank to new lows and the size of the regions labor force declined. A local workforce development system must deal with both issues simultaneously and engage a broad array of partners and stakeholders. The system must also balance the relationship between highly localized delivery of services to individuals and economies that are predominantly regional. In the case of Northwest Indiana, regional includes the influence of Chicago in economic growth strategies, including issues of industry sectors, transportation, and skills demand in the multi-state area. The plan emphasizes Northwest Indiana’s unique approach to rising to the challenges of the next four years. The economic future depends on creating a culture of lifelong learning required for a diversified economy with high-wage jobs, strong infrastructure and removing barriers for a strong workforce. The Northwest Indiana plan recognizes that meeting these challenges will require that both youth and adults acquire new skills and credentials, and that the core partners defined by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) are necessary, but not sufficient to address the totality of need in the NWI region. With that in mind, the Northwest Indiana Workforce Board (NWIWB) has worked to expand its influence in the region by collaborating with key partners and identifying additional sources of funding that align with collective goals to drive NWI’s economic engine. Along similar lines, increasing equality and accessibility of services takes increased priority in the new plan. Meeting customers where they are, and building greater collaboration and integration among partners is a focus in the new plan. Creating a system where customers can receive service through any point of entry is a priority.

Further cultivating a workforce system, in which business, education, workforce development, and economic development work in concert for the betterment of the community are addressed. Ongoing initiatives, such as Regional Education and Employer Alliance for Developing Youth in Northwest Indiana (READY NWI) are identified as well as leveraging our partners through community, educators, employer, and economic priorities like Ignite the Region plan. These initiatives allow for greater integration between education and training, talent, placement and a prosperous growth region. This integrated work allowed NWI the opportunity to secure READI, Intermediary Capacity Building, and Career Coaching and Navigation support to expand our reach into secondary schools and maximize internal career growth of area employers in need.

Nationally, NWIWB is proud to be a member of Midwest Urban Strategies that serves as an intermediary of urban workforce development boards (WDB) who connects the stakeholders of the workforce ecosystem. This thought leadership allows NWIWB the opportunity to embark upon partnering with other WDB’s like Growth Opportunities and Early Childhood grants that focus on priorities and removal of workforce barriers needed in our state and others in the nation.

By combining innovative and traditional workforce development practices with economic development strategies, NWIWB is driving change in workforce innovation. At the center of the workforce development ecosystem are the needs of our regional employers and talent development. An equally important focus is a community of practice toward addressing emerging industries, increasing scalability, replicability, and sustainability for NWI and the state. Addressing the unique service area workforce needs while leveraging our partners through a one stop approach, allows our team to scale our community of practice and expansion of resources to forge the region toward a more sustainable workforce, better retention, and quality of life for our residents.

The following provides key drivers for the Northwest Indiana Local Plan: Provide Employment Services access to jobs while increasing communication of career opportunities and training pathways to all audiences aligned with skill competencies; Enhancement of the WorkOne brand, as part of the American Job Centers network, leveraging the One Stop to Start Workforce Hub approach and increase access points at partner sites; Provide Education & Training that create credentials valued by industry sectors leading to career pathways into job entry, work-based learning as well as internal career growth with incumbent workers; Provide a holistic approach in addressing customers' needs in the WorkOne system including direct assistance to employers via Business Services Representatives, who specialize in specific industry sectors that draw from WorkOne candidates and from the broader network of partners. This integrated work will strengthen and expand the WorkOne partners through strategy meetings, shared data, and shared expectations. This fully functioning approach elevates our efforts as a workforce intermediary and provides efficiencies in the system by continuing to diversify sources by "blending and braiding" funding to maximize impact and allow customers to take full advantage of all resources available.

Working closely with the Northwest Indiana Forum, local economic development partners, and our post secondary partners, NWIWB collaborates to identify and develop skill pathways that attract companies with high-quality jobs to the region. The Northwest Indiana Local Plan provides a solid foundation for addressing the challenges and seizing the opportunities through the next four years. With the commitment of local partners, it also recognizes that adjustments needed to rapidly changing economic conditions, workforce barriers, and changing priorities of federal, state, and local government leaders. The NWIWB plan serves as engine of workforce innovation that will continue to include employers, job seekers, training providers, and community partners all working together to better prepare job seekers and support employers in the attraction and retention of talent.

Section 1: Workforce and Economic Analysis

Please answer the following questions. The Department of Workforce Development has assigned regional labor market analysts to assist the Regions. These experts can help develop responses to questions 1.1 through 1.3 below. **Questions that require collaborative answers for planning regions are designated with an asterisk (*). See the Regional Plan subsection of Memo 2023-16 for more information.**

1.1* A regional analysis of the economic conditions including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations and the employment needs of employers in those industry sectors and occupations. As appropriate, a local area may use an existing analysis, which is a timely current description of the regional economy, to meet these requirements. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(A) and 20 CFR 679.560(a)(1)]

Population and Labor Force Statistics

The total population of Northwest Indiana is currently estimated at 870,725, with significant populations in Lake, Porter, and LaPorte counties. The labor force in the region comprises 402,372 individuals, with an overall participation rate of 46%. Over the past 5 years, the amount of workers has decreased by about 2%, reflecting broader demographic trends.

The labor force participation rate varies by age, gender, and education level. For instance, the participation rate for individuals aged 25-54 is 60%, compared to 25% for those aged 55 and above.

Age and Diversity Breakdown

The age distribution of the workforce in Northwest Indiana shows a significant portion of workers in the prime working age group (25-54 years). Specifically, 60% of the workforce falls within this age range. However, this percentage, however, has been on a steady drop since the year 2000, and has fallen more than 10 percent over the past quarter century. This decline in prime age employment has been absorbed by older workers (55+ years) which have by nearly the same amount over the time period. Despite claims to the contrary, younger workers (19-24 years) have maintained steady employment levels over the years since 2000.

Diversity statistics reveal that 18% of the workforce identifies as non-white and 13% as Hispanic or Latino, highlighting the region's commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive labor market. NWI, already one of the state's most diverse regions, has been on a road to becoming more diverse over the years, and the workforce very much reflects this reality.

Educational Attainment Levels

Educational attainment in the region has been steadily improving. Approximately 37% of the population holds a high school diploma or equivalent, and 33% have attained some level of higher education. Specifically, 24% of the workforce has a bachelor's degree or higher, a 3% increase over the past 5 years.

Employment by Industry Sectors

The employment landscape in Northwest Indiana is diverse, with key industries including healthcare, manufacturing, retail, education, and hospitality. As of 2023, the healthcare sector remains the largest employer, accounting for 14% of total employment. Manufacturing follows closely, contributing 13% to the regional job market. Retail trade, despite recent challenges, still employs a significant portion of the workforce.

Job Growth and Decline in Key Industries

Several industries in Northwest Indiana have experienced notable growth over the past decade. A significant boost in the accommodation sector points to increased tourism demands in our region. The designation of the Indiana Dunes National Park and other progress making our region a destination, are proving effective. As shopping and product movement trends have changed, warehouse and storage employment has also significantly increased over this period. Additionally, Northwest Indiana has also been undergoing a shift to a more information-based economy. Employment in the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services industries has risen 36% in the last decade. This shift is further punctuated by the increase in employment in the management of companies at 26%. These industries, in addition to other information-based sectors, now represent just under 8% of all regional employment.

Conversely, traditional manufacturing industries have faced job declines due to automation and offshoring, shedding about 1% of the total industry jobs over the past decade. The retail sector has also struggled, with

a 4% decrease in employment, attributed to the shift in consumer behavior as well as staffing changes within the industry. Notably, public sector employment, made up of those employed at various levels of government, education, and public safety, has decreased by 11% in this period, suggesting a shift in the role public sector employment plays in regional economic dynamics.

Analysis of High-Demand Occupations

Several occupations in Northwest Indiana have experienced significant changes over the past decade, reflecting broader economic trends and industry shifts. The demand for specialized manufacturing roles has seen notable increases. Metal furnace operators, for instance, have experienced a remarkable 293% rise, highlighting the region's resurgence and evolving complexity of manufacturing processes. These trends underscore the importance of specialized skills in the modern manufacturing landscape.

The expansion of the warehousing and storage sector has led to substantial growth in related occupations as well. Industrial Truck Drivers, essential for the logistics and distribution network, have seen a 167% increase in employment. Transportation and warehousing supervisors have also experienced a 94% rise, emphasizing the critical need for skilled leadership in managing the growing logistics operations. These developments align with the broader industry trends, showcasing the vital role of transportation and warehousing in the regional economy.

As Northwest Indiana transitions towards a more information-based economy, the demand for occupations such as management analysts has surged 128%. This growth reflects the increasing need for expertise in analyzing business operations and optimizing organizational performance.

Conversely, several traditional occupations, such as bank tellers and administrative assistants, have faced significant declines due to the rise of digital banking, automated services and other technological advances. Some manufacturing occupations have faced similar fates, influenced by automation and shifts in manufacturing processes, highlighting the impact of automation and technological change on the workforce.

These changes in occupation demand reflect the dynamic nature of Northwest Indiana's economy, driven by technological advancements, industry shifts, and evolving business needs. Understanding these trends is crucial for workforce planning and development, ensuring that the region's labor force is equipped with the skills needed for future growth and prosperity.

Key Trends and Insights

- **Aging Workforce:** The region faces challenges related to an aging workforce, with a growing percentage of workers 55 and above. This trend necessitates strategies to retain older workers and transfer their knowledge to younger generations.
- **Youth Employment:** Integrating younger workers into the labor force remains a priority. Initiatives aimed at providing vocational training and apprenticeships are crucial for reducing youth unemployment and ensuring a steady supply of skilled labor.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Efforts to promote diversity and inclusion are ongoing, with programs designed to support underrepresented groups in the workforce. These initiatives are vital for creating a more equitable labor market.
- **Educational Attainment and Economic Mobility:** Higher educational attainment is closely linked to better economic opportunities. The region continues to focus on improving academic outcomes to enhance economic mobility for its residents.

Employment Trends Data

Largest Established Industry Expansions:

Accommodation – 83%
Warehousing and Storage – 83%
Food Manufacturing – 48%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services – 36%
Heavy and Civil Construction – 26%

Smaller Notable Gains:

Data Processing, Hosting, and Related – 81%
Beverage Manufacturing – 35%
Electrical Component Manufacturing – 30%

Notable Declines:

Amusement, Gambling, and Recreation Industries - -35%
Apparel Retailers - -23%
State Government - -19%

Job Growth

High Demand Occupations
Metal Furnace Operators – 293%
Industrial Truck Drivers – 167%
Food Batchmakers – 159%
Management Analysts – 128%
Transportation and Warehousing Supervisors – 94%

Declining Occupations

Bank Tellers - -56%
Rolling Machine Operators - -51%
Administrative Assistants - -50%
General and Operations Managers - -45%
Machinists - -36%

Largest Wage Increases

Delivery Drivers – 79%
Maids and Housekeepers – 57%
Laborers and Material Movers – 55%
Retail Salespeople – 55%
Automotive Service Technicians – 53%

Other Data Points

Regional Turnover Rate 2022 – 20%
Highest Turnover – Accommodation and Food Service – 34%
Lowest Turnover – Manufacturing – 9.7%
Highest Average Monthly Earnings – Manufacturing \$7,660

Source: Lighcast Industries 2024 by county

1.2 An analysis of the knowledge and skills required to meet the employment needs of the employers in the region, including employment requirements for in-demand industry sectors and occupations. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(B) and 20 CFR 679.560(a)(2)]

Employer Feedback

The 2023 Indiana Chamber Employer Workforce Survey highlights several key challenges and demands from employers across Northwest Indiana. The survey, which collected responses from over 1,000 employers, revealed that 73% of respondents reported significant talent challenges. Among these, 42%

identified attracting and retaining workers as their most pressing issue. In response to these challenges, many employers are now more willing to hire individuals with less education or fewer skills than previously required, providing on-the-job training to bridge the gaps.

Job Posting Analysis and Employer Demands

The job posting analysis for Northwest Indiana from January 2023 to December 2023 provides further insights into employer demands. Over this period, employers posted a diverse range of job openings, reflecting the region's evolving economic landscape.

Education Levels in Job Postings: A significant portion of job postings (52%) did not specify an educational requirement, highlighting employers' flexibility in considering candidates from various educational backgrounds. For those postings that did specify education levels, 27% required at least a high school diploma or GED, while 10% sought candidates with an associate's degree. Bachelor's degrees were required for 18% of the postings, indicating a strong demand for higher education in certain roles. Master's degrees and advanced professional degrees were less commonly required, reflecting in 4% and 3% of postings, respectively.

Top Occupations: The demand for healthcare professionals was exceptionally high, with registered nurses being the most frequently posted occupation. This shift underscores the critical need for healthcare services in the region. Additionally, there was a substantial need for heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers, driven by the expansion in warehousing and storage sectors. The calls for retail salespersons and supervisors also increased despite the retail sector's high turnover due to broader economic challenges. Customer service representatives were highly sought after, highlighting the importance of customer support roles across industries. The food service industry also grew, with significant postings for food service managers and fast-food workers.

Geographic Distribution of Job Postings: The job postings were predominantly concentrated in Lake County, which has the highest number of residents as well as businesses. However, job posting data from 2023 point to more total jobs available in Valparaiso than any other individual city in the region. The top communities for job demand are rounded out by a few Lake County communities in Merrillville, Gary and Hammond as well as La Porte County representative Michigan City.

Skills Highlighted in Job Postings: The skills most in demand by employers in Northwest Indiana align closely with the feedback from the Chamber survey. Employers are looking for a blend of foundational and technical skills to support their operations and growth.

Communication skills are consistently highlighted as critical. Employers seek individuals who can effectively convey information, collaborate with team members, and engage with customers. Problem-solving skills are also highly valued, as employees who can identify issues and develop effective solutions contribute significantly to operational efficiency.

Proficiency with the Microsoft Office Suite is a fundamental requirement for many roles. Familiarity with applications such as Word, Excel, and PowerPoint is essential for a wide range of positions, from administrative roles to management.

As new workers enter the workforce, there is a growing need for leadership and management skills to build capacity and support these employees. Employers are looking for candidates who can lead teams, manage projects, and drive organizational success. This demand reflects the necessity to develop internal talent and ensure that new employees are effectively integrated into the workforce.

Overall, the job posting analysis highlights the dynamic nature of the Northwest Indiana job market, with significant demands in healthcare, logistics, retail, and customer service sectors.

Employer need Data

94,000 – Number of Unique Regional Job postings in 2023
6,257 - Number of Companies Competing for Talent
28 Days – Average Duration of Regional Job Postings
52 – Percentage of Job Postings listing no education requirement
\$24.00 - Median Advertised Salary

Most Posted Occupations

Registered Nurse - 9,768
Truck Driver – 3,120
Retail Salespeople – 2,997
Customer Service Manager – 16,98

Postings By City

Valparaiso – 10,907
Merrillville – 9,030
Michigan City – 8,729
Gary – 8,212
Hammond – 7,873

1.3 An analysis of the regional workforce, including current labor force employment and unemployment data, information on labor market trends, and the educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment and youth. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(C) and 20 CFR 679.560(a)(3)]

Projected Industry Changes and Retirements

	10-year Growth	Current Workforce 55+
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	19%	30%
Food Manufacturing	25%	21%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	17%	28%
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	5%	26%
Ambulatory Health Care Services	9%	25%

Occupations with Highest Projected Demand

Projected Openings over 10 Years

Fast Food and Counter Workers	25,687
Laborers and Material Movers	22,301
Cashiers	14,552
Retail Salespersons	12,658
Driver/Sales Workers and Truck Drivers	11,983

Occupations with Highest Projected Growth

Projected Occupation Growth over 10 years

Data Scientists	42%
Nurse Practitioners	34%
Veterinarians	24%
Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	24%
Computer and Information Analysts	21%

Emerging Occupations

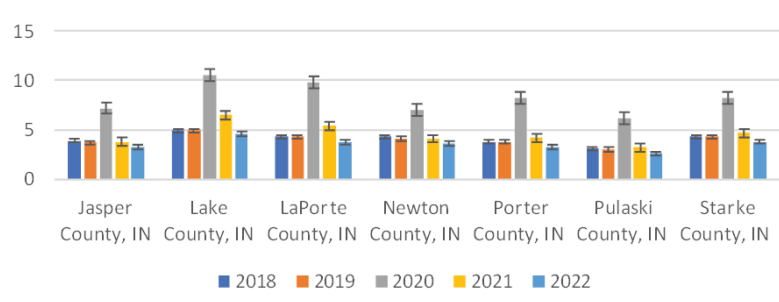
Emerging Occupations	
Software Developers	17%
Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	15%
Financial Managers	15%
Management Analysts	13%
Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors	11%

Other Social Factors to Employment

- ~6% of the population is under 6 years old
- ~2% of the population lacks vehicles or reliable transportation
- ~2% of the population does not speak English fluently
- ~12% of the population needed food assistance at some point
- ~366 individuals between the ages of 25 and 54 have been classified as "discouraged workers," meaning they desire employment and are available to work but have ceased their job search due to a belief that there are no job opportunities available for them.

² US Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Unemployment and Labor Force Participation



- The average unemployment rate for Region 1 in 2022 is 4.1%.
- Region1 had an unemployment rate above the state median in 2022.
- Within Region 1, Pulaski County, consistently shows the lowest unemployment rates for the years available, including 2022.
- In contrast, Lake County has experienced some of the highest unemployment rates, particularly in 2020.

The Northwest Indiana Workforce Board (NWIWB) and the Center of Workforce Innovations (CWI) are actively addressing the opportunities and challenges outlined through various initiatives aimed at using partnerships to create accessible employment opportunities.

Service Delivery to Adults: CWI and NWIWB are committed to providing comprehensive support to adult job seekers. This includes career exploration and counseling, job search assistance, and training programs tailored to the needs of local industries. They offer resources to help individuals upskill and reskill, ensuring they remain competitive in the evolving job market. Programs such as WorkOne Centers provide vital support, including resume writing workshops, interview preparation, and job placement services. Another important component of adult services is the Adult Basic Education (ABE) Program, which assists students who are basic skills deficient or lack a high school diploma. The ABE Program focuses on improving literacy and numeracy skills, enabling participants to achieve their educational and career goals. By providing foundational education, the program helps individuals prepare for the exam, pursue further education, and gain the skills necessary for employment.

Youth Workforce Development: Recognizing the importance of early career development, CWI and NWIWB focus on preparing youth for the workforce through a variety of initiatives. These initiatives operate under the “NextGen” brand and are designed to bridge the gap between education, employers, and the workforce system to solve talent challenges. A cornerstone of NextGen is READY NWI, a collaboration among schools, businesses, and community organizations to ensure that our high school students graduate academically, socially, and financially prepared to participate in the regional economy. Members are committed to presenting a full range of career options, including sharing affordable post-high school education and training options so that no student is denied access to the education needed for acquiring high-quality jobs in the region.

Another important initiative is Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG), which helps at-risk youth graduate from high school and transition successfully into postsecondary education or the workforce. JAG provides students with the necessary support and skills to overcome barriers to success.

Finally, Region 1 has partnered with regional manufacturers and Ivy Tech to create the South Shore FAME (Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education). FAME is a two-year work-and-learn program designed to provide recent graduates with hands-on training and education in advanced manufacturing. The South Shore FAME chapter has just enrolled the first cohort this fall.

These initiatives and others provide hands-on experience and exposure to different career paths. Partnerships between local schools, employers, and community organizations help to integrate workforce readiness into educational curricula, ensuring that young people acquire the skills needed for future employment. This is the core of the work CWI will be undertaking as an intermediary, utilizing an investment from the Commission for Higher Education to expand opportunities such as these in the coming years.

Collaborative Efforts: Collaboration is a cornerstone of our strategy as we partner with local businesses, educational institutions, government agencies, and other service providers to create a cohesive approach to workforce development. A key example of this collaboration is NWI Works. The Opportunity Collaboratives at the center of this initiative aim to provide scalable, accessible, and comprehensive services to the most economically distressed communities in Northwest Indiana. These collaboratives bring essential service providers together to focus on engaging residents directly in their neighborhoods, and will serve as central points for workforce development, offering a range of services from career exploration, job training and education to childcare and health services. These hubs are designed to create prosperity for both employers and households by filling critical job openings and supporting economic growth in vulnerable areas. Partners in this project are actively developing two initial locations to launch this initiative in the coming year.

Another example is the mobile career services unit developed in partnership with the United Way of Northwest Indiana. This Mobile Career Services Unit, furnished with computers and networking equipment, brings career development opportunities directly to communities in need. The mobile unit addresses access issues such as transportation and child care, allowing more residents to take advantage of workforce development services. The Mobile Career Services Unit is currently in use around Northwest Indiana.

Section 2: Strategic Vision and Goals

Please answer the following questions. Section 2 responses should reflect input from members of the local workforce development board and other community stakeholders. **Questions that require collaborative answers for planning regions are designated with an asterisk (*). See the Regional Plan subsection of Memo 2023-16 for more information.**

2.1 Provide a description of the board's strategic vision to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. This must include the board's vision and goals for its local workforce system in preparing an educated and skilled workforce in the local area, including goals for in-school and out-of-school youth and individuals with barriers to employment. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(E) and 20 CFR 679.560(a)(5)]

Vision: A NWI workforce that is highly skilled, motivated and diverse, earning sustainable or higher wages and actively engaged in skill advancement and lifelong learning.

Mission: To mobilize and integrate the leadership, services and resources of the community to support workforce development.

CORE GOALS

- Increase skills of current workforce to align with economic development strategies and key industry clusters
- Improve employer access to qualified workers and awareness of training resources
- Ensure youth in NWI are positioned for continued education/learning and workforce success
- Increase exposure to quality jobs and career pathway opportunities through work-based learning, on the job training, apprenticeships, and employer supporting skills training programs
- Assure compliance and efficient operations of a workforce development system
- For in school youth, align education with the needed business skills (i.e. specific technical skills, soft skills) through the Work Ethic Initiative and for out-of-school youth, build understanding of the skills needed to be workforce ready

STRATEGIES

- Maintain engagement and communication with economic development entities and employers to determine current and future skill needs.
- Drive support on local workforce issues including pipeline alignment of the k-12 system and post-secondary education, including career exposure and work-based learning opportunities in alignment with graduation requirements and workforce needs.
- Continuously collaborate and leverage connections to key resources in the workforce ecosystem within local, state, and national levels and education arenas as a community of practice.
- Support efforts on programming and talent prospecting that support emerging industries and technologies for the region.
- Stay current on both compliance and best practices regarding governance and implementation of workforce services.

GOALS TO ADDRESS CUSTOMERS WITH BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

- Identify barriers to employment that customers have and engage the resources of multiple organizations to address each customer's needs via a customized plan and partner referral network.
- Provide self-service and on-line service, and access site options for customers to meet them where they are at, while allowing staff time for priority of service customers.
- Leverage data and a customer centric approach to provide intrusive advising and training connections for customers who need to upgrade skills, or require new skills as a result of changes in demand in the labor market.
- Ensure that the customer continues ownership of his/her career plan throughout engagement with the WorkOne Center, constantly assessing the customer's level of engagement and ways to keep them motivated to persist.
- Convene and guide community leaders on ways to leverage funds, resources, and drive change through labor market trends and considerations to address barriers through a village approach.

2.2 Describe how the board's vision and goals align with and/or support the State's strategic vision as set out in the [WIOA Unified State Plan](#). Specifically address how the local area will align with the pillars and goals outlined below as well as the action steps included in the WIOA State Plan, where applicable.

Pillar I: Removing barriers for workers to meet Hoosiers where they are and help remove obstacles to work and learning.

- Goal 1: Harness opportunities through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), which includes the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment program (BEAD), the CHIPS and Science Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), for populations that have been historically excluded from the labor force.
- Goal 2: Remove barriers for workers including providing affordable and accessible childcare.
- Goal 3: Create digital equity through digital skills training.

Pillar II: Preparing future skilled workers to ensure Indiana can deliver the training and skills needed for a modern workforce.

- Goal 1: Transform as a State to prepare for emerging industries specific to federal opportunities and strategic industries.
- Goal 2: Meet people where they are for career pathway planning to customize to their unique potential and experience.
- Goal 3: Develop additional workers with skills-based technical training and/or a high-quality credential, certification, or degree to fill in-demand jobs.

Pillar III: Helping employers find and/or develop skilled workers to ensure employers have the talent needed for the economy of today and tomorrow.

- Goal 1: Deliver bespoke customer service and solutions to key employers.
- Goal 2: Increase quality job exposure and experience through apprenticeships, work-based learning, and employer supported training programs.
- Goal 3: Continue to champion and promote skills-based hiring practices through career coaching for underserved jobseekers and employer hiring and training models.

NWIWB's strategic goals, pillars, and initiatives, as outlined in 2.1, are well aligned with the state's expressed strategic pillars and goals in the WIOA Unified State Plan. NWIWB goals and subsequent strategies are evaluated regularly to inform the impact of our work together in the region and state, through a shared vision with flexibility to adjust for the unique needs of each service area.

Pillar 1

NWIB has been fortunate to be partner to with organizations to expand programming for populations in distressed neighborhoods and build evaluate access to childcare, transportation and good jobs with several area municipalities and community organizations with a focus on Opportunity Hubs and expansion of access points where applicable. The NWI region has a diverse footprint where lifelong residents are geared for change with equal access for all. Our work with the READI project has expanded the reach to include a mobile training unit in partnership with Ivy Tech and a mobile career services unit in partnership with United Way. These continued efforts to invest in the workforce to meet the talent demand of these projects and area residents is a pinnacle need in many of our communities.

As evidenced in our goal to identify barriers to employment that customers have and engage the resources of multiple organizations to address each customer's needs via a customized plan and partner referral network, we moved to implementation with leaders in the communities. Our work with the One Stop System extended an opportunity to have partners use a unified system to surround individuals and

have access to services using a Charity Tracker referral system. We also understand that removing barriers to training and employment is vital to a successful workforce system, and in addition to our digital literacy trainings, we are partnering with the Pulaski Community Foundation on a Childcare Coalition where in Pulaski County is situated in a Childcare dessert. These great strides forward are impacting the lives of many Hoosiers in our region.

Pillar 2

NWIWB drives a focus toward upskilling the current workforce to align with economic development strategies and key industry clusters. Our work with our secondary, post-secondary, economic development and area employers is an essential piece of our strategy. Together we used data informed decisions to understand the labor force and needs of area employers and underserved populations, dislocated workers, adults and youth talent pipelines. Our work as an intermediary allows us a window into related training, skills and competency needs of employers. One example of this is not only our participation in academic advisory boards, but also through the Local Needs Assessment facilitation between employers and CTE Directors to define critical curriculum, certifications and credentials needed by industry. It is equally important to analyze the supply and demand of talent and resources to maximize our work as a unified force.

Through this pillar, NWIWB has also invested time and resources in hosting talent workforce summits with employers, educators and community partners to understand any barriers to a sustainable workforce. Through this exercise we were able to understand tiers of support, emphasize available resources, and showcase opportunities that will lead to better jobs and careers for our customers.

Pillar 3

NWIWB is grounded in improving employer access to qualified workers and increasing exposure to quality jobs and career pathway opportunities through work-based learning, on the job training, apprenticeships, and skills training programs. Implementation of initiatives from career exploration and discovery all the way through to experience, including hosting an INFAME SouthShore Chapter that is employer led and Jobs for America's Graduates partnerships. Recently we championed a bridging the gap to career success for participants without a plan to assess career interest, facilitate career ready workshops, host career exposure events and end with employer interviews by pathway. This investment in talent and career exploration helped align activated employers who excel at providing quality job offerings.

In addition to these education/learning and workforce success efforts, we serve as an apprenticeship ambassador and third-party sponsor for the Department of Labor. Through this and the tools provided to us by Office of Work Based Learning and Apprenticeship, we were able to host our own internal Career Development Workforce Associate registered DOL apprenticeship program. This exercise help our teams to refine our support into the field with external partners when serving as an apprentice intermediary.

2.3* Describe how the board’s goals relate to the achievement of federal performance accountability measures. See 20 CFR 677.155 for more information on the federal performance accountability measures. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(E) and 20 CFR 679.560(a)(5)]

The goals outlined in WIOA and federal performance measures serve as indicators of the expectations for meeting the needs of customers—students, jobseekers, workers, and employers. WIOA Section 116 (b)(2)(A) outlines the performance accountability measures across all core programs as:

- Unsubsidized employment in 2nd Qtr. after exit (includes education/training for youth)
- Unsubsidized employment in 4th Qtr. after exit (includes education/training for youth)
- Median Earnings,
- Credential Attainment Rate (for all except Wagner-Peyser)
- Measurable Skills Gain (for all except Wagner-Peyser)
- Employer Satisfaction

Similar to WIOA and the strategic goals of the GWC, the NWIWB’s strategic goals are rooted in a demand driven workforce system that is responding to local needs and challenges. Most of the NWIWB’s goals relate to at least one of the federal performance accountability measures.

Since its inception, the NWIWB has focused on the responsibility of meeting the needs of the customers and stakeholders interfacing with the local/regional workforce investment system. The WIOA performance indicators are included on the Board’s Program Performance Dashboard for review at each meeting. To monitor and deliver on this, we continuously measure the required federal results while identifying areas to improve and making necessary course corrections. Each of the NWIWB goals push the system to focus on specific areas which yield results related to the WIOA performance measures.

2.4* Describe any additional indicators used by the local board to measure performance and effectiveness of the local fiscal agent (where appropriate), contracted service providers, and the one-stop delivery system in the local area. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(17) and 20 CFR 679.560(b)(16)]

The NWIWB establishes performance goals for each key item on the NWIWB dashboard. Goals are set for the region as well as for each youth service provider. Each goal is broken down into specific targets that are set for overall utilization of the Work One system. Ultimately, all goals and targets demonstrate trends to achieving WIOA performance measures and the NWIWB strategic goals.

The NWIWB uses several reports and performance metrics in addition to the Common Measures for evaluating programs supported by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Wagner-Peyser, Trade Adjustment Act, etc. These indicators include:

- Customer visits to the Work One offices and the purpose of visits
- Completion, credential, and placement rates for customers who receive training (for the Region and by Service Provider)
- Youth performance, including enrollments, credentials, placements into postsecondary education, employment, and the military, as well as the Common Measures
- Customers receiving case management
- Customer placements into unsubsidized employment by service providers
- Surveys of customers visiting the WorkOne centers

The NWIWB’s Youth Employment Council tracks several indicators on a bi-monthly basis for individual service providers and the overall program. Included are reaching enrollment goals of youth in the WIA Youth program; completion of objectives for each individual youth program; and provision of case management services.

The NWIWB aggressively tracks performance toward end-of-year goals. On a bi-monthly basis, the NWIWB and One Stop Operator review performance reports, which includes a monthly and year-to-date comparison of actual performance versus goals. Service providers analyze their own performance data and submit monthly reports to the One Stop Operator including strategies to meet key performance targets and any concerns. The WorkOne Operator reviews the data for each service provider and responds to each provider's monthly report. The Operator conducts an in-person review session with each service provider on a quarterly basis to discuss performance in key areas and contribution to the WorkOne system in Northwest Indiana. The NWIWB reviews a one-page dashboard report of job seeker services delivered and attached comments from the WorkOne Operator staff in addition to reports from the Business Services Team. Those metrics include the number of businesses served, the percentage of job orders filled, and the amount of outreach activities performed by the team.

The NWIWB also monitors spending targets. Management staff review the information monthly in order to determine trends and to take any corrective action necessary. Northwest Indiana plans to spend at least 90% of all funding within the program year.

The NWIWB also receives a Return-on-Investment Report on Adult and Dislocated Worker WIOA Services which gives information about what their investment is yielding, yearly monitoring reports presented by the Department of Workforce Development, and the annual audit of the organization.

Section 3: Local Area Partnerships and Investment Strategies

Please answer the following questions. Many of the responses below, such as targeted sector strategies, should be based on strategic discussions with the local board and partners. **Questions that require collaborative answers for planning regions are designated with an asterisk (*). See the Regional Plan subsection of Memo 2023-16 for more information.**

3.1 Taking into account the analysis in Section 1, describe the local board's strategy to work with the entities that carry out core programs (*Core programs include Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth Services, Title II Adult Education and Literacy, Title III Wagner-Peyser, and Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation*) and required partners to align resources in the local area, in support of the vision and goals described in Question 2.1. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(F) and 20 CFR 679.560(a)(6)]

In 2014, the NWIWB's One Stop Operator established the NWIWB WIOA Partners Collaborative, which includes members from Vocational Rehabilitation, TANF/FSSA, Wagner Peyser, Regional Adult Education, and WIOA providers (WorkOne Adult, Dislocated Worker DLW), Youth and Business Services departments. This collaborative brings together essential support networks to serve clients from various programs and funding streams, and the group meets bimonthly. The focus is on creating strategies to achieve NWIWB goals, sharing employer demands, training and up-skilling opportunities, developing professional development sessions, creating referral networks, and ensuring funding and programming synergy.

The WorkOne offices also have partner groups that support the local WorkOne. These groups include members from all WIOA core programs, required partners, as well as faith communities, post-secondary institutions, and local nonprofits. These groups meet bi-monthly, alternating with the WIOA Partnership Collaborative meetings. It has been decided to focus these groups on the county level rather than the city level to encourage broader participation and impact. The WorkOne partners group is responsible for implementing the goals set by the NWIWB and the strategies set by the NWIWB WIOA Partnership Collaborative. Progress towards these goals will be reported at the NWIWB WIOA Partnership Collaborative meetings.

3.2* Identify the programs/partners that are included in the local workforce development system. Include, at a minimum, organizations that provide services for relevant secondary and post-secondary education programs, provision of transportation, Adult Education and Literacy, Wagner-Peyser, Trade Adjustment Assistance, Jobs for Veterans State Grant, Senior Community Service and Employment Program, Vocational Rehabilitation, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, and programs of study authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006. Describe how the local board will coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(2), (10), (11), (12) & (13), 20 CFR 679.560(b)(9), 20 CFR 679.560(b)(10), 20 CFR 679.560(b)(11), and 20 CFR 679.560(b)(1)(i)]

- WIOA Title I, Adult and DLW (CWI, Inc. Job Works Inc., & Goodwill Industries of Michiana, Inc..).
- WIOA Title I, Youth (Goodwill Industries of Michiana, Inc., JobWorks, Inc., Geminus Corporation, Workforce Development Services, Inc, Mental Health America of Northwest Indiana, TradeWinds)
- WIOA Title II, Adult Education, Literacy, and English Language Support (CWI and a Network of Community Providers).
- Wagner-Peyser and State Labor Exchange (WP)
- Trade Adjustment Assistance Act (TAA), Unemployment Insurance (UI), and Veterans (JVSG) (State of Indiana Department of Workforce Development).
- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), (Family and Social Services Administration)
- Temporary Aide to Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (Family and Social Services Administration)
- Older Americans Act, Title V (SCSEP) (Vantage Aging, Goodwill Industries of Michiana, Inc., and AARP FOUNDATION, Inc.).
- National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP), Migrant and Season Farmworker (Proteus, Inc.).
- Technical Education Act, programs at the postsecondary level (Ivy Tech Community College).
- Community Services Block Grant Act (CSBG), Employment and Training Activities (CoAction)
- Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through OCRA, Employment and Training Activities (CoAction)
- Job Corps at Camp Atterbury (MTC).
- Transportation Partner – N/A

3.3* Describe how the board will support the strategy identified in the WIOA Unified State Plan and work with the entities carrying out core programs and other workforce development programs, including programs of study authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 to support service alignment. Describe efforts to work with each partner identified in 3.2 to develop plans, assurances, and strategies for maximizing coordination, improving service delivery, and avoiding duplication of the Wagner-Peyser Act services and other services provided through the one-stop delivery system. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(2), (10), (11), (12) & (13), 20 CFR 679.560(b)(1)(ii), (b)(9) and (b)(11)]

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) works through OCRA to support Employment and Training Activities (CoAction). Local HUD programs aim to enhance lives by offering high-quality, affordable housing options and by promoting education and economic independence for community

members. They coordinate case management, career advising, training, and employer services with One Stop Partners to meet the needs of the workforce.

The WIOA Title I, Youth (Goodwill Industries of Michiana, Inc., JobWorks, Inc, Geminus Corporation, Workforce Development Services, Inc, Mental Health America of Northwest Indiana, TradeWinds)The program integrates service provider staff funded by WIOA Youth into the One Stop system as appropriate. Tailored career and training services are available for One Stop system clients aged 16-24 who meet the established eligibility criteria, subject to resource availability. These services may be offered at a One Stop Center, a school, or a local partner's location. Career services, training services, and employer-related services are closely coordinated with the functions of the One Stop Partners' services.

Older Americans Act, Title V (SCSEP) (Vantage Aging., Goodwill Industries of Michiana, Inc., and AARP FOUNDATION, Inc.). SCSEP is a community service and work-based job training program for older Americans. The programs provide training for low income, unemployed older Americans and supportive services that allow them to participate in the training. Participants must be at least 55 years old, unemployed, and have a family income of no more than 125% of the federal poverty level. Case management and career advising, training, and employer services are coordinated with the One Stop Partners in relation to functional position. In addition, the programs may be co-located in a One Stop Center.

Community Services Block Grant Act (CSBG), Employment and Training Activities (COAction). CSBG services are focused on the reduction of poverty, the revitalization of low-income communities, and the empowerment of low-income families and individuals in rural and urban areas to become fully self-sufficient. Case management and career advising, training, and employer services are coordinated with the One Stop Partners in relation to functional position.

3.4 Identify how the local board will coordinate WIOA Title I workforce investment activities with adult education and literacy activities under WIOA Title II. This description must include how the local board will carry out a review of local applications submitted under WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy, consistent with the local plan and state provided criteria. See the Multi-Year Adult Education Competitive Grant Application (Request for Application). [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(13) and 20 CFR 679.560(b)(12)].

The RFA for adult education and literacy (WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy Act) is distributed statewide by the Department of Workforce Development. As mandated the NWIWB in their role of coordinating activities with education and training providers within the local Workforce Development Area ("WDA") will review and acknowledge all applications proposing to offer Adult Education services within Region 1 prior submission to DWD. At a minimum the NWIWB will review eligible providers' application materials to determine whether the applications are consistent with local plans. Upon completing this review, the local WB will submit a recommendation to DWD confirming alignment or gaps with the local plan. Prior to awarding of contracts, DWD may require applicants to make revisions, or request additional input from the NWIWB to better align adult education an English Language Learning services with local workforce plans

3.5* Describe how the local boards will coordinate local workforce investment activities with regional economic development activities that are carried out in the local area and how the local board will promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(5) and 20 CFR 679.560(b)(4)]

The Northwest Indiana Workforce Board (NWIWB), Executive Staff to the Board, and One Stop Operator have a long history of working with local and regional economic development organizations to promote and support business attraction, expansion, and retention efforts. NIWWB has been a strong supporter of community building efforts by collaborating with partners and stakeholders to address employer needs for a skilled workforce. We closely work with our core partners, faith-based organizations, and local community-based organizations at a regional level to establish a referral and resource network, providing our community access to reliable and relevant services.

The local economic development organizations rely on the NWIWB for data necessary to demonstrate existing and future talent so employers can be assured that NWI has the human resources required to build a productive business. The system is called to help facilitate hiring or to orchestrate training which will build the workforce required with the necessary skills. LEDOs look to the NWIWB for resources to support the hiring and expansion for existing employers as the NWIWB has a solid understanding of the local K-12 system, Career and Technical Education centers, post-secondary institutions and additional educational programs offered throughout the region. The NWIWB is looked to as an entity which is working to align the education and workforce systems with economic develop so they are called upon for consultation by LEDO's when they are thinking about utilizing funds such as from redevelopment commissions to generate new workforce programs. In addition, the NWIWB has been able to work with LEDO's to provide incumbent worker training to assist their local employers maintain their workforce and in several instances, this type of strategy has even been instrumental in keeping businesses in Northwest Indiana.

We are committed to creating new opportunities for workforce development in Northwest Indiana, aiming to address the unique workforce challenges in urban and rural areas by understanding their needs and existing programs. We will collaborate with partners to create tailored strategies through Opportunity Hubs and mobile training programs. Although we won't be collocating until next year, we are committed to building collaborative workforce innovation in Northwest Indiana by continuing to be present in the community at various access points, such as local nonprofit libraries and faith-based organizations, which serve many of our priority service populations, allowing us to reach clients where they are.

3.6 Based on the analysis described in Section 1.1-1.3, describe how the one-stop operator will ensure priority for adult career and training services will be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient. Include any locally identified priority of service populations. [WIOA Sec. 134(c)(3)(E) and 20 CFR 679.560(b)(21)]

We have continued to build and enroll with standing partners to address a diverse range of service populations. While we are required to uphold Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) partnership titles with partners, we approach all partners with the same spirit of commitment, as we are all working towards achieving a common goal of serving the community. We prioritize service populations as per the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) policy and any other population identified by the governor, DWD, or the NWIWB. This includes low-income, homeless, TANF, and food stamp recipients. The one-stop operator will engage in supporting local faith and community-based organizations by increasing available resources and access points in the community. We ensure regular community access to these points every month and provide reports through local management. We will continue to organize meetings with community partners to strengthen the network for referring resources at the regional level. We will oversee this by providing monthly reports and implementing specific strategies that showcase the resource network as an essential part of meeting the needs of our priority service clients and the community.

By engaging with our community partners, we aim to improve referrals and increase the number of priority services. Customers with basic skills deficiencies will continue to receive support for their skill gaps. Our main priority will be to refer these clients with basic skill deficiencies to our regional adult education programs for remediation, High School Equivalency (HSE), ESL, and other services involving educational support.

3.7* Based on the analysis described in Section 1.1-1.3, identify industries where a sector partnership is currently being convened in the local area or where there will be an attempt to convene a sector partnership and the timeframe. Describe how you will be partnering to achieve defined goals.

NWIWB convenes a monthly Healthcare Consortium composed of all of the region's major hospital systems, other local providers including mental health providers, post-secondary institutions with healthcare programs, and other healthcare training providers. This group meets to discuss health workforce issues in the region and coordinate for a more interconnected system. Most recently, the Consortium hosted a Healthcare 360 event targeting key service areas with hands-on career exposure and provides an annual two day healthcare hands on career pathway event. Together we define our goals, outcomes and conversions of those exposed through these experiences and shared practices to leverage a collective industry voice.

The South Shore INFAME chapter is an industry-led talent pipeline program that engages K-12 systems, community colleges, and universities in a highly coordinated, seamless model known as the FAME Career Pathway. A local FAME chapter is composed of employers, institutions of education, non-profit education organizations, workforce and economic development organizations, government representatives, and more. South Short INFAME is the Northwest Indiana chapter of FAME, which currently accepts students from Lake, Porter, and La Porte counties whereby graduates receive an associate degree in multidisciplinary technical education, with an advanced manufacturing work-study curriculum in an Advanced Manufacturing Technician (AMT) Program in Northwest Indiana. This multi-craft maintenance position is in high demand and high wage in Northwest Indiana and throughout the state. This requires participants to become highly skilled, globally competitive, well-rounded, and sought-after talent that can meet the unique needs and challenges of today's modern manufacturing workforce. Recruitment included out of school youth, justice involved, and those without a plan. NWIWB serves as the intermediary who supports the employer and individual recruitment while also assisting with connecting resources and opportunities to provide WIOA services. Goals are defined by the employers and has subcommittees that are held to aggressive action plans and a unified experience for all partners and students.

3.8 A-D

Responses to the following questions should include the implementation of incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, work-based learning programs, apprenticeship models, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies, career pathways, utilization of effective business intermediaries, and other business services and strategies that support the local board's strategy in 3.1 and meet the needs of regional employers. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(4)(A) & (B) and 20 CFR 679.560(b)(3)]

Identify and describe the strategies and services that are and/or will be used to:

A. Facilitate engagement of employers in workforce development programs and targeted sector strategies, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

With the NWIWB serving as the primary employer engagement partner in the regular convening of workforce partners structure, and with the priorities established by WIOA, the Board has a highly-visible sector-based strategy to engage the region's employers as partners in identifying skill needs, promoting career opportunities, and serving as partners in training design and work-based learning. The NWIWB has a number of active sector partnerships, most notably in Healthcare, Manufacturing, Construction, and Logistics.

The strategy includes serving communities focusing on industries emphasizing high impact workforce needs, using data informed decisions, leading with a consultative approach, building strong relationships, and prioritizing pain points for sector specific businesses. The Business Services Representatives approach including relationship management, service delivery, and braiding of funds, will continue to be refined in collaboration with employers as part of the WorkOne Business Services strategy. Intelligence gained from sector-based planning groups, panels, and workforce talent summits incorporate the Business Services staff for immediate action. The Business Services staff continually acts as the eyes and ears on the ground, assisting with recruitment of sector partners and connecting information across planning groups for implementing new training and employment strategies.

To support the sector framework and to strengthen the Board's role in recruiting and connecting employers to the wider array of engagement opportunities with key partners and talent, the staff to the board is revising the structure of the Regional Education and Employer Alliance for Developing Youth in Northwest Indiana (READY NWI), a grassroots initiative to connect employers, educators, community partners, and workforce development professionals to address career readiness, and talent retention. This initiative has been connecting educators with regional businesses and community partners for over a decade. This unique to the state regional consortium allows for conversation, best practice sharing and a bridge to cultivate action together with a seven-county approach. Leveraging this platform with an existing activated member base, will further enhance and build awareness of our position and available support as staff to the Northwest Indiana Workforce Board, WIOA adult service provider, regional fiscal agent for adult basic education programming, compliance and quality assurance for WIOA Youth Programing, and regional one stop operator for the America's Job Centers in NWI. This is a community approach to career exploration and better quality of life for families.

The most recent READY NWI collaboration is the formation of the READY NWI Business Advisory Council. This council brings together a diverse array of workforce sector representatives from across the region, fostering invaluable connections between education, industry, and community stakeholders. Through this partnership, the group aims to provide enhanced resources and tailored guidance to educators,

employers, and individuals seeking to navigate and excel talent in Northwest Indiana's evolving education and job market landscape. The insights and expertise offered by the Business Advisory Council promise to equip stakeholders with the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in their chosen fields, prepared for the future within demand sector specific skills, social, and financial acumen.

The NWIWB will continue to serve as the primary table for connecting sector-based initiatives in all key sectors so that common and sector-specific needs can be identified, prioritized, and addressed within the context of the broader regular convening of workforce partners. With READY NWI revisioning, a cohesive approach and centralized dissemination of information focusing on occupational and high demand skills will enhance and scale sector specific consortiums and business intelligence. We have already begun some of this work through preexisting partnerships cultivated through our NWIWB, Healthcare Consortium, pathway to trades, and FAME work. Learning directly from our engaged partners on their desires for talent, feedback, and best practices provided a clearer alignment of actionable options.

With each of these strategies, the intention is to scale and expose our WIOA clients to similar opportunities toward a better quality of life, while building strong relationships and connections within the region.

B. Support a local workforce development system as described in 3.2 that meets the needs of businesses.

In addition to the work at the BSR level, the NWIWB convenes industry sector groups focused on specific target industries in the region. These groups help to connect the workforce development system with employers and educators with interest in those sectors. The Work One system has aligned its work around the NWIWB's sector strategies that have specific training aligned with jobs in demand that support economic development and allows for alignment with jobs in each of our communities which will build a stronger pipeline of job ready workers while improving our educational attainment. The WorkOne Business Services Team coordinates its business services with job seeker services that are provided at the WorkOne offices by utilizing Indiana Career Connect, the statewide job matching system. The WorkOne Business Services Team creates and shares with both staff at a region-wide level as well as with community partners with a vested interest in workforce development efforts. Industry and employer specific intelligence is shared to educate the WorkOne centers and key community organizations on job demand and industry expectations. This information allows the WorkOne centers to prepare job seekers in a way that meets the needs of hiring employers. Training is a key issue being addressed by the NWIWB. In order for businesses to remain competitive in their industry, oftentimes the introduction of new technology, processes, or procedures is necessary. While opportunities exist to train job seekers in preparation for employment, addressing the growth and development of incumbent workers remains a critical element to the overall retention and success of the business in NWI. Therefore, incumbent worker training is another strategy that will be used by NWIWB to assist employers facing these challenges of skill shortages in their business. In some cases, incumbent worker training may be delivered in a cohort made up from one or multiple employers.

C. Better coordinate workforce development programs with economic development partners and programs.

The Northwest Indiana Workforce Board has a long history of working with local and regional economic development organizations to promote and support business attraction, expansion, and retention efforts. Numerous companies have been successfully located in Northwest Indiana because of the

NWIWB and One Stop Operator staff's ability to provide prospective employers with a thorough analysis of the available workforce by occupation and experience, wage data, industry growth, and other key metrics as well as to determine they will be able to meet their hiring needs.

The NWIWB, Executive Staff to the Board, and One Stop Operator staff actively participate in economic development organizations, boards, and committees and maintain memberships with local chambers of commerce. Individual NWIWB members serve on the board of directors of the Northwest Indiana Forum, the private sector regional membership organization representing the voice of private business and economic development in Northwest Indiana as well as other community based economic development organizations.

The economic development and business organizations with which we are members or have a working relationship include:

- Regional economic development includes: The Northwest Indiana Forum, Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission, and Regional Development Authority
- Eleven local economic development organizations: Portage Economic Development Corporation (PEDCO), Valparaiso Economic Development Corporation, Duneland Economic Development Company, Gary Economic Development Corporation, City of Hammond Economic Development Corporation, La Porte Economic Advancement Partnership (LEAP), Starke County Economic Development Corporation, Jasper County Economic Development Corporation, Newton County Economic Development Corporation, Michigan City Economic Development Corporation, Pulaski County Economic Development Corporation
- Fifteen chambers of commerce: Lakeshore, Greater La Porte, Valparaiso, Greater Portage, Duneland, Munster, Michigan City, Gary, Crossroads, Hobart, St. John-Dyer, Whiting, Cedar Lake, Highland Griffith, Schererville

The local economic development and Chamber organizations turn to the NWIWB system for data necessary to demonstrate existing and future talent so employers can be assured that NWI has the human resources required to build a productive business. NWIWB also serves on several chamber workforce and education committees to support the employer talent pipeline and career exposure needed at the school level. The system is called to help facilitate hiring or to orchestrate training which will build the workforce required with the necessary skills. LEDOs look to the NWIWB for resources to support the hiring and expansion for existing employers as the NWIWB is familiar with all the schools, Career and Technical Education centers, post-secondary institutions, and the programs offered throughout the entire region. The NWIWB is looked to as an entity which is working to align the education and workforce systems with economic development so they are called upon for consultation by LEDOs when they are thinking about utilizing funds such as from redevelopment commissions to generate new workforce programs. In addition, the NWIWB has been able to work with LEDOs to provide incumbent worker training to assist their local employers maintain their workforce and in several instances this type of strategy has even been instrumental in keeping the business in Northwest Indiana.

D. Strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs.

To strengthen linkages between One Stop system and Unemployment Insurance programs, such as RESEA, we will continue to collaborate with the staff that deliver these programs, co-enroll the clients participating and capture any outcomes of such programs. Unemployment Insurance is a central part of

our Basic service offerings, integrated into our flow and seamless within our program delivery. To that effect, the staff that coordinate these programs inside our offices are fully integrated on teams that offer clients information about training, career advising, workshops, etc. In addition, these orientations for these programs often include a video presentation about what additional services are available to these Unemployment Insurance recipients.

3.9 Describe the strategy the local board implements when using WIOA dollars to support training opportunities including but not limited to OJT, work experience, apprenticeship, and pre-apprenticeship.

- What portion of WIOA funds in the past two years were used to support training costs for participants in each of these programs? Please list a total as well as the portion used for each program.
- What percentage of WIOA funds would you project over the next two years will be used to support training costs for participants in each of these programs? Please list a total as well as the portion used for each program.
- If the local board is supporting training costs for participants using non-WIOA funding, how is this tracked?

The portion of WIOA funds used for Direct Training costs & supportive services for PY23 and PY22 (note this does not include labor cost of CA's or other WO staff time with clients helping them secure training) is as follows:

PY 23: Adult \$1,015,827

DLW \$134,067

PY 22: Adult \$1,214,243

DLW \$69,673

We expect to allocate 35% of WIOA Adult funds for training & supportive services (or \$1,075,000) (and again this does not include the CA or other WO staff labor spent with clients on training) in PY24 and PY25; 26% of WIOA DLW for training & support services (\$275,000) for PY24 and PY25

The NWIWB was a significant partner in bringing the final funding for the region for training and other services such as Work Based Learning, OJT, apprenticeships, and pre-apprenticeships including the use of non WIOA funding such as Employer Training Grant, Workforce Ready Grant, Quest, Apprenticeship Building America, Adult Education, and READI grants and it is tracked on our Financial Statements. In addition, the NWIWB also supports staff making applications from funding sources such as Department of Labor, Community Foundation Grants, and other private foundations.

3.10 If the local board is currently leveraging funding outside of WIOA Title I funding and state general funds to support the local workforce development system, briefly describe the funding and how it will impact the local system. Organize the description by population(s) served. If the local board does not currently have oversight of additional funding, describe any plans to pursue it.

Currently, we have partnered with Midwest Urban Strategies to secure Growth Opportunity Funding through the Department of Labor to work with young adult offenders living in Gary. We currently are serving juvenile and young adult offenders through WIOA youth funding as a special target population so the use of the Growth Opportunity funding will assist in enhancing services. Because the focus is on Gary

residents, WIOA youth funding will be used to support the participants in Growth Opportunity as needed. The Growth Opportunity grant will allow us to focus the regular WIOA youth funding on serving those offenders outside of Gary.

The Center of Workforce Innovations continues to broaden its ability to build a workforce system in NWI by both securing new funds and by leveraging funds of partners in workforce development.

3.11 Describe any collaboration with organizations or groups outside of your local area, interstate or intrastate, and what outcomes you plan to achieve as a result of the collaboration.

A resource that has served as a cross pollination of regional expertise and statewide transformation is the Indiana Workforce Board Alliance (INWBA) which provides resources and support for employers, job seekers, and workforce development boards across Indiana to help regional economies thrive. This organization allows members to Serve as a Key Thought Partner to Workforce Decision Makers, Serve as a State-wide Clearinghouse that Shares the Value, Accomplishments and Needs of Regional Workforce Boards, Share Knowledge and Best Practices Between Regions, and Provide Resources to Benefit all Members in an ever-evolving economic landscape.

The Coalition for Adult Basic Education (COABE), the leading and largest adult education association, represents the professionals who provide adult education services for the federal program. Adult education programs in all 50 states, DC, and U.S. territories are authorized under Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act to assist adults in building skills and earning credentials that lead to postsecondary education, sustainable employment, and economic self-sufficiency. These programs provide services to millions of learners nationwide and provide an incredible return on investment to our economy, helping individuals up and out of poverty and serving as a pipeline into a family sustaining job or community college. NWIWB collaborates and serves on the Innovations Committee for COABE. Our recent work has centered around working with employers to assess their needs as it relates to education and workforce training provided to adult learners. One project is “Ways to Engage: Solutions for Workforce Talent”. This badge series is provided by COABE’s Behind Every Employer Initiative where folks can register and interact. The other major project is an employer survey that will help capture data that reflects the Employer’s understanding and preferences as it relates to candidates that have received a GED/HSE. This collaboration will help us navigate the best way to engage with employers in our region in the adult education space.

The Northwest Indiana Workforce Board collaborates with several organizations. One organization is Midwest Urban Strategies (MUS). MUS is an intermediary of urban workforce development boards (WDB) serving their local communities to connect the stakeholders of the workforce ecosystem. As a member of MUS, we have been able to collaborate on grant funding opportunities, participate in professional development, and build relationships with Workforce Boards from other states. This has allowed us to enhance our funding and serve more individuals, learn about best practices among workforce boards, and to skill up staff in order to better serve clients.

Another organization that we belong to is the Indiana Talent Network (ITN). ITN connects statewide stakeholders and regional collaborations to support equitable talent policies and strategies. This group meets quarterly and has provided valuable resources and shared best practices among different organizations throughout Indiana. This has allowed us to gain insight in attracting talent, developing the skills of the workforce, and ensuring that they are connected to employers.

Section 4: Program Design and Evaluation

Please answer the following questions. Many of the responses below, such as those regarding career pathways and individual training accounts, should be based on strategic discussions between the local board and partners. **Questions that require collaborative answers for planning regions are designated with an asterisk (*). See the Regional Plan subsection of Memo 2023-16 for more information.**

4.1 Describe how the local board, working with the entities carrying out core programs (*Core programs include Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth Services, Title II Adult Education and Literacy, Title III Wagner-Peyser, and Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation*), will expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment and out of school youth. Include information regarding the referral processes with one stop partners such as the technology used for making/tracking referrals. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(3) and 20 CFR 679.560(b)(2)(i)]

All core partners are represented on the NWIWB's Northwest Indiana WIOA Partners Collaborative group and have representation on each of the WorkOne Partner groups. Partnership extends well beyond just this group of core partners. To expand our services, we have representation from all of the WIOA outlined partners, faith community, local government, training providers, and other community stakeholders. During these meetings, referral networks, recruitment strategies, strengths, challenges, and opportunities are discussed. In addition, weekly email communication goes out to partners in order to serve as a connection to the workforce system and includes information about training opportunities, hiring events, employer intelligence, hot jobs, and additional opportunities for partnering with the NWIWB.

Looking ahead, we anticipate that foot traffic in centers will decrease due to post pandemic effects, and customer's preference for virtual services. To counteract this, we are partnering with our referral and resource networks even more closely to ensure that motivated individuals who need our assistance are sent to our offices. We are also continually evaluating our technology options and the satisfaction of customers utilizing these new means of service. Additionally, we are working more closely with our local universities and colleges to connect with their career services networks, advisory committees where possible and program chairs of in-demand degree and certificate programs. We have achieved sizeable success through this route in that many of their students need last semester financial assistance that we can provide.

Providing Assistance to Customers with Barriers to Employment

Some of our urban centers have significant levels of poverty, educational disparities, and inflated levels of ex-offenders in the population, so we rely significantly on our core and community based program partners to help overcome the barriers through supportive and supplemental resources. We partner with the core program partners through a regional Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) designed to build networks of referrals and shared resources. We also partner with them at a local level through community partner meetings which often include not only required MOU Partners, but also faith and community based organizations, Veterans support groups, postsecondary and Adult Education providers. Lastly, in terms of access, we also provide local Access Points for customers that cannot access the One Stop offices so that the community can have a well-informed community center where information and basic assistance is readily available.

The NWIWB and its WorkOne partners serve communities throughout the region that have a relatively high level of individuals with disabilities. All regional efforts to serve these individuals, including those

from a community of educational disparity or a community with concentrations of persons with significant disabilities, begin with the collaboration of core program partners that include Adult Education and Vocational Rehabilitation.

The partnership is coordinated and forged through ongoing meetings at the local WorkOne offices and at the regional level through meetings facilitated by the WorkOne Operator, as well as through a universal referral system utilized by the partners. This referral system works both ways, as individuals are referred to and from the WorkOne offices. When an individual comes to a WorkOne office seeking services that partners provide, such as high school equivalency attainment or workplace accommodations for clients with disabilities, a referral form is initiated and a referral is made while case management continues, along with follow up with the partner agency to ensure coordination of services. The converse is also true as partners refer their own clients who have needs for employment and/or training in addition to services provided by the partner.

Region 1 has a comprehensive strategy for engaging out of school youth. It begins with outreach where there are three approaches. The first is internal outreach to jobseekers in the WorkOne system. All individuals between the ages of 18 – 24 who enter the WorkOne offices are first screened for eligibility for the out of school youth program and are provided with information on the array of services offered through the youth program. The second approach to outreach is working with partners including Adult Education and Vocational Rehabilitation. Career Pathway Facilitators are co-located at Adult Education sites and work exclusively with youth that are Adult Education students. The partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation facilitates the capture of those youth that are transitioning from school to work. Students with disabilities work on developing transitional plans. The partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation also serves to capture those youth who are leaving high school and are in need of workforce services offered through the youth program. The final approach to outreach is a grassroots effort with community organizations that serve out of school youth. Youth staff members reach out to community organizations that provide services such as shelter for homeless, health care, transportation, and child care to engage youth in targeted demographics such as homeless youth and parenting youth.

The second part of the NWIWB's engagement strategy is to provide ongoing coordinated services during participation. Specifically included is occupational training that provides youth with skills needed for many in-demand occupations as well as work based learning activities in areas of interest. Work based learning activities not only provide the youth with technical skills and soft skills, but the youth are also earning money. In addition, staff provides monthly guidance and counseling with to the participants to ensure they are working on achieving goals and addressing any barriers that develop that prevent them from success. Staff continues engagement with youth throughout their participation.

The final part of engagement is during the follow up phase. Staff continues to work with youth during this phase to ensure that they are successful in employment and/or postsecondary training. If the need for additional services is identified, referrals and connections are made.

4.2 Describe how the local board will facilitate and develop career pathways and utilize co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs as well as 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. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(3), 20 CFR 679.560(b)(2)(iii), and 20 CFR 679.560(b)(2)(ii)]

The local board will facilitate and develop career pathways through our established career lattice system, which maps skills and experience to provide clear mobility within organizations and industries. This system ensures that individuals can see their potential career trajectories and understand the steps needed to advance. Our Occupational Skills Training program offers vetted training opportunities that culminate in certifications, which are portable and stackable, providing individuals with credentials that are recognized across various industries.

In addition, we serve as an apprenticeship ambassador for the US Department of Labor. In this capacity, we support employers in the design, registration, and funding of registered apprenticeship programs. This involvement not only helps employers create structured training programs but also ensures that participants receive industry-recognized credentials that enhance their employability and career growth.

Our Career Advisors work one-on-one with clients to assess their needs and interests. They either set clients up with appropriate training programs or assist them in finding a job. This personalized approach ensures that each client receives tailored support to meet their career goals. The job-finding assistance is facilitated in large part by our Business Service Team, which connects clients with local employers and job opportunities. Additionally, Career Advisors review clients' eligibility and needs to determine if they should be enrolled in other programs we offer or if they would benefit from services provided by other organizations.

To improve access to these opportunities, our Outreach and Communications department organizes a wide variety of community events, including job fairs, hiring events, and workshops. These events are designed to connect individuals with employers and training providers, making it easier for them to access the resources they need to advance their careers. Our Youth Engagement team hosts similar events tailored for young people, such as Trades Day career fairs, employer tours, and job shadowing opportunities, which help facilitate early career exploration and skill development.

Our career pathways initiative will lead to increased co-enrollments by integrating clients into our core programs as well as other available services. The One-Stop Operator system, utilizing the new referral system, Charity Tracker, facilitates seamless co-enrollment with other service providers. This ensures clients receive comprehensive support, leveraging multiple resources to enhance their career development and success.

4.3 A-G Describe the one-stop delivery system in the local area as required by WIOA Sec. 121(e). Please note that question F is only for local areas participating in a Planning Region. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(6)(A-D) and 20 CFR 679.560(b)(5)].

A. Describe the local board's efforts to ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services and ensure that such providers meet the employment needs of local employers, workers, and jobseekers. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(6)(A) and 20 CFR 679.560(b)(5)(i)]

The current service providers in Region 1 are the Indiana Department of Workforce Development,

JobWorks, Goodwill and Center of Workforce Innovations. Together, the employees of all organizations work side by side to meet the needs of people seeking jobs, and employers seeking workers. To a visitor, there is no distinction between the two groups and the way in which customers are served. The goal of the WorkOne system in Region 1 is to meet employers' needs for a skilled workforce. To this end, employer intelligence is shared across programs to ensure that industry sector focus, career pathway information, and goals align with the NWIWB strategies.

Continuous improvement starts with a series of NWIWB benchmarked goals and shared expectations. Including:

- Shared vision and strategy across all programs and services including
 - Resources, Informational Services
 - Career Advising, Skills Training, and Work based learning
 - Business Services
- Functional job descriptions which include aligned Core Values, Behaviors and Metrics based upon these above three areas
- WIOA Common Measures
- Performance Management Dashboards

Service provider standards and goals are written into their contract statement of work. Outcomes include: system goals and program performance.

Region 1 has developed an extensive youth provider list to ensure that youth participants have access to a variety of youth organizations that provide occupational training and other services. This list is updated on a quarterly basis.

Region 1 has a Skills Training Manager that assists training providers to complete applications for the Eligible Training Provider List and meets quarterly with those on the approved training provider list to ensure that both staff and the training provider have open communication, understand the enrollment process for WIOA and the occupational skills training, and outcomes needed for both entities.

B. Describe how the local board will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system, including in remote areas, through the use of technology and through other means. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(6)(B) and 20 CFR 679.560(b)(5)(ii)]

Region 1 has access to many E-tools that assist clients to connect virtually with staff members. Currently, the Region utilizes Zoom for access to clients on varying levels; Workshops, Career Services, Enrollment, and Events. Another tool that is often used is Emitrr, which allows staff members to text through an app. It also allows for text campaigns to send mass text messages individually to clients. On a state level, Region 1 has been utilizing the Virtual Client Engagement CRM (VCE.) The VCE uses Microsoft Teams for virtual meetings and allows for the use of electronic signatures. Region 1 has piloted the use of VCE to deliver RESEA services. Region 1 also uses SignWell to gain electronic signatures of clients and employers. Several other tools exist for organization, such as appointment scheduling and assessments that a customer can complete at home to show proficiency or practice proficiency in particular skill areas. The local board has continuously facilitated expansion of technology as required and integration with systems that have been put in place by the Department of Workforce Development (DWD). One area of concern is the customer's access to technology and internet access to participate in the process virtually.

C. Describe how entities within the one-stop delivery system, including one-stop operators and the one-stop partners, will comply with WIOA section 188 and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. [See WIOA Sec. 108(b)(6)(C), 29 CFR 38, 20 CFR 679.560(b)(5)(iii), and DWD Policy 2016-09]

All aspects of the WorkOne network of services in Region 1 are dedicated to ensuring facilities, programs, equipment, and staff are available and accessible to all in need of service.

A new physical and language accessibility plan was drafted and implemented on May 1, 2024. This policy addresses the need to provide meaningful access to all clients and provide options for accommodation. It also emphasizes that the AJC must continuously notify customers and staff of their equal opportunity and non-discrimination rights.

Language Assistance Services

Language assistance generally comes in two forms: written translation or oral interpretation. An LEP individual must be given adequate notice about the existence of interpretation and translation services and that they are available free of charge. All WorkOne offices post a Babel notice near the front door, indicating that language assistance is available in all communications of vital information. This allows clients using English as a second language to easily identify their primary language to staff as they enter the WorkOne system.

Once identified, it is incumbent upon the WorkOne staff to utilize all resources available at the time to provide meaningful access to services and programs in the client's preferred language. Telephonic, interpretation and translation services are available where bi-lingual staff are not present to readily assist a client. This ensures meaningful access for LEP individuals to services and programs via every delivery method (written, electronic, and in person). For languages spoken by a significant portion of the population eligible to be served or likely to be encountered, WorkOne will translate vital information in written materials into these languages. According to the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Spanish is spoken by a significant portion of the community in six of the seven counties in Region 1. Therefore, vital written materials are available in Spanish. Vital written materials include:

- Notice of rights & responsibilities (EO is the Law poster)
- Complaint forms
- Applications
- American Job Centers Overview and E-Tools Guide
- RESEA IRP, ICC User's Guide, self-assessment and the eligible work search activities packet
- WorkOne website

If an LEP beneficiary, participant, or applicant for aid is identified as needing materials in another language, WorkOne will secure vital information in that language using the State of Indiana's preferred qualified interpretation service.

Physical Accessibility to Services

WorkOne is obligated to provide physical and programmatic accessibility and reasonable accommodation/ modification in regard to the WIOA program, as required by section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, and Section 188 of WIOA. The ADA defines a "disability" with respect to an individual to mean a physical

or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual, a record of such an impairment, or being regarded as having such an impairment. To afford individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in and enjoy the benefits of the WIOA Title I program or activity, WorkOne must furnish appropriate auxiliary aids or services where necessary.

- All WorkOne offices have been equipped with computers containing Ease of Access tools. The Ease of Access tools provide computer program accessibility for many clients.
- Ring Central is the program used in Region 1 to provide TDD-TTY services. Ring Central is loaded on all computers within the WorkOne office.
- Documents for clients will be created with accessibility in mind. Braille materials, large print materials, or other effective means of making visually delivered materials available to individuals with visual impairments will be provided upon request.
- WorkOne actively works with landlords to ensure that its offices meet or exceed the ADA guidelines for accessibility. The EO Officer reviews each WorkOne office for ADA accessibility compliance at least two times a year. Non-compliance is reported to CWI leadership, the office manager and the landlord within 2 business days for timely resolution.
- Other similar services and actions will be provided to ensure that all WorkOne services and programs are accessible to all clients.

Reasonable Accommodations

A reasonable accommodation refers to modifications in policies, practices, or procedures when necessary to avoid discrimination on the basis of a disability. Reasonable accommodations may be a structural change made to existing premises, occupied or to be occupied by a person with a disability, in order to afford such person full enjoyment of the premises. The requirement to provide reasonable accommodations is intended to give people with disabilities equal opportunity to participate in WorkOne services and programs. With regard to aid, benefits, services, training, and employment, WorkOne must provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities who are applicants, registrants, eligible applicants/registrants, participants, employees, or applicants for employment, unless providing the accommodation would cause undue hardship. Definitions of the terms “reasonable accommodation” and “undue hardship” are specified in 29 CFR § 38.4. For any circumstance whereby an individual requests an accommodation not readily accessible to the staffer, the WorkOne Center Manager should be immediately called upon to assist. When a client makes a reasonable accommodations request that is not readily accessible Managers, they will contact the Director of Client Engagement & WorkOne Operations. The Director has 2 business days to evaluate if there is an alternative, or not, then provide written and/or verbal response to the WorkOne client or potential client and the Equal Opportunity Officer on the status and reasoning.

Training and Monitoring Accessibility

All WorkOne staff and subcontractors will be trained on Equal Opportunity (EO) and the American’s with Disabilities Act (ADA) as part of their onboarding. Afterwards, staff and subcontractors will participate in a refresher training for both of these topics as a part of continuing education. The local Equal Opportunity Officer will also provide monthly training on a variety of topics related to EO and ADA compliance during the regular office meeting time on the second week of the month. When appropriate, workforce partners will make presentations as part of the ongoing EO/ADA training opportunities. This will help keep staff apprised of any changes or new offerings from partnering organizations. All WorkOne staff and subcontractors will be invited and encouraged to participate in all training opportunities. These trainings will be recorded and retained on Sharepoint for staff access.

WorkOne staff and subcontractors will be subject to oversight and monitoring of all program and contract requirements. This will include a programmatic overview, and file monitoring to determine compliance with federal, state and local policies, including accessibility. Periodic on-site and file spot checks will be conducted by the Program Manager and/or Director of Policy in addition to the annual monitoring that is conducted as part of the State of Indiana WIOA Program Monitoring. A written report of all findings will be provided to the supervising manager for follow-up and training of staff. If a service provider receives multiple findings in the internal monitoring process, a follow-up monitoring process will be conducted within three months to verify that corrections have been made.

Complaint Process

EO complaint and EO information including contact names and numbers is posted for all individuals accessing any type of core services in all WorkOne offices in both English and Spanish. For individuals enrolled into specific programs/funding streams, the Equal Opportunity (EO) Release of Information Authorization and Consent for Release of Information Form is provided in the primary language and explained to the customer, including through translation services as needed, during the enrollment process. Clients who feel that they have been discriminated against by the Region 1 WorkOne office may file a complaint with the Local Equal Opportunity Officer and/or the Civil Rights Center (CRC)⁴ following the complaint process outlined in the One Stop Operator guidance on Equal Opportunity and Equal Opportunity Complaint Process.

This is the list of equipment and programs that we have available in or to the AJC offices:

- TTY-TDD
- Microsoft Ease of Access Tools
- Adjustable Workstation
- Articulating Arm Supports (Northern Counties only)
- Viewsonic 24" Monitor
- Merlin Elite Full HD Video Magnifier
- Kensington Expert Mouse
- Noise limiting headsets
- EnableMart Large Print Keyboard
- Ergonomic Office Chair
- Merlin Reader (Hammond, Gary, Portage & LaPorte)
- JAWS screen reader
- Access to language interpretation and translation

Monthly training will be offered to all AJC staff related to WIOA section 188. Topics to be covered include Equal Opportunity requirements, ADA access, Microsoft Ease of Access Tools, providing services to clients with disabilities, translation & interpretive services, service animals, new tools to aid limited English proficient clients, working with Migrant & Seasonal Farmworkers and the complaint process.

We are exploring available options to increase the accessibility of the Region 1 WorkOne website. Today's users are unique and may require additional assistance to be able to access our content. It is our goal to meet new accessibility requirements for websites by the end of PY25, even though the compliance date is April 26, 2027.

D. Provide the name, organization, and contact information of the designated local WIOA Equal Opportunity Officer.

Becky Fry, CWDP, Director of Policy/ EO Officer, 2804 Boilermaker Drive Valparaiso, Indiana 46385,
Phone: (219) 248-7488, EOfficer@cwicorp.com

E. Describe the roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners agreed to per DWD Policy 2018-04 Memoranda of Understanding and Infrastructure/Additional Costs Funding Guidance and any future iteration of this guidance. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(6)(D) and 20 CFR 679.560(b)(5)(iv)]

Infrastructure costs are defined as non-personnel costs that are necessary for the general operation of the One-Stop System, including; but, not limited to:

- Rental of the facilities;
- Utilities and maintenance;
- Equipment, including assessment-related products and assistive technology for individuals with disabilities; and,
- Technology to facilitate access to the One-Stop System, including technology used for the center's planning and outreach activities.

All parties in the Northwest Indiana Regional One Stop System recognize that these costs are applicable to all required Partners based on relative benefit received. Partners not colocated may not contribute to each infrastructure line item if there is no relative benefit received. All partners receiving benefit from items such as the referral system agree to contribute to the referral system based on proportionate use. Each partner's contributions to these costs, however, may vary, as these contributions are based on the proportionate use and relative benefit received, consistent with the Partner programs' authorizing laws and regulations and the Uniform Guidance.

All costs are included in the partnership agreement, allocated according to Partners' proportionate use and relative benefits received, and reconciled on a semi-annual basis against actual costs incurred and adjusted accordingly. The one-stop operating budget is expected to be transparent and negotiated among Partners on an equitable basis to ensure costs are shared appropriately. All Partners negotiated in good faith and seek to establish outcomes that are reasonable and fair.

F.* If you participate in a Planning Region, please describe the coordination of administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate. [20 CFR 679.510(a)(1)(v)]

There are no administrative cost pooling arrangements between Center of Workforce Innovations, Region 1 and the NWI Workforce Board. N/A

G. Describe how one-stop centers are implementing and transitioning to an integrated technology enabled intake and case management information system for core programs and programs carried out under WIOA and by one-stop partners. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(21) and 20 CFR 679.560(b)(20)]

If a client possesses the technology, the entire process from enrollment to job placement can occur without an in-person office visit. Clients can meet with a staff member through Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Clients may upload documents into Indiana Career Connect and signatures can be gained electronically using either the Virtual Client Engagement platform or SignWell. Career advisors also have the technology to conduct enrollments and career services outside of a WorkOne. The integration has allowed flexibility in customer services however, making office

appointments much shorter in duration, which allows Career Advisors to assist more customers overall.

4.4 Provide an assessment and description of adult and dislocated worker workforce development activities, including type and availability of education, training, and employment activities. Include analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of such services as well as the capacity to provide such services in order to address the needs identified in 1.2. Specifically assess the local area's WIOA performance levels from the prior two years. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(D) & 108(b)(7), 20 CFR 679.560(b)(6), and 20 CFR 679.560(a)(4)]

Basic Career Services Basic career services communicate employer expectations and career opportunities through available resources and workshops. These services are delivered in both virtual, self-guided experiences, and across partner locations. Staff are focused on outstanding customer service, assessment delivery, upselling of additional WorkOne services, and communicating employer and career pathway information; service delivery is at a fast pace and offered in a welcoming environment.

Clients engage in an initial conversation with staff to understand their needs in looking for employment and what barriers they need assistance in overcoming. The staff provide an overview of WorkOne Services, provide general information on local employer demand such as available hot jobs and upcoming skills training and provide access to assessments to help them determine a career that fits their interests and abilities. These services are delivered through the resource area and are self-help and informational in nature. In addition, employer driven skills testing such as WorkKeys are also delivered by staff under the Basic Career Services area. Workshops in a virtual and/or informational format are offered at the WorkOne offices at this Basic Career Services level.

Outcomes for this service include speed of service, conversions to individualized service, and client experience measured by customer service surveys. All outcomes are currently meeting or exceeding established targets.

Analysis of Basic Career Services

Basic career services are a valuable offering as they allow for self-service, informational customer driven services to the one-stop system for customers who may not be able to benefit from a deeper level of investment from our Career and Training service offerings. They allow the One Stop system to provide service to the community and job seekers entering the offices and virtually accessing these offerings to obtain the short term help that they need to access job, career, and education information. Basic career services also allow employers to have a steady stream of skilled job seekers ready for opportunities they may have listed on the job exchange.

Strengths of the basic level of services is the connection to partners and community resources, as well as the outstanding customer service as measured by our excellent net promoter score. The weaknesses in basic career services are few but important. While they do allow for us to screen for motivated customers that should be able to benefit from deeper level of investment through Individualized Coaching and Up Skilling (training) services it often presents a predicament in the fact that many motivated customers bypass our system altogether by accessing virtual basic services without ever stepping foot inside our One Stop system. To address this, we will rely on referral paths with our

partners and innovative value-added marketing campaigns.

Individualized Career and Coaching Services (aka Coaching and Career Advising)

Clients seeking career assistance are assigned to a Career Advisor, serving as a case manager and career coach. These services are delivered from a client-centric perspective, rooted in a deep understanding of regional employer demand, and hone in on the industry specific skill analysis, career path exploration, upskilling, and job matching. All Career Advisors, regardless of funding stream, work one-on-one with customers, beginning with the delivery and interpretation of an assessment, as well as the development of an Individualized Employment Plan (IEP), following the customer throughout their interactions with WorkOne services in one on one coaching sessions, and into placement and follow-up.

There are two main categories of work with the customer: Group Services and Individual Coaching. Career Advisors assign online instructional and/or pre-vocational services, and refer employer ready customers to job orders in Indiana Career Connect. They may also set up pre-vocational training services, such as referral to Adult Basic Education, and/or a paid internship (aka, Work Experience). Certain workshops are offered at the Individualized Career Services level. These workshops go beyond Basic and informational and require experienced staff to facilitate skills development validated by skill demonstration. Only clients at the Individualized level with an assigned Career Advisor can attend Individualized level workshops.

Outcomes for this service include days to employment, case load size target, coaching sessions with customers, and common measure performance. Other than coaching session targets, outcomes are currently meeting or exceeding established targets.

Analysis of Individualized Career and Coaching Services

Individualized Career services often are our most robust offering as they allow our One-Stop System to invest in job seekers through individual and group coaching, assessment of skills, including making them aware of their transferrable skills, mock interviewing, etc. All of these service offerings provide the job seeker and employers a tangible benefit of making them ready for employment and a career. At the core of these services are two strengths: career advisors understanding of regional employer intelligence and demand and the strong relationships career advisors develop with their clients.

There are two challenges to these services though: often, job seekers need significant assistance in overcoming barriers and many of these barriers are not areas for which we can provide direct services, resulting in referrals to our partners. To address this, we are working to seamlessly connect the system with partners who have experience and expertise in addressing specific barriers. The second challenge is the speed at which career advisors deliver services. We will be setting expectations that the days to placement metric decrease over the next three years, allowing caseloads to turn at least twice throughout the program year. This initiative will require consistent coaching and feedback to the Career Advisor team and strong professional development (PD) opportunities.

Work Based Learning and Up-Skilling Services

For clients needing skills development beyond the resources available at WorkOne, Career Advisors

recommend occupational skills training. Training happens in one of two ways, either through the typical training in a classroom or facility that offers certificate or degree-based program training (considered an Individual Training Account, or ITA) or through Work-Based Learning skills demonstrations in an On-the-Job-Training (OJT) or Work Experience. Each Career Advisor is assigned a minimum number of customers who receive training services each year and the Career Advisor is responsible for following the customer, documenting progress, and ensuring that the customer receives the certification associated with the training. Since JVSG funded Career Advisors cannot enter WIOA services the process is performed in tandem with a non-JVSG funded Career Advisor. For customers that are adults, there are currently four programs of classroom/facility training: WIOA Adult; WIOA Dislocated Worker; Next Level Jobs; and Scholarships.

Outcomes for this service include completion rates, credential rates, employment, employer experience, and common measure performance. Other than credential rates, outcomes are currently meeting or exceeding established targets.

Analysis of Work Based Learning and Training

Work-based learning and training is a robust way of upskilling the community job seekers allowing them to obtain an increase in skills to become more marketable to employers. Both of these offerings make workforce development increasingly critical in the conversation around economic development and allow for us to create as well as sustain the recognized link between education and economy. The challenge sometimes presented by work based learning is that employers may not be willing to take the risk of experiential learning due to workers' compensation limitations and risk. We are working with employers to explore additional ways to support the process. The challenges presented by training services is the lack of diverse set of training providers that can respond quickly to the needs of employers and work with us to develop in a short time frame a training program that is industry recognized and presents a credential that is acceptable. We continue to explore the creative attraction methods for gathering additional training providers to the region. Accessing copies of credentials and hinging the credentialing process to the training syllabus is a significant challenge. The NWIWB's industry based consortium model is addressing these issues by forcing different conversations with training providers which highlight the mode of delivery by the training providers. An additional challenge is the employers' discussion of skills and not credentials. We will be working to change our language to discuss skills and how a credential is a tool for verifying skill demonstration.

Recruitment and Referral to Employment

We provide employers with recruitment services. All WorkOne staff have responsibilities in the recruitment process for skilled workers to meet employer demand:

- **The Business Services Representatives:** bring employer demand and employer intelligence back to the system. Responsibilities include posting job orders to Indiana Career Connect and understanding employer screening practices, as well as gathering additional needed information to find candidates.
- **The Employer Readiness Specialist team:** meet employers demand by identifying employer-ready skilled workers for employers. Through increased awareness of available jobs in ICC and skills necessary, Employer Readiness Specialists support the identification of potentially skilled

workers.

- **The Career Advisor team:** meet employer demand by locating and creating skilled workers for employers. Career Advisors actively review job orders in Indiana Career Connect. Through increased awareness of available jobs and the skills necessary, matches are made with both customers for future enrollment and customers on existing caseloads.

Outcomes for this service include job order management, business services actively managed accounts, employer engagement penetration rates by industry, employment, employer experience, and common measure performance.

Analysis of Recruitment and Referral to Employment

The strength of our recruitment and referral to employment is that it provides an opportunity for us to take a proactive step in meeting the needs of employers through skilled workers. There are significant efforts that we have built around this process which have allowed us to respond in business time to the needs of the employers. The challenge presented in this is that while we have access to a good size of employer ready clients, many of our clients that make it into the Individualized (“enrolled”) career services level are often those that need more investment and are not always ready. In other words, it takes time to get them ready and this time does challenge our system to respond to business needs in business time.

Placement and Follow-up

Placement is the ultimate goal for all of our programs. However, placement is not enough; we work with our clients to ensure that the placement is a sustainable placement.

Once the client is placed into unsubsidized employment and has a planned exit to employment, it is vital that WorkOne maintain quarterly contact to ensure that he or she is receiving any needed job retention assistance or services. We have identified Career Services staff who serve as Transition Career Advisors. These staff track, document and ensure that the participant successfully meets their planned outcome goals and successful outcomes on the WIOA performance measures. Transition Career Advisors, when appropriate, provide limited services necessary to help prevent job loss or enter employment.

Outcomes for this service include exit screen completion, employment, employer experience, and common measure performance.

Analysis of Placement and Follow-up

The strength of our efforts to assist clients in obtaining employment and following up with them rest in our ability to develop a rapport with them quickly and help them at a rapid pace both so that they are in a place to provide for themselves and their families as well as meet the employer’s needs. Follow up services that are offered after placement allow for us to ensure that the client retains their position and if possible grows and advances through ongoing coaching and encouragement. The challenges presented by the placement process specifically rest with the significantly complicated process by which our staff and our system obtains performance calculations and common measure success. Another challenge present in both placement and follow up is the reality that customers do not always notify us

that they have obtained employment. The new Transition Specialist positions were created to specifically address this issue.

4.5 Identify successful models of the activities above, especially any best practices for dislocated worker activities relevant to the local area.

Region 1 utilizes Ring Central for sharing information on upcoming hiring events and job and Work Based Learning opportunities between the Business Services team and the WorkOne staff. All Region staff meetings also provide information sharing. Involving WIOA case managers in the RESEA process during initial, follow up and subsequent client meetings has led to an increase in dislocated worker enrollments in Region 1. WIOA case managers are able to connect with the RESEA client and provide job openings and Regioskills training information.

4.6 Describe how the local board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with statewide rapid response activities, as described in section 134(a)(2)(A). [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(8) and 20 CFR 679.560(b)(7)].

Rapid Response services in Region 1 are designed to respond quickly and communicate with key stakeholders and partners. Key members of the Rapid Response Team include a representative of the Business Services Team, select WorkOne staff, and in some cases, a local economic development organization, who meet with a company to determine the needs of the affected workers. The regional plan specifies that an initial meeting with the affected company will occur within 48 hours of an announced layoff or closure. After this initial meeting, the team develops a business support plan. This plan outlines the needs of the company and its affected workers and provides a general overview of Rapid Response services to be provided. A Business Services Representative facilitates the implementation of services through a Rapid Response team comprised of WorkOne, TAA, and UI staff. The team works with the company to outline a process of engagement which works for both the company and the impacted workers. The team then provides customized orientation sessions to the affected workers. These initial sessions include an overview of workforce services, including Unemployment Insurance, job search assistance, training, and placement assistance. The affected workers complete a survey, which includes basic demographic information including geographic location, gender, veteran status, and level of educational attainment, as well as any information on services desired by the affected worker. These surveys are divided by geographic location and delivered to a Center Manager in each WorkOne as well as the state contact.

Additional partners at Rapid Response events have included representatives from community colleges, United Way, and community-based organizations that may also provide services as part of rapid response activities. The NWIWB developed a partnership with the Department of Labor's Employee Benefits Security Administration. This division is responsible for providing information on COBRA benefits, pensions, health plans, and HIPPA. Representatives of the Employee Benefits Security Administration also participate in Rapid Response orientations with affected workers.

In an effort to meet unique demands or in response to the number of employees being dislocated, the Rapid Response team develops specialized models which incorporate and expand on the process above. Regardless of the structure of the intervention the focus is on getting the impacted workers back into the workforce as quickly as possible. Throughout the process, staff at WorkOne offices follow-up with

customers and tell them about rapid job matching opportunities and are encouraged to continue their engagement via WorkOne services to further accelerate the process the Business Services Team is marketing the skills of the impacted workers to other businesses. Frequently we will see these workers be quickly picked up by a different employer.

4.7 Provide an analysis and description of the type and availability of youth workforce activities for in school youth, including youth with disabilities. If the same services are offered to out-of-school youth, describe how the programs are modified to fit the unique needs of in-school youth. For each program, include the following: length of program and availability/schedule (i.e. two weeks in July); percent of youth budget allocation; WIOA program elements addressed by the program; desired outputs and outcomes; and details on how the program is evaluated. Include analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of such services and the capacity to provide such services in order to address the needs identified in 1.2. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(9) and 20 CFR 679.560(b)(8)]

The primary activities for in school youth revolve around the Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) program. Activities for JAG include career exploration including learning about career pathways and training opportunities through college tours; pre-employment/work maturity activities such as learning to develop resumes, filling out job applications, developing interview skills, and participating in work experience and other work based learning opportunities; leadership development; financial literacy; entrepreneurship; project based learning and community services activities; job placement assistance; and follow up. JAG also serves youth with disabilities and Region 1 receives Pre-ETS funding to help support those services. These services are provided during the school year with some work experience occurring during the summer months of June – August. Program elements include Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies leading to completion of requirements for secondary school, recognized equivalent, or for recognized postsecondary credential; work experience; Education offered concurrently and in same context as workforce preparation activities and training for specific occupation or occupational cluster; Leadership development activities; support services; Adult mentoring for the period of participation and a subsequent period, for a total of not less than 12 months; Follow-up services for not less than 12 months after the completion of participation, as appropriate; Comprehensive guidance and counseling, which may include drug and alcohol abuse counseling and referral, as appropriate; Financial literacy education; Entrepreneurial Skills Training; Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors of occupations available; and Activities that help prepare for and transition to postsecondary education/training.

We also serve non JAG participants. In particular, we serve parenting teens that are still in secondary school, some home schooled youth, and some youth that do not have the opportunity to participate in JAG. The activities for these youth include career exploration: pre-employment work maturity including employer tours; work experience; job placement or postsecondary education placement assistance; support services; and follow up services. These services are provided during the school year with some work experience occurring during the summer months of June – August. Program elements include Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies leading to completion of requirements for secondary school, recognized equivalent, or for recognized postsecondary credential; work experience; Education offered concurrently and in same context as workforce preparation activities and training for specific occupation or occupational cluster; support services; Adult mentoring for the period of participation and a subsequent period, for a total of not less than 12 months; Follow-up services for not less than 12 months after the completion of

participation, as appropriate; Comprehensive guidance and counseling, which may include drug and alcohol abuse counseling and referral, as appropriate; Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors of occupations available; and Activities that help prepare for and transition to postsecondary education/training.

Some of the same activities such as career exploration and pre-employment work maturity including work experience and on the job training and support services are also provided to out of school youth. In addition, out of school youth have an opportunity to participate in occupational skills training. We also serve a special sub demographic of justice involved youth that is unique to out of school youth. These services are provided year round through WorkOne office locations. Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies leading to completion of requirements for secondary school, recognized equivalent, or for recognized postsecondary credential; work experience; Education offered concurrently and in same context as workforce preparation activities and training for specific occupation or occupational cluster; Occupational skill training, with potential priority given to programs leading to recognized postsecondary credentials aligned with in-demand industry sectors/occupations; Support services; Adult mentoring for the period of participation and a subsequent period, for a total of not less than 12 months; Follow-up services for not less than 12 months after the completion of participation, as appropriate; Comprehensive guidance and counseling, which may include drug and alcohol abuse counseling and referral, as appropriate; Financial literary education; Entrepreneurial Skills Training; Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors of occupations available; and Activities that help prepare for and transition to postsecondary education/training

Forty percent of the WIOA youth budget is dedicated to in school youth and 60% is dedicated to out of school youth. Outputs for JAG participants include mastery of the JAG competencies, participation in activities such as the Career Develop Conference and Leadership Development Conference, and college tours. Outcomes include achieving the six JAG performance outcomes and WIOA performance outcomes. Outputs for non-JAG participants include completion of activities such as career exploration, pre-employment/work maturity activities, and work experience. Those are also the same outputs for out of school youth. Outcomes includes the WIOA performance outcomes.

All youth programming is evaluated by the youth participating and completing activities and meeting WIOA performance targets. Services and activities are evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that those activities are worthwhile to the youth participants and that they are participating and completing those activities. The strengths include completing career exploration, developing work sites, and the work based learning opportunities for our participants. Job placements are also a strength for the youth programs. One area of weakness includes credentials for HSE and occupational skills training. Therefore, we regularly evaluate the occupational skills training providers to ensure our out of school youth are able to complete the training and successfully obtain credentials. We had noticed that for some of the trainings, the youth completed but did not earn their certification. As a result, we met with both the youth staff and training providers to work on how to ensure the youth that complete earn their certification. We also have developed stronger relationships with Adult Education providers so we are working with them to ensure our youth are attending classes and gaining ground to earn their HSE. Finally, we subcontract out all provision of youth services through a competitive process. The organizations providing those services are evaluated quarterly on their progress towards goals. Contracts are renewed yearly for up to two years for those organizations who are reaching goals.

4.8 Identify successful models of the activities above and any other best practices for youth workforce activities relevant to the local area. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(9) and 20 CFR 679.560(b)(8)]

JAG is a proven national model and has been very successful in Region 1. We have met performance targets for the last 12 years.

We have branded all of our youth programs under NextGen and hold 3 or 4 NextGen career events for all enrolled youth to attend as well as those that are not enrolled. These events have proven to be very successful.

In addition, we have piloted a new program (Bridging the GAP) that allows us to target youth as they complete high school in order to serve them as out of school youth. During the last two program years, it has been difficult to capture out of school youth that do not come into the WorkOne offices. As a result, we reached out to a few school systems in our region to work with seniors who do not have a plan for life after high school. During our pilot phase, we provided career assessments, developed SMART goals with the students, provided resume and interviewing workshops, and hosted a career/job fair for the students. The students are also assessed by out of school youth career advisor for enrollment into the out of school youth program once the student has graduated from high school. We worked with approximately 170 students at four different schools this year and will evaluate the conversion rate over the next few months.

4.9 Describe the process utilized by the local board to ensure that training provided is linked to in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the local area or in another area to which a participant is willing to relocate. Describe how training services outlined in WIOA sec. 134 will be provided through the use of individual training accounts, including, if contracts for training services as described in 20 CFR 680.320 will be used, how the use of such contracts will be coordinated with the use of individual training accounts under that chapter, and how the local board will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs regardless of how the training services are to be provided. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(19) and 20 CFR 679.560(b)(18)]

Through thorough assessment of the client which includes their transferable skills, interests, and barriers, we can ensure that the client's training choice is what is best for them. This includes the type of training. We provide information on short term occupational training versus traditional degrees or apprenticeships. We also share opportunities for IWT or OJT when it fits the client's situation. We use a regional Program Fact Sheet that lists all possible funding/training opportunities for clients to assist staff in identifying possibilities for the client. With DWD's ETPL on INTraining and with information provided through the Promoted Industry Certification List, we can provide clients with labor market information on their occupations of choice. These resources provide in-depth information for our staff and clients to offer support to anyone coming into the office with questions. They also help in explaining to clients what the state sees as valuable based on feedback from employers in the industry. To make sure that the clients are making informed decisions, we encourage all staff members to use the INTraining Website Performance tab to show them data on training success, credential, and job placement rates. We prioritize providing quality information to clients to make the most of their time and our funding. We take client feedback seriously and document concerns and inform the INTraining team when needed to enforce quality. We developed a MOU last PY to encourage Training Providers to take ownership of performance metrics and our client focused approach. This has helped to improve communication and working together to increase completion rates and job placement.

4.10 Describe how Reemployment Service and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) activities are implemented in the local area and how they will be incorporated into WIOA programming.

In an effort to better serve RESEA participants, it is expected that approximately 30% of RESEA participants will be co-enrolled in WIOA DLW career advising services based on assessment of needs. As the RESEA participants bring in job search logs, it is vital that the staff reviewing these logs, whether they are RESEA Career Advisors or not, ensure the quality of the client's job searches listed by checking to see if the companies listed are hiring and if the jobs for which the client is searching are relevant to their work history and skill sets. If the client has marketable skills, it is essential that they be informed of the available jobs through ICC that the Business Services team has obtained from regional employers.

As has been established in NWIWB Dislocated Worker Policy on “Unlikely to Return,” all RESEA participants are eligible for Dislocated Worker services as long as they receive RESEA services prior to enrollment into WIOA services. Based upon the initial conversation where RESEA Career Advisor assesses for motivation and evaluate the participant’s marketable skills, RESEA participants will be given the opportunity to meet with a WIOA Career Advisor for co-enrollment. RESEA services are entered into the case management database by the RESEA Career Advisor, and WIOA services are entered by the Career Advisors of the WIOA service provider.

If the client is working at the Individualized level, then the Career Advisor enrolls the customer into all eligible WIOA DLW programs, interprets an assessment of the client, jointly develops the Career Plan with the client and provides regular employment counseling services. If the client prefers to work with a Career Advisor at a different WorkOne location, then an appointment is scheduled.

4.11 Describe the local area’s grant application and project design strategy, including staffing, when applying for additional funding (e.g., non-formula grants). How does the local area braid funding and/or prioritize use of certain funding streams?

When there are opportunities for additional funding, the first step is to evaluate the purpose of the funding to ensure it aligns with our mission and goals and supports workforce development. Once that has been established, our Director of Planning and Fundraising will review the contents of the application and bring together a cross section of staff from different departments to work on the application. This ensures that all departments are aware of the funding opportunity and how their department fits into the proposed project and provides for enhanced collaboration. Whenever possible a project manager position is written into applications. This allows one individual to oversee the project and work with other staff to ensure targets and goals are being met.

There are many opportunities to braid funding when additional funding (non-formula grants) are available. Prioritization for funding would start with non-formula funding to ensure that the funds are being spent at the required level. However, where possible other funding can be used to enhance services. One example is the Growth Opportunity DOL funding received in collaboration with Midwest Urban strategies. This funding specifically targets the workplace skills of the participants by placing them into work-based learning opportunities. However, some of the participants may have a need for occupational skills training. These participants can be co-enrolled and formula funds are used to pay for the training.

4.12 Describe how the local area plans to implement program evaluation. What aspects of program delivery and performance will be evaluated, and how will these evaluations take place?

Region 1 already implements program evaluations with the WIOA subrecipients. The process used to evaluate subrecipients can be used to evaluate other programs. Programs are evaluated on a quarterly basis with staff or subrecipients directly involved in the program. The quarterly meetings include progress towards enrollment goals, entrance into training, completion of training, and credentials earned, placement and retention of employment, and overall performance targets of the program.

4.13 Describe the local area's professional development plan for all staff, including the frequency, type (in-person, self-guided, web-based, etc.), and topics addressed.

Region 1 provides continuous training to all staff during the bi-monthly regional all staff meeting. Topics for training are provided by MIS, Management and Staff requests. The Region 1 Equal Opportunity officer conducts monthly training on Equal Opportunity and ADA topics. All staff are provided mental health first aid training. Annually all staff are trained on case management topics such as de-escalation and safety procedures, writing effective case notes, enrollments, client engagement, client skill assessments and follow up after exit. Career advisors are given the opportunity to participate in an apprenticeship program during which they earn their Certified Workforce Development Professional accreditation. Staff participate in webinars hosted by Workforce GPS. Managers along with selected staff members attend conferences including NAWDP and Midwest Urban Strategies.

Region 1 employs three types of professional development offered to individuals who work with youth and young adults. The first is related specifically to the rules and regulations of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. New staff are provided training in eligibility determination, program elements, follow-up, performance management, and records management. Other staff are provided refresher training as needed, but also receive regular training on performance outcomes and records management. This type of training is done by one on one and in small groups. The second type of training is related specifically to the position of the staffer and the program they implement. In-school youth staff implement the JAG Program. Staff attend a statewide JAG training once each year and also have the opportunity to attend the Annual National JAG Training. In addition, during Christmas break and the summer, the JAG staff come together and take turns sharing best practices and refresher training as needed. Staff known as Career Pathway Facilitators who work with Adult Education students only participate in joint training with Adult Education staff from CWI. These professional development sessions focus on the components of Adult Education services and WIOA youth services, common goals, and working jointly with customers. Regular Out of School Youth Staff along with the Career Pathway Facilitators attend state training (Young Adult Services Summit) once a year. This training includes break-out sessions such as work based learning, working with difficult customers, trauma informed care, and special population groups such as homeless youth or youth involved in juvenile justice system. In addition to the state training, Out of School Youth Staff attend professional development along with the other staff at the WorkOne offices. The third type of professional development is outside local, state, and national conferences focused on youth programming in general. Staff is encouraged to attend at least one conference a year. Examples of conferences attended include the Indiana Youth Institute's Kids Count Conference, the Adult Education Summer Institute, and the National Youth Symposium Conference. While most of the professional development is in person, staff also participates in webinars on various topics throughout the year.

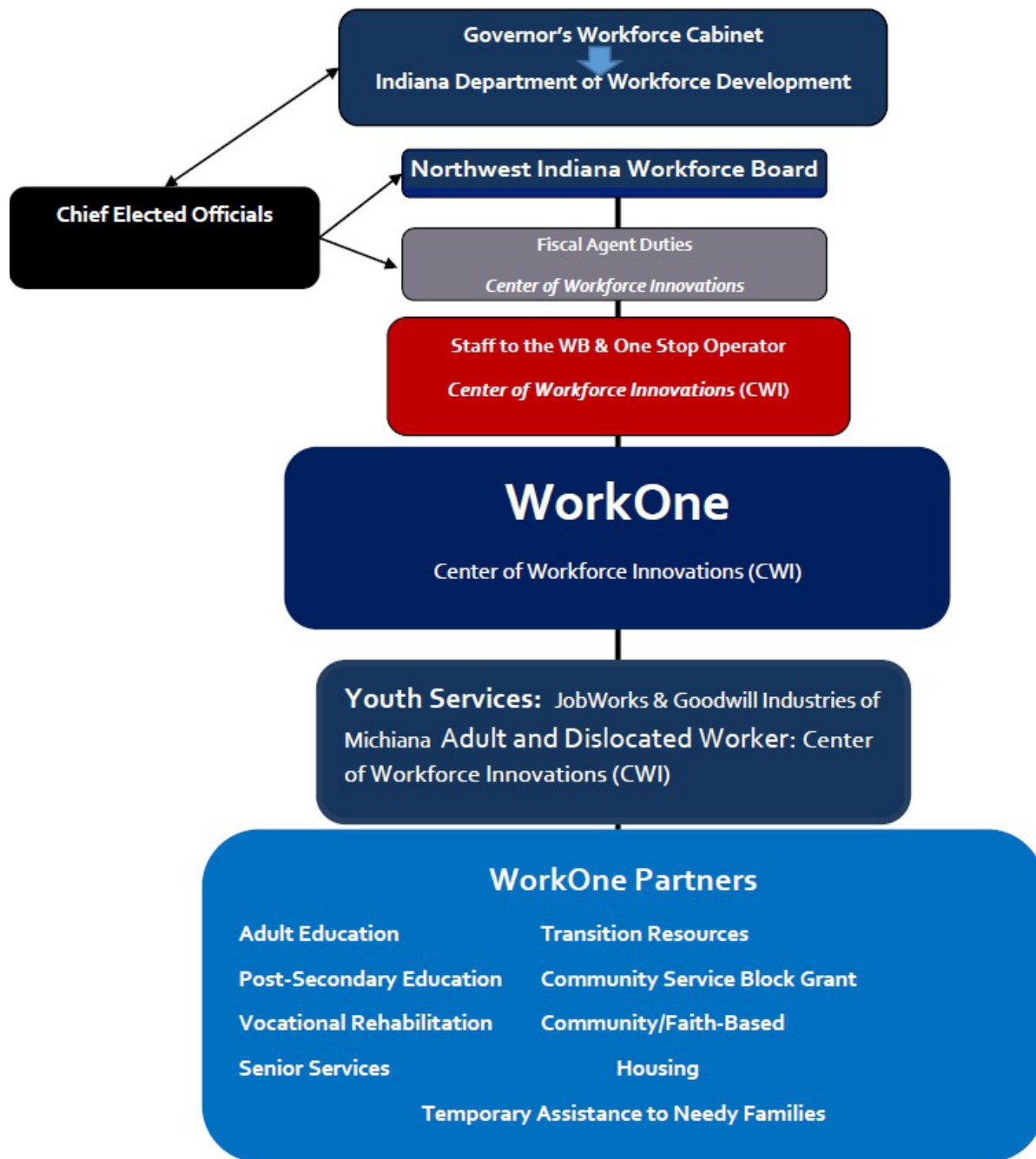
Section 5: Compliance

5.1 Describe the competitive process that will be used to award the sub-grants and contracts in the local area for WIOA Title I activities. Identify agreement type (sub-award or contract), name of sub-recipient or contractor, and length of agreement. Attach copies of current agreements as Exhibit 1 for, as applicable: One Stop Operator, Service Provider(s), Fiscal Agent, and Staff to the Board. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(16) and 20 CFR 679.560(b)(15)]

The Board competitively procures services every three years for Staff to the Board, One Stop Operator, and WIOA Adult and Dislocated Services. This is done through a Request for Proposals (RFP) which is handled by a separate organization with no affiliation to the current provider or to the Board. The RFP is released posted on the organization's website and Department of Workforce Development website and sent out to other organizations. Once the proposal and bids are received, a special committee comprised of NWIWB members review and rate each bid.

As staff to the Workforce Board, CWI competitively procures WIOA Youth services every three years, through a Request for Proposals (RFP). The RFP is released to current WIOA Youth providers, other youth serving organizations, posted on our website, and sent to other regions in the state. The proposals are reviewed and rated by staff to the board, other leadership staff from CWI, board members, and outside experts. Upon the finalization of the rate and review process, the recommendation is provided to the board for formal approval and the agreement is awarded to the organization/s for a year with an option for two additional years of service depending on performance.

5.2 Provide an organization chart as Exhibit 2 that depicts a clear separation of duties between Title I roles (e.g., between the board and service provision). [20 CFR 679.400 – 430]



5.3 Describe any standing committees or taskforces of the Local Board, including the role and scope of work of the youth committee (or youth representatives on the WDB if there is not a youth committee).

Region 1 has a Youth Committee (Youth Employment Council) co-chaired by two Board members and comprised of employers, youth serving organizations, a Career Center Director, and a former WIOA youth participant. The Youth Employment Council meets six times a year on opposite months of the Board meetings. The Youth Employment has three central goals that are aligned with the work of the Board. Those goals include: Determining credentials valued by employers; Integrate work based

learning into career pathways; and Work Ethic Initiatives which include our local work ethic certificate along with the Governor's work ethic certificate. The Youth Employment Council members have developed sub-committees to work on these goals. The objective is to provide information and opportunities to in school and out of school youth on career pathways leading to gainful employment.

5.4 Identify the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds as described in WIOA Sec. 107(d)(12)(B)(i)(III), as determined by the chief elected official or the Governor under WIOA sec. 107(d)(12)(B)(i). [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(15) and 20 CFR 679.560(b)(14)]

The County Local Elected Officials have selected their fiscal agent to be: Organization: Center of Workforce Innovations, Inc. Address: 2804 Boilermaker Court, Suite E, Valparaiso, IN 46383-8418 Telephone Number: (219) 462-2940 E-mail Address: ldaugherty@cwicorp.com

5.5 Indicate the local levels of performance negotiated with the Governor and chief elected official consistent with WIOA sec. 116(c) to be used to measure the performance of the local area and to be used by the Local WDB for measuring the performance of the local fiscal agent (where appropriate), eligible providers under WIOA title I subtitle B, and the one-stop delivery system in the local area. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(17) and 20 CFR 679.560(b)(16)]

Proposed Goals for WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Performance Indicators

Region: 1	Local Workforce Development Board Name: Northwest Indiana Workforce Board
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Performance Measure	Proposed Goal
WIOA Title I – Adult	
Employment Rate 2 nd Quarter After Exit	77.90%
Employment Rate 4 th Quarter After Exit	76.50%
Median Earnings 2 nd Quarter	\$7,200
Credential Attainment Rate 4 th Quarter After Exit	67%
Measurable Skill Gains	63%
WIOA Title I – Dislocated Worker	
Employment Rate 2 nd Quarter After Exit	78.90%
Employment Rate 4 th Quarter After Exit	75.60%
Median Earnings 2 nd Quarter	\$8,300
Credential Attainment Rate 4 th Quarter After Exit	70%
Measurable Skill Gains	63%
WIOA Title I – Youth	
Education/Employment Rate 2 nd Quarter After Exit	78.50%
Education/Employment Rate 4 th Quarter After Exit	80%
Median Earnings 2 nd Quarter	\$3,600
Credential Attainment Rate 4 th Quarter After Exit	65%
Measurable Skill Gains	65%

5.6 Describe the actions the local board will take toward becoming or remaining a high-performing local workforce development board, consistent with the factors developed by the State WDB. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(18) and 20 CFR 679.560(b)(17)]

Based on the reform principles in WIOA through ETA, a vision for the impact of State and Local WDBs in transforming and improving the workforce system and building a sustaining system for board excellence. A High Performing Board Operates as a strategist, convener, manager, and optimizer. Working together, board members will ensure that the board has the capacity to perform the functions associated with each of these roles.



5.7 Provide as Exhibit 3 copies of executed cooperative agreements which define how all local service providers, including additional providers, will carry out the requirements for integration of and access to the entire set of services available in the local one-stop delivery system. This includes cooperative agreements (as defined in WIOA sec. 107(d)(11)) between the Local WDB or other local entities described in WIOA sec. 101(a)(11)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 721(a)(11)(B)) and the local office of a designated State agency or designated State unit administering programs carried out under title I of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. 720 et seq.) (other than sec. 112 or part C of that title (29 U.S.C. 732, 741) and subject to sec. 121(f)) in accordance with sec. 101(a)(11) of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. 721(a)(11)) with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and to other individuals, such as cross training of staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers, and other efforts at cooperation, collaboration, and coordination. See Local Plan References and Resources. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(14) and 20 CFR 679.560(b)(13)]

All of the necessary One Stop Partners are active participants in the One Stop System, also known as the Northwest Indiana Regional One Stop System. This partnership with the Northwest Indiana Workforce Board (NWIWB) is designed to benefit the employers and citizens in our communities.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR) is one of our partners and offers personalized services to help and support individuals with disabilities as they prepare for, obtain, or maintain employment. The individuals will closely collaborate with a VR Navigator throughout the entire process. People with disabilities can achieve higher levels of independence in their workplaces and living environments

through active participation in their rehabilitation. VR Navigators offer itinerant services at the Region's full-service One-Stop WorkOne Centers, both in person and remotely. They ensure that all clients seeking jobs and those ready for jobs are engaged in VR related services. VR case management, career advising, training, and employer services are coordinated with One Stop Partners to match functional positions.

The partners will meet every bimonthly to review their commitments to each other, system outputs, and outcomes, and to ensure customer access. Each partner agrees to participate in the meetings, either in person or remotely, to maximize services to clients and avoid duplication. The partners will utilize this opportunity to collaborate effectively, using the regular meetings to analyze available data and ensure that opportunities for system improvement are identified and pursued.

5.8 Describe the process used by the Local WDB, consistent with WIOA sec. 108(d), to provide a 30-day public comment period prior to submission of the plan, including an opportunity to have input into the development of the local plan, particularly for representatives of businesses, education, and labor organizations. If any comments that represent disagreement with the plan were received, they must be included as Exhibit 4 attached to this Local Plan. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(20), 20 CFR 679.560(b)(19), and 20 CFR 679.560(e)]

The NWIWB Plan for PY24, following initial posting by the NWIWB at its July 2024 meeting, made the plan available on the Regional WorkOne website (<http://www.gotoworkonenw.com/>) for 30 days. The plan was posted for public comment from August 29, 2024, through September 29, 2024. Notice of plan availability was sent to local elected officials, business organizations, economic development groups, and other groups that have requested such information from the NWIWB. The plan was also reviewed at a meeting of the WIOA Partners Collaborative during the comment period. There were no comments received which needed to be incorporated in the plan. The final plan was approved by the WDB and submitted to the Indiana Department of Workforce Development on September 30, 2024.

5.9 Describe the board's process for oversight and monitoring of sub-recipients and contractors. Include staff titles for who conducts monitoring and how staff are trained to conduct monitoring. Provide a list of all upcoming planned or scheduled monitoring activities as well as copies of or links to all monitoring procedures and tools utilized during the review process. Submit this information as Exhibit 5.

Monitoring is a review of performance towards grant outcomes based on the targets set forth in Internal monitoring of programs, subrecipients and contractors each specific grant. The review may include desktop monitoring, obligation of funding, program reach and staff interviews. The forms used for WIOA and Adult Education monitoring are based on forms utilized in previous reviews completed by DWD. The monitoring schedule is attached at Exhibit 5. Upon completion of the monitoring, the Director and/or Manager responsible for the work monitored is provided with a report summary and recommendations for next steps and is completed by Becky Fry, Director of Policy.

Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Services are monitored on a regular basis throughout the program year. Monitoring occurs on a quarterly basis.

There are four types of monitoring. The first is an informal monitoring through both oral and written communication between management staff and staff providing Adult and Dislocated Worker services and

the WIOA Youth service provider. This monitoring includes progress towards goals such as enrollments, training, and work based learning activities; compliance with policy; and technical assistance needs. Informal monitoring of Adult and Dislocated Worker, is conducted by the Becky Raderstorf, Regional WorkOne Manager, Arika Piggee, Skills Training Manager, and with some assistance from the WorkOne Center Managers. Youth sub-recipients are monitored on a quarterly basis based on meeting contract goals. Both program and fiscal staff meet with the organizations to go over progress on enrollments, services, and WIOA performance. Specific staff include Erin Sizemore, CFO/COO, Tammy Stump, Senior Workforce Associate, Becky Fry, Director of Policy/EO Officer, and Ana Luisa-Davidson, Staff Accountant.

The second type of monitoring is desktop monitoring which is completed on a weekly basis. This monitoring includes review of eligibility, data validation, and performance using reports generated by MIS and review of data in ICC. Desk top monitoring is done by the WorkOne One Center Managers, the Regional WorkOne Manager, and the Senior Workforce Associate who go over the reports with staff.

The third type of monitoring is contractual compliance monitoring conducted on a quarterly basis with the youth service provider. During the monitoring each contract/metric item is reviewed with the provider, letting them know what areas have been completed, which are satisfactory and which areas need improvement. Technical Assistance is also provided at these meetings. While technically not a contractual monitoring, a similar approach is conducted on a monthly basis with Adult and Dislocated Worker WorkOne Services Managers.

The fourth type of monitoring is a formal operational and program monitoring. This monitoring is completed once a year and conducted by an individual outside of the Operations Department. This monitoring includes interviews with all service staff as well as CWI Adult and Dislocated Worker Services Managers and Management Staff from the youth provider organizations; file review of customers in the approved state case management system; and interviews with the Business Services Team and a review of data in the CRM. Upon completion of formal monitoring, a report is developed and sent to management of all service providers. Formal operational and program monitoring for WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker.

Fiscal Monitoring

There are three types of fiscal monitoring. The first is an informal monitoring through both oral and written communication between CWI Fiscal Staff and sub providers. This monitoring includes ensuring that subproviders understand the requirements of Federal statutes, regulations and the terms and conditions of the Federal award; ensure that subproviders obtain appropriate training in current grant administrative and program compliance requirements; and providing technical assistance needs. This monitoring is conducted by the CWI Fiscal Department including Erin Sizemore, Chief Financial Officer, Jordan Burke, controller, and Lori Cheek, Fiscal Assistant.

The second type of monitoring is desktop monitoring which is completed on a monthly basis. This monitoring includes a review of programmatic and financial reports prepared and submitted by the subrecipient as well as a review of the subrecipient budgets to ensure that spending is on track. All desk type reviews include following up on areas of concern. In addition, to the monthly monitoring, all subproviders are required to undergo an annual audit and submit the report of the audit to CWI for review. CWI follow up on any areas of concern. This monitoring is completed by Erin Sizemore, Chief Fiscal Officer.

The third type of monitoring is a formal fiscal monitoring of the subproviders. This is completed once a year and conducted by either Erin Sizemore, Chief Fiscal Officer or CWI has included the option of a third party to conduct the monitoring if the Chief Fiscal Officer cannot complete in a timely manner. This

monitoring includes site visits to the subrecipient to review financial and programmatic records and assess compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and provisions of the subaward and interviews with all fiscal and management staff employed by the subproviders. Upon completion of formal monitoring, a report is developed and sent to the subproviders.

5.10 Describe local operating systems, including data systems, and local policies that will support the implementation of the local board's strategy.

NWIWB uses Windows Operating Systems. A Microsoft Dynamics CRM is used to track data for Business partnership interactions that is managed by the State of Indiana. NWIWB uses the Indiana Career Connect case management system and individual and job orders from Employers that is managed by the State of Indiana and utilized by WorkOne.

For the JAG program, staff use JAG Force, the official data system for the JAG program and Indiana Career Connect as the official case management for WIOA Title 1 and State JAG. Out of school youth, Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Wagner-Peyser use Indiana Career Connect as the official case management system.

AdEd – inTERS is the data system for Adult Education to track, monitor and store data Adult Education participants.

Region 1's policies are in place to support the board's strategic goals of enhancing workforce skills, improving employment outcomes, and addressing barriers to employment. These policies prioritize the integration of WIOA core programs, including Title I (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Services), Title II (Adult Education and Literacy), Title III (Wagner-Peyser), and Title IV (Vocational Rehabilitation), , ensuring that services are comprehensive and accessible. Region 1 policies also emphasize the importance of employer engagement, mandating regular consultations with local businesses to understand their workforce needs and tailor training programs accordingly, and adhere to the Business Services Scope of Work. As a region we require regular staff training and professional development, ensuring that personnel are knowledgeable about current policies, best practices and regulatory requirements.

Overall the systems and policies provide a solid foundation for implementing the workforce development board's strategy, fostering an environment of collaboration, continuous improvement, and responsive service delivery with a human center design that meets the needs of job seekers and employers alike.

Section 6: Participant Information, Costs, and Supplemental Funding

In the “Program Participants” column, each program should reflect all participants enrolled or projected to be enrolled regardless of whether they are co-enrolled in another program. Please provide an explanation of the projections if they are at or below participant levels from the prior year. In the “Co-enrolled Participants” column, please list how many participants are co-enrolled in any core or other programs. In the text box below, include the programs in which the participants are co-enrolled.

Program		Program Participants	Co-enrolled Participants	Referrals			Average Cost Per Participant
				ABE	VR	Other	
WIOA Adult	Actual PY22	682	682	61	4	31	5833
	Actual PY23	750	750	55	23	66	4759
	Projected PY24	800	800	100	50	100	
	Projected PY25	850	850	150	75	150	
WIOA Dislocated Worker	Actual PY22	98	98				9946
	Actual PY23	192	192				4815
	Projected PY24	250	250				
	Projected PY25	300	300				
Youth (In School)	Actual PY22	412	0	2	4		
	Actual PY23	409	0	0	5		
	Projected PY24	500	0	10	25	10	2,511
	Projected PY25	450	0	10	25		2,790
Youth (Out of School)	Actual PY22	788	9	15	5		
	Actual PY23	874	6	20	3	7	
	Projected PY24	800	35	25	10		3,605
	Projected PY25	800	25	25	10		3,605

Explanation
<p>Adult participants are co-enrolled in all programs they are eligible for. Those programs include: Wagner-Peyser, JVSG, TAA, Dislocated Worker and special grants. Participants could be co-enrolled into more than 1 additional program depending on their eligibility.</p> <p>In school youth WIOA projected enrollments are lower for PY 24 and 25 as a result of two factors. The first being our overall allocations for WIOA youth has decreased and there are other funding sources such as TANF, State JAG funding, and Pre-ETS funding to spend on in-school youth. The Out of School Youth projected enrollments will also decrease due to lower allocation of overall WIOA youth funding, but those only slightly.</p>

Supplemental Funding

Please list additional funding sources that will supplement the funding that the local area receives through WIOA.

Funding		Program Participants	Total Budget	Budget per Participant	Explanation
Additional State	PY24	33 1,025	175,000 247,500 1,000,000 1,300,000 700,000 400,000 120,000 500,000	5,300 1,268	NLJ WRG Intermediary Capacity Grant Career Coaching Grant Adult Ed JAGTanf State JAG PreETS NLJ ETG
	PY25				JAGTanf State JAG PreETS
Additional Federal	PY24	100	800,000 450,000 250,000 100,000		Go Grant (3 year grant ends 2024) RESEA Rural HealthCare (4 year grant ends 2025) ABA Apprenticeship (4 year grant ends 2026)
	PY25	116	1,000,000		Go Grant (3 year grant ends 2026)
Additional Other	PY24		2,256,000		Readi Funds (4 year grants end 2026)
	PY25				