

**WEST VIRGINIA  
WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA)  
COMBINED STATE PLAN  
PY 2024-2027**

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## I. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### A. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE

The State of West Virginia is submitting a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined Plan that includes the six core programs:

- WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth (Title I)
- Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (Title II)
- Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program (authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by Title III)
- Vocational Rehabilitation program (authorized under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV).

The Combined Plan also includes the following Partner Programs:

- Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers programs (Activities authorized under chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.))
- Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program (programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et seq.)
- Unemployment Insurance programs (programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws in accordance with applicable Federal law)
- Senior Community Service Employment program (programs authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.))
- Community Services Block Grant (Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.))

### B. PLAN INTRODUCTION

The State of West Virginia is undergoing an economic renaissance as the economy both fully recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic and continues to diversify. During Governor Jim Justice's term in office, the state has experienced a number of important business expansion and economic development announcements in diverse industries such as chemical and metals manufacturing, energy technologies, and aerospace. Most economic sectors have fully recovered from the COVID-19 economic downturn, led by construction and business services.<sup>1</sup>

As the West Virginia economy continues to grow and diversify, an educated and skilled workforce is crucial. Workers and students must be exposed to the new, high-quality job opportunities available in West Virginia through multiple avenues, especially an enhanced "No Wrong Door" public workforce system, which effectively coordinates work between state and local workforce partners, employers, post-secondary education institutions, and community-based service providers.

The goals and strategies of West Virginia's No Wrong Door system seek to address chronic issues plaguing West Virginia's workforce including:

- West Virginia's labor force participation rate
- Low postsecondary educational attainment rates
- Youth leaving the state for jobs and careers
- Long-term unemployed and dislocated workers moving into new industries and jobs.

**West Virginia's vision and commitment to the following four goals are designed to specifically address the state's economy and workers in transition:**

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<sup>1</sup> West Virginia Economic Outlook 2023-2027 is published by the Bureau of Business & Economic Research, John Chambers College of Business & Economics, West Virginia University, Josh Hall, PhD, Milan Puskar Dean

- West Virginia will expand and implement high-quality work-based learning opportunities for youth and adult learners.
- West Virginia will increase referrals and integration of services to improve access to supportive services customized for individuals needing education and employment.
- West Virginia will implement comprehensive sector strategy approaches to reduce skills mismatches and enhance faster labor market attachment while informing education and training priorities.
- West Virginia will implement the Blue Ribbon Franchise Model of workforce service delivery to increase the efficiency of service delivery and effectiveness in serving businesses, workers, and job seekers.

## II. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

### A) ECONOMIC, WORKFORCE, AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

#### 1. ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

##### **(A) ECONOMIC ANALYSIS**

West Virginia's economy is well on its way to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. West Virginia continues to address its low labor force participation and lower educational attainment, but new business relocation, investments in economic growth and workforce education, and a focus on transitioning from legacy industries with less employment today to high tech employment in manufacturing and other technologies presents opportunities for West Virginia workers.

According to *West Virginia Economic Outlook 2023-2027* produced by West Virginia University, many of the state's economic indicators now surpass pre-pandemic levels and several have even managed to reach new highs. West Virginia's economic growth prospects for the next five years are moderately positive overall.

The *Economic Outlook* highlights the following key indicators:

- Employment fell by roughly 95,000 jobs in March and April 2020. As of late-summer 2022, preliminary data shows nearly 93,000 jobs have been regained—leaving the state nearly on par with its pre-pandemic level.
- Several sectors have seen activity return to or surpass pre-pandemic levels, including construction and business services. Many sectors face high rates of unfilled job openings.
- The state's unemployment rate reached an all-time low of roughly 3.5 percent during the second quarter of 2022.
- Only 55 percent of West Virginia's adult population is either working or looking for work. This remains the lowest rate of labor force participation among all 50 states and is a key hurdle to economic growth.
- Per capita personal income in West Virginia increased by more than 7 percent in 2021 and stands at roughly 76 percent of the national average.
- West Virginia's real GDP increased 4 percent in 2021, helping to offset the drop in economic output observed during 2020. The state's topline measure of real economic output remains volatile, largely because of the state's history and role as an energy producing state, and that volatility continues into 2022.

##### **Existing and Emerging Economic Sectors<sup>2</sup>**

West Virginia's economy is characterized by 11 major sectors: natural resources and mining; construction; manufacturing; trade, transportation, and utilities; information; financial activities; professional and business services; education and health services; leisure and

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<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, figures and data are produced by the West Virginia Labor Market Information unit.

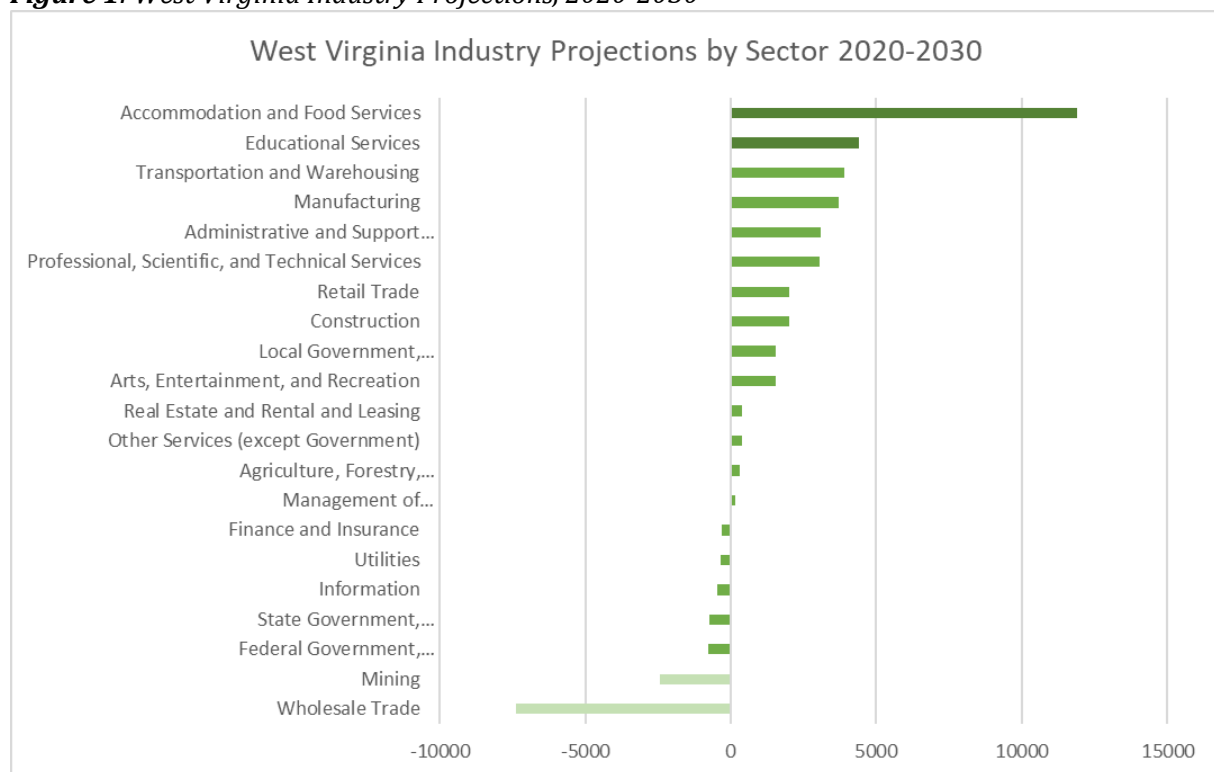
hospitality; other services; and total government. Between 2018 and 2028, many of these sectors may see employment declines while others will experience growth.

West Virginia's economic landscape reveals a mix of positive and challenging trends across various sectors. Industries such as Accommodation and Food Services, Educational Services, and Transportation and Warehousing show steady employment growth, contributing to the state's economic stability.

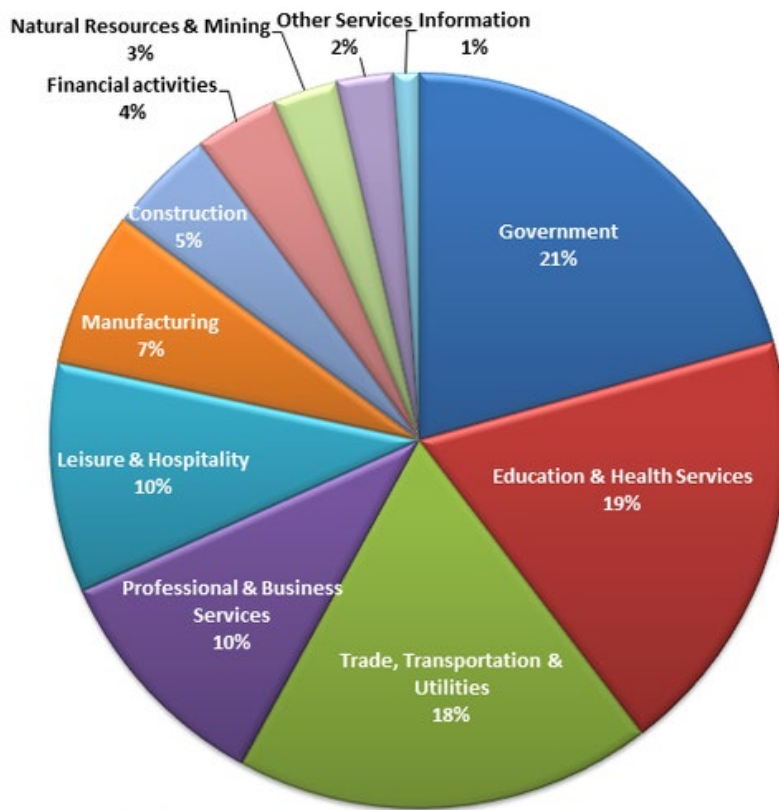
In manufacturing, certain sub-industries like transportation equipment, nonmetallic mineral products, plastics, and rubber products are expected to grow, while others face declines. Navigating this diversity within manufacturing is key for effective economic planning. However, challenges persist in sectors like Mining and Wholesale Trade, where significant declines in employment highlight the need for targeted strategies and support for affected communities.

Negative figures in Finance and Insurance, Utilities, Information, State Government (excluding education and hospitals), Federal Government (excluding post office), and Wholesale Trade emphasize the complexity of the economic landscape. Adapting to these shifts will require proactive measures and a diversified economic approach.

**Figure 1: West Virginia Industry Projections, 2020-2030**



**Figure 2: West Virginia Employment Distribution by Sector, 2021**

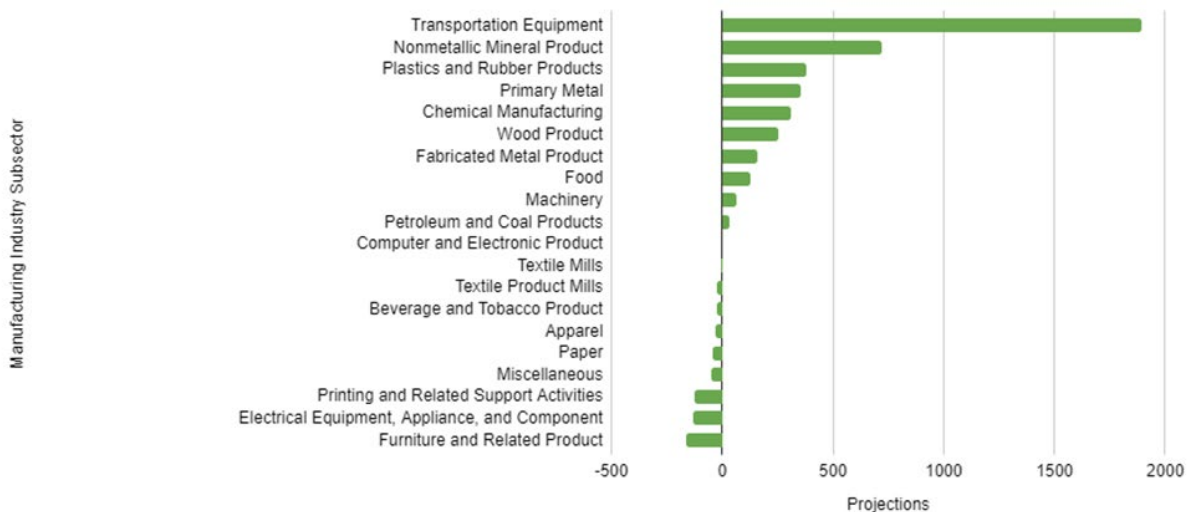


Source: WV Economic Outlook

Projected employment trends in the manufacturing sector for West Virginia through 2030 present a varied landscape, featuring growth in some industries alongside declines in others. Noteworthy expansions are expected in transportation equipment, nonmetallic mineral products, plastics and rubber products, and primary metal manufacturing. Conversely, sectors such as printing and related support activities, electrical equipment, appliance and component manufacturing, and furniture and related product manufacturing anticipate significant declines.

**Figure 3: West Virginia Manufacturing Projections, 2020-2030**

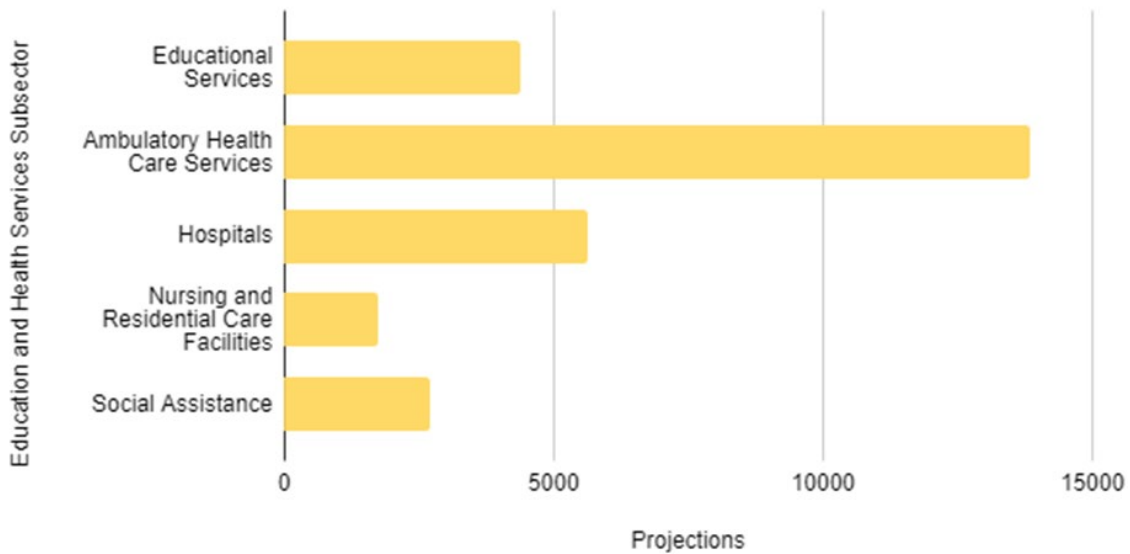
West Virginia Manufacturing Projections '20-'30



Within the education and health services subsector, West Virginia is expected to experience a notable rise in ambulatory health care services, with hospitals following closely as the second-highest projected industry for growth from 2020 to 2030. Within this subsector there are no projected declines overall.

**Figure 4: West Virginia Education and Health Services Projections, 2020-2030**

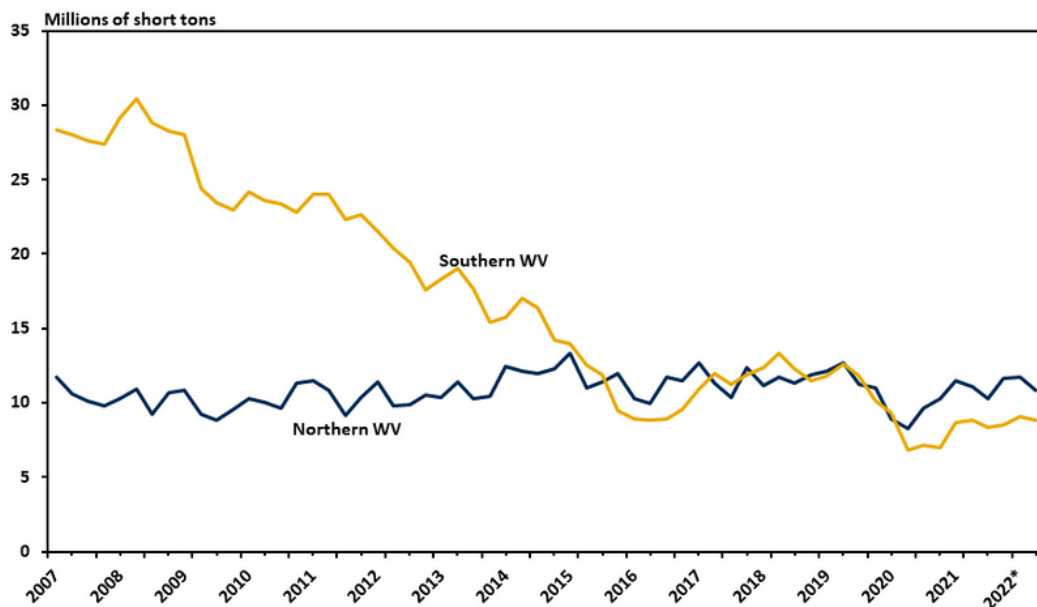
### West Virginia Education and Health Services Projections '20-'30



In the energy sector, coal and electricity production have experienced volatility over the past two years but are on track to recover somewhat from the downturn in production during the COVID-19 pandemic. Coal production has increased over 16% since 2020 and is expected to continue rising. Industrial and commercial electricity needs continue to increase as economic activity has increased after the pandemic recession. Despite these production increases, coal employment has not risen at the same pace to date, growing to 11,700 workers in 2021 from 11,650 in 2020, a significant decrease from 2019's 14,500 workers. Preliminary data shows an increase in workers in 2022, with Q1 showing an 11% increase from the same time in 2021.

**Figure 5: West Virginia Regional Coal Production, 2007-2022**

### West Virginia Regional Coal Production



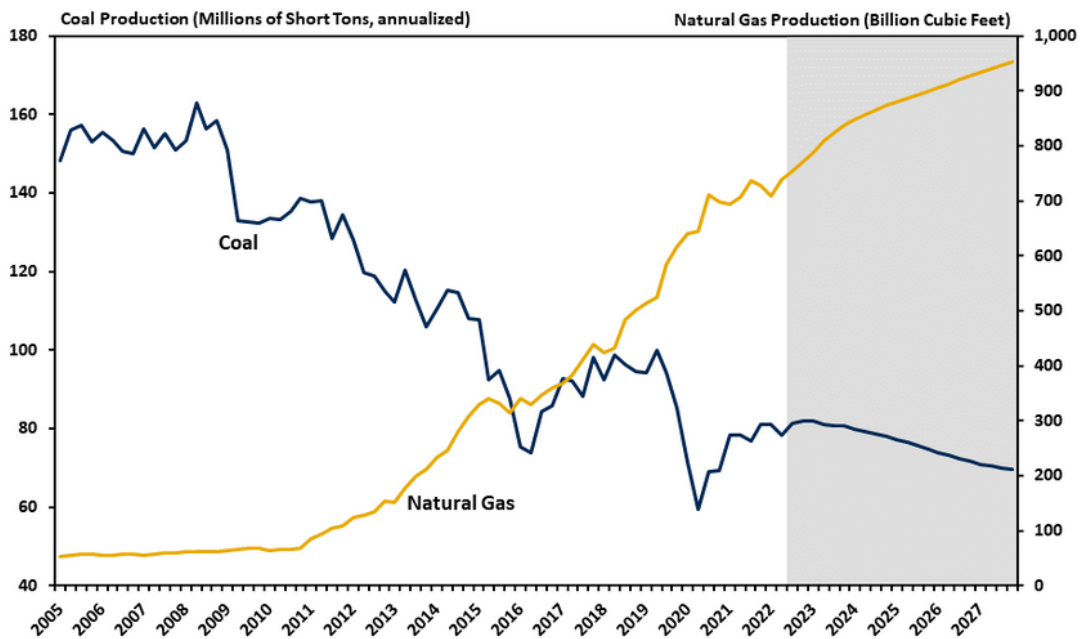
\* Available through second quarter  
Source: US Energy Information Administration

Source: WV Economic Outlook

Future forecasts suggest that coal production numbers will likely return to pre-pandemic levels, and other sources of energy production may rise due to market pricing or policy decisions in the future. Employment numbers will follow similar trends with coal jobs remaining flat and natural gas jobs growing by approximately 5% a year, though increases in natural gas productivity could reduce labor demand and could cause weaker employment growth.

**Figure 6: West Virginia Coal and Natural Gas Output, 2005-2027**

**West Virginia Coal and Natural Gas Output**

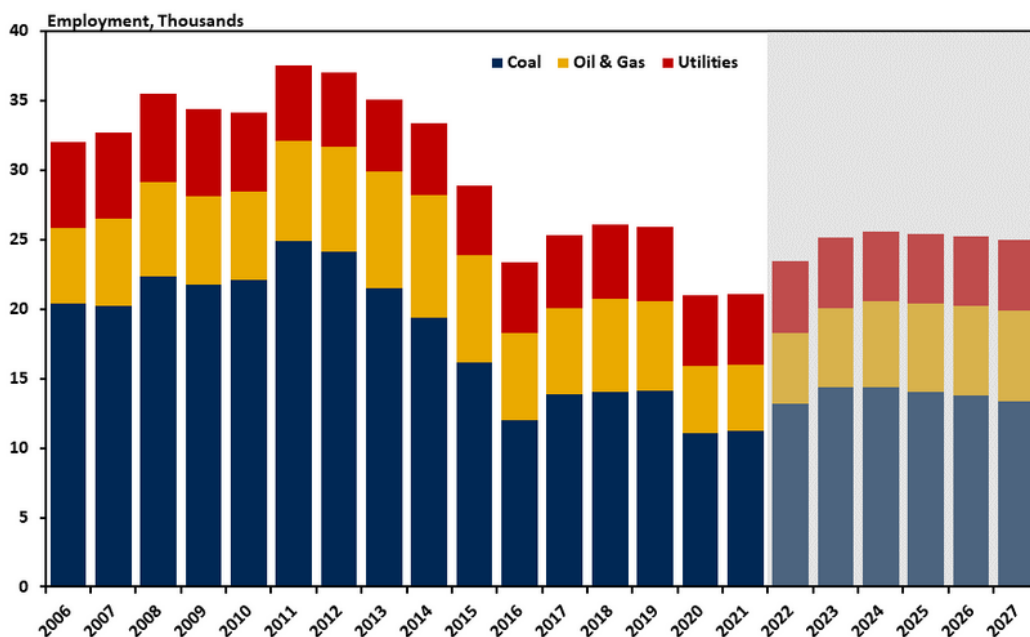


Source: US Energy Information Administration; WVU BBER Econometric Model

Source: WV Economic Outlook

**Figure 7: West Virginia Energy Sector Employment Forecast, 2006-2027**

**West Virginia Energy Sector Employment Forecast**



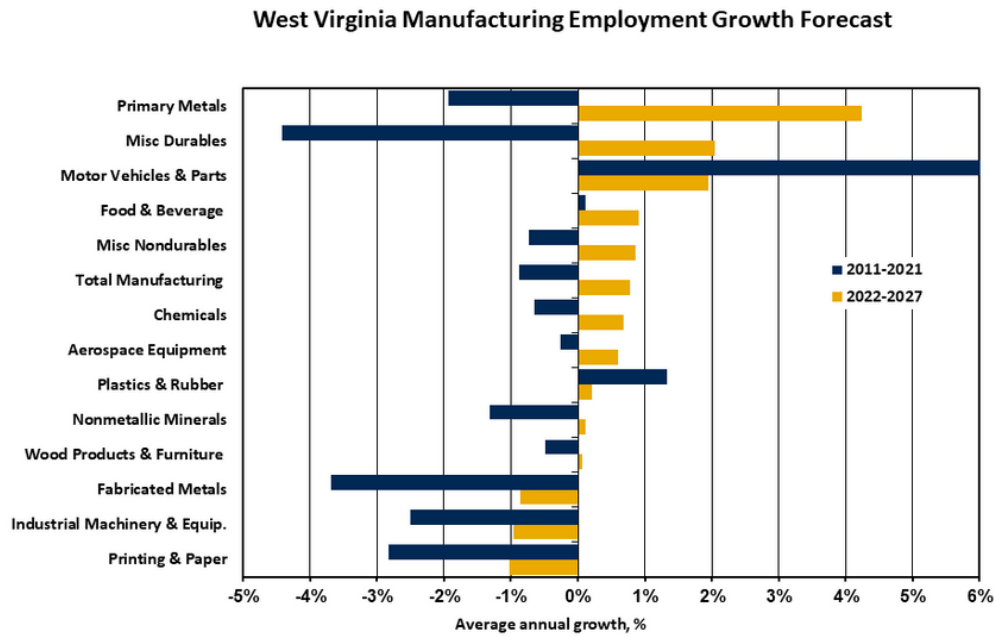
Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics; WVU BBER Econometric Model

Source: WV Economic Outlook



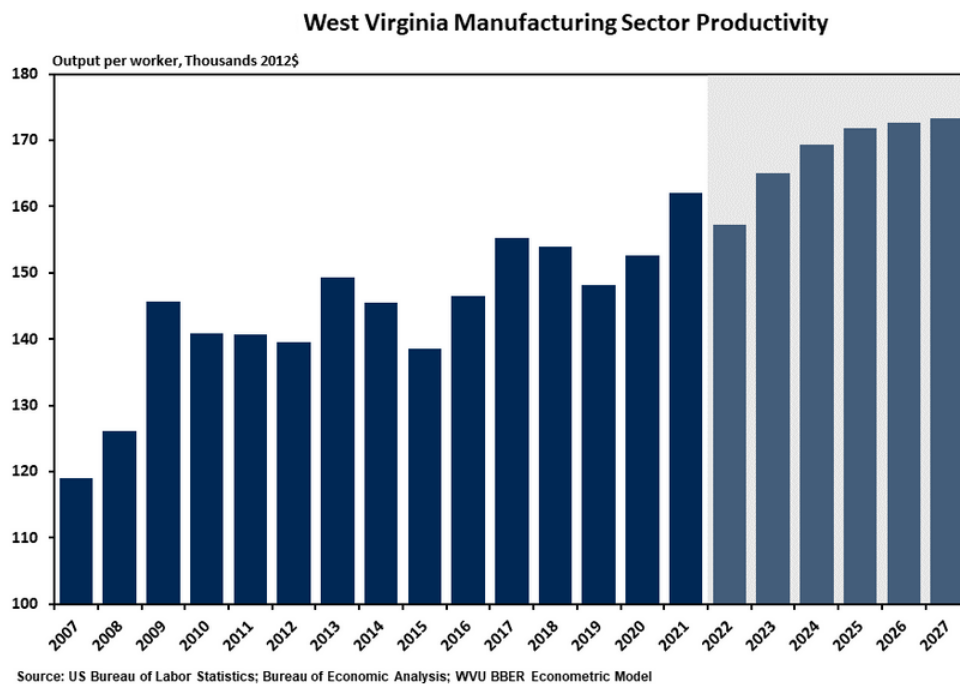
The manufacturing sector remains a robust part of West Virginia's economy and is a reason the state is a part of global economic trade. New growth in automotive manufacturing, metals, and food and beverage manufacturing have all contributed to increased rates of production that are expected to continue. Despite this progress, there have been pandemic-related difficulties in manufacturing because of the disruption of global supply chains and closures of two major plants in the state, and there are concerns about impacts of rising interest rates, cost of capital, and potential recessions leading to further downturn of production, and thus employment. That said, the overall outlook is positive with 1) 11 of 14 subsectors expected to increase their employment levels and 2) total manufacturing productivity expected to continue rising.

**Figure 8: West Virginia Manufacturing Employment Growth Forecast, 2011-2027**



Source: WV Economic Outlook

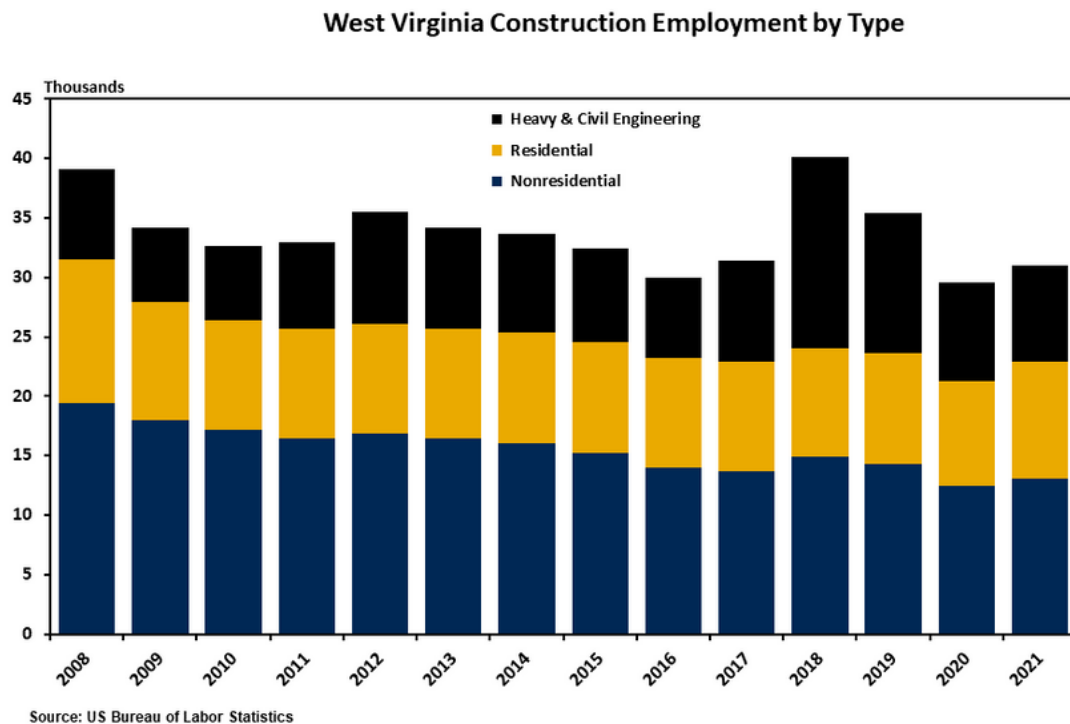
**Figure 9: West Virginia Manufacturing Sector Productivity, 2007-2027**



Source: WV Economic Outlook

Construction was one of the first sectors to surpass pre-pandemic levels of activity, and output is expected to continue to grow significantly in the long run. Employment openings have remained high, which has hindered some productivity, but employment is expected to grow by 1.1% per year through the end of 2027. Significant utility sector projects (i.e., Berkshire Hathaway Energy in Jackson County, Competitive Power Ventures, and GreenPower Motors) and public works projects (i.e., the Roads to Prosperity program) will buoy the growth of the construction sector. The state has undertaken various legislative initiatives, such as the Build WV program, to encourage and incentivize construction in some aspects, like housing markets.

**Figure 10: West Virginia Construction Employment by Type, 2008-2021**



Source: WV Economic Outlook

Looking region by region, the employment trajectory from 2020 to 2030 shows significant similarities in growing and declining industries. Industries expecting expanded employment across regions include health services (ambulatory and hospitals) and food service and drinking places. Most regions are expected to see an employment decline in stores (including clothing, electronics, food and beverage, and personal care) and gasoline stations. Even with these similarities, each region differs in other industries that will grow or shrink employment opportunities and the overall impact of these changes.

In West Virginia's Workforce Development Region 1, the Food Services and Drinking Places industry is set for robust growth, projecting a significant increase of 1,646 jobs at an annual rate of 2.2%, reflecting evolving consumer preferences. Concurrently, the Ambulatory Health Care Services sector anticipates notable expansion, emphasizing the region's commitment to healthcare infrastructure. Declining sectors, such as General Merchandise Stores and Health and Personal Care Stores, signaling the need for strategic interventions.

**Figure 11: WDR 1 Industry Projections 2020-2030**

<b>Workforce Development Region 1 Industry Employment Projections 2020-2030</b>				
<b>Industry Title</b>	<b>Estimated 2020 Employment</b>	<b>Projected 2030 Employment</b>	<b>Numeric Change</b>	<b>Annual Growth Rate</b>
<b>Growing Industries</b>				
Food Services and Drinking Places	6,913	8,559	1,646	2.2
Ambulatory Health Care Services	7,200	8,488	1,288	1.7
Administrative and Support Services	3,211	3,998	787	2.2
Accommodation, including Hotels and Motels	2,713	3,474	761	2.5
Educational Services	7,203	7,793	590	0.8
<b>Declining Industries</b>				
General Merchandise Stores	3,009	2,774	-235	-0.8
Food and Beverage Stores	2,052	1,880	-172	-0.9
Health and Personal Care Stores	944	828	-116	-1.3
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	428	349	-79	-2.0
Gasoline Stations	1,638	1,562	-76	-0.5

Based on annual growth rate, growing industries in Workforce Development Region 2 are contained largely within healthcare and social assistance. The health services sector contains the greatest numeric growth of industries on the list and includes ambulatory health care services, hospitals, and social assistance. Other growing industries include food services and drinking places and administrative and support services. The greatest declines by growth rate in WDR 2 are found in miscellaneous store retailers, mining (except oil and gas), and telecommunications.

**Figure 12: WDR 2 Industry Projections 2020-2030**

<b>Workforce Development Region 2 Industry Employment Projections 2020-2030</b>				
<b>Industry Title</b>	<b>Estimated 2020 Employment</b>	<b>Projected 2030 Employment</b>	<b>Numeric Change</b>	<b>Annual Growth Rate</b>
<b>Growing Industries</b>				
Food Services and Drinking Places	7,648	9,925	2,277	2.6
Ambulatory Health Care Services	6,879	8,103	1,224	1.7
Hospitals	9,032	10,241	1,209	1.3
Social Assistance	3,715	4,831	1,116	2.7
Administrative and Support Services	4,553	5,646	1,093	2.2
<b>Declining Industries</b>				
Mining (except Oil and Gas)	2,082	1,817	-265	-1.4
Food and Beverage Stores	1,639	1,505	-134	-0.8
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	430	362	-68	-1.7
Gasoline Stations	1,354	1,292	-62	-0.5
Telecommunications	414	360	-54	-1.4

In Workforce Development Region 3, the top growing industries are contained largely in health care and professional and business services. The health care sector contains the greatest numeric growth of industries on the list and includes ambulatory health care services and social assistance. Growth in professional and business services includes professional, scientific, and technical services, and management of companies and enterprises. The greatest declines in WDR 3 are found in merchant wholesalers, durable goods; clothing and clothing accessories stores; and health and personal care stores as many residents have turned to online shopping.

**Figure 13: WDR 3 Industry Projections 2020-2030**

<b>Workforce Development Region 3 Industry Employment Projections 2020-2030</b>				
<b>Industry Title</b>	<b>Estimated 2020 Employment</b>	<b>Projected 2030 Employment</b>	<b>Numeric Change</b>	<b>Annual Growth Rate</b>
<b>Growing Industries</b>				
Ambulatory Health Care Services	6,264	7,215	951	1.4
Food Services and Drinking Places	7,142	7,974	832	1.1
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	5,034	5,421	387	0.7
Social Assistance	2,030	2,371	341	1.6
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1,533	1,780	247	1.5
<b>Declining Industries</b>				
Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods	1,723	1,562	-161	-1.0
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	875	731	-144	-1.8
Health and Personal Care Stores	957	856	-101	-1.1
Telecommunications	735	680	-55	-0.8
Gasoline Stations	802	756	-46	-0.6

In Workforce Development Region 4, growing industries are contained largely within the health care sector, showing the greatest numeric growth on the list and including ambulatory health care services, hospitals, and social assistance. Other growing industries include food services and drinking places and heavy and civil engineering construction. The greatest declines in WDR 4 occur in clothing and clothing accessories stores, health and personal care stores, and merchant wholesalers, durable goods.

**Figure 14: WDR 4 Industry Projections 2020-2030**

<b>Workforce Development Region 4 Industry Employment Projections 2020-2030</b>				
<b>Industry Title</b>	<b>Estimated 2020 Employment</b>	<b>Projected 2030 Employment</b>	<b>Numeric Change</b>	<b>Annual Growth Rate</b>
<b>Growing Industries</b>				
Food Services and Drinking Places	5,392	6,020	628	1.1
Ambulatory Health Care Services	3,655	4,210	555	1.4
Hospitals	3,023	3,389	366	1.1
Social Assistance	1,975	2,307	332	1.6
Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction	4,032	4,300	268	0.6
<b>Declining Industries</b>				
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	556	465	-91	-1.8
Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods	717	650	-67	-1.0
Gasoline Stations	1,076	1,014	-62	-0.6
Health and Personal Care Stores	575	514	-61	-1.1
Support Activities for Mining	1,012	971	-41	-0.4

In Workforce Development Region 5, the health care sector contains the greatest numeric growth of industries on the list and includes ambulatory health care services, hospitals, and social assistance. Other growing industries include food services and drinking places and administrative and support services. The greatest industry declines in WDR 5 based on the growth rate include merchant wholesalers (durable goods), fabricated metal product manufacturing, mining (except oil and gas), health and personal care stores and electronics and appliance stores.



**Figure 15: WDR 5 Industry Projections 2020-2030**

<b>Workforce Development Region 5 Industry Employment Projections 2020-2030</b>				
<b>Industry Title</b>	<b>Estimated 2020 Employment</b>	<b>Projected 2030 Employment</b>	<b>Numeric Change</b>	<b>Annual Growth Rate</b>
<b>Growing Industries</b>				
Hospitals	4,974	5,576	602	1.1
Food Services and Drinking Places	5,117	5,713	596	1.1
Ambulatory Health Care Services	3,251	3,744	493	1.4
Administrative and Support Services	2,073	2,385	312	1.4
Social Assistance	1,347	1,573	226	1.6
<b>Declining Industries</b>				
Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods	1,317	1,194	-123	-1.0
Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	1,276	1,174	-102	-0.8
Mining (except Oil and Gas)	2,165	2,076	-89	-0.4
Health and Personal Care Stores	452	404	-48	-1.1
Electronics and Appliance Stores	380	335	-45	-1.3

The industries in Workforce Development Region 6 projecting the greatest growth through 2030 are found largely within the health care and social assistance sector, including social assistance, ambulatory health care services, and hospitals. Food services and drinking places and administrative and support services are anticipating employment growth as well. Declining industries in this region include clothing and clothing accessory stores, health and personal care stores, and merchant wholesalers, durable goods.

**Figure 16: WDR 6 Industry Projections 2020-2030**

<b>Workforce Development Region 6 Industry Employment Projections 2020-2030</b>				
<b>Industry Title</b>	<b>Estimated 2020 Employment</b>	<b>Projected 2030 Employment</b>	<b>Numeric Change</b>	<b>Annual Growth Rate</b>
<b>Growing Industries</b>				
Hospitals	15,564	17,446	1,882	1.1
Food Services and Drinking Places	13,087	14,612	1,525	1.1
Ambulatory Health Care Services	9,026	10,396	1,370	1.4
Administrative and Support Services	5,101	5,868	767	1.4
Social Assistance	4,156	4,855	699	1.6
<b>Declining Industries</b>				
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	1106	924	-182	-1.8
Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods	1589	1441	-148	-1.0
Health and Personal Care Stores	1271	1137	-134	-1.1
Gasoline Stations	2281	2151	-130	-0.6
Mining (except Oil and Gas)	2634	2526	-108	-0.4

In Workforce Development Region 7, industries showing growth through 2030 are scattered across economic sectors. Industries with the highest projected growth rate include waste management and remediation services, social assistance, ambulatory health care services, and chemical manufacturing. The greatest projected declines in WDR 7 are found in fabricated metal product manufacturing, clothing and clothing accessories stores, and real estate.

**Figure 17: WDR 7 Industry Projections 2020-2030**

<b>Workforce Development Region 7 Industry Employment Projections 2020-2030</b>				
<b>Industry Title</b>	<b>Estimated 2020 Employment</b>	<b>Projected 2030 Employment</b>	<b>Numeric Change</b>	<b>Annual Growth Rate</b>
<b>Growing Industries</b>				
Chemical Manufacturing	6,164	6,882	718	1.1
Ambulatory Health Care Services	4,818	5,401	583	1.1
Social Assistance	3,094	3,564	470	1.4
Waste Management and Remediation Service	1,997	2,333	336	1.6
Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction	8,528	8,858	330	0.4
<b>Declining Industries</b>				
Real Estate	1,082	981	-101	-1.0
Furniture and Related Product Manufacturing	1,206	1,137	-69	-0.6
Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	616	551	-65	-1.1
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	290	262	-28	-1.0
Mining (except Oil and Gas)	629	603	-26	-0.4

### **Occupational Demand 2020-2030**

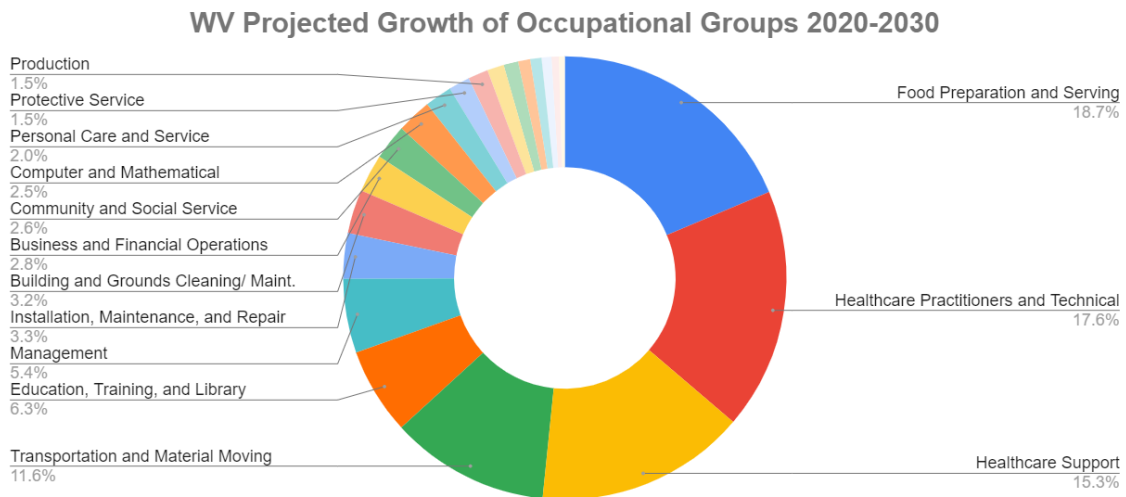
West Virginia's workforce is on the brink of a positive transformation, with significant projected growth in key occupation groups from 2020 to 2030. Sectors such as Food Preparation and Serving, Healthcare, and Transportation are poised to flourish, offering exciting opportunities for targeted employment programs and forward-looking training initiatives.

Notably, the Food Preparation and Serving sector anticipates an expansion of 10,542 jobs. This aligns with the region's emphasis on hospitality and culinary services, promising employment opportunities in the food industry. Healthcare continues to be a focal point, with Healthcare Practitioners and Technical occupations projecting substantial growth of 9,949 jobs, and Healthcare Support roles adding 8,669 positions, reflecting a dedication to enhancing medical services and support infrastructure. Transportation and Material Moving occupations forecast an increase of 6,557 jobs, underscoring the importance of logistics and transportation in the state's economic development. Addressing this workforce need can contribute to the overall efficiency of the state's transportation infrastructure. Additionally, the Education, Training, and Library sector is expected to see notable growth, projecting an addition of 3,580 jobs, emphasizing the state's commitment to educational advancement.

While these sectors anticipate growth, other areas require targeted attention because of projected declines. The Office and Administrative Support sector anticipates a decline of 1,240 jobs, emphasizing the need for strategic interventions to address shifts in administrative roles and workflow. Understanding these occupational dynamics provides valuable insights for federal funding allocation, ensuring resources are directed towards fostering growth in high-demand sectors and addressing employment challenges for residents and businesses.

These overall projections for 2020-2030 highlight the potential for a dynamic and resilient workforce in West Virginia's future. By aligning resources with emerging opportunities, we can foster a thriving job market, ensuring the state's position for sustained success.

**Figure 18: WV Projected Growth of Occupational Groups 2020-2030**

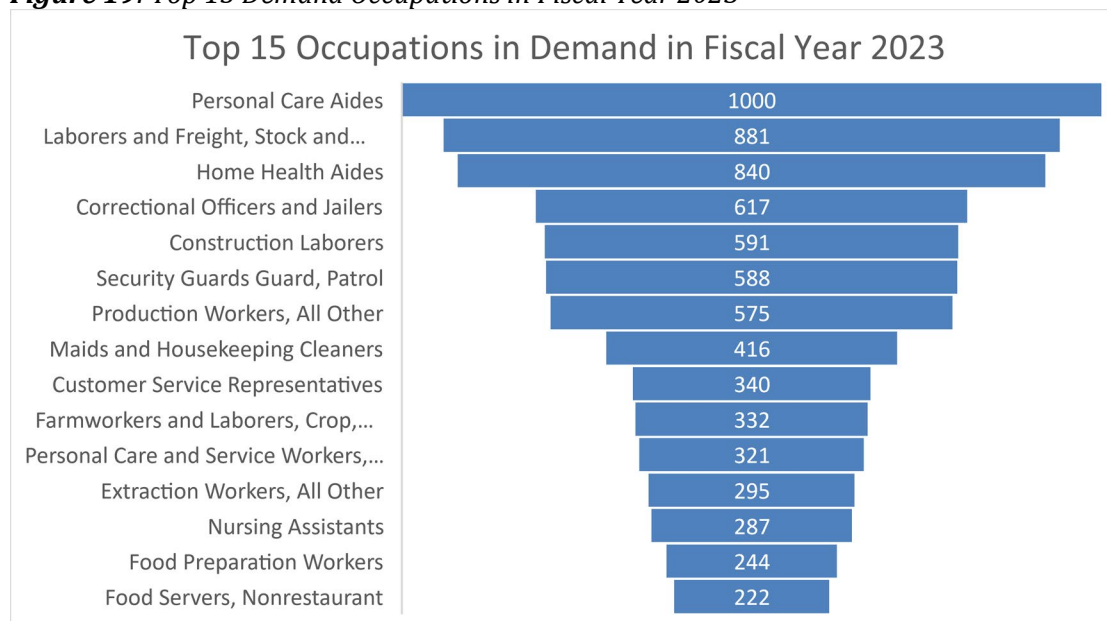


At a more granular level, The Mid-Atlantic Career Consortium (MACC) research and analytics on staff-assisted job orders for WV illuminates current trends of in-demand occupations across sectors. Personal Care Aides stand at the pinnacle with a formidable count of 1000, a testament to the burgeoning demand for personalized caregiving services. Alongside Home Health Aides, at 840, we can see the substantial prioritization of healthcare services.

In other sectors, Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers are in high demand at 881 instances, underscoring the integral role of logistics in the contemporary economic landscape. 617 job orders for Correctional Officers and Jailers reflect an unwavering commitment to public safety. Construction Laborers, totaling 591, contribute significantly to the workforce, alongside Security Guards and Patrol, who make a formidable presence with 588 job orders. Production Workers, All Other, account for 575 instances, showcasing the diverse facets of industrial production. Occupations such as Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners (416), Customer Service Representatives (340), and Farmworkers and Laborers, Crop, Greenhouse (332) underscore the varied demands within the economy.

MACC’s nuanced data further provides a comprehensive snapshot of the dynamic occupational landscape, allowing us to see the rich economic intricacies of employment across the state.

**Figure 19: Top 15 Demand Occupations in Fiscal Year 2023**



Source: Workforce WV MACC Staff Assisted Job Orders

Looking to the future, the top five occupational groups with the greatest number of annual openings through 2030 are Food Preparation and Serving-Related Occupations, Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations, Healthcare Support Occupations, Transportation and Material Moving Occupations, and Education, Training, and Library Occupations. Occupations with large employment within these five groups include Fast Food Cooks, Waiters and Waitresses, Registered Nurses, Home Health and Personal Care Aides, Nursing Assistants, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers, Stockers and Order Fillers, and Elementary School Teachers.

**Figure 20:** Projected Job Openings by Occupational Group 2020-2030.

Top 2020 - 2030 Occupational Projection Groups Ranked by Expected Employment Profile					
Occupation Group	Estimated Employment 2020	Projected Employment 2030	Annual Exits	Annual Transfers	Annual Openings
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	55,414	65,956	4,664	6,201	1,054
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	61,173	71,122	1,694	2,033	995
Healthcare Support Occupations	35,498	44,167	2,348	2,450	867
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	53,489	60,046	2,688	4,341	656
Education, Training, and Library Occupations	38,904	42,484	1,669	1,860	358
Management Occupations	34,241	37,293	859	1,989	305
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	31,858	33,733	1,033	2,072	188
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	24,064	25,866	1,399	1,816	180
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	28,118	29,686	773	1,658	157
Community and Social Service Occupations	12,631	14,085	438	868	145

West Virginia is poised for economic growth and vitality, as indicated by the projected job openings in various occupational titles. Closer analysis shows the potential and prospects for the state, highlighting key occupations that are set to play a pivotal role in its economic evolution.

1. Home Health and Personal Care Aides (Projected Openings: 4,971):
  - a. As the demand for personalized care services continues to rise, the significant number of projected openings for Home Health and Personal Care Aides reflects a burgeoning sector that provides essential support to individuals and families.
2. Fast Food and Counter Workers (Projected Openings: 3,101):
  - a. West Virginia's hospitality and food industry is on an upward trajectory, with a substantial demand for Fast Food and Counter Workers. This surge signifies the state's thriving culinary scene and the role it plays in the local economy.
3. Cooks, Restaurant (Projected Openings: 2,872):
  - a. The restaurant industry is a key contributor to West Virginia's economic landscape, with a growing need for skilled culinary professionals. The demand for Restaurant Cooks highlights the potential for expansion within the state's vibrant dining sector.



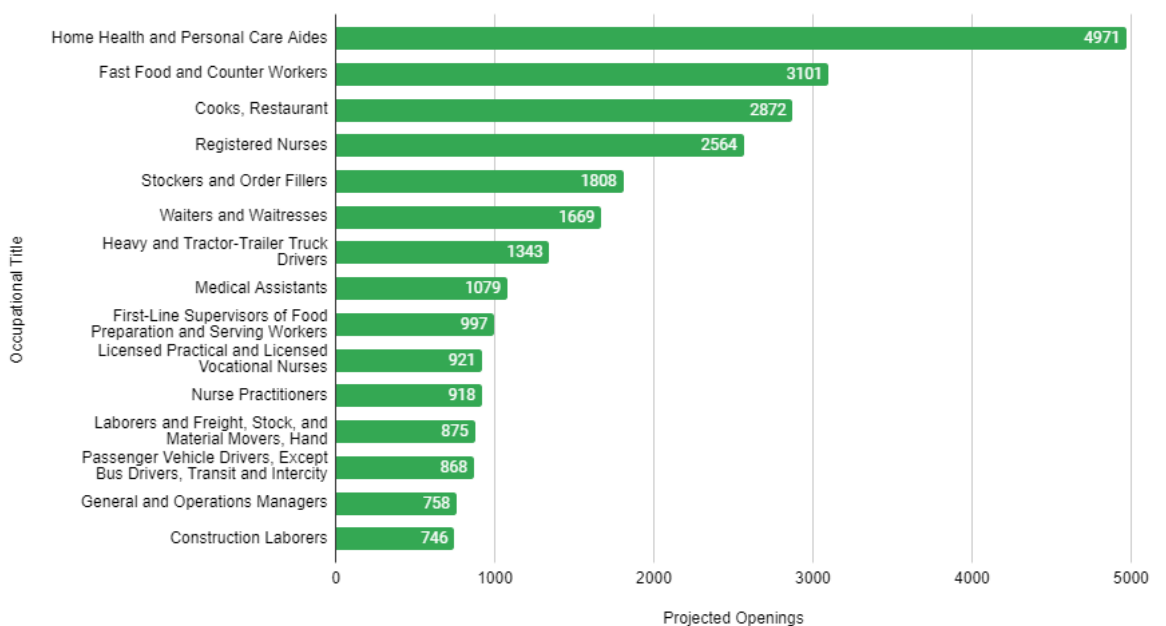
4. Registered Nurses (Projected Openings: 2,564):
  - a. Healthcare continues to be a cornerstone of West Virginia's economic growth. The projected openings for Registered Nurses underscore the state's commitment to enhancing its healthcare infrastructure, providing opportunities for skilled professionals.
5. Stockers and Order Fillers (Projected Openings: 1,808):
  - a. The logistics and distribution sector is witnessing a surge in demand, with Stockers and Order Fillers playing a crucial role in the supply chain. This points to the state's strategic position as a hub for commerce and trade.
6. Waiters and Waitresses (Projected Openings: 1,669):
  - a. West Virginia's hospitality industry is flourishing, with an increasing demand for service professionals. The projected openings for Waiters and Waitresses signify a positive trend in the state's tourism and dining experiences.
7. Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers (Projected Openings: 1,343):
  - a. Transportation remains a key driver of West Virginia's economic potential. The demand for Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers highlights the state's role in facilitating the movement of goods and services.

As West Virginia looks ahead, the projected job openings in these key occupations paint a picture of a state brimming with potential and growth. The diverse range of sectors, from healthcare to hospitality, logistics to culinary arts, positions West Virginia for a dynamic and prosperous future. Embracing these opportunities will not only fuel economic expansion but also contribute to the well-being and vitality of the state and its residents.

The top five occupations with the largest annual openings through 2030 include Home Health and Personal Care Aides, Fast Food and Counter Workers, Cooks, Restaurant, Registered Nurses, and Stockers and Order Fillers. Other occupations with large projected annual openings which may pay higher wages than some of the top five include Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers, Medical Assistants, Construction Laborers, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers, and Nurse Practitioners.

**Figure 21: Annual Job Openings for Select Occupations 2020-2030.**

Top 15 Occupations in Demand 2020-2030 Projections



The economic landscape in the employment sector is marked by diverse trends across various occupations in the specified time frame. Notably, Nurse Practitioners lead with a notable growth rate of 5.7%, reflecting a surge in demand for advanced healthcare services. The profession is expected to add 92 new positions, underscoring the pivotal role of healthcare practitioners in the evolving medical landscape. In other healthcare fields, Medical and Health Services Managers, with a growth rate of 3.1%, are poised to contribute significantly to healthcare administration, reflecting the sector's organizational expansion. Concurrently, Medical Assistants, Home Health, and Personal Care Aides all are expected to grow over 2.5%, addressing the increasing need for healthcare support services. Meanwhile, Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses (1.4%) and Registered Nurses (1.1%) anticipate maintaining stable rates with small-modest amounts of growth.

In the realm of food services, Restaurant Cooks show a growth rate of 4.0%, adding 287 jobs, indicative of the sustained demand for dining services. The growth rate for First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers is 1.9%, reflecting the ongoing demand for skilled supervision in this sector. Similarly, Waiters and Waitresses (1.8%) and Stockers and Order Fillers (1.7%) demonstrate similarly modest growth rates, emphasizing the consistent demand for customer service and logistics roles. Fast Food and Counter Workers are expected to remain in stable demand with some possibilities for growth at 1.4%.

In other areas, Passenger Vehicle Drivers, Receptionists, and Information Clerks show growth rates of 1.4%, indicating stable demand but with a more modest expansion. Meanwhile, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers, and Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners contribute to the employment sector with growth rates of 1.2%, 1.1%, and 1.1% respectively, reflecting a balanced employment outlook.

Through this comprehensive overview of the employment landscape of West Virginia, we can see the nuanced growth patterns across various occupations, underscoring the importance of healthcare, culinary services, and support roles, while acknowledging the steady contributions from diverse occupations within the state.

**Figure 22: Annual Job Growth Rate for Select Occupations 2020-2030.**

2020-2030 Occupations with Highest Projected Growth Rate				
Occupation	Growth Rate	Annual Exits	Annual Transfers	Annual Openings
Nurse Practitioners	5.7	35	53	92
Cooks, Restaurant	4.0	432	628	287
Medical and Health Services Managers	3.1	58	117	70
Medical Assistants	2.8	161	293	108
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	2.6	1,231	1,089	497
First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	1.9	240	548	100
Waiters and Waitresses	1.8	702	1,143	167
Stockers and Order Fillers	1.7	623	1,067	181
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	1.4	223	276	92
Fast Food and Counter Workers	1.4	2,183	2,380	310
Passenger Vehicle Drivers, Except Bus Drivers, Transit and Intercity	1.4	421	318	87
Receptionists and Information Clerks	1.3	304	376	70

Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	1.2	450	745	134
Registered Nurses	1.1	609	574	256
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	1.1	473	448	73

### Employers' Employment Needs

With the intensive growth of Healthcare and Social Assistance industries through 2030, the need for education for higher-skill workers is anticipated. The range of knowledge, skills, and abilities needed in these professions are high, and in order to fulfill demand for these positions, educational structures that teach both prospective and current nurses are needed to maintain a highly skilled workforce in these necessary fields.

**Figure 23: Model Knowledge, Skills, & Ability for Registered Nurse**

KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	ABILITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medicine &amp; dentistry</li> <li>• Therapy &amp; counseling</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Business               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer Service</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Math &amp; Science               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychology</li> <li>• Arithmetic, algebra, geometry, calculus</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Arts &amp; Humanities               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English language</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic Skills               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening to others, not interrupting, and asking good questions</li> <li>• Talking to others</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Social               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding people's reactions</li> <li>• Looking for ways to help people</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Problem Solving               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noticing a problem and figuring out the best way to solve it</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate by speaking</li> <li>• Listen &amp; understand what people say</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ideas and Logic               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notice when problem happens</li> <li>• Make a general rules from detailed information</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Attention               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do two or more thing att the same time</li> <li>• Focus to do something without distracted</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Visual Understanding               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quickly compare groups of letters, numbers, pictures, or other things</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Knowledge needed for the top five healthcare occupations in the state, according to current employees, includes customer and personal services, English languages, psychology, medicine and dentistry, and therapy and counseling. Educational systems that teach this knowledge to potential nurses and help current nurses continue their education to stay on top of changing healthcare needs are required to fulfill the demand for skilled healthcare workers in the state.

**Figure 24: Knowledge Assessment for Top 5 Healthcare Occupations**

Knowledge	Registered Nurses	Occupational Therapists	Licensed Nurses	Physical Therapists	Physician Assistants
Customer & Personal Services	86	76	86	87	83
English Languages	81	82	82	77	84
Psychology	84	92	82	83	87
Medicine & Dentistry	89	86	92	93	98
Therapy & Counseling	78	92	75	82	84

Numerous occupations in West Virginia require licensing. This is to ensure the competency of those practicing these professions, and in many cases the safety of those utilizing their services. There are approximately 110 occupations that require licensure in the State of West Virginia, eleven of which are in-demand occupations. The majority of these in-demand occupations are found in the healthcare field, such as Physician Assistant, Registered Nurse, Licensed Practical Nurse, Pharmacist, Physical Therapy Assistant, Radiologic Technologist, and Dental Hygienist. The remaining in-demand occupations that require licensing include Accountant, Attorney, Elementary School Teacher, and Social Worker. Licensing requires certain amounts of education

to fulfill the needs of the license and for applicants to gain the knowledge needed to pass any licensing exams. To adequately license the workers who can fill these in-demand occupations, we will have to continue creating educational opportunities for people to gain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to succeed in these positions.

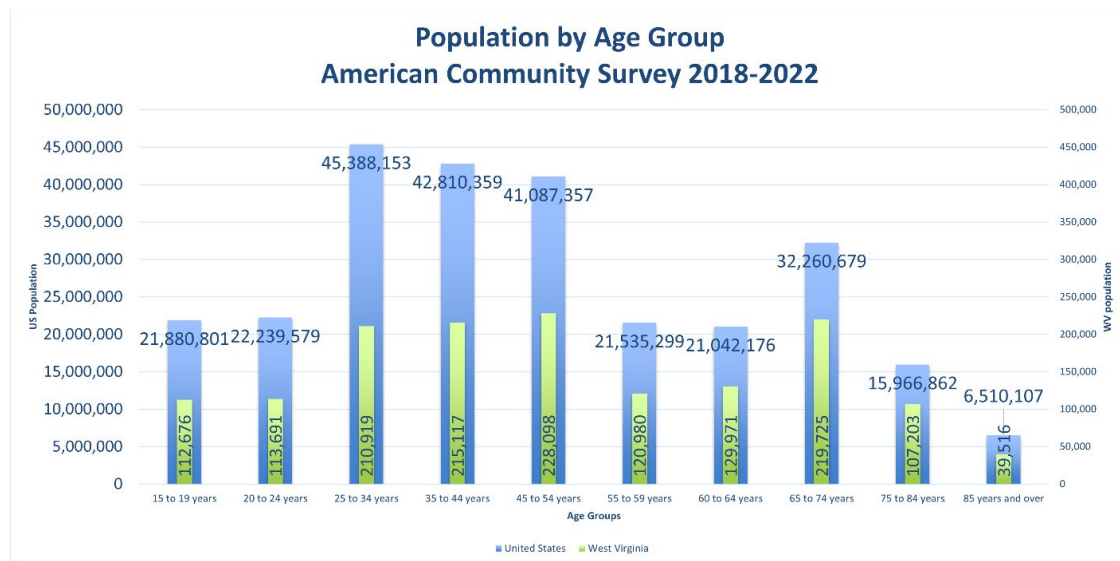
**(B) WORKFORCE ANALYSIS**

**Demographics of the State’s Economy<sup>3</sup>**

**Age**

Analyzing the age distribution in West Virginia against the United States reveals distinct patterns. In the younger age groups (15 to 24 years), the state's population aligns with national figures, with 112,676 individuals aged 15 to 19 years and 113,691 in the 20 to 24 years category. As we move into the working-age brackets (25 to 54 years), West Virginia's figures of 210,919 (25 to 34 years), 215,117 (35 to 44 years), and 228,098 (45 to 54 years) show alignment with national trends but at a smaller scale. However, in the 55 to 64 years group, the state's population of 120,980 (55 to 59 years) and 129,971 (60 to 64 years) contrasts with higher national figures. In the older age groups, West Virginia's population in the 65 to 74 years, 75 to 84 years, and 85 years and over categories stands at 219,725, 107,203, and 39,516 individuals, contributing to national figures. This narrative provides a snapshot of West Virginia's age distribution, emphasizing unique characteristics within specific age brackets compared to the national landscape.

**Figure 25: WV and US Population by Age Group**



The U.S. Census Bureau's 2019 5-year estimates from the American Community Survey provide a comprehensive overview of West Virginia's workforce demographics. With a total population aged 16 and older at 1,491,316, approximately 53.3% are part of the labor force. The employment to population ratio stands at 49.7%, while the unemployment rate for this population is 6.5%.

Analyzing specific age groups in West Virginia, individuals aged 16 to 19, numbering 89,375, have a labor force participation rate (LFPR) of 34.9%, slightly below the national LFPR of 40.7%.

The 20 to 24 age group, estimated at 114,325, exhibits a robust LFPR of 71.3%, albeit lower

<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise noted, figures and data in (B) Workforce Analysis are produced by the US Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey

than the national LFPR of 76.0%.

For those aged 25 to 29 (102,223), the LFPR is 74.7%, again slightly below the national LFPR of 84.3%.

The trend continues with the 30 to 34 age group (104,869), where West Virginia's LFPR of 73.1% is below the national LFPR of 84.2%.

Moving to the 35 to 44 age group (216,666), West Virginia's LFPR of 75.1% is slightly lower than the national LFPR of 83.6%.

In the 45 to 54 age group (221,995), the state's LFPR of 73.2% is again slightly below the national LFPR of 82.3%.

For those aged 55 to 59 (114,295), West Virginia's LFPR of 63.0% contrasts with the national LFPR of 74.2%.

In the 60 to 64 age group (126,356), the LFPR is 47.7%, below the national LFPR of 59.1%.

For residents aged 65 to 74 (224,674), the LFPR is 18.3%, significantly lower than the national LFPR of 26.6%.

Finally, for those aged 75 and over (151,488), West Virginia's LFPR of 6.8% is notably lower than the national LFPR of 7.3%.

This detailed analysis offers insights into West Virginia's diverse workforce across various age cohorts, highlighting trends and opportunities for targeted strategies and support in the context of both state and national labor force dynamics.

**Figure 26: WV and US Labor Force Participation Rate by Age Group**





Reviewing long-term projections for jobs in industries and occupations in West Virginia that provide employment opportunities for older workers. The total number of West Virginians aged 55 and older totaled 617,395, comprising 41.23% of the state’s total population (10.89% increase since 2010 census).

According to the Quarterly Workforce Indications (QWI), out of the twenty industries, the industry sectors that represented the largest numbers of employed seniors during 2019-2022 were Health Care and Social Assistance, Education Services, Retail Trade and Manufacturing. These sectors were the top four employers for older workers 55+ during 2019-2022. Table 2-SCSEP illustrates the industries during 2019-2022 that had the largest number of older workers.

**Figure 27: Industries With Older Workers**

Industry Sectors Employment	55-64				65-99			
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2019	2020	2021	2022
2019-2022								
Health Care and Social Assistance	21,588	21,416	21,074	20,962	7,571	7,960	8,218	8,696
Educational Services	1,116	1,030	1,015	1,044	686	618	642	658
Retail Trade	12,362	11,814	11,620	11,591	5,644	5,354	5,343	5,630
Manufacturing	10,128	9,817	9,554	9,441	2,298	2,290	2,272	2,398
Public Administration	7,162	7,150	6,975	6,962	2,881	2,824	2,851	3,010
Construction	6,080	5,318	5,438	5,498	1,588	1,438	1,505	1,667
Accommodation and Food Services	6,062	5,332	5,296	5,642	2,528	2,275	2,389	2,660
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Ser	4,896	4,540	4,588	4,967	1,925	1,802	1,869	2,056
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	4,595	4,453	4,686	4,816	1,927	1,875	1,949	2,170
Transportation and Warehousing	3,570	3,381	3,516	3,636	1,116	1,092	1,129	1,195
Wholesale Trade	4,363	4,174	4,065	3,831	1,451	1,424	1,422	1,409
Finance and Insurance	3,962	3,885	3,732	3,712	1,196	1,218	1,276	1,290
Other Services (except Public Administration)	3,827	3,094	3,044	3,131	2,298	1,803	1,834	1,922
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	3,433	2,904	2,756	2,875	670	594	574	697
Utilities	1,431	1,322	1,294	1,263	137	150	158	172
Information	1,462	1,352	1,322	1,346	428	426	439	484
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1,542	1,557	1,521	1,469	428	458	467	474
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1,273	1,244	1,236	1,261	722	680	676	734
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1,346	1,157	1,225	1,359	846	782	834	958
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	304	303	317	312	135	147	162	186

(Source: Table 2 - SCSEP; QWI, NAICS Sectors, 2019-2022)

The QWI information focuses on, of the 20 Industry Sectors which had the highest number hiring older workers (55+). The largest number of hires of older workers during 2019-2022 for the age range 55-64 were Health Care and Social Assistance, Construction, Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services, and Retail Trade. Within the age range of 65-99 the results varied. Similar to the age range 55-64, Health Care and Social Assistance was also the top employer for the age range 65-99. Educational Services, Retail Trade, Accommodation and Food Service were the remaining top employers that had the highest number of employed seniors for the age range 65-99. Table 3 - SCSEP illustrates the industries during 2019-2022 that had the largest number of 55+ seniors hired.

**Figure 28: Industries With Largest Number of 55+ Seniors Hired**

New Hires	55-64				65-99			
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2019	2020	2021	2022
Health Care and Social Assistance	1,134	1,120	1,211	1,315	462	506	553	541
Educational Services	116	92	118	117	68	60	78	74
Retail Trade	992	925	1,171	1,067	466	470	624	580
Manufacturing	315	296	406	410	103	109	136	152
Public Administration	349	300	297	296	227	260	227	273
Construction	1,196	890	932	835	295	242	280	269
Accommodation and Food Services	814	744	962	957	426	396	505	526
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	890	801	958	958	319	300	377	380
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	373	331	411	417	191	176	202	238
Transportation and Warehousing	394	346	376	298	144	135	150	132
Wholesale Trade	204	174	214	220	84	83	96	90
Finance and Insurance	140	102	152	159	55	54	62	62
Other Services (except Public Administration)	360	273	300	317	194	170	166	182
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	177	134	163	180	53	34	45	58
Utilities	47	51	55	74	13	17	12	15
Information	58	54	68	78	25	23	32	35
Management of Companies and Enterprises	70	77	67	68	25	32	29	28
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	94	107	108	115	43	52	57	58
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	224	194	258	255	139	122	170	186
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	42	38	42	46	26	29	27	34

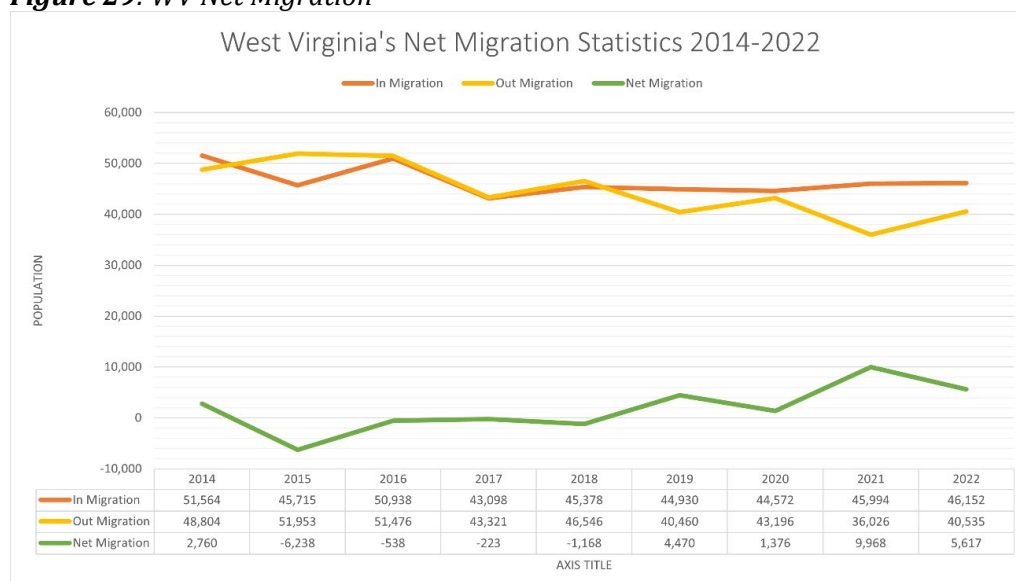
(Source: Table 3 - SCSEP; QWI, NAICS Sectors, 2019-2022)

From the information gathered in Table 3-SCSEP, the staffing patterns from the top three Industry Sectors of New Hires show employment in Healthcare and Social Assistance, Administration and Support Waste Management and Remediation Services, Construction, Accommodations and Food Services, Educational Services and Retail Trade. The forecast predicts that these industries will continue to hire older workers, thus providing employment opportunities in the following Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) Occupations Groups based off the Industry Sector of New Hires: Transportation, Natural Resources, Construction & Maintenance Occupations, Sales and Office Occupations, Service Occupations, Education, Legal, Community Service, Arts & Media Occupations, Management, Business & Science. EEO Occupational Groups are categorized into fourteen groups and further categorized into nine job categories. Table 4-SCSEP illustrates the twelve Occupational Groups that were narrowed down from the top Industries.

### West Virginia's Net Migration

West Virginia's net migration patterns, as revealed by the American Community Survey 2022 5-Year Estimates, offer insights into the state's demographic shifts and potential implications for its future. The data underscores the dynamic nature of migration, both within the state and from other regions, contributing to a net migration of 5,617 individuals.

**Figure 29: WV Net Migration**



Examining age groups, West Virginia has experienced notable in-migration among those aged 1 to 4 years, with 1,725 individuals moving in, offset by 2,613 individuals moving out, resulting in a net migration of -888. Similarly, the 5 to 17 years age group demonstrates a net migration of 528, indicating a positive trend in this demographic.

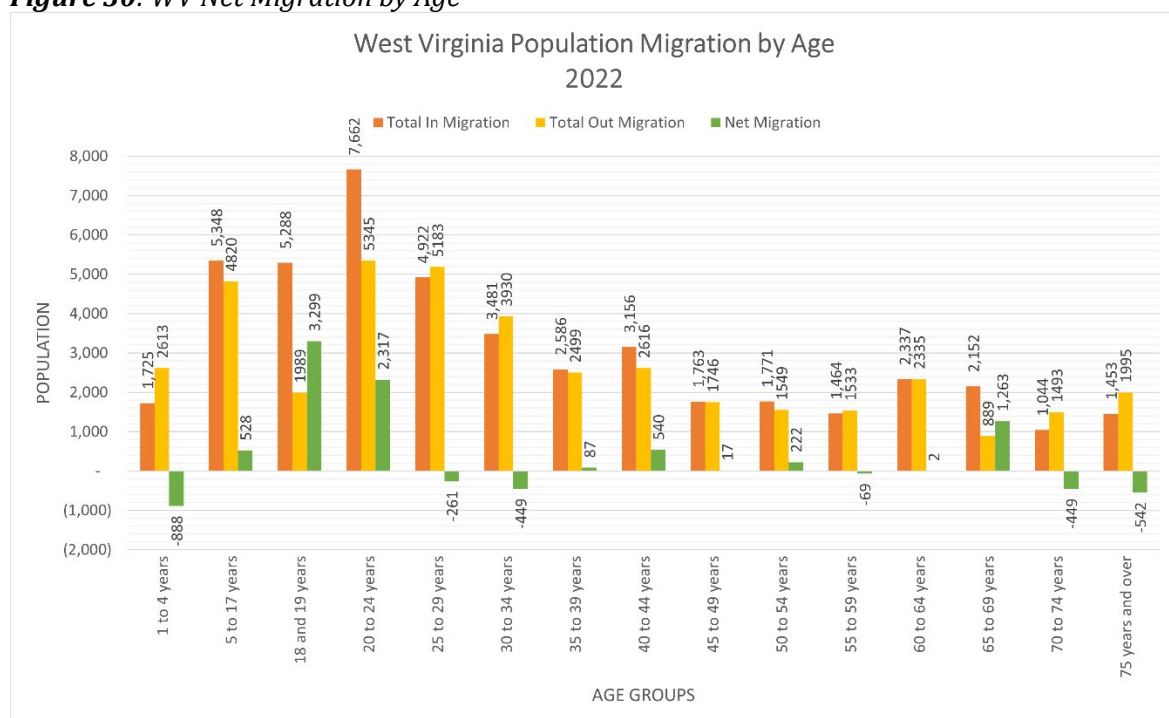
Notably, young adults aged 18 to 24 years contribute significantly to West Virginia's net migration, with a positive trend of 2,317 individuals moving into the state. This could potentially be attributed to factors such as education, employment opportunities, or lifestyle choices attracting individuals to West Virginia.

However, the state experiences a net migration loss in certain age groups, notably among individuals aged 25 to 34 years, with a net migration of -449. The age group 35 to 44 years, while showing a small net migration of 87 individuals, could benefit from strategies to attract and retain residents in their prime working years.

For individuals aged 60 and over, West Virginia observes varying net migration patterns. The age group 60 to 64 years shows a modest net migration of 2, while those aged 65 to 74 years and 75 and over exhibit net migration losses of -449 and -542, respectively.

While the overall net migration is positive, the data suggests a need for strategic efforts to enhance migration patterns, especially among the working-age population, and to address potential challenges in retaining residents in certain age brackets. Proactive measures aimed at creating an attractive environment for various age groups could play a pivotal role in shaping West Virginia's demographic landscape and fostering a resilient and vibrant future for the state.

**Figure 30: WV Net Migration by Age**



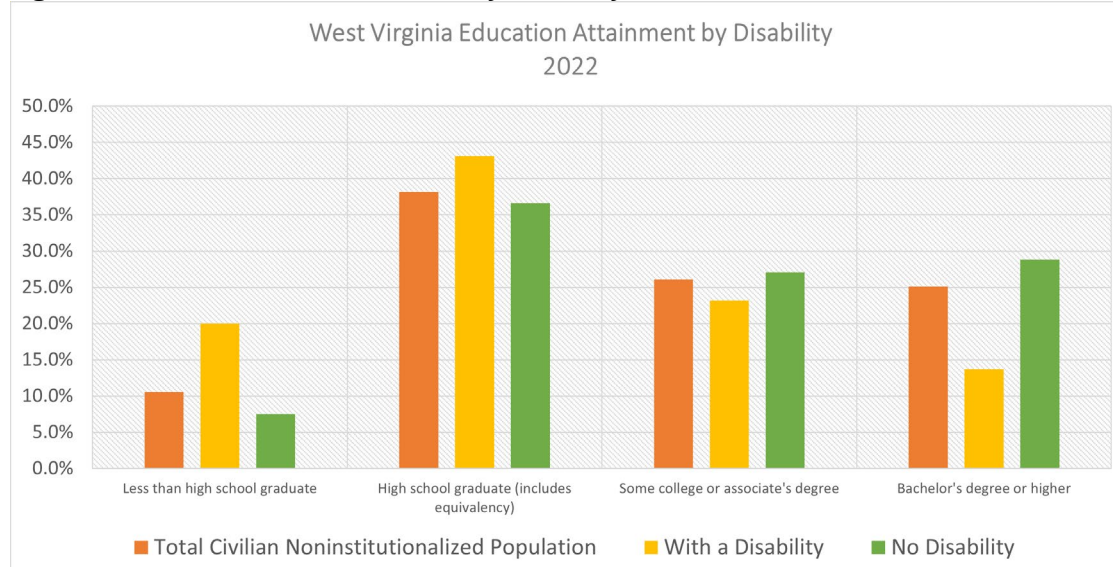
## Disability

Data on rates of educational attainment for people with disabilities show that people with disabilities, overall, have lower educational attainment than people without disabilities. 58.2% of people with disabilities have a high school degree or lower, compared to 44.1% of people without disabilities. Of those who have some college or above, 13.7% of people with disabilities graduate from college, compared to the 23.2% of people with disabilities who have some college experience or an associate degree. Meanwhile, the levels for people without disabilities are



more similar, 27.1% of the population have some college or associate degrees, while 27.1% have graduated from college. Understanding these patterns can inform targeted interventions, policies, and educational initiatives aimed at promoting inclusivity, accessibility, and equal opportunities for all residents, regardless of their disability status. For example, A higher percentage of people with disabilities are likely to fulfill “some” high school or college credit without graduating, pointing to a need for more support in completing each educational level.

**Figure 31: WV Education Attainment by Disability**



West Virginia's disability profile for 2022 reveals a dynamic landscape. Of the individuals with disabilities, 51,250 are employed, showcasing their significant contributions to the state's workforce. An additional 6,214 individuals with disabilities are unemployed, signaling potential areas for targeted employment support. Additionally, 109,593 individuals with disabilities are not currently in the labor force, suggesting unique challenges or personal choices. The Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for individuals with any disability is 34.40%, emphasizing the need for fostering inclusivity and accessibility. As the state moves forward, addressing barriers, promoting workplace accommodations, and implementing targeted training programs can enhance workforce participation, tapping into the diverse skills and talents of individuals with disabilities for a more inclusive and resilient economy.

**Figure 32: Disability Profile**

Disability 2022 Profile	
Employed with a disability	51,250
Unemployed with a disability	6,214
Not in Labor Force with a disability	109,593
<b>DISABILITY STATUS</b>	<b>LFPR</b>
With any disability	34.40%

### Sex and Race

In the latest demographic snapshot provided by the U.S. Census Bureau's 2022 ACS 5-year estimates, West Virginia's population continues to showcase distinct patterns in sex and race. As of 2022, the total population stands at approximately 1,792,310 residents. The male population

is reported at 897,121, slightly surpassing the female population at 895,189.

Analyzing the racial composition, most West Virginia residents identify as White alone, representing 91.5% of the state's population with a total count of 1,639,342 individuals. Black or African American alone constitutes 3.4% of the population, with 61,227 residents. American Indian and Alaska Native alone account for 0.1%, totaling 1,730 individuals. The Asian alone population stands at 0.8%, comprising 13,602 residents. Some other race alone makes up 0.5% of the population, with 9,504 individuals. Notably, the Two or more races category represents 3.7% of the population, totaling 66,905 residents.

Compared to 2021 figures, this data shows subtle shifts in population distribution. While the overall population has seen a marginal decrease, the variations in racial demographics highlight the dynamic nature of West Virginia's population. The comprehensive understanding of these demographic shifts is crucial for informed policymaking, resource allocation, and community engagement initiatives tailored to the diverse needs of West Virginia's residents.

**Figure 33: WV Population by Sex and Race**

<b>West Virginia Population by Sex and Race</b>				
<b>Race</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>
White alone	1,639,342	91.5%	825,042	814,300
Black or African American alone	61,227	3.4%	26,797	34,430
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	1,730	0.1%	839	891
Asian alone	13,602	0.8%	7,218	6,384
Some other race alone	9,504	0.5%	4,276	5,228
Two or more races	66,905	3.7%	33,565	33,340
2022: US Census Bureau ACS 5 Year Estimates Data Profiles - Table: B01001A-G				

### **Education and the Labor Force**

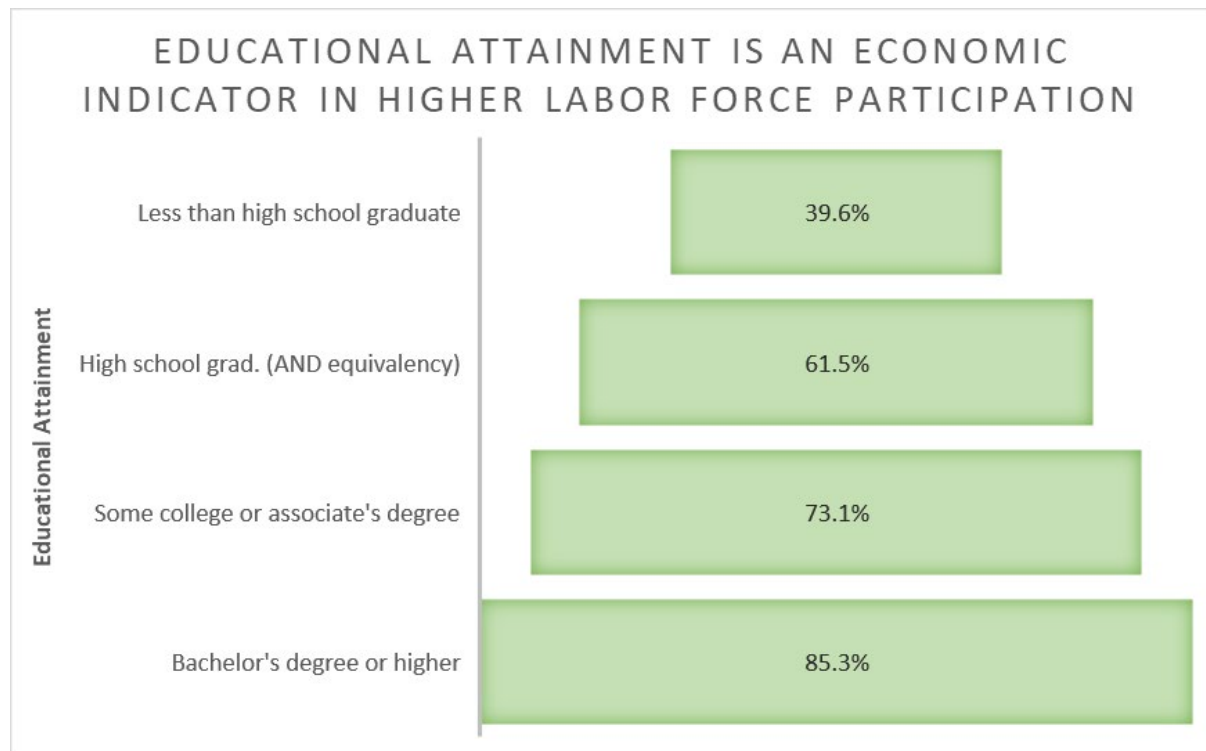
The Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) data in West Virginia, categorized by educational attainment, underscores the significant impact of education on workforce engagement. Among individuals with less than a high school diploma, the LFPR stands at 39.6%. This lower rate is indicative of the challenges faced by this group in accessing and participating in the labor market. Those with a high school diploma or equivalency exhibit a higher LFPR at 61.5%, signaling a notable increase in workforce participation compared to individuals with lower educational attainment.

As educational attainment rises, so does the labor force participation. Those with some college education or an associate degree demonstrate a substantially higher LFPR at 73.1%, emphasizing the positive correlation between post-secondary education and increased engagement in the workforce. The trend continues upward for individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher, reaching an impressive LFPR of 85.3%. This group, which includes those with advanced degrees, illustrates the considerable influence of higher education on active participation in the labor force.

These findings highlight the pivotal role of education as a determinant of labor force engagement. As West Virginia seeks to enhance its economic vitality, focusing on educational attainment and facilitating access to higher education opportunities can be instrumental in fostering a more robust and dynamic workforce. Policymakers and stakeholders can leverage this data to develop targeted initiatives aimed at improving educational outcomes, thereby

contributing to higher labor force participation rates and overall economic prosperity in the state.

**Figure 34: WV Population and Labor Force Participation Rate by Educational Attainment**



The unemployment landscape in West Virginia illustrates a clear correlation between educational attainment and employment prospects. Among the population aged 25 to 64 years, the overall unemployment rate stands at 5.20%. However, when examining educational levels, a compelling trend emerges showing higher unemployment rates for those with lower educational attainment.

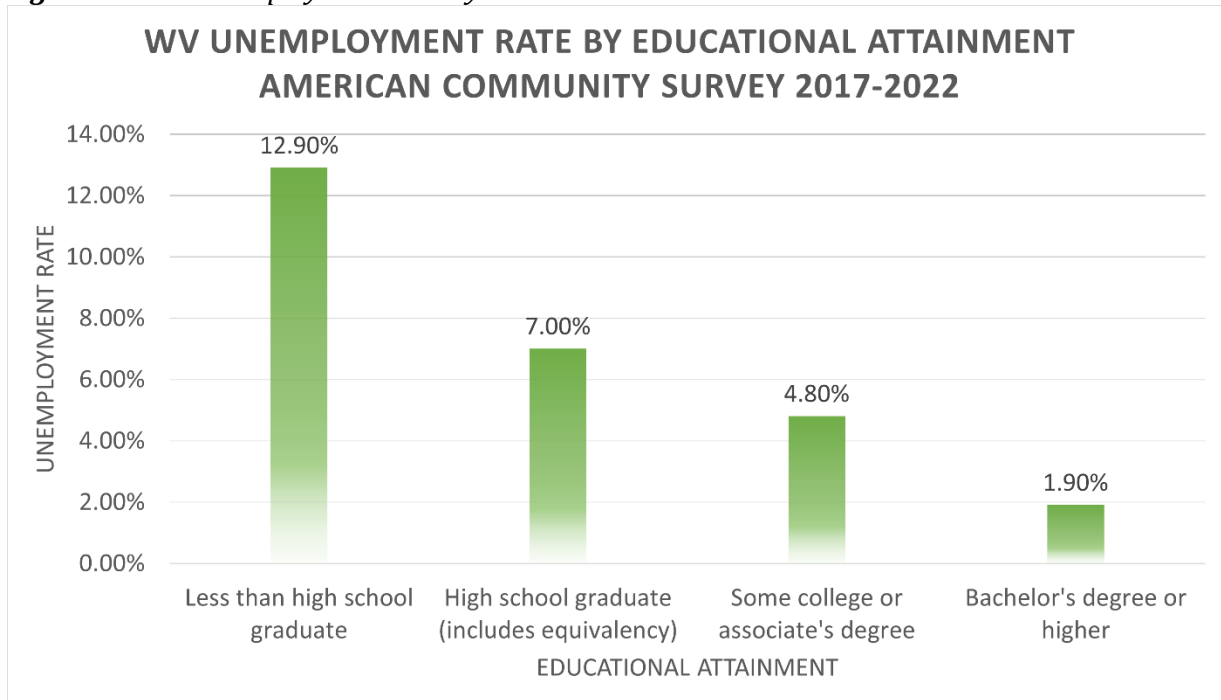
Individuals with less than a high school diploma face a higher unemployment rate, recording at 12.90%. This emphasizes the challenges associated with limited educational attainment and the impact it can have on employability in the state. Conversely, those with a high school diploma or equivalency experience a lower unemployment rate at 7.00%, showcasing a positive correlation between basic educational attainment and improved employment outcomes.

The trend continues with higher education levels contributing to even lower unemployment rates. Individuals with some college education or an associate degree exhibit a reduced unemployment rate of 4.80%. This underlines the potential benefits of post-secondary education in enhancing employability and reducing unemployment.

Notably, those with a bachelor's degree or higher demonstrate the lowest unemployment rate, standing at 1.90%. This emphasizes the substantial advantages associated with advanced education in fostering a resilient and highly employable workforce.

These findings underscore the importance of educational investment in shaping the employment landscape in West Virginia. Initiatives aimed at improving educational attainment, especially at the post-secondary level, can play a pivotal role in reducing unemployment rates and contributing to overall economic resilience in the state. Policymakers and stakeholders can leverage this data to tailor strategies that address educational disparities and enhance workforce development, ultimately fostering a more robust and prosperous economy in West Virginia.

**Figure 35: WV Unemployment Rate by Educational Attainment**



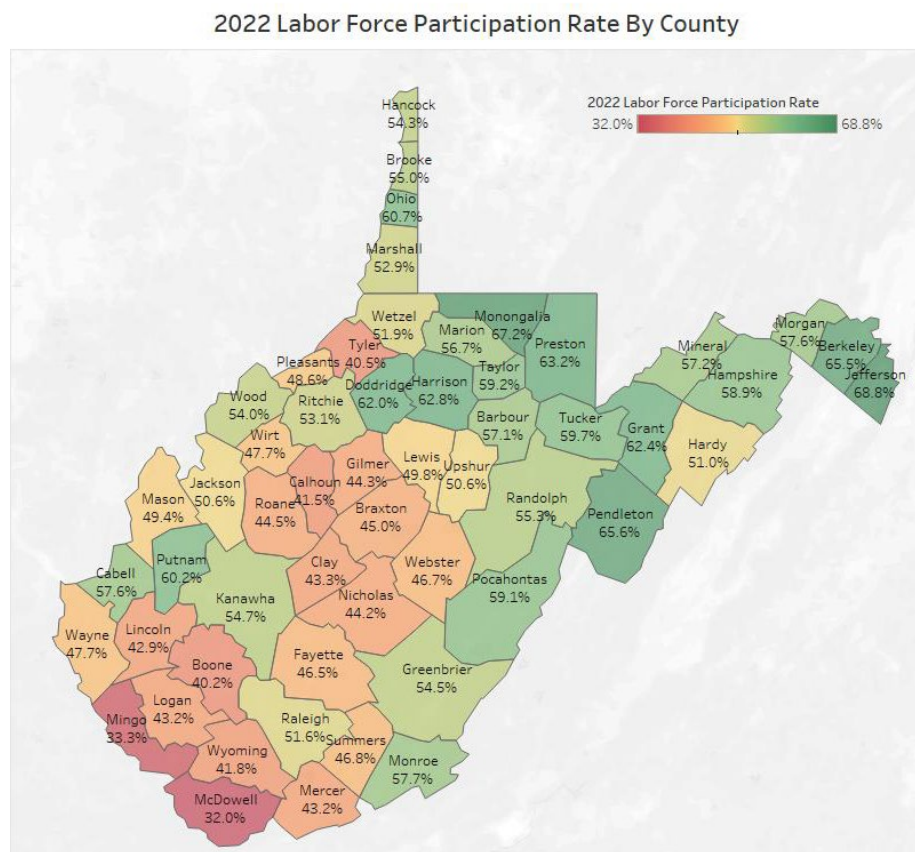
### Labor Force

The labor force participation rate (LFPR) in West Virginia registered at 54.7% in 2022, the lowest in the nation. The national labor force participation rate stood at 62.2%.

Fewer than one-half (40.0%) of West Virginia counties recorded a LFPR below 50.0% in 2022. Several of these counties are in the southern coalfields of West Virginia (Workforce Development Regions 1 & 2). McDowell County recorded a labor force participation rate of 32.0%, the lowest in the state. Other southern counties with a labor force participation rate less than 50% included Wyoming (41.8%), Boone (40.2%), Logan (43.2%), Mingo (33.3%), Wayne (47.7%), Summers (46.8%), Lincoln (42.9%), Fayette (46.5%), and Mercer (43.2%).

Ten counties in the state recorded a labor force participation rate greater than 60.0% in 2022. These counties are Putnam (60.2), Ohio (60.7), Doddridge (62.0), Grant (62.4), Harrison (62.8), Preston (63.2), Berkeley (65.5), Pendleton (65.6), Monongalia (67.2), and Jefferson (68.8). In 2022, seven West Virginia counties reported a labor force participation rate greater than the national rate of 62.2%.

**Figure 36: WV Labor Force Participation Rate by County**



Source: 2022 Workforce WV LMI Data

Examining the LFPR for West Virginia and its contiguous states provides a comprehensive view of the region's workforce engagement in 2022. West Virginia, with an LFPR of 52.8%, exhibited a lower participation rate compared to its neighboring states. WV's contiguous states showcase varying levels of labor force participation, influencing the overall economic landscape.

Maryland leads the region with a robust LFPR of 67.0%, indicating a high level of workforce engagement. Virginia closely follows with a rate of 65.3%, contributing to a dynamic and active labor market. Ohio, at 63.1%, demonstrates solid workforce participation, aligning with the broader regional trends.

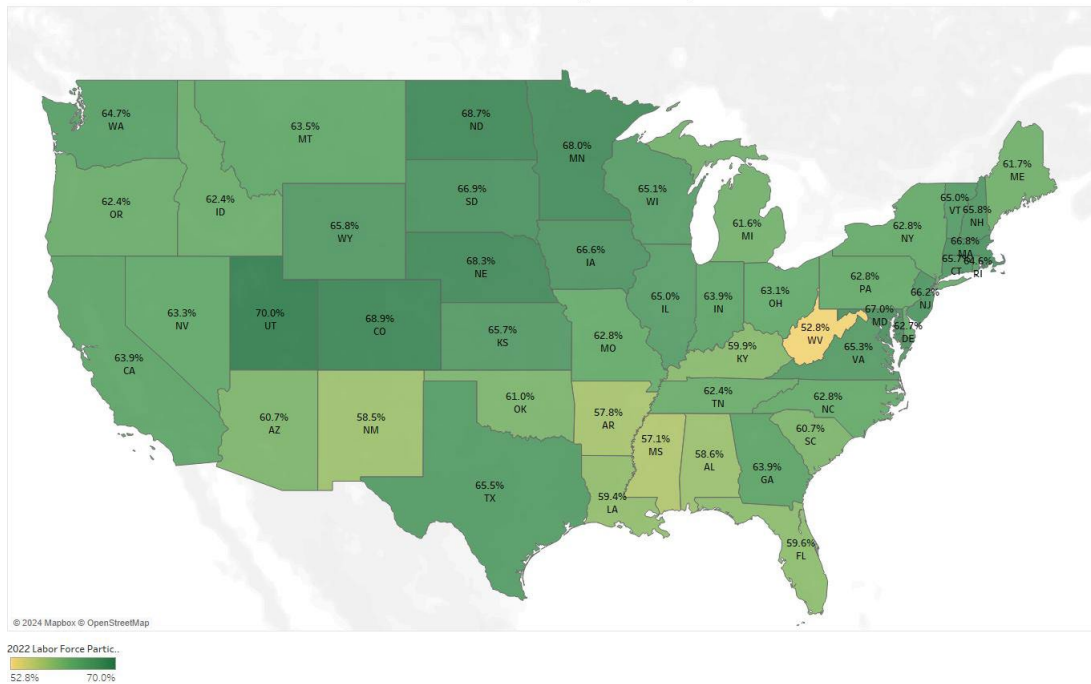
Pennsylvania and Kentucky present LFPRs of 62.8% and 59.9%, respectively, showcasing moderate workforce engagement. Kentucky, although slightly below the national average in LFPR, remains an essential contributor to the regional labor market.

West Virginia, despite its LFPR of 52.8%, plays a crucial role in the regional economy, and there is an opportunity for targeted initiatives to enhance labor force participation. Understanding these LFPR dynamics across contiguous states allows policymakers, businesses, and community leaders to tailor strategies that address specific workforce challenges and leverage regional strengths. As each state contributes uniquely to the economic tapestry, collaborative efforts can foster a resilient and thriving regional workforce.



**Figure 37: US Labor Force Participation Rate by State**

United States Labor Force Participation Rate by State 2022

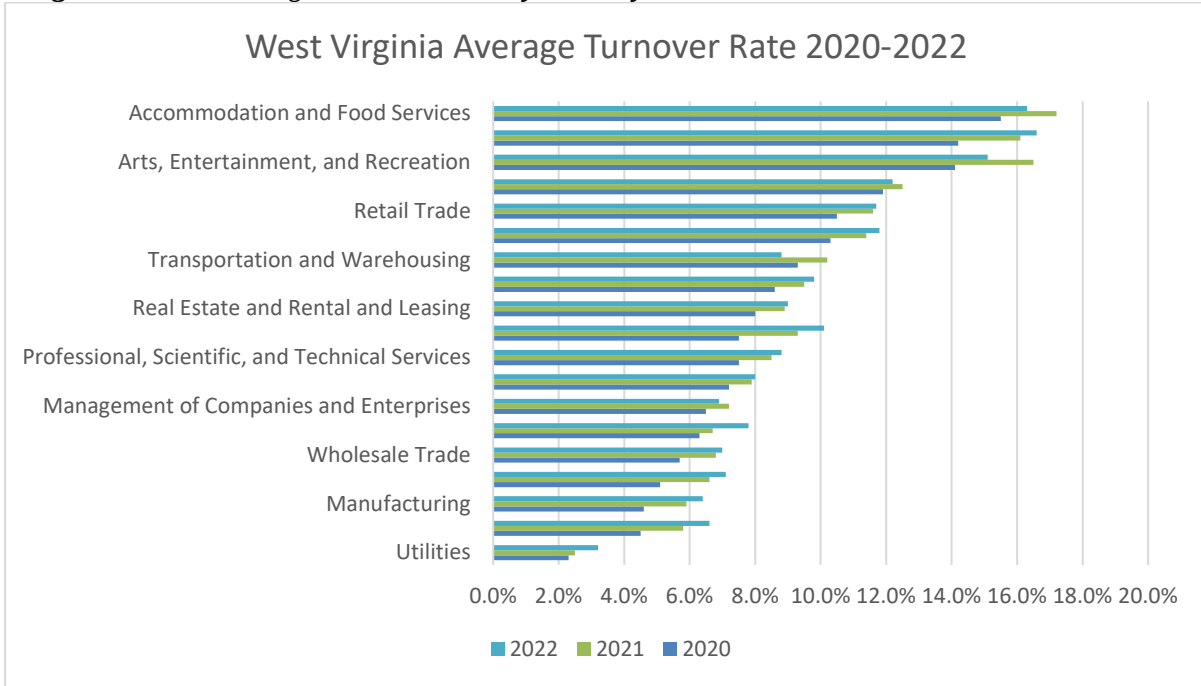


## Turnovers

Turnover rates can vary by industry and by a variety of demographic characteristics, such as education, race, sex, and age. In West Virginia, between 2020 and 2022 industry sectors with the highest average turnover rates include Accommodation and Food Services; Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation; Retail Trade; and Transportation and Warehousing. Sectors with the lowest turnover rates include Utilities, Manufacturing, and Wholesale Trade. High turnover rates in industry sectors can indicate a number of possibilities, including, but not limited to, seasonality, short business cycles, part-time employment status, employee dissatisfaction, and health risks.

Addressing retention challenges is key for sustained economic stability. West Virginia's economic resilience hinges on maintaining a healthy turnover rate that attracts talent without compromising workforce stability. As West Virginia navigates the economic landscape, policymakers and stakeholders can leverage these insights to formulate targeted initiatives, ensuring workforce resilience and sustained economic growth in the years to come.

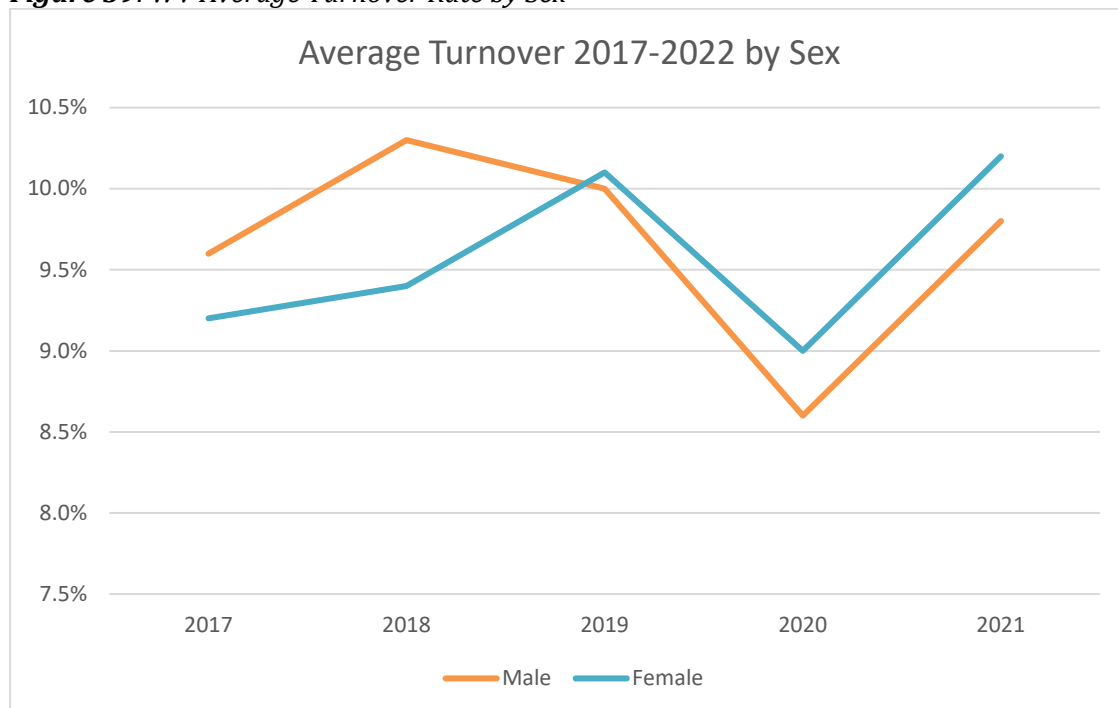
**Figure 38: WV Average Turnover Rate by Industry**



Source: 2021-2023 QWI Explorer

In 2021, turnover rates of female employees (10.2%) were higher than male employees (9.8%), continuing the trend starting in 2019.

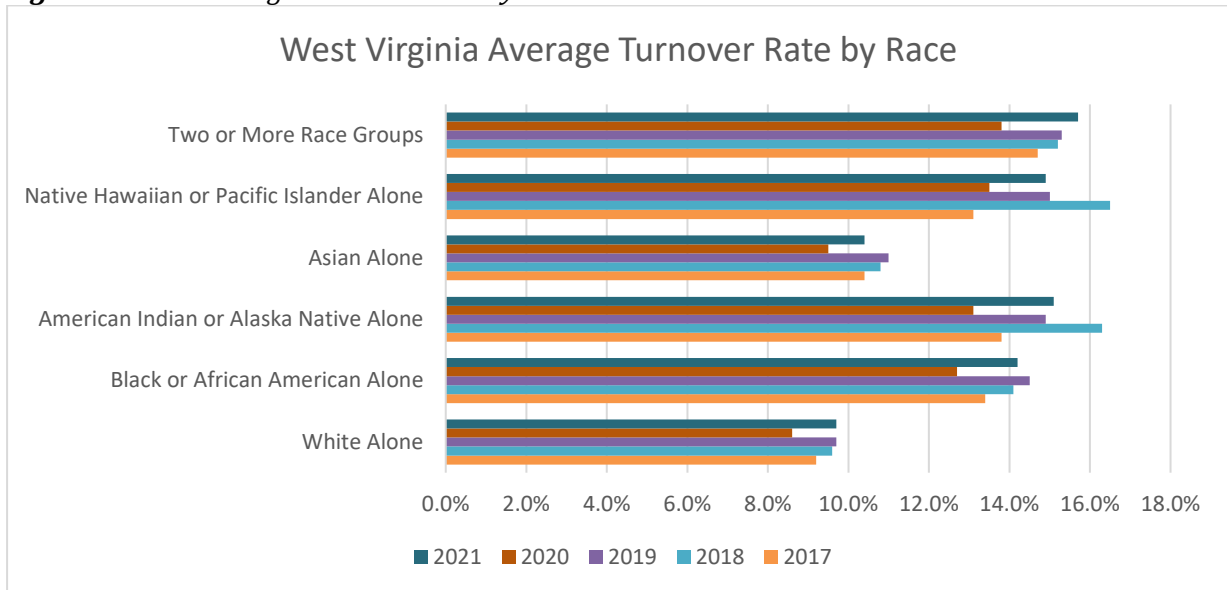
**Figure 39: WV Average Turnover Rate by Sex**



Source: 2017-2021 QWI Explorer

Assessing turnover rate by race reveals that in 2021 turnover rates were lowest among White (9.7%) and Asian (10.4%) populations; The highest turnover rate was among Two or More Races (15.7%), followed by American Indian/Alaskan Native (15.1%) and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (14.9%), and Black or African-American (14.2%) populations. Turnover rates across races increased between .9% (White, Asian) and 1.9% (Two or More Races) between 2020 and 2021.

**Figure 40: WV Average Turnover Rate by Race**



Source: 2020-2021 QWI Explorer

## Occupations

Building upon last year's insights, West Virginia's occupational landscape continues to evolve, with a keen focus on the seven workforce development regions. Notably, the occupations anticipating substantial annual growth rates between 2020 and 2030 predominantly align with the healthcare and social services sectors. This persistent trend finds its roots in the state's aging population, the challenges posed by the opioid epidemic, and the prevalence of health issues like obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and tobacco use. The positive aspect is that many of these in-demand healthcare occupations often require less extensive education or offer on-the-job training opportunities, presenting a pathway for aspiring professionals, such as obtaining an associate degree for roles like Registered Nurses. As we explore each region's unique occupational projections, we uncover the intricate interplay between workforce needs, demographic shifts, and the state's ongoing health challenges.

### Workforce Development Region 1 Occupational Employment Projections 2020-2030

In Workforce Development Region 1 of West Virginia, the occupational employment projections for the period 2020-2030 spotlight key occupations with the highest anticipated job openings. Leading the projections is the demand for Home Health and Personal Care Aides, with an estimated 700 openings, reflecting the region's emphasis on healthcare and social services. In the culinary sector, Cooks in restaurants and Fast Food and Counter Workers are projected to see 550 and 480 openings, respectively. The list continues through other sectors, including positions such as Registered Nurses, Security Guards, and Construction Laborers. These projections provide valuable insights into the evolving workforce landscape and should guide strategic decisions for regional development and employment planning.

**Figure 41: WDR 1 Top 15 Occupations by Projected Job Openings**

Workforce Development Region 1 Occupational Employment Projections 2020-2030 Top Occupations by Projected Openings		
31-1120	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	700
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	550
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	480



35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	350
33-9032	Security Guards	270
29-1141	Registered Nurses	270
53-3058	Passenger Vehicle Drivers, Except Bus Drivers, Transit and Intercity	170
35-1012	First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	170
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	150
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	140
37-2012	Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	140
49-9071	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	120
31-1131	Nursing Assistants	110
29-1171	Nurse Practitioners	110
47-2061	Construction Laborers	100
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	90
Workforce WV Labor Market Information Division		

Source: WV Labor Market Information Division

### Workforce Development Region 2 Occupational Employment Projections 2020-2030

In Workforce Development Region 2 of West Virginia, the highest demand is in healthcare services, with high numbers for Home Health and Personal Care Aides (960 openings) as well as Registered Nurses (540 openings). In the culinary sector, Fast Food and Counter Workers and Restaurant Cooks are projected to see substantial openings of 880 and 460, respectively. The list also includes positions in retail, customer service, and logistics, with heavy emphasis on Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers, Construction Laborers, and Industrial Machinery Mechanics.

**Figure 42: WDR 2 Top 15 Occupations by Projected Job Openings**

<b>Workforce Development Region 2 Occupational Employment Projections 2020-2030 Top Occupations by Projected Openings</b>		
31-1120	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	960
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	880
29-1141	Registered Nurses	540
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	460
35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	340
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	300
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	260
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	230
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	190
31-1131	Nursing Assistants	170
47-2061	Construction Laborers	160
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	160
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	150

31-9092	Medical Assistants	150
25-3031	Substitute Teachers, Short-Term	140
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	90
Workforce WV Labor Market Information Division		

Source: WV Labor Market Information Division

### Workforce Development Region 3 Occupational Employment Projections 2020-2030

In Workforce Development Region 3 of West Virginia, Fast Food and Counter Workers lead with a substantial projection of 700 openings, underscoring the importance of the hospitality industry, especially considered next to the number of openings for Restaurant Cooks (400) and Waiters and Waitresses (250). Home Health and Personal Care Aides follow with 480 projected openings, which, alongside openings for Registered Nurses (350), reflects growing demand for healthcare services. Construction Laborers (270) and Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers (190) indicate a demand for skilled workers in essential sectors, aligning with the region's economic needs.

**Figure 43:** WDR 3 Top 15 Occupations by Projected Job Openings

<b>Workforce Development Region 3 Occupational Employment Projections 2020-2030 Top Occupations by Projected Openings</b>		
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	700
31-1120	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	480
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	400
33-9032	Security Guards	360
29-1141	Registered Nurses	350
47-2061	Construction Laborers	270
35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	250
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	230
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	220
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	190
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	190
35-1012	First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	180
29-1171	Nurse Practitioners	150
23-1011	Lawyers	150
51-9199	Production Workers, All Other	130
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	90
Workforce WV Labor Market Information Division		

Source: WV Labor Market Information Division

## Workforce Development Region 4 Occupational Employment Projections 2020-2030

In Workforce Development Region 4 of West Virginia, the occupational employment projections for 2020-2030 reveal key occupations with projected openings. Home Health and Personal Care Aides lead with 710 anticipated openings, emphasizing the region's focus on healthcare and support services. Fast Food and Counter Workers and Restaurant Cooks reflect the continued demand in the hospitality industry, with 330 and 260 projected openings, respectively. Registered Nurses and Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers follow suit, showcasing the importance of healthcare and transportation sectors. Construction Laborers and First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers also feature in the projections, indicating a diverse range of occupational needs. These insights provide a foundation for regional workforce planning and strategic economic development initiatives.

**Figure 44:** WDR 4 Top 15 Occupations by Projected Job Openings

<b>Workforce Development Region 4 Occupational Employment Projections 2020-2030 Top Occupations by Projected Openings</b>		
31-1120	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	710
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	330
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	260
29-1141	Registered Nurses	160
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	140
35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	130
35-1012	First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	130
47-2061	Construction Laborers	90
53-3058	Passenger Vehicle Drivers, Except Bus Drivers, Transit and Intercity	90
31-9092	Medical Assistants	80
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	70
11-9111	Medical and Health Services Managers	70
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	70
15-1299	Computer Occupations, All Other	70
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	70
29-1171	Nurse Practitioners	60
Workforce WV Labor Market Information Division		

Source: WV Labor Market Information Division

## Workforce Development Region 5 Occupational Employment Projections 2020-2030

Within Workforce Development Region 5, Registered Nurses take a prominent position with 320 projected openings, and Home Health and Personal Care Aides anticipate 280 openings, reflecting the continued demand for skilled healthcare professionals. The hospitality industry, exemplified by Restaurant Cooks and Fast Food and Counter Workers, anticipates 310 and 240 openings, respectively. This region also showcases openings in transportation, with projections for Passenger Vehicle Drivers (90) and Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers (80).

**Figure 45: WDR 5 Top 15 Occupations by Projected Job Openings**

<b>Workforce Development Region 5 Occupational Employment Projections 2020-2030 Top Occupations by Projected Openings</b>		
29-1141	Registered Nurses	320
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	310
31-1120	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	280
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	240
35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	170
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	100
31-1131	Nursing Assistants	90
53-3058	Passenger Vehicle Drivers, Except Bus Drivers, Transit and Intercity	90
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	80
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	80
37-2012	Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	70
47-2073	Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	70
31-9092	Medical Assistants	60
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	60
11-9111	Medical and Health Services Managers	60
47-2061	Construction Laborers	60
Workforce WV Labor Market Information Division		

Source: WV Labor Market Information Division

### Workforce Development Region 6 Occupational Employment Projections 2020-2030

Workforce Development Region 6 demonstrates a robust demand for positions in the hospitality sector, as evidenced by Fast Food and Counter Workers, Restaurant Cooks, and Waiters and Waitresses, projecting 1610, 970, and 910 openings, respectively. Home Health and Personal Care Aides follow closely at 940, which, along with Registered Nurses at 490, reflect the region's emphasis on healthcare support services. Construction Laborers and Registered Nurses also feature prominently, showcasing the region's commitment to infrastructure development. The demand for skilled workers extends to management roles, such as General and Operations Managers and Food Service Managers, indicating a need for leadership across industries.

**Figure 46: WDR 6 Top 15 Occupations by Projected Job Openings**

<b>Workforce Development Region 6 Occupational Employment Projections 2020-2030 Top Occupations by Projected Openings</b>		
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	1610
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	970
31-1120	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	940
35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	910

47-2061	Construction Laborers	570
29-1141	Registered Nurses	490
35-1012	First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	480
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	360
25-1071	Health Specialties Teachers, Postsecondary	250
35-3011	Bartenders	240
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	220
35-9031	Hosts and Hostesses, Restaurant, Lounge, and Coffee Shop	200
11-9051	Food Service Managers	190
53-3058	Passenger Vehicle Drivers, Except Bus Drivers, Transit and Intercity	180
11-9111	Medical and Health Services Managers	170
29-1171	Nurse Practitioners	170
Workforce WV Labor Market Information Division		

Source: WV Labor Market Information Division

### Workforce Development Region 7 Occupational Employment Projections 2020-2030

In Workforce Development Region 7, Home Health and Personal Care Aides project the highest number of openings at 530 and reflect the region's emphasis on healthcare and support services, seen also in 180 openings for Registered Nurses. The culinary industry also features prominently, with significant openings for Restaurant Cooks (410), Fast Food and Counter Workers (270), and First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Service Workers (110), illustrating the region's vibrant food sector. A notable aspect is the demand for transportation roles, including Passenger Vehicle Drivers (230) and Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers (70), indicating the region's reliance on efficient logistics. The projections also highlight the need for skilled professionals across sectors, including education (Elementary School Teachers – 80) and technology (Software Developers – 120).

**Figure 47: WDR 7 Top 15 Occupations by Projected Job Openings**

Workforce Development Region 7 Occupational Employment Projections 2020-2030 Top Occupations by Projected Openings		
31-1120	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	530
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	410
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	270
53-3058	Passenger Vehicle Drivers, Except Bus Drivers, Transit and Intercity	230
35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	180
29-1141	Registered Nurses	170
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	120
15-1256	Software Developers and Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers	120
35-1012	First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	110
49-9071	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	90

25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	80
37-2012	Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	80
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	70
15-1299	Computer Occupations, All Other	70
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	70
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	70
Workforce WV Labor Market Information Division		

Source: WV Labor Market Information Division

## Education

The presented data illustrates the percentage of the population aged 25 years or older holding a bachelor's degree or higher across the nation, providing valuable insights into the educational attainment of different regions. West Virginia stands out with a comparatively lower percentage at 24.8%, emphasizing the need for initiatives that promote higher education in the state. Contiguous states such as Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania boast higher percentages, indicating a more significant proportion of individuals with advanced educational qualifications. Educational attainment plays a crucial role in shaping workforce capabilities and economic development, making it imperative for policymakers and educators to focus on strategies that enhance educational opportunities and attainment levels, particularly in regions with lower percentages. The national average of 34.5% underscores the ongoing national effort to foster a highly educated population.

**Figure 48: Population 25 Plus with Bachelor's Degree or Higher**

<b>Percent of Population Age 25 years or Older with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher</b>			
State	Percent	State	Percent
<b>West Virginia</b>	24.8%	<b>Georgia</b>	34.7%
<b>Mississippi</b>	24.8%	<b>Nebraska</b>	34.7%
<b>Arkansas</b>	25.4%	<b>Pennsylvania</b>	35.1%
<b>Nevada</b>	27.0%	<b>Hawaii</b>	35.4%
<b>Louisiana</b>	27.1%	<b>Kansas</b>	35.6%
<b>Kentucky</b>	27.9%	<b>North Carolina</b>	35.9%
<b>Oklahoma</b>	28.5%	<b>Maine</b>	36.1%
<b>Alabama</b>	28.8%	<b>Oregon</b>	36.3%
<b>Wyoming</b>	29.6%	<b>Delaware</b>	36.5%
<b>Indiana</b>	29.6%	<b>California</b>	37.0%
<b>New Mexico</b>	30.5%	<b>Illinois</b>	37.7%
<b>Alaska</b>	30.6%	<b>Utah</b>	37.9%
<b>Tennessee</b>	31.1%	<b>Minnesota</b>	39.1%
<b>South Dakota</b>	31.6%	<b>Washington</b>	39.5%
<b>North Dakota</b>	31.8%	<b>Rhode Island</b>	39.6%
<b>Ohio</b>	32.0%	<b>New York</b>	40.0%
<b>Michigan</b>	32.1%	<b>New Hampshire</b>	41.3%
<b>Missouri</b>	32.2%	<b>Connecticut</b>	41.9%
<b>Idaho</b>	32.3%	<b>Virginia</b>	42.2%
<b>Iowa</b>	32.3%	<b>New Jersey</b>	43.5%
<b>South Carolina</b>	32.6%	<b>Maryland</b>	43.8%
<b>Arizona</b>	33.0%	<b>Vermont</b>	44.2%
<b>Wisconsin</b>	33.2%	<b>Colorado</b>	45.9%

<b>Texas</b>	33.9%	<b>Massachusetts</b>	46.6%
<b>Florida</b>	34.3%	<b>District of Columbia</b>	65.4%
<b>Montana</b>	34.6%		
<b>United States</b>	34.5%		

The 2020-2030 Occupational Projections Data by Level of Education for West Virginia provides a comprehensive snapshot of the state's evolving workforce landscape. The data reveals significant shifts in employment distribution across various educational levels, underscoring the dynamic nature of the state's economy. Notably, the projections indicate a modest increase in total employment, with a nuanced focus on educational attainment. High school diploma holders continue to form a substantial part of the workforce, although their percentage of the workforce is anticipated to decrease slightly by 2030. Conversely, the demand for individuals with associate degrees and postsecondary non-degree awards is expected to rise, reflecting a growing need for specialized skills and technical expertise. The projections also highlight the importance of higher education, as employment figures for bachelor's, master's, and doctoral or professional degree holders are set to increase. This data reinforces the significance of educational initiatives and workforce development programs to align with the evolving demands of West Virginia's job market and foster a resilient and well-educated workforce.

**Figure 49: WV Occupational Projections by Education**

<b>2020-2030 Occupational Projections Data by Level of Education</b>				
<b>Educational Level</b>	<b>2020 Employment</b>	<b>2020 Percent of Workforce</b>	<b>2030 Employment</b>	<b>2030 Percent of Workforce</b>
No formal educational credential	155,128	22.98%	169,551	23.21%
High School Diploma	273,055	40.44%	288,180	39.45%
Some college, no degree	14,320	2.12%	14,518	1.99%
Associate degree	17,164	2.54%	19,418	2.66%
Bachelor's Degree	132,150	19.57%	144,088	19.73%
Postsecondary non-degree award	48,625	7.20%	54,542	7.47%
Master's Degree	14,278	2.11%	17,034	2.33%
Doctoral or Professional Degree	20,448	3.03%	23,108	3.16%

Source: Workforce West Virginia Labor Market Information - Occupational Projections Data

The latest economic data on median earnings by education level in West Virginia reveals important insights into the correlation between educational attainment and financial prosperity. The figures underscore the significance of education in shaping income dynamics across the state.

**Overview of Median Earnings:**

- For the population aged 25 years and over with earnings, the overall median income stands at \$42,738. This figure reflects the combined earnings of both male and female individuals in this age group.



### Educational Attainment and Earnings:

- 1. Less than High School Graduate:**
  - Individuals with less than a high school diploma have a median income of \$26,692. This group demonstrates a substantial income disparity, with males earning \$31,728 compared to females earning \$22,346.
- 2. High School Graduate (includes equivalency):**
  - Those with a high school diploma or equivalency exhibit a higher median income at \$35,052. Males in this category have a median income of \$42,328, while females earn \$26,556.
- 3. Some College or Associate Degree:**
  - Individuals with some college education or an associate degree show a further increase in median income, reaching \$40,791. The gender disparity continues to be notable, with males earning \$51,797 and females earning \$33,565.
- 4. Bachelor's Degree:**
  - The median income for individuals with a bachelor's degree rises significantly to \$52,887. Males with a bachelor's degree earn \$61,978, while females earn \$46,408.
- 5. Graduate or Professional Degree:**
  - Those with a graduate or professional degree demonstrate the highest median income at \$63,974. This group showcases a substantial gender income gap, with males earning \$81,142 compared to females earning \$56,531.

Education plays a pivotal role in determining median earnings in West Virginia. As educational attainment increases, so too does the median income, underlining the importance of fostering educational opportunities and access to higher education. Policymakers and educators can draw from these insights to tailor initiatives that promote educational advancement, address gender income disparities, and contribute to the overall economic well-being of West Virginia's residents.

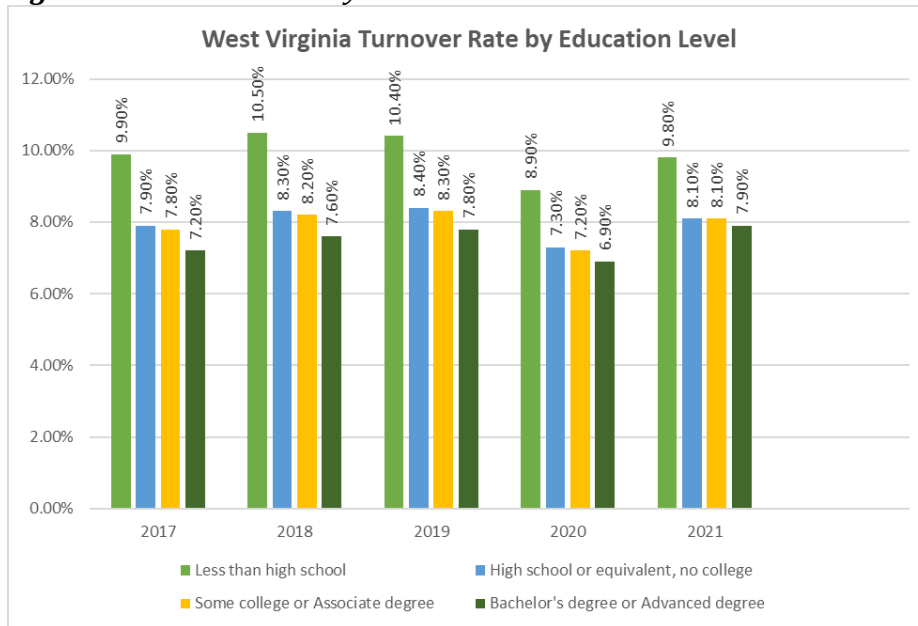
**Figure 50: Median Annual Earnings by Education Level**

West Virginia Median Earnings by Education Level			
Education Level	Total	Male	Female
Population 25 years and over with earnings	\$42,738	\$50,775	\$36,638
Less than high school graduate	\$26,692	\$31,728	\$22,346
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	\$35,052	\$42,328	\$26,556
Some college or associate's degree	\$40,791	\$51,797	\$33,565
Bachelor's degree	\$52,887	\$61,978	\$46,408
Graduate or professional degree	\$63,974	\$81,142	\$56,531
<b>Source: US Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates</b>			

Education levels may also impact turnover rate with data showing a potential correlation between education level and employment stability, with higher educational attainment associated with lower turnover. Individuals with less than a high school education consistently exhibited higher turnover rates, starting at 9.90% in 2017 and slightly decreasing to 9.80% in 2021. Meanwhile, those with a bachelor's degree or advanced degree consistently had lower turnover rates, starting at 7.20% in 2017 and experiencing a modest increase to 7.90% in 2021. Understanding these trends is crucial for policymakers and businesses to tailor strategies that promote workforce stability and leverage the skills of a more educated labor force for sustained economic growth.



**Figure 51: Turnover Rate by Education Level**



### Skill Gaps

The term Skills Gap, defined as “a significant mismatch between the needs of employers for skills and the current capabilities of available workforce,” is of particular concern in West Virginia as it has the lowest labor force participation rate (LFPR) in the nation, and businesses attempting to fill positions vacated during the pandemic have expressed concerns about finding skilled workers to fill these vacancies. This is being addressed in West Virginia through various initiatives, including a blue ribbon task force meant to identify and align employer needs with workforce abilities concluded last year and the “No Wrong Door” program described elsewhere in this plan, which effectively coordinates work between state and local workforce partners, employers, post-secondary education institutions, and community-based service providers.

The West Virginia Skills Assessment for the period 2020-2030 highlights crucial skills that play a pivotal role in employment dynamics. Data from this assessment shows the current employment levels and projected growth for skills that are key for success across industries. Critical Thinking, Active Listening, and Speaking emerge as the three skills with the highest projected employment growth, underlining their significance in the evolving job market. However, challenges are evident, as skills like Mathematics show a negative growth trend, indicating a potential gap that requires attention.

Additionally, the data underscores the importance of interpersonal skills such as Social Perceptiveness, Service Orientation, and Persuasion, which are integral for effective communication and collaboration in diverse work environments. Projected numbers of exits and transfers alongside that project growth signify the need for strategic initiatives to address potential skills gaps and ensure a skilled, adaptable workforce in West Virginia. Policymakers and educators can utilize this data to align training and education programs with the evolving demands of the job market, fostering a resilient and competitive workforce for the state's economic future.

**Figure 52: West Virginia Skills Assessment 2020-2030**

<b>West Virginia Skills Assessment</b>					
<b>2020-2030</b>					
	<b>Occ Base Year Employment</b>	<b>Occ Proj Year Employment</b>	<b>Exits</b>	<b>Transfers</b>	<b>Projected Employment Growth</b>
Skills					
Critical Thinking	506,986	542,133	218,176	343,658	35,147
Active Listening	467,887	501,401	205,140	315,164	33,514
Speaking	455,182	488,350	201,377	305,596	33,168
Reading Comprehension	425,780	453,206	180,208	274,573	27,426
Monitoring	407,359	436,977	181,253	279,119	29,618
Coordination	347,479	373,359	161,083	247,883	25,880
Social Perceptiveness	337,383	360,065	158,895	228,565	22,682
Service Orientation	257,626	276,303	130,812	180,121	18,677
Writing	228,278	242,740	90,408	131,016	14,462
Time Management	222,972	236,280	110,949	155,098	13,308
Judgment and Decision Making	183,088	195,865	78,639	115,328	12,777
Active Learning	153,538	170,463	60,813	87,117	16,925
Operation Monitoring	104,372	110,534	38,540	78,129	6,162
Operation and Control	93,090	99,397	34,815	70,960	6,307
Persuasion	90,184	95,243	45,102	71,569	5,059
Complex Problem Solving	70,048	75,561	23,721	41,301	5,513
Quality Control Analysis	59,515	64,159	23,598	45,491	4,644
Management of Personnel Resources	51,763	54,334	19,867	38,157	2,571
Mathematics	52,691	52,554	28,220	36,526	-137
Troubleshooting	48,362	50,795	15,621	33,751	2,433

**Source: Workforce West Virginia Labor Market Information Division**

Source: WV Labor Market Information Division

In the evolving landscape of West Virginia's workforce, critical concerns emerge as we examine knowledge gaps projected from 2020 to 2030. The data delineates the anticipated exits, transfers, and changes within various knowledge domains, shedding light on areas where the state may face challenges. English Language and Customer and Personal Service lead the charts,

with substantial numbers of individuals exiting or transferring within these knowledge realms. Education and Training, Mathematics, and Administration and Management closely follow, underscoring the importance of addressing gaps in these areas. As we navigate this intricate tapestry of knowledge dynamics, strategic measures are imperative to bridge these gaps and cultivate a resilient and well-rounded workforce for West Virginia. The projections emphasize the need for targeted educational and professional development initiatives to ensure a seamless transition and sustainable growth across diverse sectors within the state.

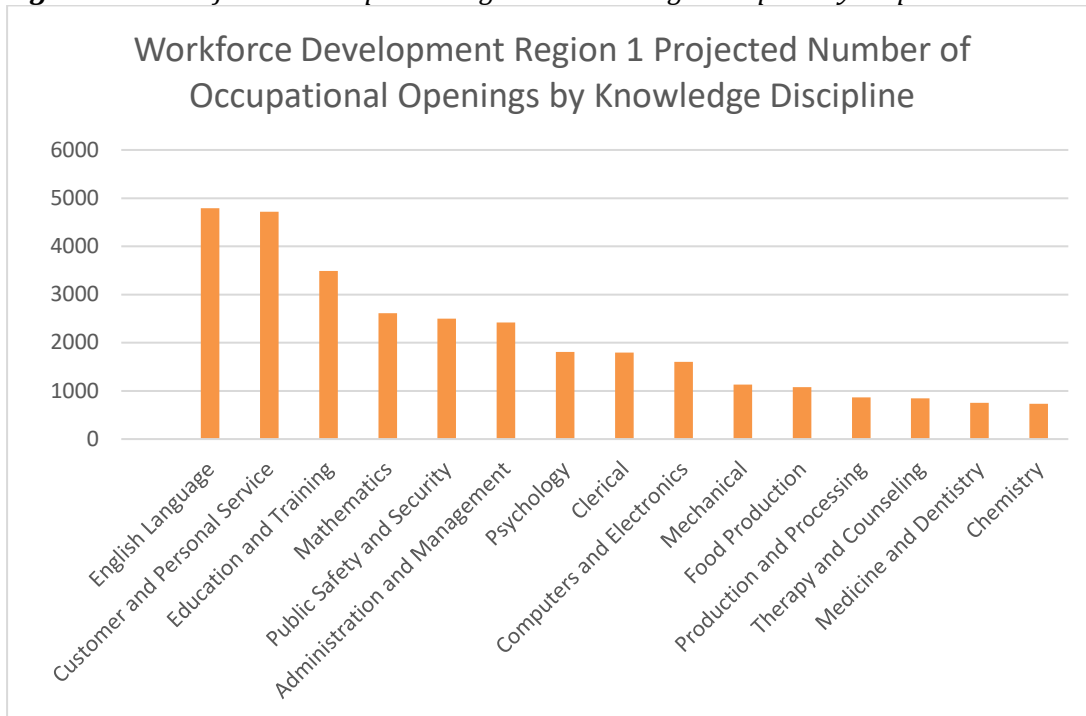
**Figure 53: West Virginia Knowledge Gaps, 2020-2030**

<b>West Virginia Knowledge Gaps 2020-2030</b>			
<b>Knowleges</b>	<b>Exits</b>	<b>Transfers</b>	<b>Change</b>
English Language	212,323	328,735	35,199
Customer and Personal Service	210,985	325,793	34,106
Education and Training	138,239	224,577	30,591
Mathematics	153,099	250,974	18,668
Administration and Management	114,656	191,742	17,619
Psychology	62,693	89,929	17,197
Public Safety and Security	83,869	136,697	15,880
Medicine and Dentistry	18,697	24,118	10,666
Computers and Electronics	119,006	186,090	10,555
Clerical	89,733	144,394	9,235
Therapy and Counseling	19,941	26,114	8,963
Production and Processing	38,479	77,564	8,712
Mechanical	55,984	109,070	8,548
Biology	16,295	22,278	7,845
Food Production	23,733	37,882	7,017
Sociology and Anthropology	17,991	25,059	6,739
Sales and Marketing	63,259	98,412	5,658
Personnel and Human Resources	24,945	50,999	5,645
Transportation	26,542	45,976	5,302
Chemistry	25,109	40,251	4,508
Engineering and Technology	23,095	50,536	4,071
Law and Government	19,760	33,124	3,047
Building and Construction	19,349	40,848	3,005
Philosophy and Theology	7,667	11,069	2,094
WV Labor Market Information Division			

Source: WV Labor Market Information Division

In Workforce Development Region 1, the projected number of occupational openings shows needs across a wide range of disciplines. The demand is notably high in English Language, with 4,789 openings, emphasizing the importance of effective communication skills. Customer and Personal Service, with 4,720 projected openings, underscores the significance of interpersonal skills in meeting the needs of clients and customers. As the region anticipates growth, Mathematics (2,613 openings) and Computers and Electronics (1,604 openings) emerge as critical areas with considerable opportunities, suggesting a need for individuals with proficiency in STEM fields. As the region navigates the evolving workforce landscape, addressing skill gaps in these areas becomes imperative for fostering a robust and adaptable workforce.

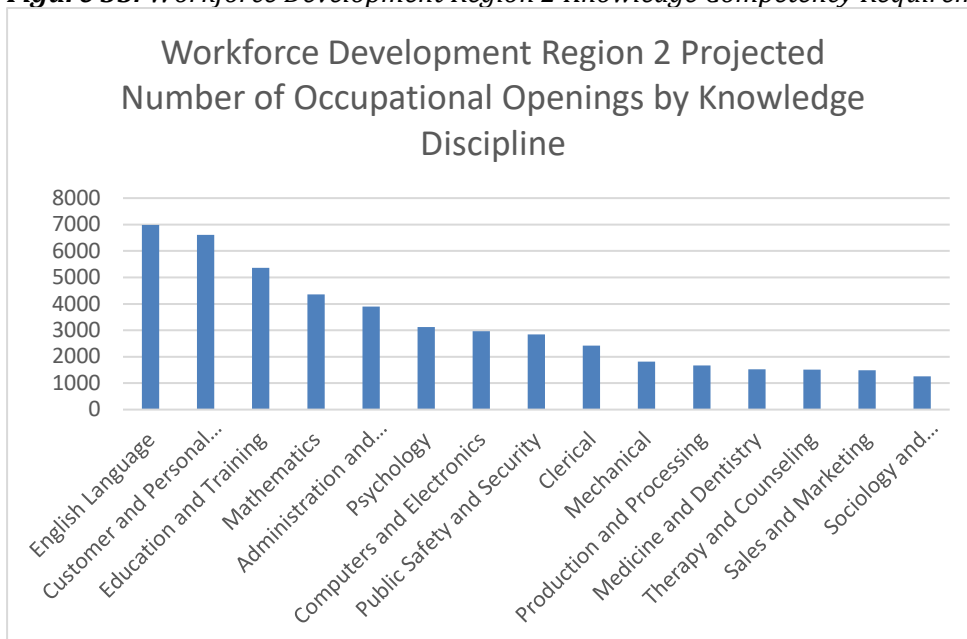
**Figure 54: Workforce Development Region 1 Knowledge Competency Requirements**



Source: Workforce WV Labor Market Information Projections

In Workforce Development Region 2, occupational openings in English Language (6,991) highlights the significance of strong communication skills in various professional contexts. The Customer and Personal Service sector, with 6,614 openings, emphasizes the continued importance of personalized interactions in service-oriented industries. As the region anticipates growth, Mathematics (4,363 openings) and Computers and Electronics (2,965 openings) emerge as critical areas with considerable opportunities, suggesting a need for individuals with proficiency in STEM fields. Bridging skill gaps to fill these positions will be essential West Virginia’s dynamic workforce landscape to thrive.

**Figure 55: Workforce Development Region 2 Knowledge Competency Requirements**

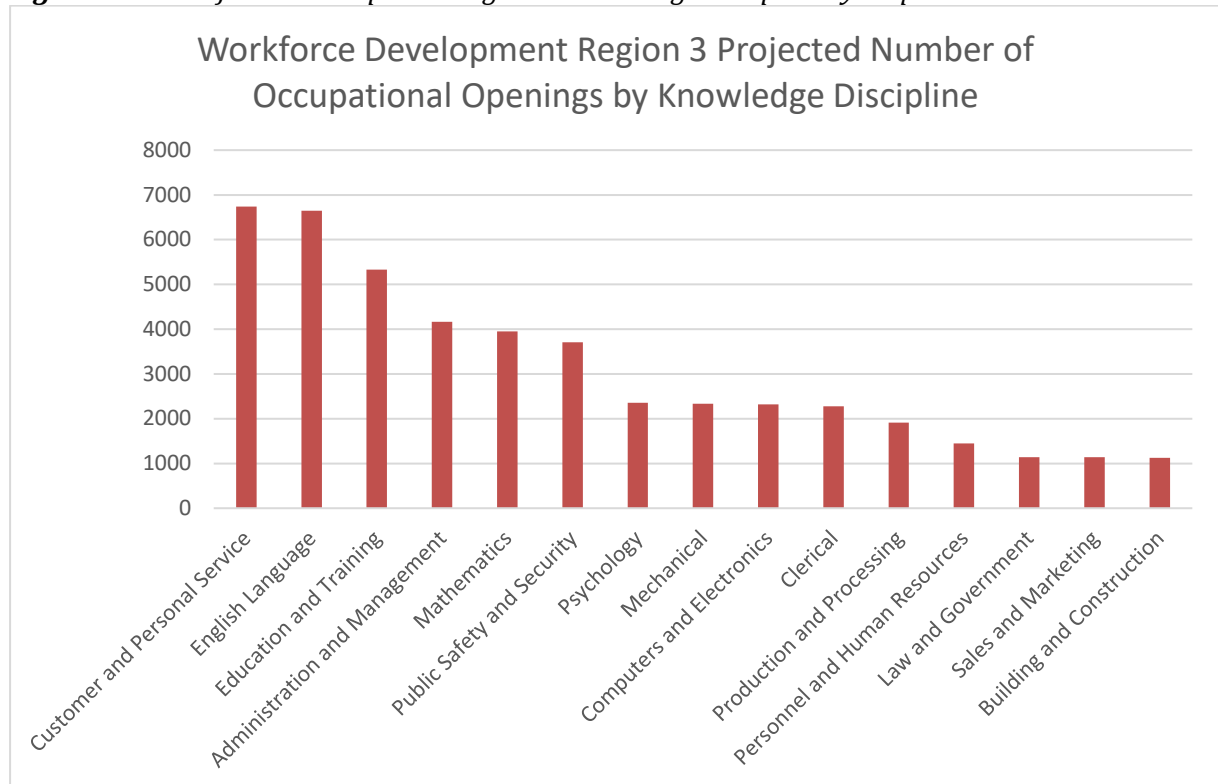


Source: Workforce WV Labor Market Information Projections

Within Workforce Development Region 3, openings in Customer and Personal Service (6,739)

emphasizes the region's emphasis on service-oriented professions. English Language (6,644 openings) and Education and Training (5,331 openings) highlight the importance of effective communication and educational expertise in the evolving job market. The prominence of Administration and Management (4,162 openings) and Mathematics (3,948 openings) suggests a demand for individuals with strong leadership and analytical skills. Notably, the presence of Computers and Electronics (2,318 openings) and Mechanical (2,334 openings) positions points to the ongoing significance of STEM-related competencies.

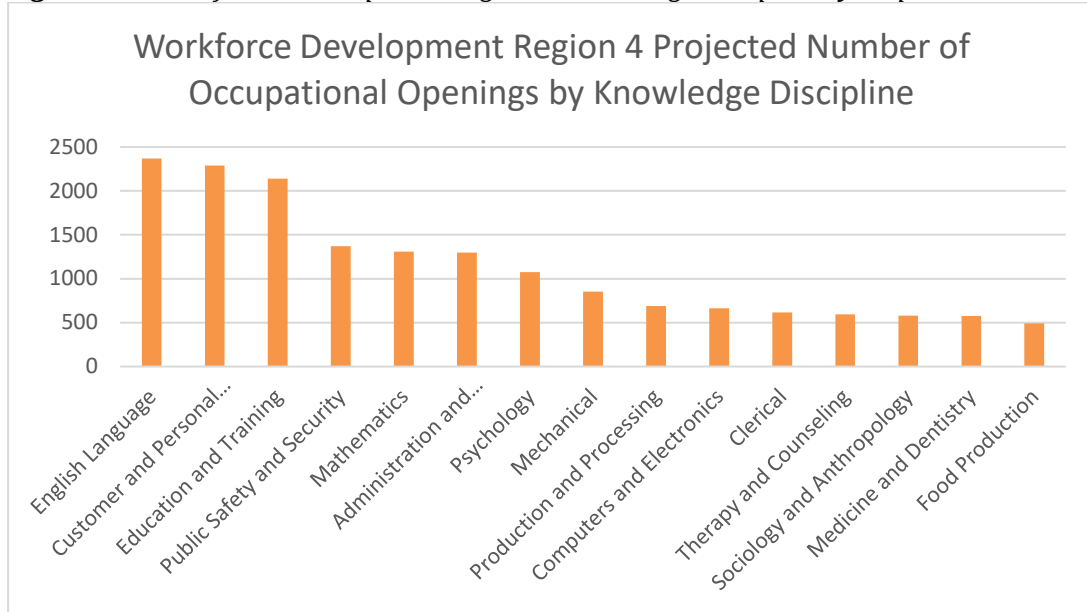
**Figure 56: Workforce Development Region 3 Knowledge Competency Requirements**



Source: Workforce WV Labor Market Information Projections

Within Workforce Development Region 4, openings in English Language (2,369) emphasize the continued demand for effective communicators. Customer and Personal Service (2,290 openings) and Education and Training (2,139 openings) signify the importance of service-oriented roles and educational expertise. Public Safety and Security (1,369 openings) highlights the region's commitment to ensuring community safety. The presence of Mathematics (1,308 openings) and Administration and Management (1,298 openings) underlines the significance of analytical and leadership skills. Furthermore, the inclusion of Mechanical (852 openings) and Computers and Electronics (665 openings) suggests a growing need for individuals with STEM-related competencies.

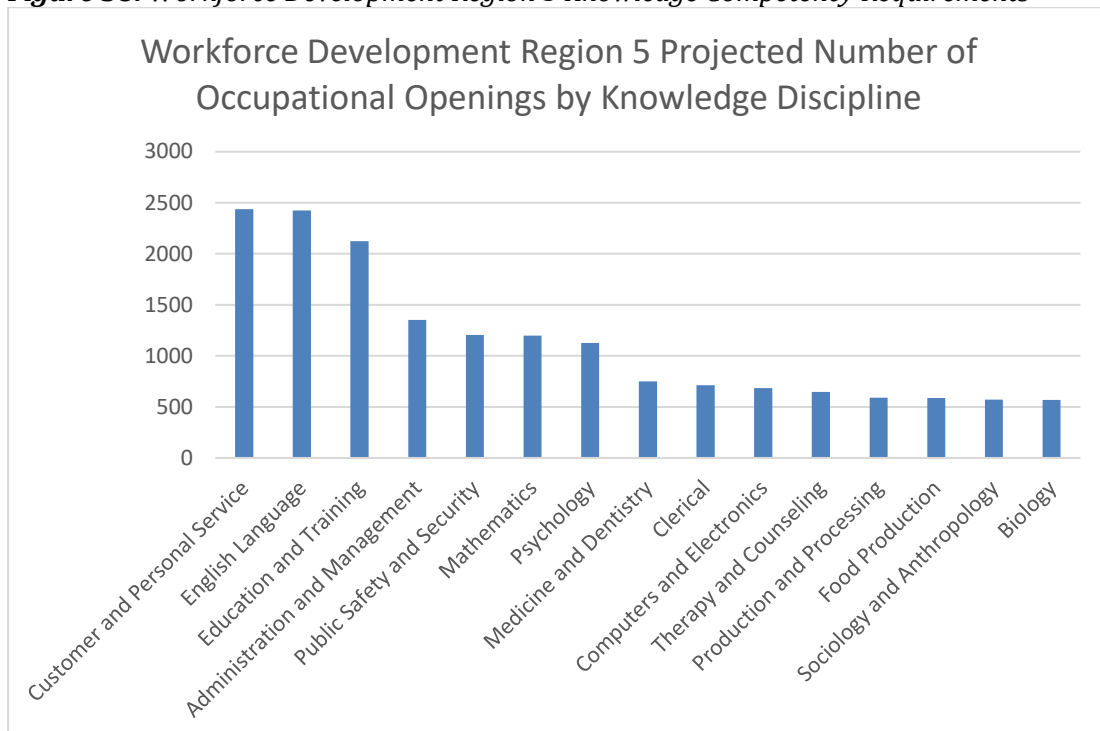
**Figure 57: Workforce Development Region 4 Knowledge Competency Requirements**



Source: Workforce WV Labor Market Information Projections

Within Workforce Development Region 5, the projected number of occupational openings in Customer and Personal Service (2,438) and English Language (2,424) highlight the continued demand for roles centered around effective communication and service provision. Education and Training (2,123 openings) signifies the region's commitment to fostering a knowledgeable workforce. Administration and Management (1,352 openings) and Public Safety and Security (1,205 openings) underscore the need for strong leadership and safety-oriented skills. Mathematics (1,200 openings) and Computers and Electronics (685 openings) indicate the growing importance of STEM-related competencies. The inclusion of Medicine and Dentistry (751 openings) reflects the region's emphasis on healthcare, while Clerical (712 openings) emphasizes administrative support roles.

**Figure 58: Workforce Development Region 5 Knowledge Competency Requirements**

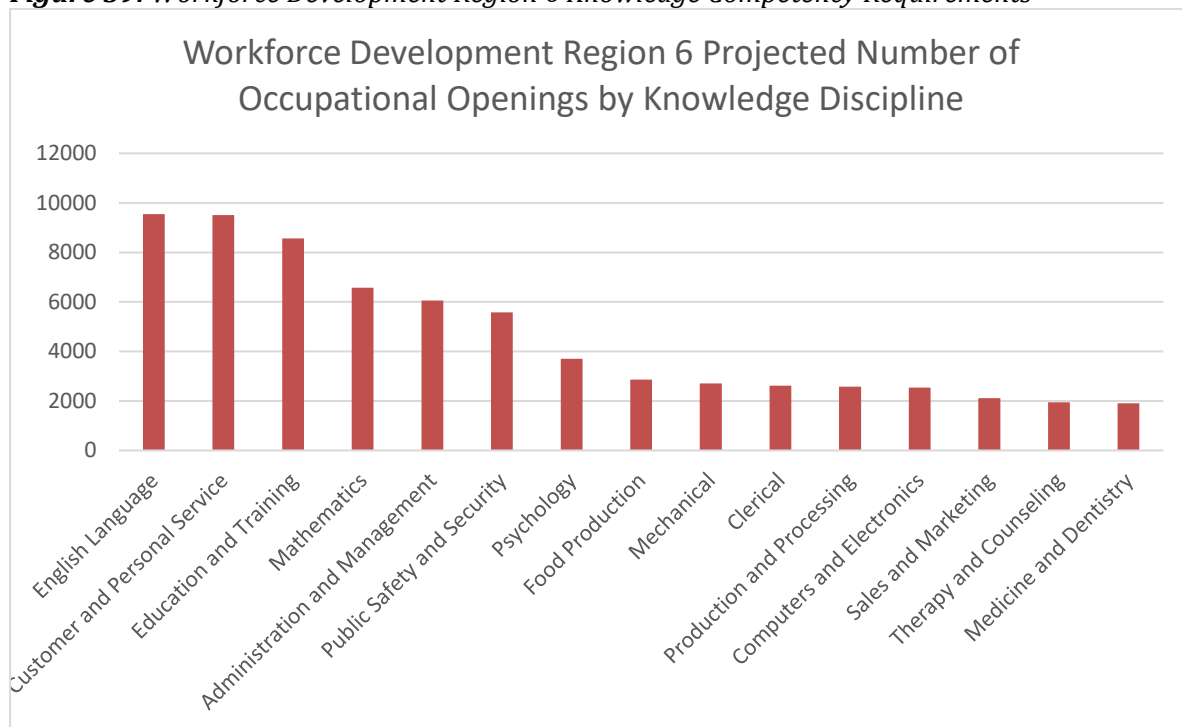


Source: Workforce WV Labor Market Information Projections



Within Workforce Development Region 6, the projected number of occupational openings in English Language (9,549) and Customer and Personal Service (9,503) showcase the region's ongoing reliance on effective communication and service-oriented roles. Education and Training (8,558 openings) underscores the commitment to nurturing knowledge, aligning with the region's dedication to educational excellence. Mathematics (6,572 openings) and Administration and Management (6,058 openings) highlight the increasing importance of STEM-related competencies and leadership skills. Public Safety and Security (5,577 openings) emphasizes the demand for professionals ensuring community well-being. Psychology (3,700 openings) adds a dimension of human understanding to the workforce, while Medicine and Dentistry (1,908 openings) underscores the significance of healthcare.

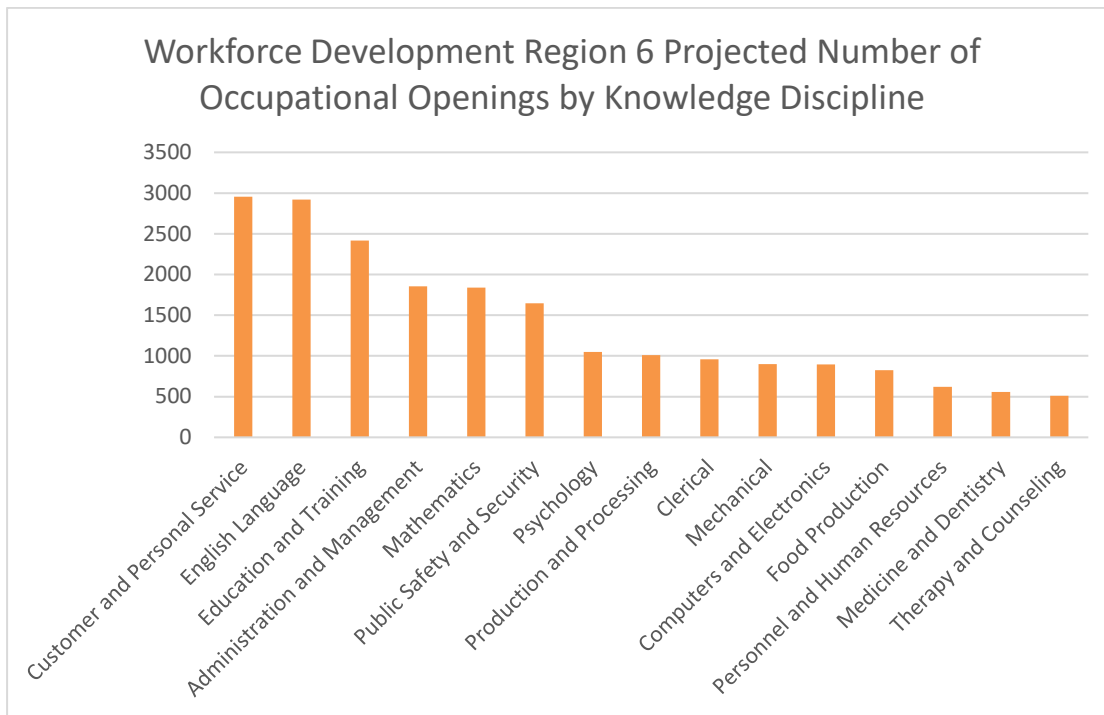
**Figure 59: Workforce Development Region 6 Knowledge Competency Requirements**



Source: Workforce WV Labor Market Information Projections

Within Workforce Development Region 7, the projected number of occupational openings in Customer and Personal Service (2,956) and English Language (2,918) reflect the region's emphasis on interpersonal skills and effective communication. Education and Training (2,417 openings) speaks to the commitment to fostering learning environments, aligning with the region's dedication to educational excellence. Administration and Management (1,854 openings) and Mathematics (1,840 openings) underscore the growing importance of leadership and STEM-related skills. Public Safety and Security (1,647 openings) emphasizes the need for professionals ensuring community safety. Psychology (1,048 openings) contributes to a nuanced understanding of human behavior, while Medicine and Dentistry (558 openings) signifies the ongoing demand for healthcare expertise.

**Figure 60: Workforce Development Region 7 Knowledge Competency Requirements**



Source: Workforce WV Labor Market Information Projections

## 2. ECONOMIC, WORKFORCE, AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

### (A) The State's Workforce Development Activities

#### Description of West Virginia's Local Workforce Development Areas

The State of West Virginia comprises seven local workforce development areas. A minimum of one comprehensive American Job Center of West Virginia (AJC WV) is located in each area.

- Region 1:** The Region 1 Workforce Development Board, headquartered in Beckley, administers workforce activities in an eleven-county region covering the southeastern portion of the State. The R1WDB offers diverse workforce development programs aimed at addressing employment barriers and meeting the needs of both individuals and employers in Region 1. Work-based learning programs like transitional jobs and on-the-job training provide valuable work experience and skill development opportunities. Through initiatives like Communities of Healing (COH), partnerships with organizations like Fruits of Labor and WV Hive facilitate the employment of individuals in recovery. Youth services prioritize career exploration, education support, and paid work experiences for young adults. Barriers to sustainable employment are identified and addressed through counseling and support services like Jobs and Hope WV. Collaboration with employers through sector strategies ensures workforce solutions are tailored to meet specific needs, guided by labor market data. Integration and innovation in service delivery focus on creating a seamless workforce system through cross-training, consistent communication, and unified IT systems, ensuring effective coordination among partners.
- Region 2:** The Southwestern West Virginia Workforce Development Board, located in Huntington, governs a seven-county region in the southwestern portion of the State. The R2WDB collaborates with the Southern Mountains District Consortium, a partnership of educational, governmental, and nonprofit entities. They create pathways in allied health, trades, and early college programs to strengthen the workforce in southern counties,

including those in Kentucky. Since 2019, Region 2 has run the WIOA Youth Program, offering employment and education assistance to eligible youth aged 16-24. They help participants develop individual plans for the future and introduce them to in-demand occupations through training agreements with local institutions. They also support young adults without diplomas in achieving their education goals, offer expos, and provide hands-on training opportunities. Additionally, Region 2 partners with Coalfield Development to provide funding and assistance to job seekers in the trades, helping them establish career pathways and, ultimately, aiming to reduce recidivism.

- **Region 3:** The Workforce Development Board of Kanawha County oversees activities in the State's only single-county workforce development region from its office in Charleston. Region 3 partners with local employers to offer work-based learning initiatives that include apprenticeship programs and structured career pathways, offering on-the-job training that address workforce needs for both employers and job seekers. For local youth, they provide after-school programs for at-risk youth focused on professional development and career readiness. Recently developed programs include the Minority Youth Career Academy to provide valuable career exploration opportunities and mentorship for minority youth and technology-focused opportunities that utilize technology-based learning with VR headsets. All programs offered through Region 3 Career Centers emphasize hands-on training, and their collective impact approach involving partner agencies enhances workforce development efforts. To reduce barriers to sustainable employment, comprehensive needs assessments and case management services are provided, alongside initiatives like Pop-Up One Stops, outreach efforts, and wraparound services. Sector strategies involve piloting the State's No Wrong Door approach, utilizing labor market information and surveys to inform training allocation, and integrating innovative service delivery models like Pop-Ups and Virtual Job Fairs, alongside fostering community feedback through customer surveys and collaborating with agencies to provide seamless services. Additionally, the R3WDB co-hosts the Frontline Unity Network Conference to empower frontline teams with networking and learning opportunities.
- **Region 4:** Nine counties are served by the Workforce Development Board Mid-Ohio Valley, which is located in Parkersburg. The WDBMOV has undergone a cultural shift in service delivery, driven by its mission to capture Appalachian prosperity and economic success (CAPES). Encouraging customers to take "a leap of faith," they provide tailored information and hands-on experiences related to job training, professional development, and industry-specific skills. Partnering with Transfr, a virtual reality platform company, they offer realistic career exposure in various fields. Work-based learning opportunities, including apprenticeships, job shadowing, and on-the-job training, are provided for both adults and youth. Core services such as interviews and resume assistance are supplemented with supportive services addressing training expenses and transportation barriers. Through sector-focused training fairs and engagement with employers across sectors, they facilitate direct links to employment opportunities and provide information on necessary skills and competencies. Monthly business engagement meetings help address employer training and hiring needs, with efforts to expand pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities. Additionally, they secure additional funding to enhance community impact alongside their WIOA allocation.
- **Region 5:** The Northern Panhandle Workforce Development Board (NPWDB) provides services in six counties and is based in Wheeling. The NPWDB has been part of the "TEAM" (Tri-State Energy & Advanced Manufacturing) Consortium for 4 years, collaborating with educators, workforce organizations, and industry across Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia to build a skilled workforce. They are also partnering with 12 Ohio counties and 1 Pennsylvania county to apply for an ARC ARISE planning grant, which would prepare students for in-demand careers across state lines.

Additionally, they host youth expos to introduce WIOA eligible youth to training opportunities. Moreover, they partner with the Lee Day Report Center to provide services for Drug Court-mandated clients, offering life skills and career workshops to support their rehabilitation and employability.

- **Region 6:** The Region 6 Workforce Development Board, located in Fairmont, provides services in a thirteen-county region in the north-central portion of the State. R6WDB actively promotes work-based learning like on-the-job Training for job seekers and employers, effectively training new hires for regional employers. Through a significant investment of training funds, individuals served by the program increased from 17 in 2019 to 74 in 2022. The R6WDB Executive Director participates in various Economic Development Boards and co-chairs the Workforce and Economic Development Working Group of the Tri State Energy and Advanced Manufacturing Consortium, aiming to ensure skilled workers for critical sectors. Recently, the consortium developed an "Energy and Advanced Manufacturing Career Pathway Exploration Guide" and focused on initiatives around Hydrogen and Carbon Capturing Technology. The Executive Director also participates in two new strategic planning groups: ARISE, aiming to improve worker mobility across Ohio, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania, and the I-79 Development Council, focusing on promoting innovation and growth in specific sectors along the I-79 corridor. Additionally, Region 6 is addressing the shortage of LPN/RN's by instituting a pilot program that offers higher tuition reimbursement rates, leading to a 29% increase in WIOA individual training accounts for nursing programs in 2022, with expectations to continue increasing this number moving forward.
- **Region 7:** Eight counties in the easternmost portion of West Virginia are served by the Region 7 Workforce Development Board located in Moorefield. Through the R7WDB's web-based referral system, they connect individuals with nearly 100 workforce partners, streamlining access to services and averaging over 1,000 referrals annually. With partners in advanced manufacturing, transportation, skilled trades, and entry-level healthcare, they offer customized training programs, pre-apprenticeships for youth, and work experience opportunities. They prioritize eliminating barriers to employment, offering supportive services such as transportation assistance, and addressing the impact of the opioid crisis through work-based learning initiatives. Through these efforts, they enhance economic prosperity and provide pathways to fulfilling careers for individuals in their region.

### **Description of Combined Plan Core and Partner Programs**

West Virginia core and partner programs participate in comprehensive one-stop workforce development services through both in-person programs and as part of a shared electronic referral system. Programs include:

- **WIOA Title I Adult-** The Adult program serves participants aged 18 or older in need of employment or career advancement, with priority of service given to participants who receive public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient. If a participant is also an eligible Veteran or spouse of a Veteran, the priority of service is extended to the covered person. Individuals deemed ready for work are provided career services to assist them in finding existing employment opportunities. Individuals not ready for employment or looking for employment in a new field are provided training to prepare them with the skills necessary to meet the needs of employers.
- **WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker-** The Dislocated Worker program assists workers, who are 18 years or older, before or after a layoff to help facilitate rapid reemployment. Dislocated Workers with requisite skills may be directly referred to employers with hiring needs. Other Dislocated Workers, such as displaced homemakers and spouses of

veterans, may require training and other services to meet the skill requirements of employers.

- **WIOA Title I Youth-** The Youth program offers eligible youth and young adults (ages 14-24) high-quality case management support toward their educational attainment and future employment. Services include career guidance and exploration, summer and/or year-round work experience opportunities such as internships and pre-apprenticeships, and career pathway skills training for in-demand industries and occupations, along with any necessary supportive services. The attainment of education, skills, and work experience can make youth participants more attractive candidates for employers to hire.
- **WIOA Title II Adult Education-** Adult Education is a critical partner in establishing career pathways for adults who lack basic skills. Funded programs provide a full range of services from beginning level literacy through high adult secondary and transition activities to support college and career readiness, including English language acquisition activities. Programs provide basic skills instruction in the context of work readiness, incorporating workplace preparation activities as well as career awareness and planning into instruction and services. Adult Education program administrators and other staff develop relationships and partnerships at the local level to support alignment of Adult Education services with those of other programs and workforce development system (WDS) partners, including working with local Business Service Teams (BSTs). Funded programs, when possible and appropriate, provide integrated education and training, which requires three components offered concurrently and contextualized to an occupation or occupational cluster: adult education, workforce preparation, and workforce training. Integrated education and training activities must align with local workforce needs; prepare students for realistic, existing employment opportunities; and be developed in consultation with local workforce development boards (LWDB), employers, and training providers.
- **WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser-** Wagner-Peyser staff provide employment services to both job seekers and employers by placing individuals in employment and helping employers recruit workers.
- **WIOA Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation-** The West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (WVDRS) aims to fulfill its roles and responsibilities as a core WIOA partner by providing high-quality, individualized vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to its consumers with disabilities and expert consultation and technical assistance to employers so they can include or retain people with disabilities in their workforce. WVDRS provides a continuum of services to consumers with disabilities beginning at age 14 to enable them to achieve competitive integrated employment. Through early engagement, WVDRS provides career exploration and planning services to students and youth with disabilities to set them on a path to high-quality employment. This can include postsecondary training, work-based learning experiences, assistive technology, and support services, including those provided by other partner agencies. WVDRS is committed to providing services throughout a consumer's career to assist them in maintaining or advancing in employment, including supported employment.

Through the Systemic Transition Enhancement Project initiative (STEP21), which started in 2021, WVDRS has encouraged full participation from its staff, partners, stakeholders, and its consumers to increase awareness of the availability of its services and to advance high-quality employment outcomes for participating students with disabilities. This statewide, equitable investment in future generations will place West Virginians with disabilities not in just basic employment, but high-quality careers in in-demand occupations, including STEM.

To optimize program visibility and awareness among potential consumers and their families, WVDRS has partnered with Disability Rights of West Virginia, the WV State Rehabilitation Council, the WV Parent Training and Information, Inc. (WVPTI), Combined State Plan partners, the No Wrong Door initiative, and other stakeholders to maximize outreach efforts and strategies to foster early engagement that leads to long-term success for VR consumers, employers, and the state.

WVDRS directly serves hundreds of employers of all sizes from a variety of industries across the state each year. Services are primarily provided through the WVDRS Employer Services Section and its employment specialists through outreach and coordination with stakeholder groups such as chambers of commerce and regional workforce development boards. WVDRS' employment specialists work one-on-one with employers to provide staffing solutions, technical assistance, and opportunities for work-based learning experiences for youth with disabilities. WVDRS' employment specialists collect, report, and utilize labor market information in coordination with WorkForce WV.

- **Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)**- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) helps people who become unemployed due to layoffs that result from foreign imports or a shift of production out of the United States. TAA eligible workers receive services and training to assist them in returning to the workforce. Services and training provided ensure that TAA recipients have the skills needed to find reemployment within the industry they were laid off from or to enter a new industry with more employment opportunities.
- **Jobs for Veterans Grant (LVER/DVOP)**- Through the Jobs for Veterans Grant program, Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists assist veterans with significant barriers to employment including homelessness, previous incarceration, and low-income status. Another element of the program is carried out by Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) who meet with employers, plan and participate in job and career fairs, and conduct job development with employers on behalf of job-ready veterans. LVERs work with BSTs to promote qualified veterans to employers seeking candidates.
- **Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)**- The CSBG is a federal anti-poverty program that provides support and resources to a network of 16 Community Action Agencies (CAAs) and other statewide organizations to reduce poverty, revitalize low-income communities, and provide economic opportunities for low-income families.
- **Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP)**- SCSEP is a grant-funded, community service and work-based training program that provides eligible seniors (persons aged 55 or older with limited incomes) with the hands-on training experience needed to obtain employment. In order to maximize SCSEP participant placement in unsubsidized employment in high demand jobs, the statewide SCSEP network; which consists of the one State and one National grantee, will focus their on-the-job training opportunities and host agency recruitment efforts with agencies that can provide training for the types of occupations forecasted based on Industry Sector of New Hires 2019 to hire older workers. When available, training opportunities will increase to provide a variety of opportunities that have a higher percentage of developing into unsubsidized employment. Training in computer literacy continues to be at the forefront, as this is a necessity in most occupations that forecast continued employment. Computer training opportunities are provided through entities, such as local American Job Centers (AJC), local Community Colleges, and public libraries. When appropriate, program coordinators and host agencies encourage participation in specialized computer training opportunities. SCSEP has also implemented the Senior Evolve program which provides iPads to eligible participants to help decrease technophobia,



and to help improve computer skills and job searching. Another strategy for older workers to be placed into unsubsidized employment would be to investigate occupations that require minimum training, as this would help the statewide SCSEP network meet the employment goals listed in the core measures that are set forth by DOL.

The SCSEP Network continues to partner and utilize resources such as transition programs, adult displacement resources, utilization of the MAAC database, resume enhancement, computer classes, mock interviews and all other events offered at the AJC WV. The SCSEP Network will maintain working relationships with all WFWV offices to obtain relevant employment and training information that pertains to that Region. Sub-grantees will continue to inform enrollees of their specific region's occupational projections.

- **Unemployment Compensation-** Unemployment compensation provides temporary financial assistance to workers unemployed through no fault of their own who meet West Virginia's eligibility requirements.
- **Linkages to Other One-Stop Partner Programs-** Through comprehensive one-stop service delivery, job seekers can find information on and obtain referrals to other partner programs, including the TANF program, Perkins program, vocational rehabilitation, and SNAP E&T. All partners collaborate to better serve West Virginians who use the AJCs by sharing resources, reducing redundancies, and optimizing service delivery. So they can best serve consumers, state and local level staff are kept well informed of the services and other resources available from partner agencies. This communication occurs at the state level, as well as in the AJCs, where daily interaction with partner agency staff occurs. Cross-training of staff is mandatory and results in better service provision to AJC customers while preserving resources for future needs.

## **(B) The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities**

In West Virginia, a state in economic transition, the workforce system is undergoing a maturation process, deepening its engagement, and adjusting to rapidly changing economic conditions. As the state adapts to these changes, its workforce development efforts are evolving to meet the needs of employers and job seekers. Moreover, as West Virginia's workforce system matures, efforts are being made to enhance connectivity with other key stakeholders. This includes closer collaboration with government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and community-based entities to create a more integrated and comprehensive approach to workforce development.

West Virginia's WDS partners collectively contribute to the state's efforts in developing a workforce that is equipped to meet the demands of a dynamic and evolving economy. The state has a historical legacy of hardworking individuals, particularly in industries like coal mining. This work ethic serves as a strong foundation for workforce development activities. West Virginia has been investing in training and education programs to equip its workforce with the skills needed for evolving industries. This includes vocational training, community and technical college (CTC) programs, and partnerships with industry leaders and employers to address specific skill demands.

In 2022, Governor Jim Justice, with the support of the West Virginia Legislature, created the State Workforce Resiliency Office. This office operates on behalf of the Governor to coordinate workforce development, job training, education, and related programs across numerous state agencies and entities to grow West Virginia's workforce and to provide more options for West Virginians seeking work. This office advises the Governor on the workforce development landscape across West Virginia and assists in developing policies, plans, and procedures to ensure that state agencies, private partners, and federal programs are effectively utilized for

workforce development.

West Virginia has recently unveiled a No Wrong Door platform to address the skills gap addressed above for individual users with the philosophy that there are “No Wrong Doors” when seeking workforce assistance in West Virginia. The platform helps individuals learn about available services without having to go through a myriad of processes and navigational challenges. It also allows them to search for services in their area and input inquiries that are logged and acted upon. This can help expedite access to services and support. Support organizations can share information, which allows for better coordination of services provided. The No Wrong Door approach and vision, which expands face to face service delivery, is further discussed under the customer service delivery section of this Combined Plan.

### **Strengths in Workforce Development State Investment and Initiatives**

Workforce related programs that support and show strength in West Virginia’s system and a commitment of coordinated resources include:

#### [Ascend WV Program](#)

West Virginia’s natural beauty, low cost of living, and quality of life can be attractive factors for skilled workers. Creating a positive living environment contributes to attracting and retaining a talented workforce. The Ascend WV program, a partnership between West Virginia natives Brad D. and Alys Smith, Governor Justice and the departments of Tourism and Economic Development, and West Virginia University, has successfully attracted over 360 new residents to the state. Supported by a \$25 million donation from the Smiths, the program focuses on outdoor recreation opportunities to attract and retain skilled workers.

The program offers a unique package to remote workers, including a \$12,000 cash relocation incentive paid over two years, one year of free outdoor recreation valued at over \$2,500, free co-working space, professional advancement opportunities, and access to outdoor and social programming. The aim is to welcome more than 1,000 remote workers to the state over the next six years. The Ascend WV program is not only attracting new residents, but also fostering a sense of community pride and engagement through service projects that contribute to the state’s well-being. Ascend workers moved to West Virginia from thirty-eight states and five countries. Fifty-six percent are renters, and forty-four percent have purchased homes.

#### [West Virginia Nursing Workforce Expansion Program](#)

In December 2021, West Virginia Governor Jim Justice committed \$48 million to aggressively address West Virginia’s nursing workforce shortage through a multi-pronged plan to attract, train, and retain nurses in the Mountain State. Thanks to several education initiatives included in the West Virginia Nursing Expansion Program, an additional 2,200 nursing students could graduate from the state’s nursing schools over the following four years. The Governor’s program supports new care models through education as well as regulation changes that lessen the burden on nurses by eliminating non-nursing tasks. In addition, the expansion program creatively increases nursing ranks by allowing for more externs to fill gaps in nursing assistant care and removing barriers to nursing faculty and advanced practice nurses serving in direct care RN roles.

The initiative includes several components to achieve program goals:

- The program creates a statewide incentive program for nurses who move to West Virginia to be employed directly by a West Virginia licensed health care provider organization, providing direct care services—including a cash incentive for re-location and a variety of state perks. The Balance WV program (the out of state recruitment program) brought in 57 nurses, 83% (47) of whom are still working in WV.

- The licensure process for nurses moving into the state is expedited, and the existing 3RNET Recruiting for Retention Academy and other recruitment campaigns are fully utilized for nursing recruitment.
- Capacity has been expanded to create new nursing education programs at West Virginia’s public colleges and universities—both baccalaureate institutions and the community & technical colleges—and Career Technical Education through the West Virginia Department of Education by providing awards that support LPN and RN programs at all levels. The Early Career Nursing Scholarship program was initiated to better assist expanded pre-licensure RN students. This program has awarded 119 students with funds, totaling just under a million dollars.
- Awards are provided to innovative new programs, especially those that speed time to degree completion. Funding supports facility construction, additional faculty salaries, and other resources needed to expand.
- The West Virginia Nursing Scholarship Program, which is administered by the West Virginia Center for Nursing and Higher Education Policy Commission, is fully funded. This program provides RN and LPN students with scholarships after the midpoint of their nursing program in exchange for working in the state after graduation. During the 2022-2023 academic year, the WV Nursing Scholarship was able to supply \$1,244,750 in funding to 293 nursing students at 32 institutions across the state. For the current academic year, 2023-2024, the WV Nursing Scholarship program has dedicated 1.6 million dollars in funds towards the award. Currently, 224 students have received awards with an additional 244 pending eligibility for later in this academic year.
- A new Nursing Faculty Investment Program has been created, which is administered by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission. The program will incentivize master’s- and doctoral-level nurses to pursue careers as instructors at schools of nursing. 22 institutions applied for and received funding through this program, and a total of 335 faculty training sessions were held through the nursing faculty investment grant program.
- A centralized nursing program application for public two- and four-year nursing programs has been deployed. This allows nursing program applicants to complete one application for applying to multiple colleges. Colleges that do not fill all their seats can search for qualified applicants who did not receive previous offers and offer them seats in their programs. Use of a common nursing application has been shown to increase nursing enrollment in other states.

The Nursing Expansion program showed the following successes in year 1:

- 716 new RN enrollees above normal enrollment for expanded pre-licensure nursing programs.
- 94 new LPN enrollees above normal enrollment for expanded LPN programs.
- A total of 810 new nurses are being trained at expanded programs.

### [Tourism Works](#)

The tourism industry in West Virginia recorded its highest-ever economic impact last year—bringing in nearly \$5 billion in visitor spending. Tourism already supports 44,400 jobs across the state, and 21,000 job openings are projected annually. These projections include 10,000 annual openings for management-level positions, with salaries approaching \$60,000.

West Virginia is taking a bold approach by launching Tourism Works, a comprehensive workforce development program. The program led by the West Virginia Department of Tourism—in collaboration with the West Virginia Department of Economic Development, the West Virginia Department of Education, and the West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education—will devote \$5.1 million dollars to workforce development and training. This initiative is federally funded by the United States Economic Development Administration.

The Tourism Works program supports this anticipated job growth. Through Tourism Works, Governor Justice’s administration shows its commitment to proactively preparing for the

industry's needs by ensuring that West Virginians have the skills to fill these roles and that tourism businesses have the resources to upskill their existing staff. This program launched in 2023.

Initiatives in the Tourism Works program include:

#### *Train Your Team*

- Provides and coordinates customized training and certification programs for new and existing tourism businesses.
- Uses targeted outreach to promote the very successful Learn & Earn workforce program to tourism industry businesses.

#### *Educate Our Communities*

- Currently developing a widely accessible online hospitality and tourism course for West Virginians.

#### *Shape Our Future*

- Provides tourism education to middle and high school students across the state.
- Establishes career pathways for high school students to begin earning credit toward future degree or certificate programs.
- Creates new degree and certificate programs with our institutions of higher learning.

#### [Grow Your Own - Educator Workforce Pathway](#)

Designed to address West Virginia's critical need for teachers, Grow Your Own Pathway to Teaching programs provide promising high school students an accelerated, funded path for pursuing a career in education. Grow Your Own students take a fast-track into the education field through a combination of dual enrollment/Advanced Placement courses and an accelerated pathway that allows them to graduate with a bachelor's degree in just three years. Designed to provide paid, on-the-job training, the WV Apprenticeship Model provides Grow Your Own students with wage-earning field experiences, preparing them for the teaching career while alleviating financial burdens. Students who have graduated high school and complete the Youth Apprenticeship are certified as a Teacher Apprentice by the U.S. Department of Labor. For the 2023-2024 school year, the program comprises 345 students and 33 actively participating counties. These students are still in high school, so the impact on the workforce will be more evident in the next three to four years.

#### Learn & Earn

This program is the leading workforce development, economic development, and educational partnership in the Mountain State. Learn & Earn connects college students with employers so they can take technical courses while gaining paid work experience. The student pay is shared by the company and the college, and students receive at least \$10 per hour to work in the field they are studying. Key factors for the program include:

- Students are enrolled in 1- or 2-year degree programs.
- Co-op experience must pay no less than \$10/hour.
- Employer gains a highly qualified employee and a future skilled labor pool.
- Students earn valuable on-the-job training while attending school.
- Employers and college split program costs 50/50.

#### Rapid Response Advance Grant

This grant is awarded to colleges that partner with industries on projects to address the state's workforce needs, including pre-employment programs, pre-preparation programs, skills upgrades, new and expanding companies, and job retention.

### West Virginia Invests

WV Invests, formerly known as the West Virginia Invests Grant Program, is a state initiative aimed at providing affordable pathways for West Virginians to obtain the skills and credentials necessary to secure high-demand jobs, which both fulfills workforce development needs and promotes economic growth within the state. WV Invests offers tuition-free education and training for West Virginia residents pursuing certificates or associate degrees in specific high-demand fields, including healthcare, information technology, manufacturing, construction, and other industries identified as critical to the state's economy. WV Invests is available at participating public institutions, including CTCs, as well as eligible private training providers. Recipients must meet certain academic and progress requirements, such as maintaining a minimum GPA and completing a certain number of credit hours each semester, to maintain eligibility for tuition assistance.

### West Virginia Dual Enrollment Program

In 2023, The West Virginia Legislature Gov. Jim Justice established West Virginia's first statewide dual enrollment program to allow more students to take college courses in high school. West Virginia's higher education system is developing a four-year pilot program to begin in fall 2024, supporting up to an estimated 10,000 students per year. Through this program, high school students can enroll at West Virginia's public CTCs and four-year institutions to take courses in certain designated career pathways—such as health care, information technology, advanced manufacturing, construction, engineering, education, and agriculture—that meet workforce needs identified by the West Virginia Department of Commerce. The state's Higher Education Policy Commission and Community and Technical College System will administer this program, adding to the more than \$100 million in state-sponsored financial aid offered each year through the West Virginia Invests program, the state's tuition-free community college program, the merit-based Promise Scholarship, and the needs-based Higher Education Grant Program, among others.

Across these programs, West Virginia's WDS partners are historically successful in serving residents and the state by meeting workforce needs. Current alliances can be amplified at the state and local level to identify and overcome any areas of weakness that emerge. The strength of West Virginia's WDS is demonstrated through the relationships already formed and demonstrated above to show how multiple groups coordinate to address state workforce needs.

West Virginia's MACC system is an integrated case management, referral, and federal reporting system that assists the WDS with the coordination of service delivery, supporting WIOA, Wagner-Peyser, TAA, Veteran Employment and Training Services (VETS), NDWG, and Rapid Response programs. The MACC's capacity to support integrated case management, data sharing, and reporting, allows career planners to see the full range of services participants have received from any covered program, enabling stronger support to job seekers. West Virginia is in the process of updating this system to offer even better service tracking and outcomes.

### **Workforce Development Challenges and Opportunities for Improvement**

In June 2021, by Executive Order, Governor Justice established the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Aligning the Roles and Missions of the State Community and Technical College System and WDS to clear the hurdles West Virginians too often face when trying to enter the workforce. Gov. Justice explained, "I've said many times that we need to do everything in our power to create more and more opportunities to educate and train the hard-working, dedicated West Virginians who make up our workforce. By creating this Blue Ribbon Task Force, we'll have some of our State's brightest minds all pulling the rope together so that, as more and more businesses move into West Virginia, our people will be ready to fill the numerous high-paying job opportunities that will become available."

The Blue Ribbon Task Force identified several weaknesses within the WDS in a final report to

the Governor, which included the following recommendations that partners are responding to:

Make it easier for citizens to be successful:

- Create a common application to make it easier for citizens to enroll in services.
- Set up a workgroup to engineer case management referral training support Infrastructure.
- Expand case management to include knowledge of all workforce programs.
- Locate several services in one location.

Get State Agencies on the same page:

- Develop a combined WIOA strategic plan.
- Establish shared metrics and goals for agencies that align with state interests.
- Establish a strong state workforce development board (WDB) that meets regularly and creates a sense of accountability to the state.

Eliminate duplication:

- Develop a workgroup of agencies to assess duplicative expenditures and other budgetary inefficiencies.
- Conduct asset mapping, including a real estate review and examination of shared location expenses.

Outreach to business and industry:

- Create incentives for employers to engage with the state and its partners.
- Adopt best practices from other states and organizations, potentially including development of a West Virginia employer engagement toolkit.
- Prioritize strategic communications with employers.

The Workforce Resiliency Office has been charged to develop strategic improvements to modernize West Virginia's WDS utilizing the issue areas identified by the Blue Ribbon Taskforce. Improvements undertaken in the past year include:

- Reshaping the West Virginia WDB to reflect evolving industry sectors through employer and community-based organization representation.
- Conducting a thorough policy review and implementing policies and procedures to guide the work of system partners while engaging the appropriate state agencies in coordinated and streamlined policies and practices.
- Implementing the previously mentioned No Wrong Door referral system.
- Identifying ways to better braid funding, including discretionary investments through IJJA and IRA funds provided to West Virginia agencies and organizations.
- Providing training and technical assistance to state and local system partners and stakeholders, including MOU development and infrastructure agreements, collaborative case management, and implementing the one-stop common identifier.

Underlying all of West Virginia's workforce development efforts is the persistent problem of West Virginia's labor force participation rate (LFPR), which is the lowest in the nation. Factors such as an aging population, disability rates, and limited job opportunities in certain regions contribute to this lower participation rate. Much of the state's population resides in rural areas, where access to education, training, and employment opportunities may be limited. Infrastructure constraints, including transportation and broadband access, exacerbate these challenges and hinder workforce participation and economic development. While efforts are underway to strengthen the state's workforce development infrastructure, there may be gaps in service delivery, coordination, and accessibility, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Investing in WDSs and partnerships is crucial to addressing these gaps and ensuring all residents have access to quality education and training opportunities.



While efforts to modernize West Virginia's WDS continue and work is underway for deepening partner engagement, there are still some structural issues stemming from a slow adaptation to new economic realities. One structural issue is the lag in transitioning from traditional industries to new economic sectors. West Virginia has historically relied on industries like coal mining and manufacturing, which have faced significant challenges in recent years due to market shifts and technological advancements. Additionally, the state's geographical and socioeconomic factors contribute to structural challenges in workforce development. Rural areas often face limited access to education and training resources, exacerbating disparities in skill development and employment opportunities. By addressing these challenges and fostering greater collaboration among stakeholders, West Virginia can better position itself to adapt to new economic realities, promote innovation, and create opportunities for sustainable economic and workforce growth.

### **Workforce Development Partner Program Summaries**

- **WIOA Title I Adult-** A strength of West Virginia's Title I Adult services is the wide range of services designed to meet the diverse needs of adult learners. This comprehensive approach ensures that participants receive tailored support to overcome barriers and achieve career employment. With a relatively small percentage of the adult population engaged in the labor force, comprehensive support for adults is imperative. Like many workforce development programs, West Virginia's Title I Adult program may face constraints in funding and resources, which could limit the availability of services and support for participants. Insufficient funding may result in reduced capacity to serve all eligible individuals or may constrain the range of services offered. Additionally, retaining participants in training programs and supporting them to completion can be a challenge for the Title I Adult program. Factors such as competing priorities, personal barriers, and insufficient support services may contribute to lower retention and completion rates, impacting participants' ability to achieve their education and career goals.
- **WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker-** A strength of West Virginia's Dislocated Worker program is the speed at which partnerships can be created through rapid response services. The State Dislocated Worker Services unit conducts rapid response activities to dislocated workers, who have priority in the WDS, through employer outreach which is coordinated as a joint rapid response team approach between the State Dislocated Worker Services Unit and the LWDB. Some eligible individuals may face barriers in accessing the Dislocated Worker Program's services, including lack of awareness about available resources, geographic barriers, transportation issues, or language barriers. Dislocated workers may face systemic barriers to employment, such as lack of affordable childcare, transportation, or access to healthcare. While the program may offer supportive services to address these barriers, funding constraints or limited availability of resources may hinder the effectiveness of these efforts in supporting participants' successful reemployment.
- **WIOA Title I Youth-** The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) youth programs in West Virginia have strengths in offering valuable skill development and career guidance as well as fostering partnerships with local employers. Their holistic approach addresses multiple barriers faced by youth, and the programs allow customization to meet unique regional needs. However, weaknesses include limited funding, challenges in coordination among various agencies, inadequate emphasis on soft skills, potential mismatches with the local labor market, policy inconsistencies across regions, and disparities in resources. Inconsistencies in policies may lead to unequal access to resources, services, and opportunities for program participants. Additionally, internet accessibility and transportation issues pose significant barriers, hindering program participation and limiting opportunities for youth, especially in the many rural areas of West Virginia. Addressing these weaknesses requires increased

resources, improved coordination, and innovative solutions to bridge the digital divide, overcome transportation challenges, and ensure policy consistency for equitable access across all regions.

- **WIOA Title II Adult Education-** Strengths of West Virginia’s adult education system include accessibility to adults seeking to improve their skills, whether it’s literacy, numeracy, English language proficiency, or workforce training. Programs are tailored to meet the diverse needs of adult learners, including those with disabilities, non-native English speakers, or individuals seeking career advancement. The system also offers flexible learning options such as evening classes, online courses, or hybrid models, making it easier for adults with busy schedules to participate. Collaboration with community organizations, employers, and local agencies strengthens the adult education system by providing additional support, resources, and opportunities for learners. Services like counseling, tutoring, career guidance, and financial aid are available to help adult learners overcome barriers and succeed in their educational and career goals. Weaknesses center on individuals' lack of awareness of the availability of adult education programs, leading to underutilization of services. Adult learners may face challenges in staying enrolled and completing programs due to competing priorities such as work, family responsibilities, or lack of motivation. Insufficient infrastructure, including outdated technology or lack of access to the internet, could hinder the delivery of high-quality education and limit the reach of programs, especially in rural areas.
- **WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser-** WorkForce WV applies an early-intervention approach to delivering services to unemployment compensation recipients. Claimants are dual enrolled from day one for Wagner-Peyser reemployment services and provided an orientation to all available One-Stop services. Additionally, the Wagner-Peyser program offers a range of services to employers, including job posting assistance, recruitment events, and workforce training programs. Program staff work closely with employers to understand their hiring needs and facilitate the recruitment of qualified candidates. While we coordinate with other workforce development partners to create easy access process for job seekers and employers, there are some challenges in achieving seamless service integration and coordination. Fragmentation of services across different agencies and programs may result in confusion for job seekers and employers.
- **WIOA Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation-** One key strength of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program in West Virginia is the expertise of the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services' (WVDRS) staff, particularly vocational rehabilitation counselors, who assist individuals with disabilities to gain, maintain, or advance in employment. WVDRS also has a team of employment specialists to aid West Virginia’s businesses and employers by providing recruitment, placement, and retention services, as well as training and technical assistance, so they can include or retain people with disabilities in their workforce. By using labor market information, in partnership with WorkForce WV, WVDRS helps individuals with disabilities, from age 14 through retirement, prepare for in-demand jobs through a wide range of services. WVDRS partners with high schools, career technical education centers, WV Adult Education, community and four-year colleges, community rehabilitation programs, and other providers to ensure the needed services on Individualized Plans for Employment are made available statewide. WVDRS maintains offices across the state, including itinerant locations at AJCs, public and private colleges, high schools, and other community locations, to ensure coverage and accessibility even in rural areas of the state. Through its provision of individualized services to over 10,000 individuals in 2023 (as of February 2024), WVDRS plays a critical role in increasing the state's labor force participation rate by enabling and empowering individuals with disabilities to achieve intermediate and long-term goals, ultimately obtaining high quality competitive integrated employment.

Potential weaknesses of the program are due to the finite human and fiscal resources available to serve the estimated 179,541 individuals with disabilities between the ages of 18-64 in the state who would potentially be eligible for VR services, including a WVDRS-estimated 18,954 students with disabilities ages 14-21 (American Community Survey, 2021). While WVDRS has a VR counselor assigned to each high school and postsecondary institution in the state, the agency is unable to fully participate in each Individualized Education Program to educate students, parents, and school staff about the VR program. WVDRS relies on partner agencies to assist with outreach and referrals to all potentially eligible individuals with disabilities seeking competitive integrated employment across the state, which, while helpful, makes it difficult to ascertain if all individuals in the state have equal access to and understanding of WVDRS services.

- **Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)**- The main strength of TAA is that the training is tailored to meet the specific needs of affected workers and prepares them for employment in high-demand industries or occupations as well as providing counseling and other support services. Despite funding for job training and education programs, some trade-affected workers may face barriers in accessing training opportunities due to factors such as limited availability of relevant programs or geographic constraints. Additionally, the eligibility criteria for TAA can be complex and may exclude certain workers who are affected by trade-related job loss but do not meet specific requirements, such as certification of trade-related impact or employment in a TAA-certified firm.
- **Jobs for Veterans State Grant (LVER/DVOP)**- The Job for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program has identified several strengths that make it effective in addressing the employment challenges faced by veterans. Firstly, it provides targeted assistance tailored to the unique needs of veterans, offering resources and support not available in general employment programs. Additionally, the program employs specialized staff, such as Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs), who are trained to understand and address veterans' specific needs. Furthermore, veterans receive priority of service, ensuring timely assistance over non-veteran participants in federally funded employment and training programs. The program also offers comprehensive support services, including career counseling, resume preparation, job search assistance, and follow-up services once they find employment. Finally, the JVSG program collaborates with other federal, state, and local programs to leverage resources and provide comprehensive support to veterans, including those facing significant barriers to employment.

While the Job for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program offers valuable support to veterans, it also faces several weaknesses that impact its effectiveness. Firstly, there is variability in the quality and availability of partner services across different locations, which can affect the consistency of support veterans receive. Additionally, underutilization of the program may occur due to veterans' lack of awareness or difficulty accessing services, particularly for those facing geographical constraints, transportation issues, or homelessness. Moreover, the complexity of eligibility criteria for certain program services may pose challenges for veterans seeking assistance. Despite these weaknesses, the JVSG program remains vital in supporting veteran employment. To enhance its impact, ongoing evaluation and adaptation are essential to ensure that it effectively addresses the evolving needs of veterans in West Virginia.

- **Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)**- CSBG programs often take a holistic approach to addressing poverty, focusing not only on immediate needs such as food and shelter but also on long-term solutions like education, employment, and financial stability. This comprehensive approach helps individuals and families achieve self-sufficiency and economic independence. Flexibility available to individual programs ensures that resources are allocated efficiently and effectively for each locality,

addressing unique challenges and maximizing impact. At a macro level, CSBG programs encourage collaboration among various stakeholders, including government agencies, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and community leaders. On a micro level, CSBG funds can be used to provide emergency assistance to individuals and families facing crisis situations such as natural disasters, unemployment, or sudden illness. This flexibility allows CAAs to respond quickly to urgent needs and provide essential support during times of hardship. Like many social service programs, CSBG funding may be insufficient to meet the needs of all eligible individuals and families in West Virginia. Limited funding constrains the scope and reach of services, leaving some vulnerable populations underserved. Fragmentation and duplication of services among different agencies and programs can undermine the efficiency and effectiveness of CSBG initiatives. Lack of coordination and communication among service providers may result in inefficiencies, gaps in coverage, and confusion for clients seeking assistance. Some CAAs in West Virginia also face capacity constraints, including staffing shortages, inadequate infrastructure, and limited organizational resources. These capacity challenges can hinder the delivery of high-quality services and limit the ability of CAAs to respond effectively to community needs. Ensuring the long-term sustainability of CSBG programs in West Virginia requires stable funding sources, strong leadership, and ongoing community support.

- **Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP)**- One key strength of West Virginia's SCSEP program is their ability to target a specific demographic worker who may face unique barriers to employment. Engaging older adults in meaningful, part-time positions at nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and other community-based entities allows them to help address important social needs and strengthen community connections, and SCSEP further contributes to the well-being of local communities. Additionally, to prepare participants for today's workforce, SCSEP offers training in computer literacy as this is a necessity in most occupations that forecast continued employment. Computer training opportunities are provided through many entities such as AJCs, local community colleges, and public libraries. SCSEP has also implemented the Senior Evolve program which provides iPads to eligible participants to help decrease technophobia, and to help improve computer skills. A weakness currently being addressed as a barrier is the fact that the majority of SCSEP's target audience have supplemental insurance, reside in subsidized housing, and/or receive Social Security Benefits, and because of this factor, the likelihood of them obtaining employment at the completion of the program is very slim due to fear that benefits will be lost and/or adjusted.
- **Unemployment Compensation:** West Virginia's unemployment insurance program's services are readily available to those who have lost their job or have experienced a reduction in work. Services are offered online, over the phone, or in person at WorkForce West Virginia's (WFWV) seventeen local offices. Local office and Connect Center staff are trained in both unemployment and employment services so they can assist those who have lost their job in applying for and receiving benefits and, ultimately, transitioning back to work. The Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program, for unemployment claimants who are determined as most likely to exhaust their benefits, has improved by adding dedicated RESEA program staff, providing self-scheduling of RESEA appointments for participants to make participation easier, and improving virtual delivery of services. WFWV is also implementing recommendations from the USDOL Tiger Team initiative to promote equitable access, ensure timely payment of benefits, reduce backlogs, and prevent and detect fraudulent activity to further strengthen the unemployment program. The largest challenge facing the unemployment insurance program is the legacy mainframe system used for unemployment benefits and tax, which is approximately 40 years old. The use

of this older system impacts service delivery due to the difficulty of implementing changes and scalability to meet new program requirements.

(C) **State Workforce Development Capacity**

**Locations:** West Virginia's WDS provides coverage for all 55 counties of the State. Workforce development services are provided from over 100 locations, with higher concentrations in more densely populated areas.

West Virginia has seven LWDBs. Each region has one AJC office location for a total of seven AJCs across the state. These centers provide easy access to employment services, such as education and training for workers, and information for economic developers. In addition to the seven AJCs, services are provided to workforce customers through 18 affiliate sites statewide. Each affiliate location provides at least one public computer with Internet to provide an access point to all combined partner services. The AJCs support West Virginia businesses by offering services including hosting job fairs, posting jobs, screening potential workers, and providing training services at no cost to businesses and workers.

The West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) provides vocational rehabilitation services statewide through 26 local office locations, which includes 6 offices co-located with a combined partner. Additionally, DRS has five itinerant offices within the regional AJC or affiliate office locations.

The West Virginia Department of Human Resources (DoHS) provides SNAP and TANF services in 54 out of 55 counties. DoHS currently provides services to residents in Brooke County through the Hancock County office location. Information on services and individual referrals are conducted through AJCs and affiliate office sites statewide.

The West Virginia Department of Education Office of Adult Education operates 69 classrooms statewide (75 if you include the stand-alone SPOKES classrooms). Of that total, eight are co-located in a regional AJC, eight are co-located on a CTC campus, six are co-located in a public library, 21 are co-located within a state K12 facility, and the remainder are located in a stand-alone facility. Regional AJCs provide access to information on services and individual partner referrals through the regional AJC process.

The West Virginia Department of Economic Development, CSBG Division, has 16 CAAs Agencies statewide which provides services through various CSBG grant services to all 55 West Virginia counties. Regional AJCs provide access to information on services and individual partner referrals through regional AJCs. Additionally, itinerant on-site locations are organized within the AJCs and affiliate offices by the individual CAAs.

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) has two National Grantee office locations. The West Virginia Bureau of Senior Services is located in Charleston. The second National Grantee office is the National Council on Aging (NCOA), located in Wheeling. SCSEP National Grantees continue to provide services at both office locations and at regional AJC and affiliate site locations.

The state-funded combined partner program, Jobs & Hope West Virginia, currently employs 23 Transition Agents statewide. The Transition Agents are placed within the local WFWV office locations or co-located within the regional AJCs or an affiliate office location. Individual referrals are conducted through the local WFWV office location or regional AJC and affiliate sites.

The Post-Secondary Carl Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Services (Perkins) combined partner has nine CTC locations throughout the state. Currently, eight West Virginia Adult Education classrooms are co-located on the campus of the CTCs. Itinerant on-sites

are organized through the regional AJCs and affiliate office locations. Individual referrals to CTC training programs are conducted through regional AJC and affiliate sites.

West Virginia is making and receiving considerable investments in technology and infrastructure upgrades that will improve the delivery of workforce development services. The state is working to expand capacity by fostering public-private partnerships and collaborations to leverage additional resources, expertise, industry associates, and community stakeholders.

## **Services**

The WDS provides a wide array of career and training services to promote quality employment outcomes to job seekers in WV and assist WV employers with their labor needs. These services are provided not only at AJCs and field offices, but also at homes, schools, businesses, and online.

West Virginia's WDS provides multiple services to residents, including Job Seeker Services, Veterans Services, Dislocated Workers Services (including TAA, TRA, and ATAA/RTAA), Employer Services, Unemployment Compensation, and Labor Market Information. In addition, WV offers multiple opportunities to assist those who are seeking training such as on-site classes, customized training (conducted in cooperation with employers), and technology training designed to enhance student transition and retention. They also offer programs that provide cash assistance, along with a variety of employment and education related services for low-income families with dependent children to help establish self-sufficiency. Finally, West Virginia is fully committed to providing comprehensive vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities, especially those with significant disabilities, who seek to obtain, retain, or maintain competitive, integrated employment. DRS services, together with pre-employment transition services, cover a spectrum of individualized needs, including medical, educational, employment, career and training, and other support needs.

## **Business Relations**

A key component of the success of West Virginia's WDS is the success that the system has had in maintaining strong relationships with businesses and employers across the state.

DRS employs nine Employment Specialists who provide statewide coverage in their task of maintaining business relations in the State of West Virginia. These relations entail not only placement of individuals with disabilities into positions, but also the acquisition of labor market information, complementing the information acquired by WFWV. DRS and WFWV work together to provide the most comprehensive labor market information available.

WFWV produces and provides extensive labor market information to its participants, and to the public in general, thanks to communication and the exchange of information with employers regarding opportunities, expected growth, and the knowledge, skills, and abilities that these employers expect from potential employees.

In 2019, West Virginia established a Business Services Unit (BSU) using an approach proposed by Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 10-16 WIOA Operating Guidance. WFWV has chosen to focus on "Retention" and "Repeat" as pilot approaches and primary indicators of performance for measuring effectiveness in serving employers. The BSU continues to focus on these primary indicators of performance and establish strong employer engagement connections throughout the state. In October 2022, WFWV scheduled monthly Virtual Job Fair Platform events to establish another venue for connecting employers with qualified job seekers. Also, the BSU team organized and conducted specific job fairs geared towards "industry specific" occupations.

The BSU works closely with employers statewide and by the end of 2023, 2,133 employers have



registered for job fairs with over 11,000 job postings. Registered job seekers exceeded 10,000 with over 94,000 employer booth visits and 5,100 resumes submitted. Approximately 75% of employers “repeat” each month. Consistency and collaboration with employers, partner agencies, and community resources have been integral in the success of the virtual job fair platform and in-person job fairs.

- Approach 1: “Retention with the Same Employer” addresses the programs’ efforts to provide employers with skilled workers. In 2022, the retention rate was 66%.
- Approach 2: “Repeat Business Customers” addresses the programs’ efforts to provide quality engagement and services to employers and sectors and establish productive relationships with employers and sectors over extended periods of time. In 2022, the repeat rate was 59%.

In establishing a BSU, West Virginia is using indicators to show areas needing improvement, increase employer engagement, provide technical assistance, and focus on indicators at quarterly meetings. Members include:

- Employer Representatives from our seven LWDBs
- WFWV Local Veteran Employment Representatives
- State Business Services Unit
- DRS
- Adult Education
- Senior Services
- Community Resources
- Partner Agencies

Programs and initiatives offered by the BSU are available to all employers and enhance the labor force by utilizing the following programs and services:

- Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)
- Federal Bonding
- On-the-Job Training (OJT) programs
- Apprenticeship promotion
- Recruiting employers to AJCs
- Connecting jobseekers by facilitating relationships
- Rapid Response Activities
- Veterans Services
- Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker (MSFW)
- Facilities usage for recruiting and interviewing
- Assistance with job fairs
- Assistance in providing accommodations for employees (DRS)
- Educational assistance programs
- Labor Market Information
- Employer engagement in unemployment adjudication
- Resume workshops
- Interviewing workshops
- Job Development assistance
- Early intervention strategies for layoff aversions (WV Development Office)
- Industry and Sector Strategies

## B) STATE STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS

### 1. VISION

The State of West Virginia's vision for the 2024-2027 state plan cycle is to clarify and consolidate the state's efforts to meet the unique and localized needs of West Virginia workers and residents. The urgency is clear. West Virginia's demographic profile makes both retaining younger workers and engaging older workers critical to the state's sustainability. The state's geography and rural composition create unique workforce obstacles. Disproportionate challenges with substance use disorder have workforce impacts through both distributed caregiving responsibilities and labor force attachment and/or reattachment. Higher poverty rates and lower educational attainment translate to barriers for many West Virginia workers, especially in the transition to a service and knowledge economy.

And yet, despite these historic realities, the state also shows signs of an economic renaissance. In the past several years, 18 large employers have established or announced their intent to establish large, new manufacturing hubs in the state. In October 2023, the Commerce Department's Economic Development Agency (EDA) selected West Virginia for two Tech Hubs Strategy Development Grants from CHIPS investments. West Virginia is receiving \$550 billion in Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funding to boost maintenance of the state's approximately 7,000 bridges. The state is also receiving \$1.2 billion in federal funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law's Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program within the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), the second highest award in the nation. The BEAD funding is accompanied by a workforce plan development by partners of the state WDS.

Modernizing West Virginia's workforce system to meet the skill needs of employers in the high-growth, high-tech economy is not easily or quickly done; the state's vision focuses on evidence of change in both short- and long-term metrics. The following outcomes will guide West Virginia's public workforce system and partnership efforts over the next four years:

#### **1. Increase prime-age LFPR for both men and women.**

This is an ongoing challenge for the Mountain State. As of December 2023, overall LFPR was at 55.3%, which is the state's highest rate since March 2010. However, this rate was also the second-lowest national LFPR (with seasonal adjustment) for December. West Virginia's prime-age men and women both have the country's lowest LFPR, contributing to the challenges posed by its aging population. To achieve even a modest increase in the prime-age LFPR, the state would need to attract thousands of additional workers to join its workforce. <sup>4</sup>

#### **2. Increase youth employment and retain a higher percentage of WV graduates (high school or postsecondary) for in-state employment.**

Youth employment can be examined through the LFPR of the age group between 16 and 19 years old. West Virginia will analyze data over the past four years and calculate the year-over-year growth in annual employment within this age bracket. This data will provide insight into trends and patterns in youth employment, offering valuable information for understanding the dynamics of the labor market for younger individuals.

#### **3. Improve job-matching quality for workers outside of the workforce through increased number of referrals and shorter durations to reemployment.**

Improving job-matching quality for workers outside of the workforce requires a comprehensive approach that addresses both supply and demand-side factors. By

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<sup>4</sup> Sources: <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/LBSSA54>; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/release/tables?eid=784070&rid=446>; <https://wvpublic.org/raising-wv-labor-force-participation-to-national-average-would-means-thousands-more-workers/>

implementing targeted interventions and fostering collaboration among stakeholders, workforce development agencies can help job seekers find meaningful employment faster and more efficiently. Through the MACC data system, West Virginia can track the number of dislocated worker referrals and develop baseline data to show achievement or improvement over time.

## 2. GOALS

Translating this new economic paradigm to the public workforce system's operations and outcomes will require ingenuity, clarity, and a commitment to shared goals. The state's goals follow four broad themes:

### **Expand work-based learning: *West Virginia will expand high-quality work-based learning opportunities for both youth and adult learners.***

Robust evidence shows the positive effects of work-based learning. Workers develop skills (technical or soft skills), improve their employability, open doors for career advancement, and expand their network. Employers can recruit or retain skilled employees, reduce recruitment costs, and build their own pipeline of skilled talent. Educational institutions build effective two-way partnerships with employers and gain feedback to ensure that their coursework is directly connected and relevant to real-world work experiences.

The state intends to widen the aperture on all forms of work-based learning, including but not limited to apprenticeships, co-ops, intern and externships, and service learning. These formats, even when used informally for incumbent workers, can engage workers otherwise at risk of leaving the state and/or the workforce. For youth and young adult learners and workers, this is particularly important as they navigate the transitions between education and employment.

One immediate challenge is the lack of comprehensive knowledge about the current state of all publicly funded efforts on work-based learning. Cataloging the full spectrum of such opportunities is already underway, the first step of the state board and WIOA system's efforts to meet the goal of expanding work-based learning.

West Virginia plans to operationalize this goal by:

- Increasing the proportion of statewide workforce funding going to work-based learning investments.
- Increasing the number of WV pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs and number of learners enrolled in these programs.
- Expanding the number of quality work-based learning opportunities at WV secondary education institutions and K12 Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs.
- Increasing the number of students who gain college credit through work-based learning options.

The intent of these measures is to see outcomes improvement in both #1 (improve prime-age LFPR) and #2 (increase youth employment and graduate retention).

### **Reduce barriers to sustainable employment: *West Virginia will address the specific barriers that preclude or reduce the likelihood of stable employment for West Virginians who would otherwise be able and available to work.***

Two of the largest and recurring employment barriers are transportation and caregiving responsibilities.

**Transportation** and demographics are inextricably linked. Although there has been more population growth in suburban and urban areas, the transportation infrastructure of these areas is typically more diverse and developed. This leaves residents, particularly those without access to and/or ability to drive a car, disproportionately vulnerable to transit-related

employment barriers. Transportation barriers are often a challenge for other populations: workers in re-entry, workers in recovery from substance abuse disorder, and the youngest groups of workers. West Virginia's future and sustainability depends on having workers from all of these groups contributing to its momentum. Given that, reducing transportation barriers is one of the primary goals over the next four years.

**Caregiving** barriers, especially related to reliable and affordable childcare, present obstacles to steady work for many West Virginians. The state lacks adequate childcare capacity for the current workforce and does not have the additional capacity that will be required for new and incoming investments. This is also an issue for the large number of West Virginia grandparents raising their grandchildren, often as a direct result of the opioid epidemic. This has forced some older workers to return to the labor force and forced other workers out of the workforce due to caregiving responsibilities.

A third of West Virginia's children have parents without stable employment. 13% of WV families with children under the age of five had to change jobs due to childcare problems in 2023. Transportation and childcare barriers often intersect because many areas, even in more densely populated parts of the state, do not have childcare centers nearby. From the Kids Count annual survey, funded in part by the Annie E. Casey Foundation:

“Even if parents can find an opening at a childcare center near their home, they often can't pay for it. West Virginia's average cost of center-based childcare for a toddler was \$7,955, 9% of the median income of a married couple and 35% of a single mother's income. While the cost of care burdens families, childcare workers are paid worse than 98% of professions. Median national pay for childcare workers was \$28,520 per year or \$13.71 an hour in 2022, less than the wage for retail (\$14.26) and customer service (\$18.16) workers.” ([Source](#))

The pressing childcare situation and its resulting impacts on workers has attracted employer, legislative, and public workforce system attention. Although many of the needed solutions could come from outside of the core WIOA programs, the WIOA system plans to coordinate efforts to address childcare and transportation issues, particularly because so many WIOA customers face one or both of these barriers.

West Virginia plans to operationalize this goal by:

- Producing and/or assembling existing in-depth research analysis (including lessons learned) of the populations, demographics, and needs of those workers most impacted by the top two challenges of transportation and childcare.
- Improving the internal data collection and tracking on employment barriers to drive evidence-based changes to WIOA service delivery.
- Implementing a comprehensive referral system and increasing the organizational database of service providers (including but not limited to transportation and childcare providers).
- Analyzing demographics to identify the subpopulations most at risk of labor market exit due to these top two barriers.

The intent of these measures is to see outcomes improvement in both #1 (improve prime-age LFPR) and #3 (improve job matching for those outside of the workforce).

**Invest in high-growth sector strategies for key industries: *The state's workforce team will prioritize three sectors where wage premiums and labor market demand create win-wins for workers and employers—surveying, consolidating, and aligning sector-strategy investments for these industries to effectively measure outcomes and prevent duplication.***

Although the coming influx of public and private economic investment to West Virginia is somewhat diverse, certain industries and associated skill sets have disproportionate demand: advanced manufacturing, healthcare, tourism, and energy.

Sector strategies and partnerships are foundational, evidence-based practices in workforce development, bridging the demand gap between employers’ needs and future workers’ needs. Focused employer engagement, worker training, and continuous learning are necessary elements of the successful sector strategies that are central to deploying a modernized and effective public workforce system. The Governor’s Workforce Resiliency Office and the State WDB are bolstering services for job seekers and workers through the No Wrong Door strategy, which effectively coordinates work between state and local workforce partners, employers, post-secondary education institutions, and community-based service providers.

As part of this sector-based approach, alignment between the state and local workforce system and the nine West Virginia CTCs can boost the skills of workers in alignment with employer engagement and feedback. As a key strategy, CTCs have created “hubs” of sector-based education and training for referrals by workforce system partners including federal investments.

The following table captures the CTC Sector Education and Training Hub Model:

<b>Sector</b>	<b>CTCs</b>
Healthcare Technology	BridgeValley, Mountwest, Pierpont, Southern, Blue Ridge, Northern
Business	New River & Northern
Hospitality	Pierpont & Blue Ridge
Legal	Blue Ridge, BridgeValley, Mountwest, New River, Pierpont
Education	Northern & Mountwest
Energy	WVUP & BridgeValley
Manufacturing	Blue Ridge, BridgeValley, WVUP
Information Technology	Mountwest, Blue Ridge, BridgeValley, WVUP
Agriculture	Eastern & Blue Ridge
CDL/Automotive/Diesel:	New River, BridgeValley, Eastern

Complementing direct alignment of education and training investments through the Hub Model, West Virginia is implementing the following tactics:

- Collecting and cataloging all federal or state-funded sector strategy interventions across the state, including post-secondary education and industry partnerships.
- Recommending creation of a sector-strategy liaison in the governor’s office (for the top three industry clusters) to ensure ongoing executive attention and prioritization; this person should also be nominated to the West Virginia State WDB.
- Producing sector-specific, region-relevant opportunity awareness training for all case management or frontline staff across the core programs and large non-core partners (SNAP E&T, TANF, Perkins).
- Creating a statewide, public data visualization dashboard to show the current and future demand for specific job skills and how many state residents either currently possess those skills or have been/are being trained in them.

The intent of these measures is to see outcomes improvement in both #1 (improve prime-age LFPR), #2 (increase youth employment and graduate retention), and #3 (improve job matching).

**Integrate and innovate for service design and delivery: *West Virginia will streamline and focus its workforce development infrastructure.***

The state's service delivery model has not changed significantly under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, and in the face of the pandemic experience and post-pandemic economic conditions, the status quo is no longer acceptable. After the June 2021 creation of the Blue Ribbon Taskforce on "Aligning the Roles and Missions of the State Community and Technical College System and Workforce Development System," the Taskforce's final report included many directly relevant recommendations related to infrastructure, service design, and delivery:

**Make it Easier for Citizens to be Successful**

- Create a common application so citizens can easily enroll in services across organizations.
- Set up a work group to engineer case management referral and training support infrastructure.
- Expand Jobs and Hope case management services and train case managers to be familiar with all SNAP, TANF, federal and state financial aid, and core workforce programs.
- Preferably locate several services in one location.

**Get State Agencies on the Same Page**

- Establish shared metrics and goals for agencies that align with state interests.
- Establish a strong state WDB that meets regularly and creates a sense of accountability to the state.

**Eliminate Duplication**

- Develop a workgroup of agencies to assess duplicative expenditures and other budgetary inefficiencies.
- Conduct asset mapping, including a real estate review and examination of shared location expenses.

These recommendations point to the previous challenges within the system's structure: program duplication; lack of coordination or communication; lack of shared definition of success; knowledge gaps between programs; diffuse service delivery locations; and lagging oversight by the State WDB. Further, many of these pressing problems are symptomatic of the need in West Virginia to overhaul the one-stop service delivery design to incorporate a "Franchise Model" whereby customers can expect high-value, consistent services tailored to their economic region. This is one goal of the "No Wrong Door" initiative described elsewhere in this plan.

Some of the need for governance improvements are not unique to West Virginia. Therefore, West Virginia is tracking federal efforts to reform WIOA. The state supports opportunities to utilize expanded waiver authority and implement a statewide demonstration project, as consistent with current congressional proposals. West Virginia is also committed to using all available workforce system flexibility to reduce unnecessary layers, reorient the center of gravity for service delivery, and invest in streamlining processes, technology, and operations.

To operationalize this goal, West Virginia will:

- Strengthen and reestablish the role of the state board as the policy and strategy leader for the public workforce system.
- Refresh (or overhaul where needed) the state's workforce policy infrastructure to ensure appropriate consistency of service delivery.

- Invest in a statewide referral tool (as part of the “No Wrong Door” initiative) to provide insight about customer journeys and service response, especially across partner programs.
- Conduct ongoing training and technical assistance for state and local partners to ensure compliance, but more importantly, create a dynamic and collaborative environment for implementing best practices and bolstering a shared commitment to one-stop system outcomes.

### 3. PERFORMANCE GOALS

Each core program will be assessed on the following performance measures from section 116(b) of WIOA:

- Employment (second quarter after exit)
- Employment (fourth quarter after exit)
- Median earnings (second quarter after exit)
- Credential attainment rate
- Measurable skills gains
- Effectiveness in serving employers

Performance table is being developed for the current year and will be provided separately for public review and included in final plan.

### 4. ASSESSMENT

The WVVWDB and program partners use several means to assess and monitor progress towards accomplishing the strategic vision and goals for the WDS.

**WVVWDB Enhanced Oversight:** The WVVWDB has revamped its approach to its quarterly meetings its and business agendas. Meetings engage partners at a deeper level, including holding labor market information updates, inviting partner and community presentations on services to different workforce populations, and engaging WVVWDB members through subcommittees, new policies, and performance reports. The WVVWDB has updated its committee infrastructure and has four standing committees:

*Operations Committee:* The Operations Committee supports the goal of utilizing a variety of strategies to align the core programs, one-stop partners, and other resources to achieve fully integrated customer services. This includes creating workforce development activities regarding gaps identified in the state’s workforce analysis; setting collaborative performance goals, certifying one-stop centers, sharing information/data working together to resolve problems and addressing gaps; and collaborating and coordinating on training, marketing and feedback by utilizing existing committees, workgroups and programs while aligning and sharing resources when appropriate.

*Industry Partnerships and Employer Engagement Committee:* The Industry Partnerships and Employer Engagement committee creates partnerships that pair employers across several industries with colleges, high schools, labor agencies, workforce agencies, community organizations, and other community stakeholders. These partnerships ensure that training aligns with skills needed for a particular industry, while also facilitating training, hiring, and career advancement for workers.



*Performance and Accountability Committee:* The Performance and Accountability Committee develops metrics and measurements for publishing comprehensive workforce data that will enable the West Virginia Workforce System to measure comprehensive accountability and performance. This committee, in consultation with other committees and the Board, recommends policy, budget, and administrative actions to the Governor to ensure that West Virginia can measure what matters for businesses, job seekers, and government entities. Elements from the Board's strategic plan specifically assigned to this committee include:

- Design and implement a statewide survey measuring businesses' satisfaction with the workforce system.
- Develop and deliver a consolidated budget report including performance data to improve transparency in workforce funding, enabling smarter policy decisions.
- Advance recommendations to the Governor to improve system alignment, accountability, and efficiencies.
- Endorse a set of common state performance measures and champion the delivery of a performance accountability system to track workforce program outcomes.
- Promote a model that determines the return on public investment for workforce system programs in order to inform policy and resource allocation.

This committee is particularly engaged in identifying common cross-agency, cross-program performance metrics and ensuring that decisions made by the Workforce Board are informed by sound data and analysis.

*Career Pathways Committee:* The Career Pathways Committee is comprised of representatives from educational, community, business, and workforce organizations. This committee meets with partners from around the state to gather information and ideas on how these groups can align, share resources, and collaborate.

**Convene Partners:** WFWV convenes core and combined program agency partners on a regular basis to discuss streamlined service delivery, coordinate policy, and track the strategic goals of the WIOA State Plan. They also focus on cross-agency training on new WVVWDB state policies and procedures to ensure that partner agencies can operationalize these in a No Wrong Door manner that is accountable and transparent. Enhanced communications are a priority as the state moves in a coordinated direction to help employers, workers, and job seekers.

**Performance Data Reviews:** Leaders of program partner agencies engage in a performance accountability process that is informed by data and aligned to the vision and goals of the Governor and the WIOA State Plan. Under the WIOA State Plan, a renewed focus on dashboards and system performance is being implemented with shared responsibility for transparency and accountability in its systems. The WVVWDB, the Performance and Accountability Committee, and WFWV staff will establish baseline data points and annual accountability points to measure success in meeting goals. The assessment process will:

- Establish performance metrics and indicators aligned with the goals of expanding work-based learning, reducing barriers to sustainable employment, investing in high-growth sector strategies, and integrating and innovating service design and delivery.
- Conduct regular data analysis and performance reviews to assess LWDB performance in these areas.
- Provide ongoing technical assistance, resources, and support to LWDBs to address challenges and capitalize on opportunities for improvement.
- Foster collaboration and information-sharing among LWDBs, state agencies, employers, educational institutions, and other stakeholders to maximize impact and achieve shared goals in workforce development.

**State Monitoring:** Through the state's monitoring system, fiscal monitors will conduct at least one annual onsite monitoring review for each of the seven LWDBs for compliance with federal and state laws and regulations. Any issues are handled through the state's monitoring resolution process.

**Evaluation:** The WVWDB and WFWV will develop an evaluation agenda and utilize a portion of the state set-aside to conduct more formal mixed-methods evaluations of programs focused on best practices and impactful components of the state’s strategy that positively influence labor force participation, youth services, work-based learning enrollments, and access to education and training for skills development. The evaluation agenda will dig deeper into issues so as to inform stakeholders and the public about effective workforce development practices in West Virginia.

## C) STATE STRATEGY

### **(1) Describe the strategies the State will implement, including industry or sector partnerships related to in-demand industry sectors and occupations and career pathways**

West Virginia is participating in the USDOL ETA Workforce System Technical Assistance Collaborative and is working with SAFAL Partners to complete a sector partnerships/employer engagement strategies study. Toward that end, state partners will elect staff to serve on a West Virginia Sector Strategies Team. Recent information sessions in West Virginia have shed light on the vision, goals, and potential impact that sector-based strategies could have in the state. These strategies will serve to foster collaboration, share expertise, and collectively address workforce challenges. This work is beginning now and will continue through the year with the end goal being a sector strategies framework identifying key partners in industry sectors that will work to provide clear career pathways that include educational outlines and employment opportunities.

The WVWDB includes an advisory committee related to industry partnerships and employer engagement, which includes multiple employers from several industries that will work to collaborate with colleges, high schools, labor, workforce agencies, community organizations, and other community stakeholders. These partnerships will help align training with the skills needed for that industry while facilitating training, hiring, and career advancement for workers. Main goals of this committee include continued partnerships with employers to identify key workforce needs and improving job matching rates.

The Career Pathways Committee of the WVWDB comprises education, community organizations, employer, and workforce partners. This committee meets with partners from around the state and gathers information and ideas on how groups can align, share resources, and collaborate. Key goals of this committee include enhancing West Virginia’s current Career Pathways system, sharing information about career pathways training with individuals and employers, providing youth a clear pathway to success, and exploring additional opportunities to establish career development in K-12 education curriculum starting with eighth grade.

CTCs in West Virginia actively participate in sector strategies by engaging with industry partners to identify skill gaps, develop relevant curriculum, and provide training programs that align with industry standards and certifications. Each college has industry advisory boards comprising representatives from local businesses and industry associations. These boards provide input on curriculum development, equipment needs, and workforce trends to ensure that the college’s programs are relevant, up-to-date, and responsive to needs of employers. Many West Virginia CTCs offer customized training programs tailored to the needs of specific employers or industries, which are often developed in collaboration with industry partners and delivered on-site or at college campuses. By offering customized training solutions, colleges can help employers address immediate skill needs and support workforce development initiatives.

## **(2) Describe the strategies the State will use to achieve fully integrated customer services**

West Virginia is working on fully integrated customer service from multiple angles, including the following in-flight and planned strategies:

**West Virginia's No Wrong Door Approach:** The WVVDB has been discussing this model and plans to move forward with policy development based on this approach. West Virginia's No Wrong Door approach utilizes a "franchise model" design to deploy services to employers, workers, and job seekers. No Wrong Door asserts a vision where people in need of workforce development services can seamlessly obtain the services regardless of the program or organization providing those services. In doing so, state and local workforce, education, social services, and economic development partners come together to fashion a unified program delivery and referral structure that ensures statewide consistency and regional flexibility in the services provided.

Under the No Wrong Door model, the Governor and WVVDB set standards and expectations for West Virginia's No Wrong Door approach and the delivery of services through the one-stop delivery system. LWDBs and Chief Local Elected Officials have responsibility for adopting and applying standards to deliver services in a way that is accountable, transparent, and high quality while collaborating closely with state and community-based partners.

LWDBs are the regional franchisees of the No Wrong Door model. LWDBs are expected to leverage regional planning and policies to implement strategies that maximize positive impact of services for customers while meeting regional economic development priorities. LWDBs establish policy for their respective local workforce development areas within the state policy framework, and they are expected to serve as regional strategic conveners in partnership with state and other local partners to provide workforce solutions for their customers. LWDBs provide administrative oversight over one-stop centers and ensure that centers provide value-added and cost-effective services, using a braided funding approach that does not overly rely on WIOA title I programs for service provision.

To support No Wrong Door implementation, WVVDB and WFWV host multiple training sessions for LWDB and partner staff on MOU and IFA expectations and development, roles and responsibilities of partners, and best practices from other states on integration of services. The No Wrong Door model seeks to utilize flexibilities and innovation embedded in current law to achieve statewide consistency in service delivery while allowing for appropriate flexibility in local service delivery tied to unique features of communities and people who are served.

**No Wrong Door WV Platform:** This is a statewide initiative in West Virginia that operates on the basis that there are no wrong doors for accessing workforce assistance. It seeks to streamline the process by identifying available resources by zip code, ensuring that individuals receive support tailored to their unique needs, and facilitating quick access to services. Benefits of No Wrong Door include eliminating the need for individuals to repeatedly share personal information, expediting access to services, enhancing coordination among support organizations, reducing duplicative processes, and improving the tracking of individual referral progress. The system allows different service providers to securely share data and make electronic referrals, ensuring that relevant information is readily available to partners serving the same individual. Current partners in the No Wrong Door initiative include WFWV, WV DoHR, WV DRS, Jobs & Hope WV, WV Department of Education, WV Adult Education, WV Community and Technical College System, WV Higher Education Policy Commission, and LWDBs.

No Wrong Door does not replace existing case-management systems but instead serves as a connector for automated referrals and tracking. Referrals can extend to non-partner organizations, with an online platform managed by Findhelp that accesses a nationwide social

care network. There are no fees associated with becoming a No Wrong Door partner and utilizing this technology, which enables a stronger statewide approach to streamlining services.

### III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

#### A. STATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

##### 1. STATE BOARD FUNCTIONS

The Governor appoints the members of the West Virginia Workforce Development Board (WVWDB) and designates one of the business representatives to serve as the Chairperson. The WVWDB gives the Chairperson authority through the bylaws to create or dissolve committees and the task forces to accomplish the state board functions of the Board as required under section 101 (d) of WIOA. There are currently four advisory committees in addition to the Executive Committee:

*Operations Committee:* The Operations Committee supports the State Plan’s goal of utilizing a variety of strategies to align the core programs, one-stop partners, and other resources to achieve fully integrated customer services. This includes 1) creating workforce development activities regarding gaps identified in the state’s workforce analysis; 2) setting collaborative performance goals, certifying one-stop centers, sharing information/data, and working together to resolve problems and addressing gaps; and 3) collaborating and coordinating on training, marketing and feedback by utilizing existing committees, workgroups, and programs while aligning and sharing resources when appropriate.

*Industry Partnerships and Employer Engagement Committee:* The Industry Partnerships and Employer Engagement committee includes multiple employers within several industries to collaborate with colleges, high schools, labor and workforce agencies, community organizations, and other community stakeholders. These partnerships align training with the skills needed for that industry while facilitating training, hiring, and career advancement for workers.

*Performance and Accountability Committee:* The Performance and Accountability Committee is established to develop metrics and measurements for publishing comprehensive workforce data that will enable the West Virginia Workforce System to measure comprehensive accountability and performance. The Performance and Accountability Committee, in consultation with other committees and the Board, recommends policy, budget, and administrative actions to the Governor to ensure that West Virginia can measure what matters for businesses, job seekers, and government. Elements from the Board’s Strategic plan specifically assigned to this committee include:

- Design and implement a statewide survey measuring businesses’ satisfaction with the workforce system.
- Develop and deliver a consolidated budget report including performance data that improves transparency in workforce funding to enable smarter policy decisions.
- Advance recommendations to the Governor to improve system alignment, accountability, and efficiencies.
- Endorse a set of common state performance measures and champion the delivery of a Performance Accountability System to track workforce program outcomes.
- Promote a model that determines the return on public investment for workforce system programs in order to inform policy and resource allocation.

The committee is particularly engaged in cross-agency, cross-program performance metrics, in identifying common performance metrics, and in ensuring that decisions made by the WVWDB are informed by sound data and analysis.

*Career Pathways Committee:* The Career Pathways Committee comprises education, community organizations, employers, and workforce organizations. This committee meets with partners from around the state and gathers information and ideas on how these groups can align, share resources, and collaborate.

The WVVWDB provides oversight for the comprehensive state workforce development system that prepares West Virginia citizens for employment opportunities offered by West Virginia businesses. The WVVWDB has recently focused and enhanced its strategic role in assuring that a policy and procedures framework is in place for consistent service delivery and, working closely with Work Force West Virginia (WFWV), that training and technical assistance occurs among all partners and the local workforce development boards (LWDBs) to further the No Wrong Door model that is the cornerstone of the state's vision.

Full Board meetings occur every quarter. Significant decisions are made with the approval of a simple majority of a Board quorum. Status updates on any current initiatives are given, as appropriate, to the full Board during regular meetings, and if action is required, the Board is able to act accordingly. Public notice of regular Board meetings will be provided to all members no less than seven days before the day of the meeting. All meetings of the Board will be publicly announced in advance and open and accessible to the public. Information on the state board's activities and schedules can be found on the Board's new public website:

<https://workforcedb.wv.gov/>

Board member training is continual and is provided in-person, virtually, and electronically delivered. Orientation is provided to all new members. Resources are provided by the Governor's Workforce Resiliency Office, WFWV, and combined partners to enable the board to carry out key functions.

## 2. IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGY

### **(A) Core Program Activities to Implement State Strategy**

Core partner and combined plan partners are actively engaged in coordinating and implementing strategies aligned to the four key strategic goals outlined in this plan:

1. **Expand work-based learning:** *West Virginia will expand high-quality work-based learning opportunities for both youth and adult learners.*
2. **Reduce barriers to sustainable employment:** *West Virginia will address the specific barriers that preclude or reduce the likelihood of stable employment for West Virginians who would otherwise be able and available to work.*
3. **Invest in high-growth sector strategies for key industries:** *The state's workforce team will prioritize three sectors where wage premiums and labor market demand create win-wins for workers and employers—surveying, consolidating, and aligning sector-strategy investments for these industries to effectively measure outcomes and prevent duplication.*
4. **Integrate and innovate for service design and delivery:** *West Virginia will streamline and focus its workforce development infrastructure.*

All partner programs are coalescing around these four goals to integrate services and activities so that the larger public workforce development system provides a high level of consistent services across the state no matter which partner is accessed first.

### **Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth**

Title I funding is primarily delivered through the LWDBs who are then tasked with creating the environment and processes for ensuring a No Wrong Door approach is actualized. A key area of focus is WFWV working with other state agency partners and the LWDBs to ensure that a

framework of contribution and cooperation occurs to systematically support the No Wrong Door model with each partner providing leadership and contributions on the direction of the West Virginia's workforce development system and continued evolution of what "one-stop service delivery" looks like—for both physical and virtual access to services. This includes collaborative local MOU and IFA negotiations and development, growing engagement and access of services through the American Job Centers (AJCs), flexible funding models, technology integration, and increased employer engagement.

A key aligned focus for Title I resources will be on investing to expand work-based learning. This investment strategy is combined with facilitating a better understanding of how LWDBs can be conveners in sector partnership opportunities, particularly in coordination with the Community and Technical Colleges (CTCs), which are conducting much of the sector-based training in West Virginia. By focusing laser-like on work-based training options, West Virginia can equip adult learners with the skills and experience needed to succeed in the workforce, meet employer demand for skilled workers, and drive economic growth and prosperity across the state. To support workers in work-based learning, WFWV and LWDBs will engage partners in strategic alignment and use of supportive services, particularly when participants are accessing multiple programs for services.

### **Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy**

Title II works with state, regional, and local partners to research, develop and implement Integration Education and Training programs based on labor market in-demand occupations. Partnering with the Governor's No Wrong Door Workforce Development initiative enables students to locate resources to reduce barriers. Adult Education guides students through education and career exploration to match skills, interests, and abilities with available education, training, and employment. Appropriate referrals are made to partners and service providers.

### **Title III Wagner-Peyser**

To promote innovation service delivery, WFWV has implemented an online training program aimed at enhancing the knowledge base of local office staff regarding the array of services available to customers. Additionally, tailored training sessions are conducted during statewide staff meetings as needed. These initiatives are strategically designed to bolster staff proficiency in employment services and partner offerings, thereby equipping them to provide whole system support, serving as more of a generalist case manager. Subject matter experts in areas such as Unemployment Insurance (UI), the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and employment services, collaborate with core partner agencies to identify pertinent training topics. This collaborative effort ensures that training content remains relevant and aligned with the evolving needs of both staff and customers. Supportive services allowable through Wagner-Peyser funding will continue to help individuals reduce barriers to sustainable employment.

### **Title IV: Vocational Rehabilitation**

#### *Expand Work Based Learning:*

The West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) defines a work-based learning experience (WBLE) as an educational approach or instructional methodology that uses the workplace or real work to provide participants with the knowledge and skills that will help them access future career opportunities. WBLEs benefit participants with disabilities in many ways, including providing an individual with initial or additional content for a résumé, helping to guide an individual in determining suitable employment, and frequently functioning as a starting point for a participant to begin building a network with employers and co-workers within his or her community.

While partner agencies offer similar WBLEs to their clients, DRS provides the additional guidance for individuals with disabilities to navigate the social and physical aspects of the work

environment so they can navigate potential concerns (i.e., stamina, accessibility, ergonomics) to ensure their employment and job retention success.

During FFY 2023, DRS provided WBLE services to 254 individuals with disabilities. DRS anticipates the number of individuals participating in WBLEs to grow over the next four years as the DRS utilizes growth strategies to increase business engagement, community rehabilitation program (CRP) collaboration, and public awareness of the availability of this service. DRS also encourages co-enrollment in partner programs, core and otherwise while participating in WBLEs, expanding awareness of the WBLE program to people participating in other partner programs.

The DRS Employer Services Section maintains a database of each DRS-employer interaction with employment specialists. This list is distributed to field staff to potentially match a job-ready vocational rehabilitation consumer with a current job opening. Through ongoing development of positive working relationships, 47 employers (including some of the largest in the state) now send job postings directly to DRS' Employer Services Section.

*Data-Drive Sector/Industry Strategies:*

To meet the workforce needs of WV employers, DRS employment specialists and rehabilitation counselors use state, regional, and local market data to ensure consumers are equipped with the necessary information to actively engage with in-demand industries in different geographical locations. Consumers also gain knowledge of what steps are required to reach those identified jobs, and Labor Market Information (LMI) is acquired through O\*NET OnLine and via the WFWV dashboard.

DRS provides experiential learning opportunities to individuals with disabilities as a way of meeting West Virginia's employment needs. DRS is attentive to the constant flow of information available that outlines in-demand employment sectors and industries, including from new businesses migrating to West Virginia. Using this information, DRS matches participants with identified employment opportunities based on their skill sets, gained knowledge, and vocational desires. DRS is a significant resource for employers needing a skilled workforce.

DRS staff are committed to collaborative connections with the Governor's office, core partners, and other partners outlined in this current state plan. Through continued connection and communication, DRS staff and consumers have access to the most up-to-date labor market information, which DRS vocational counselors use to assist individuals with securing the necessary training required to attain viable employment. Training options remain vast for DRS participants through an expansive network of training providers, including the adult education system; vocational training facilities; two-year, four-year, and graduate level education programs from colleges and universities; and curriculum provided by both DRS and community rehabilitation programs. This path provides opportunities for DRS consumers to reach occupational success and to ensure employer needs are met.

The Systemic Transition Enhancement Project (STEP 21) is a DRS initiative, developed in 2021, where DRS consumers, DRS vocational rehabilitation counselors and other staff, DRS partners, and stakeholders collaborate to expand access and opportunities for individuals with disabilities, especially students with disabilities, to participate in and succeed in education and training programs that lead to high-quality employment. STEP 21 is designed to maximize opportunities for youth with disabilities to achieve their highest potential, which will continue to improve the prime-age LFPR. The ongoing success of STEP 21 is directly linked to coordination with DRS partners including Special Education, Career Technical Education, local schools and their administrators, community service providers, and other partners as appropriate. DRS counselors are assigned to all 55 county school systems across the state to further enhance relationships and increase buy-in that will facilitate systemic change and a systematic approach to help students with disabilities maximize their potential.



Youth and students with disabilities are encouraged to enter the vocational rehabilitation program at or around the age of 14 to strengthen their participation in and understanding of career exploration activities (Pre-Employment Transition Services) and other support services to better prepare them for future training, education, and employment opportunities. To ensure DRS remains focused on early intervention, DRS has expanded the variety of services available, pushed for innovative curricula to cover all areas of job readiness, and grown into the basis of the STEP 21 framework. Also, as a function of STEP 21, DRS fosters awareness of the availability of a continuum of services to meet the various work-related needs and career goals of individuals with disabilities throughout their lifetime. STEP 21 encourages DRS and its partners to “step up” to better serve West Virginia students with disabilities, which, in turn, empowers DRS consumers to “step up” to take advantage of increased opportunities to achieve higher quality, integrated competitive employment outcomes.

*Reduce Barrier to Workforce, Education, and Training:*

DRS strives to focus attention on populations that have higher unemployment rates and lower earnings than the overall population. Vocational counselors work closely with consumers to discuss not only disability-related barriers to education, training, and employment, but also a myriad of other potential barriers including backgrounds as displaced homemakers; low income people of Indian, Alaskan Native, or Native Hawaiian descent; older persons; previously incarcerated people; unhoused people, including children and youth; people who have been in the foster-care system; English language learners; people with low levels of literacy; people with substantial cultural barriers; farmworkers (as defined at section 167(i) of WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 35-14); people within two years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program; people who receive SSDI and/or SSI; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed people.

DRS vocational counselors provide consumers with a comprehensive assessment, which includes referral and funding for functional capacity evaluations, referral and funding for psychoeducational evaluations, home modification evaluations (provided by DRS), driver capability evaluations, and worksite accommodations assessments, as needed. After identifying disability-related barriers and consumer needs, the vocational counselor and the consumer determine the services needed to meet his or her employment goals. The services provided, unique to DRS, include vocational counseling and guidance; job coaching; work adjustment training; interpreter services; benefits consultation (if the individual is receiving SSI and/or SSDI); physical restoration and mental health services; diagnosis of and treatment for mental and emotional disorders by a licensed psychiatrist, licensed psychologist, or a psychologist employed by a school system; reader services; rehabilitation teaching services; orientation and mobility services for individuals who are blind; supported employment services; post-employment services necessary to assist consumers to maintain, regain, or advance in employment; occupational licenses; tools/equipment/supplies; rehabilitation technology services; telecommunications; sensory and other technological aids and devices; vehicular modifications; maintenance for additional costs incurred while participating in vocational rehabilitation services; vocational rehabilitation services to family members (an individual who either is a relative or guardian of an applicant or eligible individual or lives in the same household as an applicant or eligible individual, has a substantial interest in the wellbeing of that individual, and who requires vocational rehabilitation services to enable the applicant or eligible individual to achieve an employment outcome); and personal assistance services.

DRS focuses on assisting those who are seeking to gain or retain employment, while recognizing individuals often have other needs that may prevent long-term success in employment. Therefore, along with a comprehensive assessment, DRS vocational counselors evaluate a consumer’s needs for equitable recovery, access to transportation, and access to mental and/or physical restoration services. Based on a consumer’s needs, DRS vocational counselors

collaborate and assist consumers in tandem with WFWV, WV Department of Health and Human Resources, the Senior Community Service Employment Program, Jobs for Veterans, career and technical education programs, four-year and graduate level higher education institutions, Jobs and Hope WV, Legal Aid of WV, and the Adult Education system.

*Integrate, Innovate, and Align Service Delivery:*

DRS provides integrated vocational rehabilitation services to West Virginians with disabilities to promote attainment of a high school education, postsecondary education, and training opportunities to increase their ability to move through meaningful career pathways. DRS counselors are trained to be knowledgeable about beneficial services offered by private service providers and agency partners so that they can describe them to consumers and make referrals, as appropriate.

Stronger partnerships and better alignment of services are necessary moving forward. Cross-training initiatives, promoting the “No Wrong Door” approach, and ensuring equitable DRS services across the state will be advantageous over the next four years and will assist in aligning service delivery in general. In terms of innovation, DRS will continue to expand upon the variety of services being offered to consumers, and the DRS will adapt their website to meet consumers’ needs by moving towards a more user-friendly composition to include a menu of services available to consumers and links to partner websites.

**SCSEP**

SCSEP partners with local employers to create on-the-job training (OJT) opportunities for older workers. By collaborating with businesses in various industries, SCSEP facilitates the placement of participants in OJT positions that provide hands-on training, skill development, and customized training plans. SCSEP leverages technology to enhance service delivery by implementing online platforms for participant intake, virtual training sessions, and remote support services. SCSEP is exploring remote work opportunities for participants, allowing them to engage in meaningful activities from the comfort of their homes. SCSEP continues to collaborate with community organizations, government agencies, educational institutions, and employers to co-create innovative solutions to local workforce challenges.

West Virginia’s statewide SCSEP network includes the State Grantee and one National Grantee operating in WV. Communication with this network is accomplished through email and teleconference as needed throughout the Program Year. The State Grantee is the West Virginia Bureau of Senior Services, which provides a multitude of services for older Americans in West Virginia under the Older Americans Act (OAA). As the designated State Unit on Aging, the Bureau administers all OAA services throughout the fifty-five counties tailored to Older West Virginians. The Bureau maintains contracts with each of the County Aging Programs, three Statewide Aging & Disability Resource Centers and four Area Agencies on Aging. The Bureau’s mission is to be West Virginia’s premier advocate for the provision of in-home and community-based services for the state’s seniors and others served by our programs and to be a faithful steward of the federal and state monies entrusted to our care for the provision of services throughout West Virginia.

Through a Memorandum of Understanding, the SCSEP network, a mandated partner, partners with the local Workforce Investment Boards operating the American Job Center (AJC) One-Stop Centers. The mission and vision between the AJC and WV SCSEP are to empower area employers, individuals, and communities to prosper and grow the region’s economy through a workforce development system that is inherently customer-centered, seamless, and effective by adopting the No Wrong Door franchise model. The mission is to establish a workforce system that provides data-driven and employer-validated talent solutions through the integration of education, workforce, and economic development resources across the systems.

West Virginia's American Job Centers (AJCs) One-Stops are currently located within the local Workforce centers in West Virginia. All SCSEP information is disseminated throughout the AJC for other programs and to the public. The SCSEP network will continue to work closely with the AJCs to utilize the partners' resources tailored to SCSEP's target audience by co-enrolling and by providing SCSEP's program eligibility requirements, priorities, and training slots availability. SCSEP will continue to have a weekly presence at the AJC One Stop. The SCSEP network continues to require enrollment of SCSEP enrollees into the Local Workforce to ensure that enrollees are informed of employment opportunities in their areas. The network will continue to utilize all training, job postings and job fairs offered at the local AJCs and will also participate and relay information from other resources outside of the AJCs One-Stop Partners. The SCSEP network encourages enrollees who are approaching their durational limit to enroll in supplementary training programs to ensure a continuous improvement of skills. The SCSEP network encourages AJCs to become Host Agencies or consider enrollees for employment opportunities.

The SCSEP is a member of the Interagency Collaborative Team (ICT). One of the primary goals of this group is to enhance communications, maximize resource sharing and program standardization. Additionally, the Bureau sits on the WV Workforce Development Board, which is composed of key state players within the workforce arena, including legislators, members of the Governor's Cabinet, labor leaders and corporate representatives. The main purpose of this group is to approach system-based issues.

SCSEP will continue to increase partnerships with organizations that provide resources on how to alleviate employment barriers throughout the state, such as transportation, rural location, age discrimination, fear of health care being discontinued due to program participation, fear of losing subsidized housing benefits. The Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) that contract with county aging providers continue to be utilized and researched to determine what additional employment barriers seniors in rural and urban counties might face. The Bureau will take a more active approach by reaching out to AAAs to determine additional resources and training opportunities. Faith based and community organizations are utilized to disseminate information regarding the program while reaching the most in need populations and increasing Host Sites.

West Virginia's local SCSEP projects will continue to recruit public and non-profit organizations in the communities that are covered. Local Projects will continue to advocate for older workers through presentations, brochure dissemination, poster dissemination, job fair and community Page 526 events participation and increasing awareness of the program's vision and mission to community stakeholders. Local SCSEP projects train participants to help develop the skills and experience necessary to be competitive in the current labor markets. Due to the longevity of organizations that participate as Host Agencies, local SCSEP projects have built a rapport with current Host Agencies and past Host Agencies to consider enrollees for employment opportunities within their organization when available. These projects have established cooperative relationships with the local AJC and public and private employers as well. Coordination and co-location of services at the AJCs help to identify suitable job openings in high demand occupations. Local SCSEP projects will continue to build strong rapport with the communities they are in.

West Virginia will continue its recruitment efforts in serving and recruiting eligible minority individuals as well as other eligible individuals. SCSEP projects will continue to locate offices in culturally and ethnically diverse neighborhoods (i.e., Community Centers, Church's). The SCSEP network will continue to have a presence at events such as AJC collaborative events, Senior Centers, Senior listening meetings, the West Virginia Minority Business Expo, Juneteenth Celebration and Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs Listening Tours to target minority audiences throughout the state. SCSEP will continue to collaborate with the State's Minority

Affairs office when available. Per the United States Census, West Virginia's 55+ Older American population during 2020 represented 41.23 % of the overall population.

SCSEP has a two-fold approach: helping Older Americans reacclimate themselves back into the workforce with the skills and training needed to be more marketable in the workforce while also helping the communities that the program operates in. The participant training hours support social services and other services provided in communities throughout the State.

West Virginia's top occupations per the West Virginia Workforce, Labor Market Information (LMI) 10-year projections of high demand occupations that require minimum education that fit our SCSEP participants' education and training levels include the following:

- Bus Drivers, Transit and Intercity
- Customer Service Clerks
- Social and Human Service Assistants
- Community Health Workers
- Animal Caretakers
- Post-Secondary School
- Personal Care Aides
- Home Health Aides
- Rehabilitation
- Janitors
- Counter Attendants

With these projections, Host Agency (H.A.) training site recruitment will focus more on entities that will develop skills for these high demand jobs, local SCSEP projects will continue to research nonprofits, religious organizations and Government agencies in the counties that are covered to assess if there is a need. Recruitment of entities such as the West Virginia Department of Agriculture where they have programs such as Veterans and Warriors to Agriculture and Rural Rehabilitation programs that need participants will be utilized.

Recruiting of Host Agencies (H.A.) is currently accomplished by relationships with past and current H.A., rapport with the American Job Centers (AJCs), attending meetings, community events, job fairs, health fairs and presenting on behalf of SCSEP. Other avenues of recruitment include marketing campaigns, where Project Directors market SCSEP services and the skills of job ready participants to organizations. Word of mouth is also utilized to recruit host agencies.

Local SCSEP projects will continue to utilize Senior Centers, Aging & Disability Resource Centers (ADRN), OAA programs, AJCs, and one-stop partners to determine the need in the counties and will continuously refine the strategy for job development to guide employer outreach and participant readiness. The WV Statewide SCSEP network will also continue to have a virtual Page 529 training presence to utilize in the event a training site is shut down due to circumstances at hand.

### **CSBG**

The Community Advancement and Development division (WVCAD) of the West Virginia Department of Economic Development administers the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) to 16 Community Action Agencies (CAAs) throughout the State. The program has established

active partnerships to facilitate and encourage coordination between the 16 CAAs participating in the State's CSBG program and statewide and local workforce development systems. Whereas a workforce agency provides assessment and job training, CAAs often provide funding for resume writing, job-related clothes and tools, and transportation to interviews or to a place of employment. Many CAAs help reduce barriers to employment by providing funds to assist with the cost of textbooks, licensing, testing, special employment related clothing, and other items necessary for the client to become employed after the training.

### **Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)**

WFWV administers the TAA program for workers impacted by foreign trade. TAA and Title I Dislocated Worker programs operationalize strategic goals by coordinating and enhancing services through coordinated case management, which gives workers stronger knowledge about growing sectors, good-paying jobs, and avenues to training so they can make informed decisions about reemployment and careers.

### **Unemployment Insurance (UI)**

The UI Program has made significant strides in managing the workload accumulated during the pandemic. Over the past year, the workload has steadily decreased due to a lower unemployment rate. However, the agency still faces challenges in clearing backlogs related to non-monetary decisions, appeals, and overpayments. To address these challenges, WFWV has adopted a two-team approach, wherein staff work simultaneously on both the backlog and current workload, ensuring that the agency can efficiently clear the backlog without compromising the timeliness of processing current claims.

While initial projections aimed to complete the backlog by early 2023, certain areas persist, such as pandemic-era non-monetary determinations and appeals. Despite these challenges, WFWV is committed to not only resolving all backlogs, but also restoring performance criteria to pre-pandemic levels. The strategic plan prioritizes the completion of backlog items and focuses on enhancing the timely delivery of all facets of the Unemployment Program.

To achieve these objectives, WFWV needs a comprehensive approach that encompasses both technological advancements and investments in human resources. The agency acknowledges that technological improvements, including modernizing the UI System and establishing call centers to address information demand, are essential. These technologies also require a skilled and dedicated workforce to use them, thus highlighting the need for effective training programs to ensure staff readiness to handle workload fluctuations and new challenges.

Furthermore, WFWV is dedicated to promoting equitable access to the UI program, particularly for underserved communities. Initiatives include utilizing equity grant funding to enhance demographic data collection, improving claimant communication and outreach, and developing a mobile application for easier access to UI benefits.

Supporting the reemployment of UI claimants is another top priority for WFWV, and, toward that end, they utilize evidence-based strategies such as the WPRS profiling model and Job Search Assistance. The agency is also incorporating online virtual experiences to enhance participation in reemployment services.

In addition to these initiatives, WFWV actively addresses issues related to fraud prevention, federal reporting compliance, worker misclassification, and staff retention. The agency has established specialized units, implemented training programs, and leveraged partnerships to improve performance across various functional areas.

Looking ahead, WFWV remains committed to achieving its mission critical goal of maintaining an Unemployment Program characterized by high performance and excellent customer service. By fostering a skilled workforce, embracing technological advancements, and implementing

strategic initiatives, the agency aims to adapt to future challenges and deliver efficient and effective services to the citizens of West Virginia.

### **Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG)**

In West Virginia, JVSG staff including Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs) strategically work across the state to address the employment challenges faced by veterans. DVOP specialists provide Individualized Career Services (ICS) to eligible veterans and individuals facing challenges such as educational or economic disadvantage. They offer comprehensive assessments, goal setting, and ongoing support, as documented in the state's management system. DVOP specialists also collaborate with AJC partners for outreach and access to resources. LVERs, stationed at AJCs, address employers' needs by placing veterans in available positions as well as in apprenticeships or training opportunities that can help fill skill gaps identified by employers through outreach activities conducted by LVERs and DVOP specialists.

Also, to ensure mandatory partners remain aligned with and actively involved in the progress of this plan, West Virginia has included the following statute in State Code:

WV State Code: §5B-2B-9. Coordination between agencies providing workforce investment programs, local workforce development boards, and the Executive Director of WorkForce West Virginia-

(a) To provide ongoing attention to addressing issues that will build and continually improve the overall workforce investment system, the Workforce Investment Interagency Collaborative Team is hereby created. The team shall be the single state interagency source for addressing issues or concerns related to building and maintaining the most effective and efficient implementation of the federal Workforce Investment Act and the overall workforce development system in West Virginia. The team shall focus on how best to collaborate between and among the state agencies directly involved in workforce investment activities and shall develop a strategic plan to that end. The team shall serve as a forum for the board to seek information or recommendations in furtherance of its responsibilities under this article. Workforce West Virginia is the entity which shall convene the team at least monthly and shall provide administrative and other services to the team as the team requires.

(b) The team shall consist of members from each agency subject to the reporting provisions of section five of this article. Each agency shall appoint two representatives to the team consisting of the chief official of the department or division and the official within that department or division who is directly responsible for overseeing the workforce investment program or activities at the state level. A designee may be selected to represent a member appointed to the team: Provided that the designee has policy-making decision authority regarding workforce investment activities including program and fiscal issues. The team members have authority to make decisions on behalf of the agency at the level required for the team to address issues and advance system improvements.

(c) The team shall coordinate the development of a self-sufficiency standard study for the State of West Virginia. The self-sufficiency standard is to measure how much income is needed for a household of a given composition in a given place to adequately meet its basic needs without public or private assistance. Beginning on the first day of November, two thousand four, and every year thereafter, this study is to be reported to the Speaker of the House of Delegates, the President of the Senate, the Workforce Development Board and the Legislative Oversight Commission on Workforce Investment for Economic Development.

(d) Beginning the first day of January, two thousand three, in order to lawfully continue any workforce investment activities, any agency subject to the reporting provisions of section five of this article shall enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Executive Director of WorkForce West Virginia and any local workforce Development Board representing an area of this state in which the agency is engaged in

workforce investment activities. To the extent permitted by federal law, the agreements are to maximize coordination of workforce investment activities and eliminate duplication of services on both state and local levels.

(e) No memorandum of understanding may be effective for more than one year without annual reaffirmation by the parties.

(f) Any state agency entering a memorandum of understanding shall deliver a copy thereof to both the West Virginia Workforce Development Board (WVWDB) and the legislative oversight commission.

Each WIOA agency/program has roles and responsibilities in serving individuals and employers through the AJCs, which allow partners to collaborate—sharing resources, reducing redundancies, and innovating service delivery. Through the AJCs, one or more agencies can provide services to a customer, depending on their individual needs, available services, and resources from programs (eligibility dependent).

To ensure the alignment to state strategic goals and best serve consumers, partners maintain ongoing communication to foster awareness of other program activities and resources from partner agencies. This communication occurs at the state level, as well as in the AJCs, where daily interaction with partner agency staff occurs. Cross-training of staff is mandatory and results in better service provision to AJC customers while preserving resources for future needs.

WV is developing an innovative integrated service delivery IT system that allows partners to best serve individual customers who are co-enrolled across programs, aligning their services across WIOA agencies. The system updates daily to inform service providers of the services that other agencies are providing to a co-enrolled customer. This knowledge enables each agency to coordinate services while also avoiding duplication. In addition, partners can host and participate in community forums targeting special populations and provide public service announcements about services available. This system is currently being developed and is in the initial stage of implementation. Core and other required partner programs are collaborating to ensure that resources are leveraged, and services are not duplicated.

AJC services provide improved access and efficiency as well as value-added services to customers of the WDS. Partners are responsible for the delivery of workforce education and training programs and related services, including those that support career preparation and advancement. Affiliated programs and agencies work together strategically either to serve a common customer or to achieve similar employment and education outcomes for their targeted customer groups, including those most in need and those with disabilities. These services include:

- Providing services that facilitate the match between high-demand jobs, employers, and job seekers;
- Providing employment, training, and retention services for eligible WIOA participants and prioritizing services to recipients of public assistance and other low-income individuals and individuals who are disabled and/or basic skills deficient, to spur financial self-sufficiency;
- Developing adult education and family literacy programs that ensure all adults have the basic education skills they need to contribute to their families and communities;
- Providing employment, training, and retention services to individuals with barriers to employment, including veterans, individuals with disabilities, trade-affected individuals, older individuals, ex-offenders, homeless individuals, long-term unemployed individuals, and youth;
- Encouraging the use of training services that provide portable, stackable, and transferable credit and credentials;



- Providing “wrap around” support services, such as childcare, unemployment insurance, and transportation to enable eligible individuals to work or participate in employment and training activities;
- Monitoring and evaluating compliance of local area service delivery for fiscal accountability and program effectiveness; and
- Providing technical assistance to LWDBs and training providers to ensure the most effective delivery of workforce services.

Additionally, the state is taking further actions to coordinate services between WIOA core programs and non-core programs and services to create an effective career pathway system by developing work-based learning options and focusing on high need sectors. These actions include:

- Fostering collaborations between education agencies, educational institutions, the WVWDB, and LWDBs to build career pathways that include secondary and postsecondary career and technical education programs of study.
- Expanding skill-building services funded through SNAP E&T, including leveraging federal funding available through SNAP E&T 50/50 funds for employment, training, and related support services, and coordinate those services with WIOA core programs.
- Increasing the integration of TANF employment and training services with WIOA core programs.
- Designing career pathways with an entry point along the pathway that meets the adult education and workforce program alignment requirements in the “ability to benefit” provision of Title IV of the federal Higher Education Act, enabling eligible participants without a high school diploma to qualify for Pell Grants and other federal student financial assistance.

### **Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs)**

The LWDBs support service delivery of core and partner programs in an integrated No Wrong Door fashion. Operationalizing of service delivery among core and partner programs in each LWDB is described below.

#### *Region 1*

The R1WDB provides work-based learning programs in the form of Transitional Jobs and OJT programs. The Transitional Jobs program is a time-limited work-based experience that allows participants with barriers to employment to gain valuable work experience, skills, and references through placement at approved worksites. Participants work 32 hours per week for 26 weeks under the payroll of the R1WDB. The OJT program allows employers to hire those with a documented skill gap and receive up to a 75% reimbursement of wages for up to 499 hours. The Business Services team provides information on these programs during Regional Business Services team meetings, employer visits, roundtable discussions, business after hours events, community events, visits to recovery centers/day report centers/work release programs, and homeless shelters. Outreach is provided to reach employers and residents across Region 1.

R1WDB partners with Fruits of Labor, Seed Sower, Region 4 Planning & Development Council and WV Hive on the Communities of Healing (COH) Initiative. The initiative strives to create a recovery to work ecosystem and encourages small businesses to hire those in recovery. To date, the R1WDB has placed thirty-six employees in recovery at five COH employers through the Transitional Jobs program. As COH expands, the R1WDB is making additional Transitional Jobs placements with new COH employers. Additionally, R1WDB staff attend COH gatherings multiple times throughout the year to present programs and services to both current and potential COH employers.

R1WDB is committed to providing high quality services for all youth and young adults through

career exploration and guidance, support for educational attainment, and opportunities for skills training in in-demand industries and occupations through pre-apprenticeships and internships—all of which combine for a jump start into a career pathway. The Youth Program offers a 90-day paid work experience component, which include mentoring and work readiness training for participants that can lead to employment opportunities.

R1WDB both identifies and develops solutions for employment barriers of individuals. The removal of barriers is a key component to improving WV's LFPR. R1WDB uses comprehensive interviewing, educational/career assessment, and counseling to identifies barriers and pinpoint support services needed so individuals can be successful in obtaining training and meeting employment goals. To ensure support services needs are being met, individuals may be co-enrolled in partner programs such as Jobs and Hope WV.

After initial enrollment, R1WDB maintains close contact with participants to continue assessing what needs they have and how they can be address through counseling and supportive services offered by R1WDB, or through referral to a partner agency. R1DWB responds to a wide variety of needs, including: travel, work attire, training and education, driver's license assistance, physical and mental health assistance, housing assistance, child and dependent care assistance and more.

R1WDB collaborates with employers utilizing a variety of methods to develop solutions to their workforce needs. The R1WDB Business Services team has participated in events to identify workforce needs through business and industry roundtables, business after hours, forums, sector strategy meetings, and career fairs. The Business Services team collaborates closely with WFWV's business services representative to ensure employers receive appropriate information regarding programs and services without duplication. R1WDB continues to improve upon the expansion of sector strategies as determined by labor market data and employer needs.

For WIOA to be successful, the workforce development system (WDS) must be seamless, comprehensive, and accessible. R1WDB uses several approaches to form an integrated WDS, including: (1) collaboration with partners for an integrated workforce system; (2) active participation of all workforce development staff in cross training; (3) consistent communication with all WDS partners; and (4) uniform use of the IT system currently being developed. Toward that end, R1WDB coordinates and cooperates with all partners through MOUs, quarterly partner meetings, Opportunities in Action Core Partner meetings, and Opportunities in Action County Partner meetings.

### *Region 2*

The Region 2 Workforce Investment Board Inc. (R2WDB) has been a member of the Southern Mountains District Consortium for several years, which includes CTC personnel, public school K-12 local educators, CTE staff, state educational officials, economic development organizations, state, and federal agencies, and non-profits. The group focuses on bringing all levels of education together to build a stronger workforce in the southern counties of Region 2 (Logan, Lincoln, Mingo and Boone counties) and the bordering state of Kentucky. They collaboratively creates accessible pathways in workforce development programs across allied health, electrical, welding, commercial truck driving, and more as well as early college academies (ECA- K12).

Since 2019, R2WDB has administered the WIOA Youth Program where eligible youth participants ages 16-24 partake in employment and education assistance programs that relate to 14 WIOA Youth required elements per DOL. Staff work with youth in developing an ISS/DP Plan (Individual Service Strategy – Developmental Plan) to help youth reach employment and education goals by using wrap-around services from local providers within the region. R2WDB introduces the youth to education opportunities for in-demand occupations and writes ITA (Individual Training Agreements) with local community colleges and career centers on behalf of eligible young adults. R2WDB works with young adults without a high school diploma to achieve

their diploma and bring them into the workforce. R2WDB also regularly offers expos and hands-on training opportunities in several fields that are in-demand such as allied health, trades, and other workforce development programs. For example, in one upcoming expo, youth learn about manufacturing glassware in Milton, WV by touring a manufacturing plant and factory and watching employees work.

Additionally, R2WDB works with a wide range of programs to expand collaborative efforts. For example, R2WDB partners with Coalfield Development to introduce individuals into the trades, offering WIOA funding to aid job seekers with training costs and supportive services. This aid allows individuals to train in opportunities for growth and aid them in discovering a career pathway with an outcome of reduced recidivism.

### *Region 3*

Expanding work-based learning opportunities through apprenticeship programs and structured career pathways is a key focus of R3WDB's workforce development initiatives. R3WDB partners with employers to create a range of programs, including ones that aim to: 1) provide on-the-job training for job seekers while fulfilling the employer's needs; 2) work with at-risk youth after school to gain professional development and career readiness skills; 3) expose individuals to technology-based learning with VR headsets; 4) provide minority youth with valuable career exploration opportunities, mentorship, and resources to help them make informed decisions about their future careers through the Minority Youth (MY) Career Academy. Beyond these specific examples, R3WDB consistently develops effective and comprehensive workforce development programs using a collective impact approach that includes partner agencies with the same mission, and they also promote programs offered through Career Centers that include hands-on training.

R3WDB works to make their services accessible to all people, identifying and eliminating barriers to employment across the region by conducting comprehensive needs assessment and offering case management services. One proven success is Pop-Up One Stops, which make the services provided at the AJC accessible to everyone. Additionally, continued outreach informs the public about the available programs, resources, and wraparound services they can receive. One such outreach activity is co-hosting the Frontline Unity Network Conference, which empowers and strengthens our instrumental frontline teams by creating networking opportunities and facilitating learning about innovative programs, resources, referrals, and services.

Sector strategies are crucial for aligning workforce development efforts with the needs of employers and job seekers. To enhance our approach, we are piloting the State's No Wrong Door initiative through findhelp.com, ensuring seamless access to resources and support for individuals seeking employment opportunities. Additionally, leveraging labor market information and surveys from both employers and job seekers enables us to identify key employment needs and skill gaps in various sectors. This data-driven approach allows us to allocate funding for training programs or create new initiatives tailored to address specific workforce challenges. By harnessing the power of data and technology, we can better align our efforts with the evolving needs of our labor market, ultimately fostering a more responsive and effective workforce development system.

Integration and innovation in service delivery are essential for enhancing the effectiveness and accessibility of our programs. By collaborating with other agencies, we can ensure seamless coordination and delivery of services, minimizing barriers and maximizing impact for our clients. Seeking and incorporating community feedback through customer surveys allows us to gain valuable insights into the needs and preferences of our constituents, enabling us to tailor our services more effectively. Moreover, we are committed to implementing innovative service delivery models such as pop-Ups, VR headsets, and virtual job fairs, leveraging technology and creative approaches to expand our reach and improve the overall client experience. Through

these initiatives, we provide innovative, responsive, and client-centered services that empower individuals to achieve their employment and career goals.

#### *Region 4*

The Region 4 Workforce Development Board of the Mid-Ohio Valley (WDBMOV) has infused a cultural shift in the delivery of service. The mission of the WDBMOV is to Capture Appalachian Prosperity and Economic Success (CAPES). Engaging and encouraging our customers, whether they are youth, adults, or dislocated workers, to take “a leap of faith” is our driving force. Providing customers with pertinent and specific information related to job training, professional development, and industry-specific training as it relates to in-demand occupations as well as emerging industries is critical for that goal. More importantly though, WDBMOV offers guidance and hands-on experiences alongside that information, which deepens engagement and allows people to reach their goals more easily. WDBMOV partners with a virtual reality platform company called Transfr to create a safe and realistic exposure to a library of careers ranging from culinary, aviation, and skilled trades jobs. They engage many of the Mid-Ohio Valley's system partners in the process. In particular, WDBMOV and the local building and trades council are forging connections with secondary education institutions to develop talent pipelines that are relevant to the area's employers. Equitable delivery is a key consideration in how people in the region can access services through WDBMOV. Adults and youth alike are provided opportunities for work-based learning through work experience, job shadowing, on-the-job training, apprenticeships, and employment.

Career Specialists provide core services such as assistance with preparing for interviews and writing resumes. Supportive services are available to address training and work-related expenses, as well as transportation barriers. The Business Services Team coordinates with one stop partners to choose the appropriate referrals for each customer, ensuring that they are not faced with the burden of multiple appointments and travel time to various partner agencies. Referrals consist of partner agencies that can help with barriers such as reentry, substance abuse, and low educational attainment. Additionally, WDBMOV provides transitional job work experience opportunities. By addressing the above barriers to employment, they can equip job seekers with necessary resources, skills, and knowledge to help reduce their barriers. Sector strategies are provided through sector-focused training fairs, which offer direct links to employment and training opportunities. The WDBMOV provides information relevant to necessary work skills and competencies required in different industries—reducing skills mismatches and offering resources and training to acquire pertinent skills. Labor market and employment trends are shared across partners and implemented in concert with our virtual platform to allow customers to “choose their career path as opposed to settling for the future.” Information is provided on various educational programs and training opportunities based on the customer's interest and career goals.

WDBMOV engages employers across sectors by conducting monthly business engagement team meetings where dedicated staff are available to address employer training and hiring needs. Through these partnerships, WDBMOV is working towards adding pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities while continuing to support the current registered apprenticeships within our region.

Perhaps most importantly, WDBMOV is securing and leveraging additional funding to offset the WIOA allocation, whereby they are continuing to develop their holistic approach to offering services to our communities.

#### *Region 5*

Region 5—the Northern Panhandle Workforce Development Board, Inc. (NPWDB) has been a member of the "TEAM" (Tri-State Energy & Advanced Manufacturing) Consortium for the past 4 years, which includes educators, workforce and economic development organizations, state and federal agencies, nonprofits, and private industry across southwest Ohio, southwestern

Pennsylvania, and northern West Virginia. This dedicated group of regional partners are committed to building a skilled workforce for the tri-state area. Additionally, the consortium works together to create accessible pathways in the energy and manufacturing sectors.

NPWDB is also partnering with 12 counties in Ohio and one county in Pennsylvania to apply for a new ARISE (Appalachian Regional Initiative for Stronger Economies) planning grant. This grant allows for the creation of a roadmap to help students innovate in their communities and prepare for in-demand careers across three states. Toward that end, partners will collaborate on a set of recommendations for employer recruitment, school recruitment (for pre-apprenticeships), and policy changes to expedite and improve the upward mobility of workers regardless of state residency.

Also, NPWDB sponsors Youth Expos for older youth participants, ages 18-24, to introduce and familiarize WIOA eligible youth with training and educational opportunities for in-demand fields. The expos are two-day events where activities include guest speakers, panels, and workshops on topics such as resume writing, interview skills, career pathways, and available resources, and participants tour a relevant company or training program facility.

Additionally, NPWDB partners with the Lee Day Report Center to provide services to their clients who are mandated to attend Drug Court by a judge. Drug Court is a specially designed court program to reduce recidivism and substance abuse. The Lee Day clients attend a once-a-week life skill and career pathway workshop conducted by NPWDB staff at the Wheeling AJC. These workshops address barriers to employment and training to increase participants' likelihood of successful rehabilitation.

#### *Region 6*

R6WDB, located in Fairmont, provides services in a thirteen-county region in the north-central part of the State. They promote work-based learning such as OJT to job seekers and employers, recently increasing the number of individuals served from seventeen in PY19 to 74 in PY22. OJT is an effective means of training new hires for the region's employers and constitutes a substantial expenditure of training funds in the region.

The R6WDB Executive Director serves on several economic development boards, including on the Executive Team of the Tri State Energy and Advanced Manufacturing (TEAM) Consortium as co-chair of the Workforce and Economic Development Working Group for the past six years. The TEAM Consortium partners of Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia share a regional vision of guaranteeing an adequate number of properly skilled workers for the critical energy and advanced manufacturing sectors in the tri-state initiative. The TEAM Consortium is developing occupational pathways through a seamless network of education and training providers, relevant agencies, and private companies, creating pipelines for jobs in the energy and manufacturing industries. In PY22, the TEAM group developed an "Energy and Advanced Manufacturing Career Pathway Exploration Guide" that highlights thirteen pyramids showing education, learn-at-work, and career pathways offered at multi-state CTCs throughout the 45-county area of the consortium. The TEAM Consortium is also building regional initiatives around Hydrogen and Carbon Capturing Technology. The Executive Director has most recently joined two new strategic planning groups: 1) ARISE: an interstate group of workforce boards in Ohio, West Virginia and Pennsylvania collaborating on an ARC planning grant to research promising approaches to employer and school recruitment, exchange of best practices, and apprenticeship models for multi-state employers to improve the upward mobility of workers regardless of state residency. 2) I-79 Development Council: a group dedicated to promoting the innovation economy; stimulating growth in the industrial/business sectors of biometrics, biotechnology, aerospace, advanced energy technologies and information technology; and creating new and expanded job opportunities for all residents along the I-79 corridor counties of Monongalia, Marion, Harrison and Lewis counties.

Furthermore, in recognition of the statewide shortage of LPN/RN's, R6WDB instituted a pilot program to fund this critical, in demand occupation at a higher tuition reimbursement rate than other occupational training programs in the region, encouraging WIOA eligible participants to choose the nursing pathway. Through these efforts, R6WDB saw an increase in the number of WIOA ITA's for nursing programs by 29% from the previous year. The higher reimbursement rate is continuing past the pilot program to continue increasing the percentage of nursing students in the next few years.

### *Region 7*

R7WDB is advancing workforce development initiatives and collaboration in the eight counties of the Potomac Highlands (Pendleton, Hardy, Grant, Hampshire, and Mineral) and the Eastern Panhandle (Morgan, Berkeley, and Jefferson) of West Virginia. Their efforts align with the goals and objectives of WIOA as they enhance the economic prosperity of our region through various implemented activities and strategies.

One such initiative is the creation and implementation of a web-based referral system, which includes nearly 100 WIOA partners within Region 7 that provide a wide array of workforce development services. This system, the first of its kind in West Virginia, has revolutionized the way individuals navigate the WDS in Region 7. It has simplified the process of accessing services by providing a centralized platform where individuals can easily find and connect with the resources they need. This has not only made it more convenient for individuals, but it has also improved the efficiency of service delivery for our partner agencies. By streamlining the referral process, R7WDB ensures individuals receive the appropriate services in a timely manner, leading to better outcomes for everyone involved. Over the last three years R7WDB has averaged over one thousand referrals per year to various workforce partners.

A key focus for the region is advanced manufacturing, which dominates the three easternmost counties of Jefferson, Berkeley, and Morgan. R7WDB recognizes the importance of providing the workforce with the necessary skills and training to excel in this industry. To achieve this, they are partnering with local manufacturing companies and educational institutions to develop customized training programs that equip individuals with the technical skills and knowledge required for employment in advanced manufacturing.

Transportation is another industry that plays a significant role in region 7 and requires a skill workforce to support the region's transportation needs. To address this, R7WDB collaborates with transportation companies and agencies to offer training programs in areas such as logistics, supply chain management, and commercial driving. These programs ensure that individuals are prepared for the diverse career opportunities available in the transportation industry.

R7WDB also promotes opportunities in skilled trades, such as welding, plumbing, and electrical work, which offer excellent career opportunities with competitive salaries. Pre-apprenticeship programs for youth provide hands-on training and mentorship in various skilled trades, serving as a pathway for young individuals to enter the workforce directly after high school and embark on a fulfilling and potentially great-paying career.

In addition to these three foci, R7WDB also recognizes the growth opportunities in entry-level healthcare training and professions. The healthcare industry is constantly evolving, and there is a high demand for individuals with the necessary skills to fill entry-level positions. To address this need, R7WDB offers training programs and partnerships with healthcare organizations and educational institutions that provide individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to pursue careers in fields such as medical assisting, phlebotomy, pharmacy technology as well as multiple levels of nursing. By offering these opportunities, R7WDB not only meets the demands of the healthcare industry, but also provides individuals with pathways to stable and rewarding careers.

Work-based learning and work experience programs are key to preparing individuals for successful employment. R7WDB, in partnerships with local businesses, facilitates opportunities for individuals to gain practical experience and develop essential workplace skills. For example, individuals in work experience programs can work with employers for a specified period, gaining valuable on-the-job training and insight into their chosen industry.

Eliminating barriers to employment and training is a priority for R7WDB. Toward that end, they offer a variety of supportive services through WIOA, including assistance with transportation, childcare, and job readiness training. When these barriers are addressed, individuals have more equitable access to employment and training opportunities, regardless of their circumstances. This enables them to fully participate in the workforce and reach their full potential.

Another area of R7WDB's work is addressing the impact of the opioid crisis across their communities. They partner with in- and out-patient opioid crisis facilities to provide work-based learning opportunities for individuals in recovery, giving them the chance to gain valuable skills and experience while on their journey to rebuilding their lives. R7WDB also collaborates with local drug courts and re-entry programs to provide work-based learning opportunities and support services to individuals transitioning back into the workforce after completing treatment or serving time. By addressing the unique needs of individuals affected by the opioid crisis, R7WDB is not only helping them overcome challenges but also ensuring they have the necessary support to succeed in their chosen careers.

R7WDB is actively engaged in workforce development initiatives and strategies that yield multiple successes in line with the goals and objectives of WIOA. Through efforts in advanced manufacturing, transportation, healthcare, pre-apprenticeship programs for youth, work-based learning, and supportive services, R7WDB enhances the economic prosperity of the region and provides individuals with opportunities for great paying careers. They are committed to eliminating barriers to employment and training so as to ensure that all individuals have access to the resources and support they need to succeed in the workforce.

## **(B) Alignment with Activities outside the Plan**

The West Virginia WDS extends beyond the core programs to include programs administered by numerous state agencies and quasi-governmental entities. With a market-based and customer-focused plan, LWDBs continue to refine and improve West Virginia's structure for aligning core and optional programs under WIOA and other available resources to realize the state's vision and achieve its goals. The WDWDB, which has representatives from all core and required partners, works diligently to promote alignment and collaboration across LWDBs and community organizations.

Specific collaborations among partner programs, beyond the high level strategic and planning efforts taking place through the interagency work group and WDWDB, include:

- The DRS works extensively with education partners including Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to coordinate the provision of pre-employment and other transition services for students with disabilities.
- WIOA Youth service providers coordinate with LEAs, adult education agencies, county human service offices, county assistance office income maintenance caseworkers, EARN contractors, juvenile justice and local law enforcement agencies, local housing authorities, DRS, economic development entities and other community and faith-based organizations to ensure participants have access to all the services they need to be successful in training activities and find employment.



- DoHS encourages dual participation in SNAP E&T/TANF and WIOA. Case managers work directly with WIOA career specialists to provide aligned resources and avoid duplication of services. WIOA Youth are notified of opportunities to co-enroll in the TANF program and are also referred to the Adult Education program as appropriate.
- The braiding of WIOA funded programs with other youth-directed state and local entities allows comprehensive services to be offered to all eligible low-income populations under WIOA. Available TANF funding supports WIOA year-round services and summer employment activities.
- DoHS has issued 55 grants for the creation and development of Family Support Centers (FSC) across the state. These centers serve families with children up to 300% of the federal poverty level with services designed to help families overcome barriers to employment, enhance life skills, and connect with services such as SNAP E&T, ultimately enabling families to obtain self-sufficiency.
- Adult Education applicants for services are required to describe how they will align services with local workforce development plans and how they will coordinate with other available education, training, and social services in the community.
- Strengthening Career and Technical Education Act for the 21st Century (Perkins V) providers assist job seekers in identifying their interests and abilities and aligning skills needs with training and financial resources. Training is linked to the state's high-demand jobs and is designed to lead to credential attainment. Credential attainment for high-demand jobs helps job seekers secure employment with family-sustaining wages.
- The state co-enrolls all trade-impacted workers in the WIOA Dislocated Worker program to ensure all individuals receive the full range of available services and benefits to dislocated workers. Co-enrollment of WIOA/DW and TAA individuals maximizes the use of partner resources, improves the availability and consistency of services, and increases the opportunity for positive outcomes.
- The Office of Adult Education works with staff from the West Virginia Schools of Diversion & Transition (WVSDT), the West Virginia Department of Corrections (DOC), and other education stakeholders to identify best practices to support the requirements of Section 225 of Title II.
- WVSDT works closely with CTE, CTCS, DoHS and other partners to align its career pathways and reentry initiatives with on-going efforts in the workforce and education systems. These partnerships provide opportunities for offenders to enhance skills and earn post-secondary credentials. WVSDT has added reentry liaisons to their staff who work with individuals 30 to 90 days prior to their release date to ensure they have a career or education goal outlined and have partner connections made prior to reentry.
- The MACC is an integrated data platform that links human service, workforce, and wage record data to measure the outcomes of workforce development programs and the number of skilled workers in relation to employer demand.
- DRS continues to build new and strengthen existing partnerships with the DOC, increasing and improving the agency's involvement in reentry employment training to assist individuals with disabilities in the correctional system.
- WFWV is partnering with other agencies and programs that are focused on combating veteran unemployment while recognizing that the emerging needs of veterans and their families are unique. Eligible veterans are entitled to priority services. Public Law 107-288, Title 38, U.S. Code and State Legislation mandates that qualified veterans receive priority in all employment and training programs including: referral to jobs and job training programs, counseling, testing and job development assistance. Co-enrollment of veterans in core partner services is a priority.
- DRS works to align its activities and services with other agencies, including WIOA partners. Because DRS provides services under an IPE, many alignment activities occur on the individual consumer level. DRS' Client Services Manual Section 2501.3 requires VR counselors to assess and utilize, if appropriate, any third-party comparable benefits and services. For example, when DRS consumers choose to receive four-year and/or

community college training, they must utilize grants and other non-loan resources prior to DRS providing financial support.

- DRS is mandated not only to coordinate services and resources with comparable services and benefits providers, but also to collect and report these data (any involvement with a comparable services benefits provider in approximately 30 service categories) to the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration at the individual consumer level. The collection, monitoring, and evaluation of these data allow DRS to ensure coordination and alignment is taking place across the state.
- Staff members from WFWV and the WV Dept. of Economic Development participate in monthly meetings on Registered Apprenticeship Programs to ensure partners and employers are aware of their apprenticeship opportunities and the continuing successes that employers and sponsors are having with this vital learn and earn model. Encouraging LWDBs to utilize WIOA Incumbent Worker Training and Customized Training funds with other state program funds for employers to train their workforce. These key resources afford WV the opportunity to better align and leverage the WDS activities and both state and federal funding to serve individuals and employers, providing more dimension and value to an already robust menu of services.
- The strategy to improve SCSEP services within the State is to do the following, create a marketing campaign that not only disseminates information regarding SCSEP but also promotes the program at key meetings to educate organizations of the Mission and Vision. Reach out to hiring entities to discuss SCSEP, exchange information regarding eligible Older Workers with AJCs. Assist AJCs to become H.A., encourage cross training in training opportunities for enrollees, inclusion within the WIOA State Plan. SCSEP will provide more incentives, such as drug screenings, criminal background checks for hiring entities. Develop relationship with State DoH to improve requirements for SCSEP target audience (i.e. Medicaid allotment of income). Revise goals with DOL to reflect actual program funding and increase funding to provide more training for enrollees. Increase H.A. recruitment for a variety of training opportunities (i.e., having all state agencies utilize the SCSEP program), partnering with local Correctional industries to minimize recidivism rate of seniors 55+ and finally, creating a virtual training platform to help most in need individuals. These recommendations will strengthen the SCSEP program within the State, affording not only potential and current enrollees' opportunities, but also strengthening the organizations that work with the program. Regarding the long-term changes in the use of grantee and program operators to better achieve goals, the SCSEP network, with its sub grantees, continuously refines its expertise on the basic elements of job development by staying abreast of the many barriers that eligible enrollees face. By trying to alleviate these barriers, Sub-Grantees are continuously assessing skills of participants, revamping Individual Employment Plans, offering additional resources, preparing for exit, resume revamping through workshops and offering one-on-one interaction with SCSEP Staff. As new barriers arise, grantee staff will adapt and provide resources.

Also, to ensure mandatory partners remain aligned and are actively involved in the progress of this plan, West Virginia has included the following statute in State Code:

WV State Code: §5B-2B-9. Coordination between agencies providing workforce investment programs, local workforce development boards and the Executive Director of WorkForce West Virginia-

- (a) To provide ongoing attention to addressing issues that will build and continually improve the overall workforce investment system, the Workforce Investment Interagency Collaborative Team is hereby created. The team shall be the single state interagency source for addressing issues or concerns related to building and maintaining the most effective and efficient implementation of the federal Workforce Investment Act and the overall workforce development system in West Virginia. The

team shall focus on how best to collaborate between and among the state agencies directly involved in workforce investment activities and shall develop a strategic plan to that end. The team shall serve as a forum for the board to seek information or recommendations in furtherance of its responsibilities under this article. Workforce West Virginia is the entity which shall convene the team at least monthly and shall provide administrative and other services to the team as the team requires.

(b) The team shall consist of members from each agency subject to the reporting provisions of section five of this article. Each agency shall appoint two representatives to the team consisting of the chief official of the department or division and the official within that department or division who is directly responsible for overseeing the workforce investment program or activities at the state level. A designee may be selected to represent a member appointed to the team: Provided that the designee has policy-making decision authority regarding workforce investment activities including program and fiscal issues. The team members have authority to make decisions on behalf of the agency at the level required for the team to address issues and advance system improvements.

(c) The team shall coordinate the development of a self-sufficiency standard study for the State of West Virginia. The self-sufficiency standard is to measure how much income is needed for a household of a given composition in a given place to adequately meet its basic needs without public or private assistance. Beginning on the first day of November, two thousand four, and every year thereafter, this study is to be reported to the Speaker of the House of Delegates, the President of the Senate, the Workforce Development Board and the Legislative Oversight Commission on Workforce Investment for Economic Development.

(d) Beginning the first day of January, two thousand three, in order to lawfully continue any workforce investment activities, any agency subject to the reporting provisions of section five of this article shall enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Executive Director of WorkForce West Virginia and any local workforce Development Board representing an area of this state in which the agency is engaged in workforce investment activities. To the extent permitted by federal law, the agreements are to maximize coordination of workforce investment activities and eliminate duplication of services on both state and local levels.

(e) No memorandum of understanding may be effective for more than one year without annual reaffirmation by the parties.

(f) Any state agency entering a memorandum of understanding shall deliver a copy thereof to both the West Virginia Workforce Development Board (WVWDB) and the legislative oversight commission.

### **(C) Coordination, Alignment, and Provision of Services to Individuals**

Coordination of activities occurs at the state, regional, and local levels. The state-level Interagency Collaborative Team (ICT) meets monthly to share information and discuss past, present, and future activities among the partner agencies. At the regional level, WVWDB meetings are attended by partner staff; these meetings are particularly beneficial to “front line” staff members. Staff receive cross-training to learn about other programs and share examples of integrated service provision for customers co-enrolled in more than one WIOA program. The core partners developed an interface for sharing common data elements for the enrollment of individuals, allowing for case management services to follow individuals for the entire process including for fulfilling follow up, performance, and additional needs.

As previously described, the WIOA partner programs collaborate in numerous ways to coordinate activities and provide comprehensive, high-quality services, including supportive services to AJC consumers. The WIOA partner agencies meet at the state, regional, and local level to share activities, concerns, and solutions related to the West Virginia WDS. These meetings and cross training result in coordinated service delivery, which is further enhanced at

the customer level using the integrated IT system for co-enrolled individuals. Though each agency may specialize in a specific area or serve a specific population (e.g., individuals with disabilities for Vocational Rehabilitation or individuals not in high school for Adult Education), the combined efforts and shared human and fiscal resources greatly benefit customers, including employers, of the West Virginia WDS.

While some services may overlap, each WIOA program has specific roles, target populations, responsibilities, and areas of expertise within the WDS. For example, WFWV maintains the largest collection of job listings in the state; the DRS specializes in serving individuals, including high school students, with the most significant disabilities; and Adult Education provides educational programs to individuals aged 16 years or older who are not required to be enrolled in the public school system. By coordinating activities at the state and local levels, a comprehensive service delivery system provides customers with the highest quality services where case management services throughout the entire process allow for fulfilling follow-up, performance, and additional needs. The core partners will share common data elements through the IT system toward the goal of ensuring each individual has received needed training and obtained employment.

All partners attend mandatory monthly meetings established by state statute where the discussion and collaboration of efforts transpires. Reports are provided, and successes are shared.

WFWV's UI and ES staff are fully cross-trained to assist individuals access a full range of services. Concentrated, individualized, and group services including reemployment assessment, continuing eligibility and job placement are provided to claimants identified as either most or least likely to exhaust benefits. Regionalized claimant-centered labor market information is available through handouts or via <https://workforcewv.org/>. WFWV applies an early-intervention approach to delivering services to unemployment compensation recipients. Claimants are dual enrolled from day one for Wagner-Peyser reemployment services and provided an orientation to all available One-Stop services.

The WVDDB creates and empowers advisory committees to further the accomplishment of mandated goals. The Operations Committee is primarily responsible for improving service delivery and outcomes through the state's workforce development structure, supporting the goal of utilizing a variety of strategies to align core programs, one-stop partners, and other resources to achieve fully integrated customer services. This includes 1) creating workforce development activities regarding gaps identified in the state's workforce analysis; 2) setting collaborative performance goals, certifying one-stop centers, sharing information/data, and working together to resolve problems and addressing gaps; and 3) collaborating and coordinating on training, marketing and feedback by utilizing existing committees, workgroups, and programs while aligning and sharing resources when appropriate.

During FFY 2023, DRS provided WBLE services to 254 individuals with disabilities. DRS anticipates the number of individuals participating in WBLEs to grow over the next four years as the DRS utilizes growth strategies to increase business engagement, CRP collaboration, and public awareness of the availability of this service. DRS also encourages co-enrollment in partner programs, core and otherwise while participating in WBLEs, expanding awareness of the WBLE program to people participating in other partner programs.

Vocational rehabilitation (VR) consumers require specialized services provided by CRPs statewide to achieve an integrated, competitive employment outcome. Responses from the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) indicate there still is a need for DRS to improve collaborative relationships with all community providers. Findings from the CSNA show a need to focus efforts on specific geographic areas within the state where miscommunication persists between community providers and DRS counselors. Toward that

end, DRS is increasing provision of services for consumers with most significant disabilities under an Individualized Plan for Employment, especially for those who reside in rural areas.

DRS also has strong relationships with many agencies and organizations that are not in the statewide WDS and whose functions, in some capacity, involve the provision of services to individuals with disabilities.

#### **(D) Coordination, Alignment, and Provision of Services to Employers**

While WFWV has consistently tailored its services to meet the specific needs of employers, a significant shift occurred in 2019 with the establishment of a Business Services Unit (BSU) focused on enhancing employer engagement and retention. Currently, this unit operates with representatives stationed in each local region, collaborating closely with LWDBs, DRS, Adult Education, Senior Services, and other partner agencies to seamlessly connect employers with skilled job seekers. Quarterly meetings facilitate discussions on strategies and best practices to effectively bridge the gap between employers and job seekers. Regular virtual and in-person job fairs cater to individual hiring needs and help re-engage employers with WFWV and its partners. Additionally, Business Services representatives attend rapid response meetings to swiftly reintegrate displaced workers into the labor force.

The WVVWDB, being business-driven, provides crucial input into the direction of workforce programs alongside LWDBs at the local-level. The WVVWDB standardizes the delivery of products and services to businesses. Employers benefit from job listings, employee searches, analysis of Labor Market Information (LMI), and access to business services through a statewide data system that minimizes duplication. WFWV serves as a one-stop center for workforce resources, offering the state's largest online database of job seekers, worker training assistance, referrals to partner agencies, and unemployment processing.

Throughout the state, OJT providers and Business Services representatives engage with employers to promote available opportunities across the state.

Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs) are fully integrated into Business Services, establishing strong relationships with employers, sharing business service knowledge, coordinating resources, and boosting awareness and utilization of services and incentives for veterans. They emphasize the unique skills and competencies veterans bring to the civilian workforce.

The DRS leads in accessibility standards, disability talent recruitment, and related issues. DRS employment specialists gather employment information from business contacts, inputting job orders into WFWV's online system and sharing across the WDS. DRS continues to serve on Business Service Teams (BSTs), providing comprehensive WDS information during employer visits to maximize impact and ensure awareness of available resources.

West Virginia Adult Education creates career pathways identified by employers and the workforce system by developing and implementing bridge and pre-bridge programs to assist youth and adults through postsecondary education training. These programs prepare participants for employment in high growth and high demand occupations. Adult Education partners with several CTCs and CTE programs to offer credentials that demonstrate measurable skill gains and are part of a clearly defined career pathway for individuals with barriers to employment. Achieving industry recognized credentials is paramount for securing sustainable employment. Toward that end, the Career Pathway Programs collaborate with all core and required WIOA partners, numerous additional state agencies, local educational authorities, workforce development boards, community colleges, career and technical education centers, and business and industry. Additionally, Integrated Education and Training Program opportunities are made available, when appropriate, to allow participants to develop adult education, literacy, and other workplace skills simultaneously while training for an in-demand

occupation. Adult Education strengthens West Virginia's business climate by supporting employers and helping job seekers gain the skills and knowledge required to obtain employment, remain employed, and advance in their careers.

WFWV provides business driven services responsive to the specific needs of agricultural employers. By building relationships with agricultural employers, they can connect businesses to resources, promote employer engagement and employer retention, match employers with qualified workers, and conduct virtual and in person job fairs. To establish such relationships, WFWV compiles a comprehensive list of agricultural employers around the state, allowing them to inform employers of available services and to identify additional domestic MSFWs. WFWV then communicates with employers regularly in an effort to market their services as well as those provided by partners and other state and federally-funded agencies. WFWV also holds in-person and virtual meetings with agricultural employers statewide to solicit their feedback on the quality of services and share crucial updates regarding the foreign labor certification processes and other pertinent information on resources such as grant opportunities, support services for farmworkers, and changes in federal regulations. WFWV will continue building relationships with employers through outreach and networking to provide information on how they can fulfill their hiring needs, and they will continue to work with the WVU Extension Office, the West Virginia Farm Bureau, and the West Virginia Department of Agriculture to raise greater awareness of the services provided by the WDS.

The DRS Employer Services Section maintains a database of each DRS/employer interaction with employment specialists. This list is distributed to field staff to potentially match a job-ready VR consumer with a current job opening. Through ongoing development of positive working relationships, 47 employers (including some of the largest in the state) now send job postings directly to DRS' Employer Services Section.

All West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) CTE programs must have an advisory council in compliance with Perkins V, and a majority of members must represent business/industry to identify local labor market demand and guide program curriculum, certification needs, and program improvements. Advisory employers are deeply connected to CTE programs. For example, some employers provide onsite clinical experiences for high school CTE students enrolled in health therapeutics and adult CTE students in Practical Nursing programs, and business and industry representatives inspect simulated workplace classrooms to ensure alignment with industry needs. These representatives evaluate CTE program facilities, safety, equipment, space, tools, supplies, technology, professional skills, customer service, and teaching materials using a scorecard. Results are communicated to the administrators and teachers so they may shift programs to better meet employer standards and needs.

### Learn & Earn

Through the Learn & Earn program, CTCs have a 50/50 partnership with employers students spend half of their time working on site and half of their time in the classroom.

### Business Surveys

West Virginia is developing statewide business surveys to gather information on business needs, which will become a regular exercise to ensure that service and workforce training is relevant and responsive to the needs of the business community.

AJC customers, including those with disabilities, frequently require additional training to meet employer needs and their own employment goals. West Virginia CTCs often provide this training and have an excellent track record of training individuals with the skills that employers need to fill high quality jobs.

Through its employer partnership programs, West Virginia's CTCs provide the training an

individual needs while leveraging a company's training dollars to maximize worker productivity. The CTCs deliver training to hundreds of employers across the state, providing customized training, skill enhancements, certificate, and associate degree programs.

The Industry Partnerships and Employer Engagement Committee of the WVDDB plays a pivotal role in bridging the gap between West Virginia's workforce development initiatives and the dynamic needs of its industries. Comprising a diverse array of employers across multiple sectors, this committee collaborates closely with colleges, high schools, labor groups, workforce agencies, community organizations, and other stakeholders. Together, they forge strategic partnerships that ensure training programs align seamlessly with industry demands, thereby fostering opportunities for employment, advancement, and career growth among workers.

Aligned with the objectives outlined in the WIOA State Plan, the committee operates with a clear focus on achieving two key goals:

1. Strengthening West Virginia's relationships with employers.
  - Forge strategic partnerships with employers to gain insights into their workforce needs.
2. Bringing West Virginia's LFPR closer to the National LFPR
  - Enhance the job matching process to improve employment outcomes.

Through proactive engagement and strategic alignment with these goals, the Industry Partnerships and Employer Engagement Committee drives meaningful impact in West Virginia's workforce development landscape, ensuring that the state remains competitive and responsive to the evolving needs of its industries and workforce.

### **(E) Partnership Engagement with Educational Institutions**

In West Virginia, the WDS begins the secondary and postsecondary school systems through programs at career and technical schools, CTCs, and other institutions across the higher education system. All core WDS programs regularly work across all sectors of education, particularly with CTEs and CTCs. State partners understand how and why both employers and job seekers value having a recognized postsecondary degree. As employers and the WDS develop career pathways, the core programs work with the education system to support them. For example, WFWV already partners with the CTE in their simulated workplace program. Our goal is to continue developing even stronger relationships with educational institutions across the state.

The state strives for quality, career-based employment outcomes for its consumers, when appropriate. The state has a long history of providing consumers with the necessary training that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential. In FY 2023, over \$12 million in DRS funding went toward training. Of this amount, the majority was for four-year college/university and CTC tuition.

Core partners have a liaison with postsecondary institutions across the state including 44 colleges, universities, and CTCs. Furthermore, cross-training between agencies is routinely conducted at state meetings and conferences. The Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC) is an example of an agency that cross-trains with core partners. HEPC develops and oversees a public policy agenda for West Virginia's four-year colleges and universities and the state's CTC system.

As discussed in the strategic section of this plan, the state uses data and works with employers to identify the skills and competencies necessary to attain family-sustaining employment, offering high quality training to individuals so they can obtain those skills. The state also works closely with employers, industry partnerships, registered apprenticeship programs, and LWDBs to identify or develop the badges, micro-credentials, certifications, and other credentials that



adequately represent attainment of those skills. Registered apprenticeship programs are an effective model providing structured, paid on-the-job learning experiences combined with job-related technical instruction with a mentor that leads to a nationally recognized credential.

The state identifies and aligns credentials to career pathways for high-demand and priority occupations. Adult Education is exploring the use of micro-credentials, particularly for individuals with barriers to employment, to allow for the attainment of skills in shorter segments that lead to an industry-recognized credential to demonstrate skill competency to potential employers. In addition, students enrolled in WVDE-approved CTE programs can earn badges. Badges are earned when a student meets or exceeds the workforce entry score for the state identified program of study technical assessment. A digital badge is an electronic indicator of one's skills, performance, and achievement.

In accordance with the Strengthening Career and Technical Education Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Perkins V), West Virginia requires postsecondary institutions receiving Perkins V funding, including the CTCs, to articulate with secondary schools that offer WVDE-approved CTE programs of study. These articulation agreements allow qualified students enrolled in approved career and technical programs of study to receive college credit toward a diploma, certificate, or degree in a similar program at a postsecondary institution. These programs serve as a seamless pathway from secondary to postsecondary education and ensure students transition from one level to another without delays or duplication of learning.

The state promotes the attainment of postsecondary credentials through multiple programs and initiatives. Examples include:

- All training providers are required to describe the credential(s) to be earned. All Perkins V postsecondary recipients report on credential, certificate, or degree earned as part of their required accountability measures.
- Business and industry partners encourage training that results in a postsecondary credential by making credentials a required outcome measure for all proposals, requiring them to identify credentials/certifications to be obtained.
- DRS analyzes labor market demand and model service delivery systems to identify opportunities for industry-recognized certificates that lead to increased and improved employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.
- Education programs, including secondary and postsecondary Perkins V and adult basic education, provide professional development opportunities to help providers understand and navigate the full credentialing spectrum and develop expertise in occupational counseling.

All postsecondary institutions with Perkins V funding have advanced credit offerings aligned with at least one approved CTE program of study and offer additional advanced credit opportunities. Students can earn between two and 22 college credits for their secondary technical coursework before high school graduation as permitted in the specific CTE approved program of study and the Perkins V Statewide Articulation Agreement.

### *Title II: Adult Ed and Family Literacy*

Adult Education as a core partner is fully engaged with all levels of education within the state, including CTE centers, CTCs, and public and private colleges and universities.

Adult Education providers implement the college and career readiness standards for adult education. Students who do not earn a high enough score on placement tests at the postsecondary institution are referred to a local adult education program for remedial work. After the student has demonstrated sufficient academic progress, the student is referred back to the postsecondary institution. Adult education and postsecondary programs work together to identify key content areas to support successful transition to specific postsecondary programs. Postsecondary career and technical education is a critical partner in providing integrated

education and training for successful transition to postsecondary education and training programs throughout the state.

*Title IV: Vocational Rehabilitation - West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS)*

Since the enactment of WIOA, DRS has focused on providing services, particularly Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to high school students with disabilities, starting in the 9th grade. To accomplish this, 53 counselors work with students with disabilities. Pre-ETS are mandated under WIOA and include the following:

- Job exploration counseling;
- Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after school opportunities or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships), that are provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible;
- Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education;
- Workplace readiness training that develops social skills and independent living; and
- Instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring.

DRS works closely with the West Virginia Office of Special Education to ensure that special education teachers, parents, and students with disabilities are aware of the availability of Pre-ETS. Toward that end, DRS offers joint-training conferences with special education staff from across the state and provides additional, intensive training on the Pathways to the Future Pre-ETS website to special education teachers. As part of its outreach campaign, DRS places large Pathways to the Future banners in high schools and distributes Pre-ETS materials to students with disabilities across the state. Additional outreach using large posters targets eighth grade, career and technical education, and post-secondary students at locations across the state.

In addition to Pre-ETS, DRS debuted the POWER program in 2015, which provides job shadowing experiences to transitioning students, who may be having a difficult time choosing a career path. Students can experience an occupation by spending time with a professional working in their career field of interest prior to committing to training. POWER guides the student to take a serious, realistic look at the occupation, allowing them to make a more informed choice.

Another DRS activity is STEP 21, which utilizes school personnel to facilitate a seamless transition from high school to post-secondary activities (employment or training) for students with disabilities. STEP 21 enables students to continue working with people who are most familiar with their interests, skills, and potential barriers to employment—their high school classroom teachers and providers of transitions services. For example, Science and math teachers provide students with further career exploration opportunities in STEM fields, and many teachers provide work-based experiences and college preparation activities, such as ACT test preparation.

By engaging students with disabilities earlier and providing them with activities such as Pre-ETS, STEP 21, and POWER, recipient students have a better understanding of the labor market and the value of obtaining a postsecondary credential, and students with disabilities who, in accordance with their IPE, are eligible for VR services receive assistance from DRS in obtaining postsecondary training.

## **(F) Improving Access to Post-Secondary Credentials**

West Virginia is improving access to post-secondary credentials through a variety of initiatives aimed at expanding opportunities and reducing barriers for individuals seeking further education and training. Some strategies include:

- **Credential Alignment:** The state is working to identify and align credentials with career pathways for high growth sectors and key industries. This ensures that credentials

earned by individuals are relevant to current workforce needs and provide pathways to meaningful employment.

- **Micro-Credentials:** West Virginia's Adult Education program is exploring the use of micro-credentials, particularly for individuals facing barriers to employment. Micro-credentials allow individuals to attain skills in shorter segments, making it easier to acquire industry-recognized credentials that demonstrate competency to potential employers.
- **Badging Programs:** Students enrolled in WVDE's approved CTE programs can earn badges upon achieving minimum scores on technical assessments. These digital badges serve as electronic indicators of skills, performance, and achievements, enhancing students' credentials and employability.
- **Articulation Agreements:** West Virginia requires post-secondary institutions receiving Perkins V funding to establish articulation agreements with secondary schools offering WVDE-approved CTE programs of study. These agreements enable qualified students to receive college credit toward diplomas, certificates, or degrees at post-secondary institutions, facilitating a seamless transition from secondary to post-secondary education.
- **Financial Support:** The state provides financial aid programs, scholarships, and grants to help individuals afford post-secondary education and training. These financial resources help reduce financial barriers and make it easier for individuals to pursue and complete credentialing programs.

By implementing these initiatives, West Virginia ensures that individuals have increased access to post-secondary credentials that are aligned with workforce needs, relevant to career pathways, and accessible to all residents across the state.

### **(G) Coordinating with Economic Development Activities**

Economic development strategies are primarily formulated and executed by the West Virginia Department of Economic Development. Collaborating closely with entities such as WFWV, CTCs, CTE programs, and higher education institutions, the Department evaluates labor market resources to present to existing and prospective businesses. Throughout the state, West Virginia maintains local economic and community development offices, along with small business development centers. The WDS engages with these local entities to advance economic development efforts. Additionally, all these entities are integral parts of West Virginia's business service model, which fosters collaboration to identify and address the needs of the business community in each workforce region.

Recognizing the changing economic landscape, West Virginia is diversifying its industries, including supporting high growth sectors such as technology, healthcare, tourism and renewable energy, which opens up new opportunities for workforce development. West Virginia has shown resilience in adapting to economic changes, including the decline of certain traditional industries. This adaptability is crucial for workforce development in the face of evolving market demands.

The following is a snapshot of the new business, across diverse industries, locating to West Virginia from the West Virginia Department of Economic Development:

<b>Company</b>	<b>Industry</b>	<b>Job Creation Number</b>	<b>Job Creation Period</b>	<b>County</b>
Nucor	Metals	550	Completed by December 2026	Mason

CMC Metals	Metals	230	Completed by December 2026	Berkeley
Treplar	Manufacturing	200	Completed by December 2026	Berkeley
Thirumalai Chemicals Limited	Chemical	50	Completed by December 2025	Marshall
CleanVision	Chemical	40	Completed by March 2026	Kanawha
MHI RJ Aviation	Aerospace	200	Ongoing beginning early 2024	Harrison
Aurora Flight Sciences	Aerospace	150	Ongoing beginning early 2024	Harrison
Form Energy	Manufacturing	750	Completed by December 2028	Hancock
Mountaintop Beverage	Food and Beverage	105	Completed by January 2026	Monongalia
NOVA North American Innovation Center - LG	High-tech	275	Completed by 2025	Cabell, Jefferson, and Monongalia

The Career Pathways Committee of the WVVWDB is primarily responsible for issues at the intersection of education, training, and labor market integration for youth and young adults. This committee is composed of employers and educational, community, and workforce organizations. They meet with partners from around the state and gather information and ideas on how groups can align, share resources, and collaborate. This committee examines economic development growth regions and makes recommendations to the WVVWDB regarding key industries to target for workforce development.

West Virginia engages consultants to provide technical support to state agencies and their partners, including the WDS, to assist in the development of a proactive grant strategy that will:

- 1) prioritize the agency's projects that are most "grant competitive,"
- 2) match them to one or more funding programs,
- 3) identify ways to strengthen weaker projects to make them "grant competitive," and
- 4) assemble this information in a timeline to provide a proactive strategy for grant pursuits.

This strategy allows agencies to communicate which projects will be put forward for discretionary grant funding and why and to describe why some grant programs are utilized and others are not. This statewide approach allows for the optimization of resources when identifying project priorities within individual sectors and across industries. This coordinating mechanism facilitates the sharing of information and decision-making between state agencies and WFWV, especially for grants with a workforce development component.

To support the implementation of IIJA, CHIP and IRA, the state's WDS partners with other state

agencies, including Energy and Tourism, to:

- 1) develop materials for competitive grant applications,
- 2) coordinate with its network of workforce partners to facilitate participation in projects funded by these programs, and
- 3) work with other state agencies to leverage funding needed for grant matching.

The state is receiving \$1.2 billion in federal funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law's Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program within the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), the second highest award in the nation. The BEAD funding is accompanied by a workforce advisory group that includes WIOA and other state workforce partners. Deployment of workforce preparation programs will include all partners in some manner. With various potential applicants, including educational institutions, local governments, and private sector partners, the program's funding will support a range of activities. These include creating new certificate programs, offering comprehensive support services, and establishing apprenticeships, all aimed at equipping West Virginians with the skills needed for the burgeoning broadband sector.

## B. STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS AND POLICIES

### 1. STATE TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS

West Virginia's MACC (Managed Administrative Computing Environment) data system is a comprehensive database used to manage various aspects of workforce development programs and services. It serves as a centralized platform for collecting, storing, and analyzing data related to employment, training, and workforce activities across the state.

The MACC data system is designed to support the implementation of the WIOA and other federal and state workforce development initiatives. It allows state agencies, LWDBs, service providers, and other stakeholders to track participant information, program outcomes, and performance metrics in real time. The system incorporates Wagner-Peyser, Adult, Dislocated Workers, Youth, Trade Act, National Dislocated Worker Grants, Rapid Response, Jobs for Veterans State Grants, Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers, Jobs & Hope WV, and the Eligible Training Provider List.

The core partners have developed interfaces between the WFWV MACC system, the Adult Education MIS system, and the DRS iECM system that allows co-enrollment of individuals under three core partners and the real-time sharing of participant activities and common data elements in the respective systems. This allows case managers to immediately know what services are being provided to a participant as well as follow up, performance, and other informational needs.

Several new initiatives are intentionally focused on smoothing and accelerating interoperability between partners via data sharing. The state has recently launched a unified login (single sign-on) for both unemployment and workforce job seeker applications. The customer has a seamless experience, and both unemployment and employment services get richer and more actionable data.

Additionally, the state is launching public-facing improvements to the jobseeker module. The new module is mobile-friendly and responsive and was developed with input from frontline staff, leadership, and customers to ensure better usability. When job seekers look for jobs, location-based LMI data is included to support informed job-matching. The state plans to conduct improvements to the employer-facing module to provide similar levels of service and, ultimately, create more secure file transfer systems to facilitate more timely and effective communication between jobseekers, state frontline staff, employers, and other key stakeholders.

Labor market information is provided to data seekers through the WFWV website at [lmi.workforcewv.org](http://lmi.workforcewv.org).

West Virginia employs a grants management system to oversee the administration of federal, state, and private grants awarded to state agencies, local governments, and nonprofit organizations. This system serves as a centralized platform for managing the entire lifecycle of grants, from application and award to reporting and compliance. Key features of the grants management system include: grants application, award management, financial management, reporting and compliance, monitoring and oversight, and training and technical assistance. This system plays a critical role in streamlining the administration of grants, enhancing transparency and accountability, and maximizing the impact of grant-funded initiatives across the state. By providing a centralized platform for grant management, the system enables efficient and effective stewardship of public funds and supports the achievement of state priorities and objectives.

## 2. STATE POLICIES THAT SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGIES

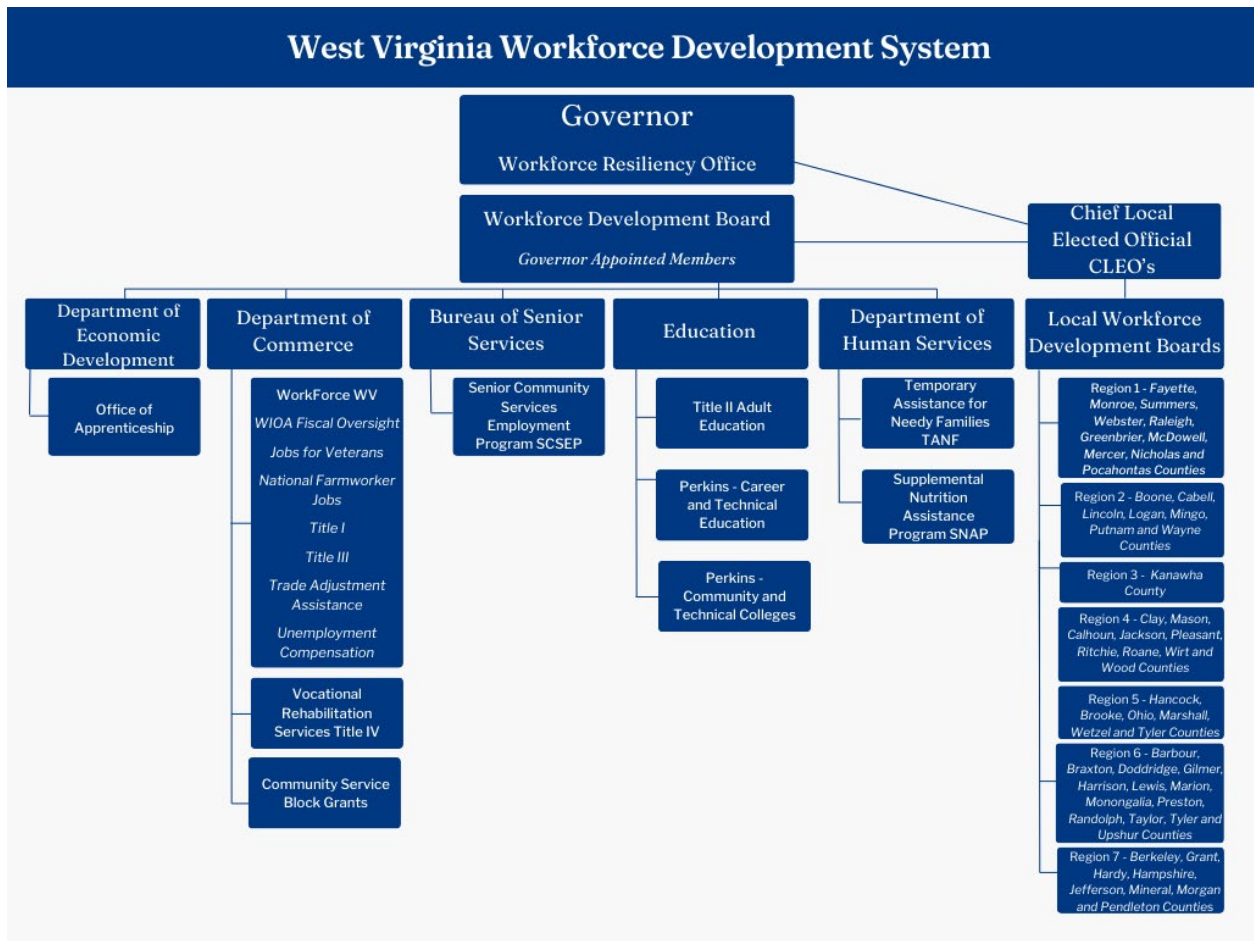
West Virginia has undertaken a thorough policy review to incorporate the appropriate agency policies and develop a comprehensive framework at the state board level. The WVVDB has approved and adopted, under Section 300 of the new numbering systems, multiple new policies regarding one-stop delivery and coordinated system governance in support of the No Wrong Door approach. As new policies and procedures are adopted, system stakeholders receive training, and WFWV and other state agencies adopt guidance and ongoing support to ensure consistent implementation of procedures and best practices. All new and ongoing state policies that support the state's strategies and those related to one-stop partner programs' contributions and guidance can be found at: <https://workforcedb.wv.gov/pages/policies.aspx>

WFWV guidance notices regarding case management and follow up can be found at: [https://workforcewv.org/images/files/PublicInfo/guidance-notices/Guidance Notice 7-16 Case Management Follow Up.pdf](https://workforcewv.org/images/files/PublicInfo/guidance-notices/Guidance_Note_7-16_Case_Management_Follow_Up.pdf)

The WVVDB is conducting a thorough policy review and implementing policies and procedures to guide the work of system partners while engaging the appropriate state agencies in coordinated and streamlined policies and practices.

## 3. STATE PROGRAMS AND STATE BOARD OVERVIEW

### **(A) State Agency Organization**



WFVV is responsible for the administration and oversight of all WIOA programs under Title I and III. The DRS is responsible for the administration and oversight of WIOA programs under Title IV. The WVDE is responsible for administration and oversight of Title II Adult Education programs. The combined partners and their programs areas are as follows:

Agency	Abbreviation/Reference	Partner/Program	Abbreviation/Reference
WorkForce West Virginia	WFVV	Adult Program - Title I of WIOA	Adult
		Dislocated Worker Program - Title II	DW
		Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program	JVSG
		Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers Program	TAA
		Unemployment Insurance Program	UI
		Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service Program - Title III	WP



		Youth Program - Title II	Youth
WV Bureau of Senior Services	WVBoSS	Senior Community Service Employment Program	SCSEP
WV Community & Technical College System/WV Higher Education Policy Commission	WVCTC/WVHEPC	Strengthening Career and Technical Education for 21st Century Act Career and Technical Education Programs	Perkins V
WV Department of Education	WVDE/Adult Ed	Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program - Title II	AEFLA
WV Department of Human Services	DoHS	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training Programs	SNAP
		Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program	TANF
WV Development Office	WVDO	Community Service Block Grant	CSBD
WV Division of Rehabilitation Services	DRS	Rehabilitation Act/Vocational Rehabilitation Program - Title IV	VR

**(B) State Board**

The WVVWDB plays a critical role in overseeing and coordinating workforce development efforts across the state, engaging in strategic planning and policy development activities to set priorities, establish goals, and guide the direction of workforce development efforts in the state. The WVVWDB is currently engaged in revising its policy framework. Drawing inspiration from Virginia's established policy framework, WVVWDB seeks to refine its own policies, utilizing Virginia's model as a reference point. This model serves as a foundational guide for delineating the functions over which the WVVWDB exercises oversight.

- Section 100: State Governance
- Section 200: Local and Regional Governance
- Section 300: One-Stop Delivery System
- Section 400: Programs and Services
- Section 500: Performance and Accountability
- Section 600: Administrative Provisions

Advisory Committees of the WVWDB provide support and guidance to partners:

*Executive Committee:* The Executive Committee comprises key leaders within the WVWDB and is responsible for providing oversight, guidance, and decision-making on behalf of the full board. It often handles matters requiring immediate attention, sets the agenda for board meetings, and ensures that board initiatives are effectively implemented.

*Career Pathways Committee:* This committee is composed of education, community organizations, employers, and workforce organizations. It is a vital component of the state's workforce development efforts, focused on creating and promoting clear pathways for individuals to obtain the skills and credentials needed to secure high-demand jobs and advance in their careers. This committee plays a key role in identifying industry sectors with growth potential, assessing skill needs within those sectors, and developing pathways that align education, training, and employment opportunities to meet those needs.

*Industry Partnerships and Employer Engagement Committee:* This committee includes multiple employers across industries to collaborate with colleges, high schools, labor and workforce agencies, community organizations, and other community stakeholders. These partnerships align training with the skills needed for a particular industry, facilitating training, hiring, and career advancement for workers.

*Operations Committee:* The Operations Committee supports the alignment of core programs, one-stop partners, and other resources to achieve fully integrated customer services. Its work includes creating workforce development activities regarding gaps identified in the state's workforce analysis; setting collaborative performance goals, certifying one-stop centers, sharing information/data, and working together to resolve problems and addressing gaps; and collaborating and coordinating on training, marketing, and feedback by utilizing existing committees, workgroups, and programs while aligning and sharing resources when appropriate.

*Performance and Accountability Committee:* The Performance and Accountability Committee monitors the performance of workforce development programs and initiatives funded under the WIOA. It assesses program outcomes, evaluates the effectiveness of service delivery, and recommends strategies for improving program performance and accountability. This committee establishes baseline data and performance goals to match the new goals and strategies presented in this plan.

In 2022, Governor Justice, with the support of the West Virginia Legislature, created the State Workforce Resiliency Office. This office operates on behalf of the Governor to coordinate workforce development, job training, education, and related programs across numerous state agencies and entities to grow West Virginia's workforce and provide more options for West Virginians seeking work. This office advises the Governor on the workforce development landscape across West Virginia and assists in developing policies, plans, and procedures to ensure that state agencies, private partners, and federal programs are effectively utilized for workforce development. This office has taken over administrative duties related to the WVWDB and works closely with WFVW to provide guidance to workforce partners regarding implementation of policies and procedures.

West Virginia's State Board, provided in the table below, consists of the following required membership types:

- State Government
  - Governor
  - Representatives of State Legislature
- Business Representatives
- Workforce Representatives

- Labor Organizations
- Joint Labor/Management Registered Apprenticeship Program
- Other Workforce Representatives
- Representatives of Government with Responsibility Over Core Programs
  - Lead State Official for Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth (Title I) and Wagner-Peyser (amended by Title III)
  - Lead State Official for Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program (Title II)
  - Lead State Official for the Vocational Rehabilitation program (amended by Title
    - IV)
- Representatives of Local Government
  - Chief Elected Officials
- Optional Representation

<b>Name</b>	<b>Representation</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Scott Adkins	Government Representative	WorkForce West Virginia
Stephanie Ahart	Youth Organization Representative	Human Resource Development Fund - HRDF
Jason Asbury	Business Representative	Terradon Corporation
Ben Ashley	Business Representative	ZMM Architects & Engineering
Sarah Bolyard	Business Representative	YMCA of Kanawha Valley
Pisnu Bua-Iam	Government Representative	West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services
Phillip Cantrell	Youth Organization Representative	Mountaineer Challenge Academy
Anne Cavelier	Chief Elected Official	Mayor of Smither
Justin Chad Morrison	Business Representative	Mountaineer Food Bank
Michael Chirico	Business Representative	Marshall Health
Steve Cox	Business Representative	Toyota Motor Manufacturing of West Virginia
Paul Espinosa	State Elected Official	West Virginia House of Delegates
Jacob Green	Youth Organization Representative	West Virginia Schools of Diversion and Transition - WVSDT
Deborah Harris	Government Representative	Jobs & Hope West Virginia
Cassandra Hensley	Business Representative	NGK Spark Plugs
Traci Leigh Nelson	Business Representative, Chair	OMEGA WV Oil Marketers
Pedro Machado	Business Representative	Procter & Gamble
Mendy Marshall	Government Representative	West Virginia Adult Education
John O'Neal IV	Business Representative, Vic-	Development Authority of Mercer

	chair	County
Cynthia Persily	Government Official	West Virginia Department of Human Services
Jay Powell	Chief Elected Official	Pleasants County Commissioner
Abby Reale	Business Representative	Mountain Health Network
Jeff Rowe	Labor Representative	Smart LU 24
Casey Sacks	Community and Technical College System	BridgeValley Community and Technical College
Lisa Samples White	Business Representative	White Insurance and Associates
Sean Sawyer	Business Representative	Higginbotham & Higginbotham
Jennifer Smith	Business Representative	Berkeley County Development Authority
Vic Sprouse	Business Representative	Berkshire Hathaway
Brian Stanley	Labor Representative	IUPAT DC 53
Diane Strong	Business Representative	Manpower of West Virginia
Chandler Swope	State Elected Official	West Virginia Senate
Joshua Sword	Labor Representative	AFL/CIO
Jennifer Tenney	Youth Organization Representative	WVU Center for Excellence in Disabilities
Kimberly Tieman	Community Based Organization	Benedum Foundation
Chris Treadway	Government Representative	West Virginia Community and Technical College System
Ann Urling	Governor's Representative	Deputy Chief of Staff for Governor Justice
Heather Vanater	Business Representative	American Electric Power
Alex Weld	Business Representative	Generation WV
Jason Wilburn	Business Representative	Paul Wissmach Glass
H. Julian Woods	Business Representative	WVU Medicine
Denise Worley	Government Representative	Bureau of Senior Services

#### 4. ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAM EVALUATION FOR ONE-STOP PROGRAM PARTNERS

##### **(A) Assessment of Core and One-Stop Program Partners**

To assess the quality, effectiveness, and improvements of the programs, core programs, including WFWV, DRS, and Adult Education, are assessed each year through the state performance accountability measures described in section 116(b) of WIOA. The assessments are conducted at the state, local, and regional levels, while taking into account local/regional planning goals, as appropriate. The WV WDS "data warehouse" ensures that the state will have the capability to conduct assessments at various levels across programs in addition to assessments of the system. Assessments help the state maintain its focus on service quality, progress towards its goals, identify promising practices, and pinpoint areas in need of improvement.

Each core program will be assessed on the following performance measures from section 116(b) of WIOA:

- Employment (second quarter after exit)
- Employment (fourth quarter after exit)
- Median earnings (second quarter after exit)
- Credential attainment rate
- Measurable skills gains
- Effectiveness in serving employers

Additional assessments may be conducted utilizing other measures, as appropriate.

The West Virginia AJC system partner programs include the following:

- Alien Labor Certification Program
- Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)
- Adult Basic Education
- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)
- Career and Technical Adult Education
- Higher Education Adult Part-Time Student
- Workforce Development Initiative Grant
- West Virginia Advance Grant and Technical Program Development Initiative
- WIOA Title I Adult
- WIOA Title I Youth
- WIOA Dislocated Worker
- Governor's Discretionary Fund
- Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS)
- Senior Community Service Employment Program
- Veterans Programs
- Labor Exchange
- Community Services Block Grant
- Unemployment Compensation
- Governor's Guaranteed Workforce Program (Including Small Business Workforce Development)
- National Dislocated Worker Grants (including Opioid and COVID)

Each year, WFWV issues an assessment of the West Virginia WDS, called the Workforce Development System Report. This serves as the primary assessment of one-stop partner program services in the state, reporting on the AJC System, funding streams (the Funding Stream Report), performance requirements, positive practices, and the Interagency Collaborative Team (ICT) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This summary document gives a public account and assessment of the current operations, structures, activities, finances,

and future direction of AJCs. The report is published annually, as required by the West Virginia Legislature, and reported to the Legislative Oversight Commission on Workforce Investment for Economic Development.

The Funding Stream Report quantifies the level of both fiscal and programmatic (service delivery) involvement of all the entities involved either directly or tangentially with workforce development in West Virginia. The data collected for the report is critical to assessing the AJC system. With the original passage of House Bill 4083 in 2002, the West Virginia Legislature required this annual report regarding the source, use and outcomes of all funds received for workforce development activities in the state.

Specifically, the Funding Stream Report requires information on:

- Source and amount of federal, state, and other funds received for workforce development activities,
- Purpose of each of the above funds,
- Services provided in each of the seven regional workforce development areas, and
- The measure used to evaluate program performance (including current and baseline performance data) and any other information the council requests.

All publicly funded workforce development programs operating in the state are to report:

- Amount of federal funds expended by each program,
- Amount of state funds expended by each program,
- How the funds are spent,
- The resulting improvement in the workforce.

The purpose, beyond identifying sources and uses of funds, is to focus on the outcomes of workforce development. Holding agencies and programs accountable for results is vitally important. Getting the most value from the dollars invested, whether federal, state, or independent grants, is critical to the success of West Virginia's WDS.

For each workforce development program or activity, the report includes the following:

- State Organization
- Funding Unit
- Operations Unit
- Program
- Program Type
- Program Purpose
- Target Population
- Service Level (number of individuals served)
- Evaluation Measurement (specific to each program)
- Outcome
- Service Locations
- Funds, by Source
- Percentage of Funds used for Workforce Development

Local and Regional Planning Data are collected from the local one-stops within each region. The report also aggregates data by workforce development region and includes data from the previous two years for comparison and assessment purposes. A sample of the data includes:

- The number of individuals receiving services in each region, by program,
- Contributions of each partner agency and non-mandated partner programs at each one-stop and region,
- Program performance for the most recent three years, including negotiated benchmarks and actual performance.

To ensure system and program oversight is communicated and analyzed properly, the Workforce Development System Report is provided to the Legislative Oversight Commission on Workforce Investment for Economic Development to assess the activities and outcomes of the WV WDS. The report allows the governor, legislators, agency and program administrators, and other stakeholders to assess performance and develop appropriate, data-driven planning goals. Through this comprehensive data collection, activities are reported at the local, regional, and state levels to facilitate administrators' ability to examine and compare performances across levels and areas.

WFWV has overall responsibility for the process to collect information for the Funding Stream Report and provides information to the WVDDB so they can report to the legislature, Governor's Office, and others.

### **(B) Previous Assessment Results for Each Four-Year State Plan and State Plan Modification**

Program Year 2022 Annual Report provided here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GKP4eeHtPO3ZLFVqKG-6JZ2yCUZ7MuSD/view?usp=sharing>

Program Year 2021 Annual Report provided here:

[https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/Performance/pdfs/PY2021/WV\\_PY21%20WIOA%20Annual%20Performance%20Narrative%20Report.pdf](https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/Performance/pdfs/PY2021/WV_PY21%20WIOA%20Annual%20Performance%20Narrative%20Report.pdf)

2021 - 2022 Workforce Development Report for West Virginia provided here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1D3PgfE8xbrOd5c29iuFvlZ04ZF6NHKMv/view?usp=sharing>

Report compiled biennially. 2023-2024 report not yet finalized.

West Virginia's WDS continuously adapts its strategies based on ongoing assessments and reviews of performance to ensure alignment with evolving economic conditions and workforce needs. These assessments involve comprehensive evaluations of factors such as labor market trends, industry demands, demographic shifts, and the effectiveness of current programs and initiatives. Based on these assessments, the WDS identifies areas for improvement and adjusts its strategies accordingly.

One key aspect of adaptation is identifying high growth sector strategies for high-demand occupations within the state's economy. By analyzing labor market data and conducting industry assessments, the WDS can prioritize training and education programs that align with these sectors, ensuring that job seekers are equipped with the skills needed for available employment opportunities.

Moreover, assessments help identify gaps in service delivery and areas of inefficiency within the WDS. This information allows for the reallocation of resources, restructuring of programs, or implementation of new initiatives to address these gaps and enhance service delivery to job seekers, employers, and other stakeholders.

The findings from annual reports, assessments, and the Department of Labor's Monitoring Report highlight the need for West Virginia to establish a unified and shared vision for workforce services provided to individuals and employers. This entails developing a cohesive framework that outlines the goals, priorities, and strategies of the WDS, ensuring alignment and collaboration among various stakeholders. Creating a shared vision requires fostering collaboration and coordination among various agencies and organizations involved in workforce development. This involves breaking down silos, sharing resources and information, and leveraging partnerships to maximize impact and avoid duplication of efforts.



Engaging stakeholders by soliciting input and feedback from across the WDS, including government agencies, employers, educational institutions, community organizations, and LWDBs, is essential for ensuring that West Virginia's shared vision reflects the needs and priorities of all parties involved. This process includes the collaborative nature of the WIOA Combined Plan, rotating WVVWDB meetings across the state to allow local workforce partners to participate and highlight areas, and the implementation of a No Wrong Door approach for all employers, workers, and job seekers. Effective communication and transparency are essential for building trust and buy-in among stakeholders. By having the Workforce Resiliency Office as the Governor's voice in workforce activities and with workforce partners, West Virginia communicates the shared vision clearly and consistently, keeping stakeholders informed about progress, challenges, and opportunities. This shared vision allows for enhanced coordination, effectiveness, and accountability within the WDS, ultimately leading to improved outcomes for individuals, employers, and the state's economy.

The establishment of clear and measurable goals is crucial for defining the direction and focus of the WDS. The goals of expanding work-based learning; reducing barriers to sustainable employment; investing in high-growth strategies for key industries; and integrating and innovating service delivery are relevant for all workforce partners and individuals in West Virginia, creating a shared vision for all parties to work toward together.

### **(C) Evaluation**

Selected research/evaluations and improvement projects are aligned to strategies in this plan and monitored by the WVVWDB's Performance and Accountability committee. The WVVWDB develops an annual evaluation agenda connected to workforce and related issues identified by state agency partners.

Prior to conducting the evaluations, the annual evaluation agenda details research questions which will lead to an evaluation's purpose and scope, so stakeholders, partners, and customers understand what is being researched and why.

Research questions include:

- What are the program processes used for the services provided?
- Does the menu of services provided meet the intended program objectives or goals (for example, employment and increased wages for customers)?
- Do some services result in better outcomes than other services (for example, do participants who receive an "extra" package of services have higher earnings or longer retention rates than those who receive the "standard" package of services)?
- Is a statewide career pathways system helping or hindering institutions in making a difference for students and workers?
- Which types of work-based learning (e.g., OJT, registered apprenticeships, paid internships, etc.) provide labor force attachment and credential attainment for youth and adults?

To ensure that the evaluation agenda is coordinated with other evaluations occurring through the Department of Labor and Education, the WVVWDB works with partners, such as WVDE and WV CTCs to catalog such evaluations, including discretionary grant efforts where evaluations are happening, particularly through the CTCs and LWDBs.

Final evaluation reports are documented through the WVVWDB's website, including those conducted as workforce system evaluations and those for discretionary and other related programs.

Because WV's WDS includes multiple agencies, measuring the collaboration and effectiveness of WDS partners is necessary to ensure services are coordinated and effective, federal and state

funding is leveraged, and activities are accurately assessed to determine whether individuals and employers are being served per WIOA's and the Governors' vision.

The Performance and Accountability Committee is primarily responsible for issues around the data and measurement of workforce program operations and programmatic outcomes, developing metrics and measurements for publishing comprehensive workforce score cards and other longitudinal data that will enable the West Virginia Workforce System to measure comprehensive accountability and performance—important data used in evaluations.

The Performance and Accountability Committee, in consultation with other committees and the Board, recommends policy, budget, and administrative action to the Governor to ensure that West Virginia can measure what matters for business, job seekers, and government. This committee is a resource to other committees assisting in the establishment of standards and metrics to assess and continuously improve program and system performance. The committee engages in identifying cross-agency, cross-program performance metrics and ensuring that decisions made by the WWVDB are informed by sound data and analysis.

## 5. DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

### **(A) For Title 1 Programs**

#### *i. Youth Activities in Accordance with WIOA Section 128(b)(2) or (b)(3)*

Once the US DOL issues the Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) and WFWV receives the Notice of Obligation (NOO), Research, Information, and Analysis (RIA) gathers information to begin the allocation process. The RIA data breaks out unemployment numbers and 'economically disadvantaged youths' by county and region.

Each region is guaranteed to receive no less than 90 percent of the average allocation percentage of the local area for the prior two years. Per the guidance in the TEGL and WIOA regulations, the remaining funds after the 'hold harmless' portion of the allocation has been calculated, the remaining funds are broken down by unemployed, excess, and economically disadvantaged youth.

#### *ii. Adult and Training Activities in Accordance with WIOA Section 133(b)(2) or (b)(3)*

WFWV follows the same guidelines for allocating Adult funds as used in Youth funds except for 'economically disadvantaged adult' rather than 'economically disadvantaged youth.' Each region is guaranteed to receive no less than 90% of the average allocation percentage of the local area for the prior two years.

#### *iii. Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Activities in Accordance with WIOA Section 133(b)(2) and Based on Data and Weights Assigned*

The funds distributed for Dislocated Workers (DW) are based on different factors than utilized for Youth and Adult funds. The 'hold harmless' provision is not taken into account for the dollars distributed.

Each region is guaranteed to receive no less than 90% of the average allocation percentage of the local area for the prior two years.

DWs funds are distributed based on the categories and the percentages listed below:

1. Insured unemployment data: 20%
2. Unemployment concentrations: 20%
  1. Annual average count of unemployed
  2. Annual average unemployment rates
  3. Index to state rates
3. Plant closings and mass layoff data: 0%\*

1. Initial claims in MLS
2. Exhaustees involved in MLS
4. Declining industries data: 5%
5. Farmer-rancher economic hardship data
  1. Percentage of delinquent loans to the estimated number of farms. Base data provided by FHA and US Department of Commerce Census of Agriculture.
6. Long-term unemployment data: 40%
  1. Last pays from UC 217 report

\*In PY22 WFWV updated its allocation formula for DW programs. Due to the unavailability of the software previously used to obtain Plant Closing and Mass Layoff Data, WFWV no longer considers this data source in the formula, applying a zero weight for this category. After reviewing the warn notices and monthly rapid response reports submitted by LWDAs and consulting with the Executive Directors of each LWDA, WFWV determined that this change has made minimal impact on the formula.

## **(B) For Title II**

*i. Describe how the eligible agency will award multi-year grants or contracts on a competitive basis to eligible providers in the State, including how eligible agencies will establish that eligible providers are organizations of demonstrated effectiveness.*

### Methods and Factors for Title II

West Virginia Adult Education will conduct a competition for new Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) and Corrections Education and Integrated English Literacy and Civics (IELCE) grants. In accordance with 34 CFR part 463, Subpart C, a multi-year grant will be awarded through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process; the first year being the grant award year with subsequent renewal years. All eligible applicants will respond to the statewide RFP announcement and will be expected to address the thirteen considerations and seven requirements established in Section 231 (e) of WIOA, listed below.

Section 231 (e) CONSIDERATIONS. -In awarding grants or contracts under this section, the eligible agency shall consider:

1. the degree to which the eligible provider would be responsive to-
  1. regional needs as identified in the local plan; and
  2. serving individuals in the community who were identified in such plan as most in need of adult education and literacy activities, including individuals who have low levels of literacy skills; or who are English language learners;
2. the ability of the eligible provider to serve eligible individuals with disabilities, including eligible individuals with learning disabilities;
3. past effectiveness of the eligible provider in improving the literacy of eligible individuals, to meet State-adjusted performance levels, especially with respect to eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy;
4. the extent to which the eligible provider demonstrates alignment between proposed activities and services and the strategy and goals of the local plan, as well as the activities and services of the one-stop partners;
5. whether the eligible provider's program-
  1. is of sufficient intensity and quality, and based on the most rigorous research available so that participants achieve substantial learning gains; and
  2. uses instructional practices that include the essential components of reading instruction;
6. whether the eligible provider's activities, including whether reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, and English language acquisition instruction delivered by the eligible provider, are based on the best practices derived from the most rigorous research

available and appropriate, including scientifically valid research and effective educational practice;

7. whether the eligible provider's activities effectively use technology services and delivery systems including distance;
8. whether the eligible provider's activities provide learning in context, including through integrated education and training, so that an individual acquires the skills needed to transition to and complete postsecondary education and training programs, obtain and advance in employment leading to economic self-sufficiency, and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship;
9. whether the eligible provider's activities are delivered by well-trained instructors, counselors, and administrators who meet any minimum qualifications established by the State, where applicable, and who have access to high quality development, including through electronic means;
10. whether the eligible provider's activities coordinate with other available education, training, and social service resources in the community, such as by establishing strong links with postsecondary educational institutions, institutions of higher education, local workforce boards, one-stop centers, job training programs, and social service agencies, business, industry, labor organizations, community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and intermediaries, for the development of career pathways;
11. whether the eligible provider's activities offer flexible schedules and coordination with Federal, State, and local support services (such as childcare, mental health services, and career planning) that are necessary to enable individuals, including individuals with disabilities or other special needs, to attend and complete programs;
12. whether the eligible provider maintains a high-quality information management system that has the capacity to report measurable participant outcomes and to monitor program performance; and
13. whether the local areas in which the eligible provider is located have a demonstrated need for additional English language acquisition programs and civics education programs.

Section 232 of the act states that each eligible provider desiring a grant or contract from an eligible agency shall submit an application to the eligible agency containing such information and assurances as the eligible agency may require, including:

1. a description of how funds awarded under this title will be spent consistent with the requirements of this title;
2. a description of any cooperative arrangements the eligible provider has with other agencies, institutions, or organizations for the delivery of adult education and literacy activities;
3. a description of how the eligible provider will provide services in alignment with the local plan under section 108, including how such provider will promote concurrent enrollment in programs and activities under title I, as appropriate;
4. a description of how the eligible provider will meet the State adjusted levels of performance described in section 116(b)(3), including how such provider will collect data to report on such performance indicators;
5. a description of how the eligible provider will fulfill one-stop partner responsibilities as described in section 121(b)(1)(A), as appropriate;
6. a description of how the eligible provider will provide services in a manner that meets the needs of eligible individuals; and
7. information that addresses the considerations described under section 231(e), as applicable

The RFP is the mechanism through which Adult Education will identify, assess, and award multi-year grants to eligible providers throughout the state that have demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education activities to eligible individuals. An eligible individual is a person 16 years of age or older who is not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under

state law; is basic skills deficient; does not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; has not achieved an equivalent level of education; or is an English language learner.

Programs previously funded by Adult Education will be evaluated for their ability to meet designated state performance measures. Applicants not previously funded by Adult Education are required to provide data that demonstrate their past ability to achieve success in comparable measures. For both groups, these measures include effectiveness in helping students develop their academic skills, achieve high school equivalency, and transition into employment and/or postsecondary education and training.

Eligible providers submitting applications to Adult Education may include:

- a local education agency;
- a community-based or faith-based organization;
- a volunteer literacy organization;
- an institution of higher education;
- a public or private nonprofit agency;
- a library;
- a public housing authority;
- a nonprofit institution with the ability to provide adult education and literacy services;
- a consortium or coalition of agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described above; or
- a partnership between an employer and an entity described above.

Local grants will be distributed based on whether they meet the requirements of AEFLA purposes outlined in WIOA, which include their ability to:

- Assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skill necessary for employment and economic self-sufficiency;
- Assist adults who are parents or family members become a full partner in the education development of their children;
- Promote transition from adult education to post-secondary education and training through career pathways; and/or
- Assist immigrants and English language learners improve reading, writing, math, speaking and comprehending the English language and acquire understanding of American government, individual freedom, and responsibilities of citizenship.

As part of the application process, LWDBs will review applications to ensure that funds allotted align with their local plans. Adult Education will consider the review and any recommendations made by LWDBs when scoring the related sections of the applications.

The RFP process is as follows:

- Statewide announcement
- Release of application
- Technical assistance webinar
- Application due date
- Review by LWDBs
- Evaluation by review committee
- Notification of awards
- Distribution of grant awards

*ii. Describe how the eligible agency will ensure direct and equitable access to all eligible providers to apply and compete for funds and how the eligible agency will ensure that it is using the same grant or contract announcement and application procedure for all eligible providers*

To ensure that the same grant announcement is made available to all eligible providers, when

RFPs are ready for release, Adult Education publishes an official press release containing information about the availability of funds and the application process, written as a legal notice in compliance with the WVDE Office of Communication's approved policies and procedures. The RFPs are then posted on the WVDE website for download.

Submissions from eligible applicants are reviewed for completeness, adherence to grant guidelines, content development, and overall quality. A review committee scores each application and makes funding recommendations. Final funding decisions are made by Adult Education staff based on the review committee's recommendations.

### **(C) Vocational Rehabilitation Program**

*In the case of a State that, under section 101(a)(2)(A)(i) of the Rehabilitation Act designates a State agency to administer the part of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under which VR services are provided for individuals who are blind, describe the process and the factors used by the State to determine the distribution of funds among the two VR agencies in the State.*

Not applicable.

## 6. PROGRAM DATA INTEGRATION

### **(A) Data Alignment and Integration**

*i. Describe the State's plans to make the management information systems for the core programs interoperable to maximize the efficient exchange of common data elements to support assessment and evaluation.*

West Virginia has an integrated data collection and performance management system (MACC) that covers the following programs:

- WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth
- National Dislocated Worker Grants (NDWG)
- Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers
- Wagner-Peyser
- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)
- Jobs for Veterans State Grants
- Jobs & Hope WV
- West Virginia's Unemployment Compensation MIS interfaces with MACC

Other partners have management information systems that are customized to meet the needs of their programs. WFWV, DRS, and Adult Education have each made the necessary changes to their systems to collect the required data elements. As previously mentioned in this plan, WV's WDS system collects data elements, develops research questions, and identifies additional metrics so proper studies and evaluations can be conducted to assess partner services and performance.

Front line staff and leadership partners, such as DoHS, can access information in real time. Employment and wage data are shared with partners to the extent allowed by the State Wage Interchange System (SWIS) agreement.

While each partner agency does have their own MIS, they are all interoperable and can send and retrieve data to and from each other in real time. All individuals served by the West Virginia WDS are assigned a unique identifier that is used across partner agencies for data sharing and reporting purposes (i.e., co-enrollment with other core programs).

The No Wrong Door Approach initiative creates a common application to make it easier for citizens to enroll in services across organizations. At this stage of planning, the state seeks a vendor solution incorporating a phased implementation approach, which enables the state to evaluate the effectiveness of the solution at each stage and validate intended outcomes and deliverables. Additionally, a phased approach enables the state to enact cost control measures. Phases are anticipated to consist of planning and account set up, data processing and preparation, application build, testing and iteration, rollout, and post-project work. WV also intends for staff working with customers to take more of a 'generalist' role in their day-to-day work so shared customers, and those who should be shared, are served the most coordinated, appropriate, and successful way possible. The generalist concept prevents a 'silo' approach from occurring, ultimately removing additional barriers placed on individuals and employers seeking services, preventing the provision of duplicated or unnecessary services, and avoiding missed opportunities.

Front-end users also benefit from shared data. For example, the DRS MIS, iECM (Internet-based Electronic Case Management System), has a link in each case for "WIOA Partner Data." When a DRS counselor clicks this link, iECM sends a request for data (using the unique identifier) to the WFWV and Adult Education MIS. If available, the information is transmitted and displayed in real time. Information provided by partner agencies includes current and previous employment goals, services received, and assessment results, which is then used by DRS counselors to optimize service delivery with the goal of improving the participant's employment outcome.

*ii. Describe the State's plans to integrate data systems to facilitate streamlined intake and service delivery to track participation across all programs included in this plan.*

The MACC is WFWV's management information system that covers all U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) programs that it manages, except for the Unemployment Compensation systems where an interface allows for the immediate transfer of registration data from the UC benefits payment system to the MACC. All partners have interfaces in their information system that allow real time exchange of participant tracking information among all systems partners. Using the system, case managers can streamline the intake process by eliminating the need to duplicate data that is already available in the partner systems. They can also track an individual's participation in all programs, including what services have been given or are scheduled to be given, development plans, outcomes, and other pertinent information.

Current WFWV initiatives are designed to enhance and expedite interoperability among partners and individuals through data sharing. Recently, the state introduced a unified login system (single sign-on) for both unemployment and workforce job seeker applications. This seamless integration ensures a cohesive experience for customers, while simultaneously providing both unemployment and employment services with more comprehensive and actionable data.

The state plans to create more secure file transfer systems to facilitate more timely and effective communication between jobseekers, state frontline staff, employers, and other key stakeholders. Additionally, DoHS continues the implementation of its WV People's Access to Help (WV PATH) Integrated Eligibility System (IES) for serving SNAP, TANF, Medicaid, Child Support, and Child Welfare Clients. The full implementation of this IES offers enhanced opportunities for systems integration with other partners across the WDS to improve tracking of and outcomes for shared clients.

*iii. Explain how the State board will assist the governor in aligning technology and data systems across required one-stop partner programs (including design and implementation of common intake, data collection, etc.) and how such alignment will improve service delivery to individuals, including unemployed individuals.*



The WVVWDB is fully committed to the goal of aligning technology and data systems across required one-stop partner programs, making it a priority at quarterly meetings to ensure progress is being made toward the governor's vision. WFWV, DRS, and Adult Education are using aligned technologies and data systems, and the WVVWDB continues to work within the framework of the WIOA legislation and federal guidance to improve service delivery by facilitating collaboration and coordination among relevant stakeholders, including government agencies, LWDBs, and service providers. This alignment requires designing and implementing common intake processes, data collection systems, and technology platforms to streamline service delivery and improve coordination among partner programs so that individuals seeking services will experience a more seamless and efficient process when accessing resources and support.

*iv. Describe the State's data systems and procedures to produce the reports required under section 116, performance accountability system. (WIOA section 116(d)(2)).*

WFWV's MACC system has produced the required reports for USDOL programs in the past and can continue complying with the section 116 reports without difficulties. The MACC system has been able to track performance for participants for year, producing reports on WIOA training performance. The MACC system has limited fiscal information available, which could be the basis of a fiscal management system once the requirements are established.

The WIOA core partners in West Virginia, including WFWV, DRS, and Adult Education have implemented a practical and effective system to fulfill the data alignment and integration requirements of WIOA. Each program has a unique system of data collection that is tailored to meet its unique needs. To maximize the efficient exchange of data to support assessment and evaluation, the core partners have collaborated to develop and implement a system for data sharing.

This system operates as follows:

1. Each consumer in the system is assigned a unique participant identifier upon entering the system (WFWV, DRS, Adult Education). The date each consumer enters and exits each program is recorded. The unique participant identifier and program entry/exit dates are used to identify common consumers across the core programs and provide access to common data elements collected by other partners in the AJC system.
2. To ensure effectiveness and efficiency in the AJC system, data collected by each program on new consumers is made available for each program to track service delivery of common consumers. This process ensures that service delivery for each consumer can be tracked across all programs.
3. The data collected is used to generate reports required under section 116, performance accountability system.

Alignment of each partner's system of data collection has improved service delivery to individuals at the AJC including individuals with barriers to employment, especially those with disabilities, by providing the three core partners with more information about how consumers are being assisted across programs in the AJCWV. This information enables the core partners to have a greater understanding of how the needs of their consumers are being met across programs, to track their progress, and to minimize duplication of service. Alignment and integration of data across programs in a data sharing system supports a consumer-focused approach to service delivery that generates quality employment outcomes for consumers in the AJC.

## **(B) Assessment of Participants' Post-Program Success**

To the extent possible, the State uses data matches with other state systems, like WVDE's P20 system, to track participants' entry and progress in post-secondary education and employment. In cases where a data match is not possible or is inadequate, case managers will work with participants, training providers, and employers to gather the needed information.

## **(C) Use of Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage Record Data**

WFWV is the state agency that houses the Unemployment Compensation programs in WV and has access to Unemployment Compensation wage data. WV is also a member of WRIS, WRIS2 and SWIS. Wage records are shared when possible, and aggregated performance data is shared when the actual wages records cannot be shared.

## **(D) Privacy Safeguards**

### Scope

WorkForce West Virginia is an agency within the West Virginia Department of Commerce. This Privacy Notice Summary is based on the West Virginia Department of Commerce Privacy Policy; however, it is specific to WorkForce West Virginia.

### Personal Information

- We need certain personal and non-personal information to assist you with your employment, unemployment and training needs.
- The Personally Identifiable Information (PII) we collect may include your name, address, social security number, date of birth and more.

### Uses of Information

- By West Virginia law and the Privacy Act of 1974, we must collect certain PII to assist you. Without certain PII, we may not be able to determine the services for which you are eligible, such as Unemployment Insurance benefits.
- The information we collect may be combined with information obtained from other Executive Branch Departments' websites and services.
- We use personal information for purposes that relate to the reason you provide it. If information is used for another purpose, we will obtain your permission.
- For purposes matching the reason you provided, we may share your information with other state and federal agencies for the limited purpose of data processing or storage.
- In certain cases, we may share your information when required by state or federal law.
- Your information may be shared with others we have hired to assist us; however, all staff and contractors are bound by a West Virginia Executive Branch Confidentiality Agreement.
- We do not sell or rent your PII to third parties for marketing purposes.
- We may share non-personal, aggregated, or de-identified data for purposes related to improving our business practices.

### Your Rights and Choice

- You have the right to review the personal information you provide us and to update or correct that information.
- If you have consented to an electronic exchange of information, you may cancel that consent by following the instructions in the email you receive.
- If you provide any information to any of our agency websites, you may choose to remove it at any time, except where such information is required by state or federal regulation.

## Security

- WorkForce West Virginia computer systems are constructed and maintained by WorkForce West Virginia agency staff, the West Virginia Office of Technology, and/or WorkForce West Virginia and state approved contractors.
- Regardless of the system or personnel responsible for it, multiple techniques and technologies are used to protect your PII. This means we use industry standards and several in-house safeguards to protect your information.

## How to Contact Us

For more information on our privacy requirements and practices, please call 800-252-5627 and your call will be directed to the WorkForce West Virginia Privacy Officer for response.

## Sharing Your Information

By enrolling with WorkForce West Virginia, you agree that WorkForce West Virginia and its mandated partners may access and use all of the information contained within your application in order to best assist you in obtaining employment and in determining your eligibility for training and other services. These services may include testing, assessment, placement services and career counseling, and we may share test scores and job eligibility data with our partners to best serve you. Personal information such as race, ethnicity, sex and disability status is being requested for federal record keeping and reporting requirements and is kept confidential; however, it may be shared with the partners to determine your eligibility for specific programs.

## WorkForce West Virginia Partner Agencies

- Adult Education and Literacy Services
- Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- Post-Secondary Carl Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Services
- Welfare-to-Work Funded Under Social Security Act
- Senior Community Service
- Veterans Workforce Programs
- Community Services Block Grant (Community Action)
- Housing & Urban Development (HUD) Employment & Training Programs
- Job Corps
- Migrant & Seasonal Farmworker (MSFW) Services
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)
- Food Stamp Employment & Training
- Navigator Program

## Civil Rights Statement-Equal Opportunity is the Law!

It is against the law for this recipient of Federal financial assistance to discriminate on the following basis:

- Against any individual in the United States, on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth and related medical conditions, sex stereotyping, transgender status, and gender identity), national origin (including limited English proficiency), age, disability, political affiliation or belief; OR,
- Against any beneficiary of, applicant to, or participant in programs financially assisted under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), on the basis of the beneficiary's citizenship status or participation in any WIOA I-financially assisted program or activity.

The recipient must not discriminate in any of the following areas:

Deciding who will be admitted, or have access, to any WIOA Title I-financially assisted program or activity; providing opportunities in, or treating any person with regard to, such a program or activity; or making employment decisions in the administration of, or in connection with, such a program or activity; or making decisions in the administration of, or in connection with, such a program or activity. Recipients of federal financial assistance must take reasonable steps to

ensure that communications with individuals with disabilities are as effective as communications with others. This means that, upon request and at no cost to the individual, recipients are required to provide appropriate auxiliary aids and services to qualified individuals with disabilities.

If you think that you have been subjected to discrimination under WIOA Title I-funded program or activity, you may file a complaint within 180 days from the date of the alleged violation with either the recipient:

Equal Opportunity Officer, WorkForce West Virginia, 1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East, Charleston, WV 25305, 304-558-1600; WV Relay 7-1-1 (TDD)

The Director, Civil Rights Center, (CRC), U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Avenue NW, Room N-4123, Washington, DC 20210, 202-693-6502; 202-693-6515 (TTY).

If you file a complaint with the recipient, you must wait either until the recipient issues a written Notice of Final Action, or until 90 days have passed (whichever is sooner), before filing with the Civil Rights Center (see address above). If the recipient does not give you a written Notice of Final Action within 90 days of the day on which you filed your complaint, you do not have to wait for the recipient to issue that Notice before filing a complaint with the CRC. However, you must file your CRC complaint within 30 days of the 90-day deadline (in other words, within 120 days after you filed your complaint with the recipient). If the recipient does give you a written Notice of Final Action on your complaint, but you are dissatisfied with the decision or resolution, you may file a complaint with CRC. You must file your CRC complaint within 30 days of the date on which you received the Notice of Final Action.

To apply for jobs you must be a United States citizen, a permanent resident alien, or be authorized to work in the United States.

#### WV DIVISION OF REHABILITATION

West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services staff are required to complete a confidentiality agreement. The agreement is utilized to ensure that all West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services staff with access to protected information or any other information deemed confidential, fully understand their obligations to limit their use of such information and to protect such information from disclosure. The agreement also details special attention items, as well as definitions of different types of information including personal health information (PHI), personally identifiable information (PII), sensitive personally identifiable information (SPII), and nonpublic personal information (NPII). The confidentiality agreement pertains to information in all forms, including electronic and paper.

#### WV ADULT EDUCATION

##### Handling Confidential Information

If a student discloses any of the following types of information (verbally or in writing), legally that information is to be considered confidential and therefore "private":

- Disclosure of a diagnosed learning disability
- Disclosure of previous status as a "special education" student
- Disclosure of any other type of diagnosed physical or mental disability
- Disclosure of a diagnosed medical condition
- Disclosure of use of any prescription drugs
- Disclosure of history of drug/alcohol abuse and/or treatment
- Disclosure of status as HIV positive or of having the AIDS virus
- Official transcripts

Filing cabinets or drawers containing confidential information must be labeled as "Confidential." They must remain locked, must not be accessible to students or support staff, and must have a log filed foremost in each locked drawer to indicate when confidential files are accessed by any instructional or administrative staff person. Confidential information files should be maintained

at the local program level for a period of not less than five years and must be shredded when discarded. Confidential information regarding a student cannot be discussed, nor can any record be shared without a written release of information.

Instructors sign the Adult Education Personnel Confidentiality Agreement, and it is maintained by the administrator in the personnel file.

## 7. PRIORITY OF SERVICE FOR VETERANS

**(A) Describe how the State will implement the priority of service provisions for covered persons in accordance with the requirements of the Jobs for Veterans Act, codified at section 4215 of 38 U.S.C., which applies to all employment and training programs funded in whole or in part by the Department of Labor.**

Priority of service for veterans is implemented by WFWV in accordance with Title 38 part III Ch. 42. 4215 via AJCs located throughout the state, by using clear and concise guidelines, and by trained staff knowledgeable with state guidelines. To ensure access to services for covered persons, the state has established formal guidance regarding priority of service that all Wagner-Peyser and WFWV staff must follow which includes determination of veteran's status and eligibility. WIOA guidance notice 4-16 referencing Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act of 2014 section 3(63) (A), 38 U.S.C 4215, and 20 CFR 1010 provides this guidance.

Covered persons can obtain information concerning priority of service through WFWV's website, flyers posted in AJCs, banners, and in person from appropriate staff in work groups, from unemployment compensation groups, during the job seeker enrollment process, and during the provision of services. WFWV provides staff information, training, and assistance regarding available employment programs, training opportunities, services, eligibility requirements, and veteran's priority of service.

WFWV provides covered person's priority of service under all state and federally funded employment and training programs. "Veterans priority of service" means that an otherwise covered person shall be given priority over non-veterans for the receipt of employment, training, and placement services provided under that program, notwithstanding any other provision of the law. When services are limited due to available funding, priority of service should be applied. For example, if there are only sufficient funds to provide services to one individual and a veteran is in the pool, the veteran must receive priority.

Wagner-Peyser staff are first point of contact in the AJCs for eligible veterans and eligible persons. Wagner-Peyser staff enroll, eligible veterans and eligible persons into the WDS if necessary, where they receive priority of service. The enrollment process is utilized to identify and determine veterans' eligibility. All WFWV staff, including managers, are trained on implementation of priority of service and integrating it into the service delivery process. Eligibility for priority of service is identified within the state's MIS by symbols that indicate a covered person has been verified by staff or the covered person has self-attested concerning eligibility status. These symbols serve to easily identify individuals who may be eligible for priority of service. Eligible veterans and eligible persons who have a Significant Barrier to Employment (SBE) or are a member of an additional population designated by USDOL VETS in accordance with Veterans' Program Letter (VPL) 03-19 and need Individualized Career Services (ICS) are referred to Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists.

Veterans who are identified with a Significant Barrier to Employment (SBE) should be referred to the DVOP specialist for service. The DVOP specialist will conduct a comprehensive assessment, and they will place eligible veterans or persons into case management and create a Veterans Development Plan. The DVOP specialist will provide consistent contact and information about a wide range of resources available.

**(B) Describe how the State will monitor priority of service provisions for veterans**

Priority of service is monitored periodically to ensure that management receives information and that they are made aware of the operations and actions taken to provide priority of service to covered persons as written by law. West Virginia's Director of Veterans Employment and Training works with the State Veterans Coordinator to ensure that priority of service is administered in accordance with the law. Additional oversight of the provision of priority of service is provided by DOL's Employment and Training Administration.

**(C) Describe the triage and referral process for eligible veterans and other populations determined eligible to receive services from the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist/Consolidated Position.**

West Virginia strategically positions adequate staff, including Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs), throughout the state to meet JVSG performance goals and program expectations. DVOP specialists facilitate the provision of Individualized Career Services (ICS) to as many eligible veterans and eligible persons as possible. ICS particularly focuses on those veterans and eligible persons who are educationally or economically disadvantaged, lack access to public transportation or to broadband internet, and those who have been identified as having at least one Significant Barrier to Employment (SBE) and/or a veteran who is a member of an additional population designated by USDOL VETS and in accordance with Veterans' Program Letter (VPL) 03-19. DVOP specialists provide ICS through the case management framework which includes a comprehensive initial assessment, the development of a plan that establishes short and long-term goals leading to suitable employment, and consistent contact pre- and post-employment. All services to eligible veterans are documented in the state's MIS. DVOP specialists use outreach activities to cultivate relationships with AJC partners and service providers, which provides them with access to beneficial resources for the veterans they serve. Outreach efforts also promote enrollment into the state's MIS, leading to referrals of eligible veterans and persons to the DVOP specialists.

LVERs are assigned to AJCs throughout West Virginia, which present the best opportunity to address the needs of employers in an effort to place veterans in available positions. LVERs identify the unique needs of employers and collaborate with AJC staff, including DVOP specialists, to formulate plans to place veterans in apprenticeships or training opportunities to meet skills gaps identified through their employer outreach activities.

**8. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES**

Section 188 of WIOA ensures nondiscrimination and equal opportunity for various categories of persons, including persons with disabilities, who apply for and participate in programs and activities operated by recipients of WIOA Title I financial assistance. WFWV uses the "Promising Practices in Achieving Universal Access and Equal Opportunity: A Section 188 Disability Reference Guide" as a boilerplate in assuring compliance with Section 188 of WIOA. The guide is designed to ensure meaningful participation of people with disabilities in programs and activities operated by recipients of financial assistance under WIOA, including those that are part of AJCs.

The guide outlines promising practices in the provision of universal access and equal opportunity to programs and activities under WIOA. Using the guide in coordination with the Governor's WIOA Non-Discrimination Plan, WFWV monitors its own compliance and that of its recipients with Section 188 and its implementing regulations that pertain to persons with disabilities.

The West Virginia WDS is committed to ensuring physical and programmatic accessibility at its locations, including those at one-stop centers (AJCs). Policies and procedures have been developed at the state and local levels to certify one-stop locations, based in part on an assessment of accessibility.

At the state level, WVWDB Policy 300-02 One-Stop Delivery: Comprehensive and Affiliated One-Stop Centers addresses the need for AJCs to provide accessibility and reasonable accommodations. WIOA stresses physical and programmatic accessibility, including the use of accessible technology to increase access to high quality workforce services to individuals with disabilities.

To afford individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in and enjoy the benefits of WIOA Title I programs and activities, AJCs must furnish appropriate auxiliary aids or services where necessary. In determining what type of auxiliary aid or service is appropriate and necessary, AJCs must give primary consideration to the requests of the individual with a disability, which means honoring the choice unless the agency can demonstrate that another equally effective means of communication is available or that using the means chosen would result in a fundamental alteration in the service, program, activity, or undue financial and administrative burdens. There are many forms of reasonable accommodations, and the individual with a disability and the AJC should work together to identify the most effective reasonable accommodation for each individual through informal discussions known as the “interactive process” whereby the individual is provided the opportunity to articulate their needs, and the AJC is able to determine how best to meet those needs.

To provide guidance to Local Boards, Chief Elected Officials, and one-stop system partners concerning the criteria to be used to evaluate and certify one-stop centers, the WVWDB developed Policy 300-05 One-Stop Center Certification, which establishes what the WVWDB considers the baseline, or minimum, requirements for AJC certification. Among the numerous requirements, potential AJCs must meet requirements regarding programmatic and physical accessibility, such as providing reasonable accommodations and completing regular accessibility reviews. WFWV provides guidance and technical support related to Policy 300-05.

At the local level, LWDBs have their own policies and procedures to ensure accessibility and certify one-stop locations. For example, Region 4 WIOA Policy: #23 - Accessibility and Accommodation establishes that programs, services (including services using technology and the Internet), and facilities of the AJCs in the LWDB region are accessible to all. The Region 4 Equal Opportunity (EO) officer conducts ADA assessments annually for all offices of WFWV in Region 4. In addition, an inclusion team has been created as a subset of the One Stop Managers and is charged with making sure the AJCs are accessible and can accommodate all customers regardless of disability or limitations. The inclusion team conducts annual (or more) “secret shopper” walk-throughs by individuals with various barriers to determine areas that need improvement and highlight areas that are working well. Technology is used to provide access to documents in an accessible manner to customers who may need them in a larger format, different language, etc. The lobby of the AJC is laid out to be friendly to persons with various barriers, and staff can access appropriate offices to accommodate persons as necessary. AJC staff are provided with training at least annually to assist them in understanding how best to provide services to customers with various barriers to employment/training. For example, all WIOA staff at the AJC have completed “Welcoming Customers with Disabilities” training from the ADA website, and the AJC has recommended it to partner staff. Additional sources of training include the Job Accommodation Network and the Civil Rights Center. The inclusion team meets monthly to discuss issues and determine how to address any current needs using partner resources, technology and other appropriate means.

As the VR core partner agency, DRS is readily available to provide disability-related technical assistance, provide one-stop staff training, and other related assistance to AJCs across the state.

DRS' Rehabilitation Technology Unit is available statewide to provide detailed ADA assessments, recommendations for rehabilitation technology, and engineering plans/drawings. DRS also provides training and technical assistance relating to assistive technology, including various hardware and software options. The DRS Information Technology Unit is available to provide assessments and technical assistance relating to websites, electronic documents, etc. to ensure accessibility and Section 508 compliance. An example of these services can be found in Region 5, where DRS staff regularly meet with AJC staff to identify opportunities for improvements at regional AJCs, conduct cross-training, provide technology assistance for AJCs, and coordinate programs and services to better address the diverse needs of job seekers with disabilities. As a result, staff are better able to identify advanced opportunities for individuals with disabilities, as well as the possibility for co-enrollment in other programs.

#### 9. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The State coordinates with AJC partners to meet the needs of non-English speaking customers. WFWV Guidance Notice 2-17, "Communication with Persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP)" details some methods that are used, such as translating vital documents into Spanish (and other languages, as needed) and providing interpreters when requested.

#### IV. COORDINATION WITH STATE PLAN PROGRAMS.

Governor Justice's vision is to create a dynamic and inclusive workforce ecosystem in West Virginia that empowers individuals to thrive, drives economic prosperity, and fosters a resilient and innovative economy. WWVDB is the Governor's agent for the development, oversight, and continuous improvement of West Virginia's workforce development system. Members collaborate to provide state-level coordination and integration of federal and state workforce development policies and strategies with a goal of creating a more job-driven service delivery system. The goals and strategies included in this plan were developed in a collaborative effort with partners and approved by the WWVDB.

As a proactive measure to address the need for comprehensive and streamlined service delivery, Governor Justice issued Executive Order 19-21 in 2021 to establish the Blue Ribbon Task Force to "better-integrate the training and certification programs offered through the West Virginia Community and Technical College system and West Virginia's Workforce Development system, opening the door to better job opportunities for all West Virginians."



<b>Blue Ribbon Task Force Recommendation</b>
<b>Make it Easier for Citizens to be Successful</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a common application to make it easier for citizens to enroll in services across organizations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up a workgroup to engineer case management referral and training support infrastructure</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand Jobs and Hope case management services and train case managers to be familiar with all SNAP, TANF, federal and state financial aid, and core workforce programs</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preferably locate several services in one location</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pay for the expansion of case management through the Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Medicaid Waiver, maximizing federal funds</li> </ul>
<b>Get State Agencies on the Same Page</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a combined plan for West Virginia that will include, but not be limited to, Perkins, WIOA, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish shared metrics or goals that agencies are measured on that are important to the state;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have DoHS explore policy changes that drive accountability for benefit recipients to comply with job placement opportunities</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a strong state workforce development board that meets regularly with regional boards and creates a sense of accountability to the state</li> </ul>
<b>Eliminate Duplication</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a workgroup of agencies to assess duplicative expenditures and other budgetary efficiencies</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct asset mapping, including a real estate review and examination of shared location expenses.</li> </ul>
<b>Outreach to Business and Industry</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create incentives for employers to engage with the state and its partners</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt best practices from other states and organizations that could include the development of a West Virginia employer engagement toolkit</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritize strategic communications with employers, so they know what opportunities are available to them</li> </ul>

As a result of the Blue Ribbon Task Force’s work, the No Wrong Door Initiative was created to implement recommendations centered on providing access to the complete array of employment, education, training, and social assistance services regardless of which program or agency is accessed initially by job seekers, students, and workers. While the Blue Ribbon Task Force focuses specifically on better service integration between the state’s CTCs and public workforce system, the No Wrong Door Initiative also encompasses social assistance programs and community partners who provide support services for populations and/or address specific barriers to education and employment.

This No Wrong Door Roadmap identifies actionable strategies designed to realize the vision of the Blue Ribbon Task Force through efficient, holistic, and integrated services for West Virginia’s workers, job seekers, and residents.

To gather data about the No Wrong Door Initiative and issues around coordination of services, interviews were conducted with stakeholders representing state agencies, program partners, regional workforce systems, and nonprofit service providers. Interviews centered upon four areas of inquiry:

1. Context and Understanding of the No Wrong Door Initiative
2. Participant Referrals
3. Systems, Technology, and Policies
4. Integrated Service Delivery

Based on this data, the No Wrong Door Franchise Model has been recommended to combat wide regional variation in service provision while balancing the need for regional flexibility and innovation. The No Wrong Door Franchise Model is led and guided strategically by West Virginia’s WDB as constituted and charged by the Governor. State and local No Wrong Door partners provide support and carry out the activities that move the state to a customer-centered franchise operation. Implementing the No Wrong Door Franchise Model through the following plan components provides the state with a means to significantly address better service provision, referrals to services, and integration of services throughout the state.

Component 1: Develop a consistent set of statewide workforce policies and procedures.

Component 2: Launch a new “one-stop certification” process intended to define a consistent access and referral system where partners can better engage in the “affiliate” role.

Component 3: Develop a consistent data sharing and local MOU process informed by understood and agreed-to privacy limitations.

Component 4: Undertake a cross-agency and program Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) process to create a consistent approach locally and statewide.

Component 5: Implement a customer mapping initiative that identifies intake, eligibility and referral processes no matter which agency engages first.

Component 6: Implement an automated referral system incorporating referrals made at one-stop centers and virtually.

In conjunction with the work and recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Task Force and following the No Wrong Door Initiative, a team from West Virginia is working through the Aligned Case Management (ACM) Institute (“the Institute”). A draft charter of the proposed work is provided below.

**I. BACKGROUND:** The Employment and Training Administration’s Office of Workforce Investment (ETA-OWI) identifies opportunities for improvement in the case management system by better understanding the first-hand experience of case managers and job seekers in the nation’s workforce development system. They engage NASWA’s Workforce ITSC to provide a replicable framework and an on-demand toolkit of resources that reflect the shared system’s case management needs. As part of this engagement, West Virginia enrolled a team in Workforce ITSC’s Aligned Case Management Institute to identify problems in the current state of case management the state would like to address.

**II. VISION:** Because of the need for a common referral system that better assesses needs and

refers customers to partner services, the West Virginia team's vision is to optimize the use of the state's No Wrong Door application to route and refer customers more seamlessly to appropriate supportive services based on a "whole person" assessment of their needs. The successful deployment of No Wrong Door is a critical first step to begin the team's commitment to an improved case management approach in West Virginia.

II. PROJECT MISSION: The mission of the West Virginia Team is to identify actions that will improve the referral process by and between program partners by optimizing the use of the No Wrong Door approach. The goal is to effectively implement No Wrong Door by better supporting this new tool's adoption by professional staff and creating positive momentum for future initiatives that advance a better aligned case management approach in West Virginia. Steps toward achieving this goal include:

- Identifying how professional staff and customers might make optimal use of No Wrong Door to improve referrals and access to the full breadth of partner services;
- identifying actions that leaders and managers should take to support optimal utilization of the tool;
- Recommending action steps and resources required to support the successful deployment of No Wrong Door;
- Discussing and identifying new opportunities that leadership might consider to continue the long-term effort toward better ACM in West Virginia, following the successful execution of No Wrong Door.

III. PROJECT OBJECTIVES: Objectives for this project include:

- Create a shared vision for the optimized implementation of No Wrong Door by and between all programs and partners to improve access to system services for the customer;
- Identify actions, activities, and resources required to properly support professional staff across the broader WDS (including partner programs) in the use of No Wrong Door;
- Identify metrics to measure "success" in the deployment of No Wrong Door;
- Gain approvals as necessary to proceed in securing necessary resources;
- Produce an Action Plan to successfully launch No Wrong Door; and
- Create a set of recommendations to the Leadership Group for next priorities in the support of a better ACM approach in West Virginia.

In 2022, Governor Justice, with the support of the West Virginia Legislature, created the State Workforce Resiliency Office. This office operates on behalf of the Governor to coordinate workforce development, job training, education, and related programs across numerous state agencies and entities to grow West Virginia's workforce and provide more options for West Virginians seeking work. This office advises the Governor on the workforce development landscape across West Virginia and assists in developing policies, plans, and procedures to ensure that state agencies, private partners, and federal programs are effectively utilized for workforce development.

The WVVDB recently reorganized advisory committees to include state partners and to align with goals developed for the WIOA strategic plan. Those goals include: 1) Expand and implement high-quality work-based learning opportunities for youth and adult learners; 2) Increase referrals and integration of services to improve access to supportive services customized for individuals needing education and employment; 3) Implement comprehensive sector strategy approaches to reduce skills mismatches and enhance faster labor market attachment while informing education and training priorities; 4) Implement a franchise model for workforce delivery to increase the efficiency of service delivery and effectiveness in serving businesses, workers, and job seekers.

The following advisory committees report information and recommendations from partners to the WVWDB quarterly:

- Operations Committee (Goals 2 and 4)
- Industry Partnerships and Employer Engagement (Goal 3)
- Performance and Accountability (Goals 1, 2, 3 and 4)
- Career Pathways (Goal 1)

In addition to the WVWDB committees, the seven LWDBs meet quarterly with their local partners (WIOA, Adult Education, Wagner-Peyser, Vocational Rehabilitation, TANF, Career Technical Education, Economic Community Development, etc.) Based on these reports, technical assistance is provided to the LWDBs where performance and/or other operational goals are not meeting the objectives of their respective regional plan. LWDBs showing promising practices are highlighted among the WVWDB committees as well as with other local planning areas within the state.

A leadership planning team for the development of the WIOA strategic plan includes staff from the Governor's Workforce Resiliency Office, the WVWDB, and WFWV. The team conducted an analysis of workforce and employment data, resulting in the identification of four strategic focus areas that were presented to the Board and partners as the strategic goals for 2024-2027. Partners reviewed and provided feedback related to the goals before they were presented to the WVWDB and approved at the December 13, 2023 meeting. Each partner identified a point of contact for their WIOA planning who participated in meetings and submitted partner plans by December 22, 2023. The plan was available for WVWDB review and partner comment from February 5-9, 2024 and is then available for public review and comment from February 12-28, 2024. Public comments will be reviewed by the leadership planning team and to consider for incorporation before the March 4, 2024 submission deadline.

The Interagency Collaborative Team (ICT), established under the state Workforce Investment Act, ensures coordination between the agencies engaged in workforce development activities, LWDBs, and WFWV. The ICT operates as a state interagency source for addressing issues or concerns related to building and maintaining the most effective and efficient implementation of WIOA and the overall workforce development system in West Virginia. The team focuses on how best to collaborate between and among the state agencies directly involved in workforce development activities. The ICT serves as a forum for the LWDBs to seek information or recommendations to fulfill their responsibilities. WFWV convenes the team at least monthly and provides administrative and other services.

To ensure seamless alignment of activities and goals across programs, partners maintain continuous communication to enhance awareness of each other's initiatives. This commitment to information sharing ensures that state and local staff remain well-informed about the comprehensive array of services and resources available from partner agencies. Regular communication takes place at both the state level and within AJCs, where daily interactions with partner agency staff occur. Mandatory cross-training initiatives further optimize service delivery to AJC customers, simultaneously preserving resources for future demands.

To better coordinate efforts with federal funded projects such as IJJA/IRA/CHIPS opportunities for West Virginia, Governor Justice's staff meets weekly with key state partners. Staff also created and operate Governor's Infrastructure Funding Summits, which provide a valuable platform to promote collaboration in workforce development by bringing together key stakeholders from government, industry, education, and the community to address infrastructure challenges and opportunities. These events serve as a forum for discussing the workforce needs associated with infrastructure projects, such as construction, engineering, and skilled trades. The events also provide information on training programs, funding opportunities, and resources available to support workforce development efforts in infrastructure-related fields.

V. COMMON ASSURANCES (FOR ALL CORE PROGRAMS)

<b>The Unified or Combined State Plan must include assurances that:</b>		
1.	The State has established a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a State Board or local board member, or the entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts;	Yes
2.	The State has established a policy to provide to the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of State Boards and local boards, and information regarding activities of State Boards and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes;	Yes
3.	The lead State agencies with optimal policy-making authority and responsibility for the administration of core programs reviewed and commented on the appropriate operational planning elements of the Unified or Combined State Plan, and approved the elements as serving the needs of the populations served by such programs;	Yes
4.	(a) The State obtained input into the development of the Unified or Combined State Plan and provided an opportunity for comment on the plan by representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administering the core programs, required one-stop partners and the other Combined Plan programs (if included in the State Plan), other primary stakeholders, including other organizations that provide services to individuals with barriers to employment, and the general public, and that the Unified or Combined State Plan is available and accessible to the general public;  (b) The State provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by the State Board, including State agency official(s) for the Unemployment Insurance Agency if such official(s) is a member of the State Board;	Yes
5.	The State has established, in accordance with WIOA section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments made for the core programs to carry out workforce development activities;	Yes
6.	The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with uniform administrative requirements in this Act, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA section 184(a)(3);	Yes
7.	The State has taken the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA section 188, Nondiscrimination, as applicable;	Yes
8.	The Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program;	Yes

9.	The State will pay an appropriate share (as defined by the State board) of the costs of carrying out section 116, from funds made available through each of the core programs;	Yes
10.	The State has a one-stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all one-stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA);	Yes
11.	Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate; and	Yes
12.	Priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses is provided in accordance with 38 USC 4215 in all workforce preparation, development or delivery of programs or services funded directly, in whole or in part, by the Department of Labor.	Yes

## VI. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

The State must address all program-specific requirements in this section for the WIOA core programs regardless of whether the State submits either a Unified or Combined State Plan.

**Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities under Title I-B.** The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following with respect to activities carried out under subtitle B—

### A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

#### 1. REGIONS AND LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS

**(A) Identify the regions and the local workforce development areas designated in the State.**

The State of West Virginia is divided into seven local workforce development areas. While the attached map shows the geographic breakdown of the seven areas/regions, a brief description of each follows:

Region 1: The Region 1 Workforce Development Board, headquartered in Beckley, administers workforce activities in an eleven-county region covering the southeastern portion of the State.

Region 2: The Southwestern West Virginia Workforce Development Board, located in Huntington, governs a seven-county region in the southwestern portion of the State.

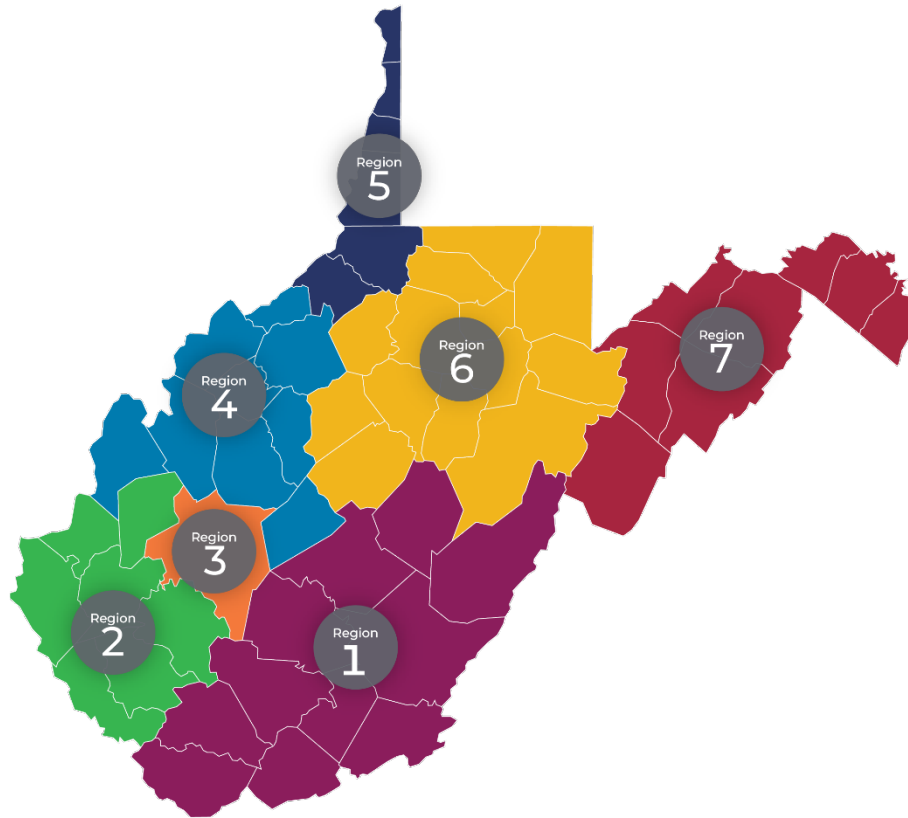
Region 3: The Workforce Development Board of Kanawha County oversees activities in the State's only single-county workforce development region from its office in Charleston.

Region 4: Nine counties are served by the Workforce Development Board Mid-Ohio Valley, which is located in Parkersburg.

Region 5: The Northern Panhandle Workforce Development Board provides services in six counties and is based in Wheeling.

Region 6: The Region 6 Workforce Development Board, located in Fairmont, provides services in a thirteen-county region in the north-central portion of the State.

Region 7: Eight counties in the easternmost portion of West Virginia are served by the Region 7 Workforce Development Board located in Moorefield.



**(B) Describe the process and policy used for designating local areas, including procedures for determining whether the local area met the criteria for “performed successfully” and “sustained fiscal integrity” in accordance with 106(b)(2) and (3) of WIOA. Describe the process used for identifying regions and planning regions under section 106(a) of WIOA. This must include a description of how the State consulted with the local boards and chief elected officials in identifying the regions.**

WorkForce West Virginia (WFWV) has issued the current policy as a Guidance Notice. The West Virginia Workforce Development Board (WVWDB) will adopt this policy under the new policy and procedures framework.

**WIOA Guidance Notice No. 01-15, Change 1 Designation/Re-Designation**

TO: Workforce Development Boards

FROM: WorkForce WV West Virginia

CATEGORY: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

SUBJECT: Designation/Re-Designation of Workforce Development Areas and the Appeals Process

SOURCE: Federal/State

DISTRIBUTION: Managers, Workforce Development Programs Staff, Workforce Region Directors, and Staff

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2015

CHANGE 1 EFFECTIVE DATE: May 11, 2022

**REFERENCE(S):**

Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014, WIOA Section 106.



**PURPOSE:**

To provide guidance and process for the designation and re-designation of Workforce Development Areas in West Virginia, along with the process for appealing designation decisions.

**BACKGROUND:**

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) mandates that the West Virginia Workforce Development Board (WVWDB) shall assist the Governor in the designation of Workforce Areas, as required in section 106, and that an appeals process is in place.

The Governor of the State shall designate local workforce development areas within the State: (i) Through consultation with the State Board and (ii) After consultation with chief elected officials and after consideration of comments received through the public comment process as described in section 102(b)(2)(E)(iii)(II).

WIOA further states that the considerations should include the following:

(i) The extent to which the areas are consistent with the labor market areas in the State; (ii) The extent to which the areas are consistent with regional economic development areas in the State; and (iii) The extent to which the areas have available the Federal and non-Federal resources necessary to effectively administer activities under subtitle B and other applicable provisions of this Act, including whether the areas have the appropriate education and training providers, such as institutions of higher education and area career and technical education schools.

WIOA states that a unit of general local government (including a combination of such units) or grant recipient that requests but is not granted the designation of an area as a local area may submit an appeal to the State Board under an appeal process established in the State plan.

**DEFINITIONS:**

**PERFORMED SUCCESSFULLY**-The term “performed successfully,” used with respect to a local area, means the local area met or exceeded the adjusted levels of performance for primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) (or, if applicable, core indicators of performance described in section 136(b)(2)(A) of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, or the Common Measures, as allowed by a USDOL approved waiver of the core indicators of performance, as in effect the day before the date of enactment of this Act) for each of the last 2 consecutive years for which data are available preceding the determination of performance under this paragraph.

**SUSTAINED FISCAL INTEGRITY**-The term “sustained fiscal integrity,” used with respect to a local, means that the Secretary, or the State in place of the Secretary, has not made a formal determination during either of the last 2 consecutive years preceding the determination regarding such integrity, that either the grant recipient or the administrative entity of the area misexpended funds provided under subtitle B (or, if applicable, title I of the workforce investment Act of 1998 as in effect prior to the effective date of such subtitle B) due to willful disregard of the requirements of the provision involved, gross negligence, or failure to comply with accepted standards of administration.

**BUSINESS LEADER**- A business member of the Local Workforce Development Board or representative of another business organization, such as a chamber of commerce.

**COMMUNITY LEADER**-An officer or director of an association, community, or civic organization whose focus or activities are related to the services provided by the one—stop delivery system.

**DESIGNATION AND RE-DESIGNATION POLICY:**

WIOA requires that existing federally recognized workforce areas are designated during the first two program years, referred to as Initial Designation, and again after the first two program

years, referred to as Subsequent Designation. Units of general local government that desire to become a new local workforce area should follow the New Area designation requirements in section B.

#### **INITIAL WIOA DESIGNATION FOR EXISTING REGIONS:**

Existing workforce regions operating in accordance with the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 may request initial designation as a Local Workforce Development Area if they have performed successfully.

#### **WIOA DESIGNATION FOR NEW AREAS:**

Any unit of general local government may request designation as a Local Workforce Development Area under WIOA. New local area designations will only become effective on July 1 of the next program year. In order for designation to be approved for the start of the next program year, the following steps and timeline must be met.

1. A statement of intent to request designation must be submitted to the West Virginia State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) no later than February 15th through email. The SWDB will work with the requesting area to determine the deadline for the full request. Submitted materials will be made available for public comment as a part of the review process. The full request for designation as a Local Workforce Development Area ("local area") must include the following components and steps: Submit the request in writing to the Chairperson of the WVVWDB through email, and the receipt of the request must be documented by electronic return confirmation. If the requestor does not receive confirmation, it is their responsibility to contact WFWV to ensure that the notice has been received.
2. This request must clearly state the circumstances for the request for designation.
3. The request must also address and explain how the following criteria are met:
  - a. Consistency with natural labor market areas.
  - b. Consistency with regional economic development areas
  - c. Existence of education and training providers, such as institutions of higher education and career and technical education schools in the area.
  - d. Submission of a service delivery plan that includes a description of resources that would be available to the area to provide services.
  - e. Coordination of multiple resources within areas that are based on labor markets and natural travel patterns of local residents.
  - f. Local support of the implementation strategies to provide quality services to employers and individuals by county commissioners, municipal elected officials including mayors and/or city council members where appropriate, and business or community leaders within the area as demonstrated by letters of support or a vote of support by a city council or other applicable board.
  - g. Local ownership is exhibited by the strong involvement of local elected officials and community leaders on the Local Workforce Development Board.
  - h. Local capacity to manage funds, provide oversight of programs, and provide for the proper stewardship of public funds.
  - i. Evidence that the area, in the two program years for which data is available prior to the request, met or exceeded the adjusted levels of performance for primary indicators of performance or the Common Measures and was not subject to the sanctions process resulting from missing the same measure two years in a row, if applicable.
  - j. Assurance that during the two program years prior to the request, the U.S. Secretary of Labor, or the State in place of the Secretary, has not made a formal determination that the Grant recipient or administrative entity for the local area

has misexpended funds due to willful disregard, gross negligence, or failure to comply with accepted standards of administration, if applicable.

4. The request must address how the proposed new area designation will impact those other workforce areas from which it withdraws. It should be understood by any unit of general local government or combination of such seeking designation that the new area will only secure the formula allocated funds for each WIOA funding stream based on the formula factors as defined by WIOA. If the area in question becomes part of a consortium, the consortium will determine the distribution of WIOA funds with its region(s).
5. If opposition to the request is voiced by municipalities or counties within the area seeking designation, then the requesting entity will address their request at a public hearing. The requesting entity will have the opportunity to respond to the concerns and questions at the hearing, and all comments will be recorded and used to inform the SWDB's action on the request. If a hearing is necessary, it will be held within 45 days of receipt of the request. Time and place are to be determined by the SWDB Chair.
6. The Chair will take the request and comments from the public as well as from a public hearing, if applicable, and make a recommendation to the full SWDB.
7. The SWDB will submit its recommendation to the Governors within five (5) business days of the State board vote.
8. The final decision rests with the Governor and shall be made prior to May 29th, four weeks prior to the beginning of the fiscal and program year (July 1st).

**APPEALS PROCESS POLICY:**

An area or areas seeking to be designated or re—designated, as a Local Workforce Development Area, which has requested but has been denied its request for designation or re—designation as a Local Area, may appeal the decision to the West Virginia Workforce Development Board.

1. An appeal must be in writing and filed with the WVVWDB within fourteen (14) days after notification of the decision. Submit the appeal to the Chairperson of the WVVWDB by sending an email to [wioa@wv.gov](mailto:wioa@wv.gov).
2. The appeal must contain a specific statement of the grounds upon which the appeal is sought.
3. Pursuant to 20 CFR 679.290 (b) and 20 CFR 683.630 (a), the State Board will provide the parties with the opportunity for a hearing, review the appeal, and the State Board will have 60 days to review the appeal and make a recommendation to the Governor. The review will take into account the information in the original request and supplemental information provided in the appeal to determine if the criteria set in this policy have been met.
4. The final decision rests with the Governor.
5. If the appeal is connected to a request for initial or subsequent designation under section V. A. or section V. B. of this policy, and if the appeal does not result in designation, the entity may request a review by the Secretary of Labor to determine if procedural rights were granted or if the minimum criteria of WIOA Section 106(b)(2) or Section 106(b)(3) were met. This second level of appeal must be sent within 14 days to the Assistant Secretary of Employment and Training U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Avenue, N.W. Washington, DC 20210. A copy of the appeal must be simultaneously provided to the ETA Regional Administrators U.S. Department of Labor The Curtis Center, Suite 825 East 170 South Independence Mall West Philadelphia PA

19106-3315. In addition, a copy must be sent to WFWV at 1900 Kanawha Boulevard East, Building 3, Suite 300, Charleston, WV 25305.

6. If the final decision of any appeal reverses the prior decision, it will become effective July 1st of the following year.
7. Definition: Where the term “days” appears, it shall be defined as calendar days, not working days.

**IMPLEMENTATION DATE:** Immediately upon receipt.

**INQUIRIES:** Please direct all inquiries to WFWV

**(C) Provide the appeals process and policy referred to in section 106(b)(5) of WIOA relating to designation of local areas.**

**(D) Provide the appeals process and policy referred to in section 121(h)(2)(E) of WIOA relating to determinations for infrastructure funding.**

**Upon receipt of the specific terms of a State Funding Mechanism (SFM), any Local WDB or one-stop required partner may appeal for cause within 21 calendar days, in writing (electronic or hardcopy), WFWV’s (with the Governor’s approval) determination regarding the portion of funds (or non-cash contributions) it is to provide. To be officially received, an appeal must fully contain evidence of the following:**

- Addressed to the attention of the Deputy Executive Director of Federal Programs or his/her designee.
- An introduction identifying the appellant and designating the letter as a formal appeal.
- Full citations from WIOA or the WIOA Final Rules in Title 29 or Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) that support the appeal.
- Identify the basis for the appeal. *WIOA stipulates that an SFM allocation determination may be appealed only if the determination is inconsistent with the requirements of WIOA sec. 121(h)(2)(E). The Final Rule at 20 CFR 678.750 further limits admissible grounds for an appeal to three possibilities. The petitioner must make a case that the State’s determination is inconsistent with:*
  - the proportionate-share requirements in 20 CFR 678.737, or
  - the cost-contribution limitations in 20 CFR 678.730(c), or
  - the cost-contribution caps in 20 CFR 678.738
- The letter must be signed (electronic signature is acceptable) and dated.

WFWV will have 10 days to acknowledge the appeal. WFWV has 30 business days to convene and hear testimony from all parties involved. After hearing testimony, WFWV, under the designated authority and approval of the Governor, has an additional 30 business days to issue a formal resolution. Until the appeals process is completed, the appellant will remain liable for its contribution as originally determined in the SFM. If a one-stop partner’s appeal to WFWV using the process described in 20 CFR 678.750 is successful and results in a change to the one-stop partner’s infrastructure-cost contributions, then the Local Area’s Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) *must* be updated to reflect the final one-stop partner infrastructure cost contributions.

WIOA Policy No. 06-17 - Memorandum of Understanding/Infrastructure Guidance, Change 1 can be found at <https://workforcewv.org/public-information/guidance-notices-and-policies> or directly at [https://workforcewv.org/images/files/PublicInfo/public-notices/Policy\\_No\\_6-17 MOU and Infrastructure Guidance Change 1.pdf](https://workforcewv.org/images/files/PublicInfo/public-notices/Policy_No_6-17_MOU_and_Infrastructure_Guidance_Change_1.pdf). Appeals Process can be found on page 8.

## 2. STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES

### **(A) Provide State policies or guidance for the statewide workforce development system and for use of State funds for workforce investment activities.**

State policies or guidance for the statewide Workforce Development System (WDS) can be found at:

<https://workforcedb.wv.gov/pages/policies.aspx>

### **(B) Describe how the State intends to use Governor's set aside funding for mandatory and discretionary activities, including how the State will conduct evaluations of Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth activities.**

Overall, the Governor of West Virginia has the flexibility to use WIOA state set-aside funds in ways that align with the state's workforce development priorities and address the unique needs of its residents and industries. The WVWDB will make recommendations for funding based on the program's ability to address the strategic goals outlined in this plan. The WVWDB will allow funding applications to be submitted on a biennial basis. After the set-aside funds are allocated and programs are implemented, ongoing monitoring and evaluation efforts are conducted to assess the effectiveness of the investments and make any necessary adjustments to ensure that the funds are being used efficiently and achieving the intended outcomes.

The determination of the WIOA Governor's set-aside involves a careful assessment of workforce development needs, strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, and ongoing oversight to ensure that the funds are effectively utilized to support the state's workforce development goals.

The Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB) have the option of requesting additional funding other than their formula distribution to ensure that dislocated workers remain a priority for the WDS. This allows LWDBs to create partnerships with employers for On-the-Job Training Programs, Transitional Jobs, and ITAs. When the LWDB exhausts or becomes low on formula funds or collaborates with businesses and partners to produce a comprehensive program, they may request additional funds. Awards are made based on the amount of funds requested and the proposal documentation submitted. West Virginia supports innovation by reviewing the results of current and recent projects to identify those that show positive results, could benefit from additional resources, and address the state's strategic plan goals.

Programs awarded from the state set aside funds include the following examples:

- In Region 1, the Transitional Jobs program targets individuals in recovery, most of whom are in residential recovery homes. Transitional Jobs offer participants the opportunity to learn the routine of work, acquire work-task skills, establish an employment record, and generate references for future employment. Transitional Jobs provides the participants with case management, wages, and comprehensive career and support services with the goal of transitioning to full-time employment.
- The Empowered Employment Pilot Program is designed to assist individuals in obtaining a time-limited work experience that is wage-paid, subsidized up to 100%, and is in the public, private, or non-profit sectors.
- The "RE-Building One's Opportunities Together" (REBOOT) program, developed by Region 5, provides re-employment activities to those participants who are, or have been, impacted by the Opioid Crisis. The program is designed to create employment and/or training opportunities that help target secure sustainable jobs and/or needed training as

participants work to turn their lives around and become contributing members of their communities.

**(C) Describe how the State will utilize Rapid Response funds to respond to layoffs and plant closings and coordinate services to quickly aid companies and their affected workers. States also should describe any layoff aversion strategies they have implemented to address at risk companies and workers.**

West Virginia uses WIOA funds to support a state Rapid Response unit called the State Dislocated Worker Services (DWS) Unit. The unit conducts rapid response activities to dislocated workers through employer outreach, which is coordinated as a joint rapid response team approach between the DWS Unit and the LWDB. The Trade Act unit is also part of the State DWS section to provide information on the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program. When a rapid response meeting is conducted, research begins with the TAA state office to determine if a company meets the eligibility criteria for TAA and a petition can be filed. If a petition is filed and certified prior to a rapid response meeting, a coordinated meeting is conducted emphasizing all the benefits and services provided through WFWV and partner agencies.

Each rapid response meeting includes representatives from the American Job Center of West Virginia (AJCWV) explaining services and benefits to assist dislocated workers, including, but not limited to unemployment, job services, career planners for training eligibility purposes, and specific partner agencies. For dislocations, all WFWV processes are discussed. After the meeting is conducted, the individual is registered in WV's MACC system and a questionnaire is completed highlighting the individual's employment/training objectives and goals. These questionnaires assist in serving the individual in a timely and more effective manner by following the career pathway of their choosing and involving partner agencies in achieving these objectives and goals.

Businesses that will be experiencing layoffs or closure come to WFWV through various communication methods: AJC staff, Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notices (WARNs), Business Services Representatives, news outlets, employees and unemployment reports showing noticeable claims, which the Rapid Response coordinator then investigates.

Additional services are organized at Rapid Response meetings such as special sessions with unemployment to answer more in-depth questions, resume writing, and interviewing skills workshops on-site or at an AJC. Sometimes, these workshops are incorporated into the Rapid Response meeting. WFWV's integrated system provided employment, partner, and resource information to Constellium Rolled Products and Homer Laughlin China Company in 2020 and Mylan Pharmaceuticals in 2021 for workers receiving rapid response informational packets. The dissemination of information included questionnaires to assist in identifying individual goals and objectives and to provide job search and training activities for dislocated workers. Ongoing communication with workers conducted by the rapid response team was conducted through emails, telephone calls, and follow-up letters.

Rapid Response provides a comprehensive array of services to offer transitional assistance in the form of available community resources and contact information, reemployment services available through the AJCWVs, such as job search and training opportunities, and unemployment services to accelerate the reemployment process. Other Rapid Response activities include community resource fairs, job fairs, and training provider fairs, etc. that may be conducted in conjunction with Rapid Response Informational Meetings or separately. While most of the effort is usually expended in the early stages of a dislocation event or an impending dislocation, it is important to continue Rapid Response services until all worker and employer needs are met. Follow-up with workers allows the Rapid Response Unit and the LWDB staff to collaborate and provide appropriate services if needed.

The State coordinates layoff aversion strategies through the direct and immediate efforts of the Governor's Office in connection with the West Virginia Development Office's (WVDO) Business and Industrial Development representatives, who mobilize concentrated efforts to salvage at-risk companies or entities through incumbent worker training through the Governor's Guaranteed Workforce Program, etc. When companies advise the State they are experiencing difficulties, there is timely sharing of all pertinent information of at-risk companies between the State Dislocated Worker Services Unit and the Business and Industry Development representatives so the layoff aversion strategies can be quickly implemented. In the event the strategies have not been shared at all local and State levels because of the sensitivity and confidentiality of some of the processes involved in averting a layoff, the State DWS Unit communicates directly with the Secretary of the West Virginia Department of Commerce with a notification of a need for the provision of Rapid Response services. This occurs often for the majority of dislocations anywhere in the state and usually results in receiving clearance to proceed with Rapid Response services.

**(D) Describe the State policies and procedures to provide Rapid Responses in cases of natural disasters including coordination with FEMA and other entities.**

WFW has specific procedures in place to provide Rapid Response services in case of a Natural Disaster as stated in Part 687 of the WIOA Public Law. In such a case, the State immediately applies for a National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) for a temporary work program for disaster clean-up activities, which would be coordinated with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and State Homeland Security and Office of Emergency Services. In addition to applying for an NDWG, dislocated workers experiencing displacement due to a natural disaster, such as flooding, would be covered under the State's Rapid Response coordination of services and would be a call to address more than just a quick return to work. Therefore, a State Rapid Response Team, in conjunction with local Rapid Response Team members and partners, could be deployed to the disaster site to conduct Rapid Response Informational Meetings and related Rapid Response activities, if necessary.

Rapid Response would coordinate with FEMA, the Small Business Administration (SBA), and other relief organizations to ensure the affected workers have a full array of resources to assist them in recovering from a natural disaster. If a natural disaster occurred followed by a FEMA disaster declaration, the availability of the temporary work program would also be highlighted at Rapid Response meetings. If the magnitude of the disaster resulted in mass layoffs/plant closures, and there was not enough WIOA formula funding or Governor's Discretionary funding available at the state level, then the State would apply accordingly for a mass layoff NDWG. If the disaster led to a sizeable mass layoff NDWG being awarded to the State, the Governor's Office would take the lead in implementing a state emergency plan mobilizing a host of state and federal resources, which include close coordination of the mass layoff NDWG with the efforts of FEMA and State Homeland Security and Office of Emergency Services, as well as other State agencies.

Partner Services as part of our response team may be comprised of Wagner-Peyser, Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR), Department of Rehabilitation (DRS), LWDBs, Healthcare navigators for those who have lost their insurance due to job loss, SBA, a FEMA Partner, a Business Services Representative, FEMA representative, Veteran Representative, and Union representatives to assist those represented by a union.

**(E) Describe how the State provides early intervention (e.g., Rapid Response) and ensures the provision of appropriate career services to worker groups on whose behalf a Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) petition has been filed. (Section 134(a)(2)(A) and**

**TAA Section 221(a)(2)(A) .) This description must include how the State disseminates benefit information to provide workers in the groups identified in the TAA petitions with an accurate understanding of the provision of TAA benefits and services in such a way that they are transparent to the dislocated worker applying for them (Trade Act Sec. 221(a)(2)(A) and Sec. 225; Governor-Secretary Agreement). Describe how the State will use funds that have been reserved for Rapid Response to provide services for every worker group that files a TAA petition and how the state will ensure the provision of appropriate career service to workers in the groups identified in the petition (TAA Sec. 221(a)(2)(A)).**

Rapid Response operates in the same manner regardless of whether a TAA petition is involved and provides timely information to dislocated workers with the goal of returning workers back to the labor market in sustainable employment.

West Virginia's early intervention to worker groups, on whose behalf a TAA petition has been filed, is in conjunction with our WIOA Rapid Response activities. In most cases, by the time a TAA petition is filed, WIOA rapid response activities have already taken place, and basic and individual services are being provided.

After a TAA petition has been filed and certified by the State TAA Unit, additional information specific to TAA is explained through a TAA/ Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA) Benefit Rights Informational Meeting (BRIM) to thoroughly explain the TAA program. Since the impacted workers have already received critical information at a previous Rapid Response meeting, the BRIM Meeting focuses specifically on TAA benefits and services and required deadlines.

West Virginia continues to strive for improvements and increased coordination between the TAA and WIOA programs by mandating co-enrollment, providing necessary services, and data sharing to create a seamless and effective process for dislocated workers. All TAA paperwork and documentation is imaged into the MACC and WIOA /TAA staff have access to all WIOA/TAA services to eliminate the duplication of services and to strengthen the ability to share accessible data benefiting the dislocated workers.

## B. ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

### 1. WORK-BASED TRAINING MODELS

*If the State is utilizing work-based training models (e.g. on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, transitional jobs, and customized training) as part of its training strategy and these strategies are not already discussed in other sections of the plan, describe the State's strategies for how these models ensure high-quality training for both the participant and the employer.*

#### **Transitional Jobs, On-the-Job Training, and Incumbent Workers**

West Virginia will increase training opportunities for individuals via alternative training models such as Transitional Jobs, On-the-Job Training (OJT), and Incumbent Worker Training (IWT). The LWDBs are encouraged to leverage current and develop new, local partnerships with community businesses and industry to support economic development in their areas. AJCWVs will provide access to training services aligned with in-demand occupations, which may include occupational skills training, OJT, IWT programs that combine workforce training with related instruction, skill upgrading and retraining, entrepreneurial training, transitional jobs training, job readiness training provided in combination with other training, Adult Education and Literacy activities, and customized training (customized training is designed to provide local areas with flexibility to ensure that training meets the unique needs of the job seekers and



employers or groups of employers). The underlying advantage of work-based learning is that by definition, it incorporates skill competencies needed by the business. There is no doubt participants are learning the specific skills needed, and furthermore, they are learning to apply skills in the way the employer prefers. These arrangements practically guarantee that individuals who complete training are positioned to immediately add value in the workplace and have marketable skills to provide upward mobility in a career pathway.

### **Transitional Jobs**

Transitional jobs are reserved for those chronically unemployed and provide real-life work experience when it is greatly needed to be successful in the workplace. Transitional jobs is an employment strategy that seeks to overcome employment barriers and transition people with labor market barriers into work using wage-paid, short-term employment that combines real work, skill development, and supportive services. Transitional Jobs program participants earn a paycheck, learn skills, may become eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit, and receive intensive mentoring and support.

The Transitional Jobs program should have at a minimum the following three components:

- 1) Paid work experience (i.e. three days per week)
- 2) Classroom training (i.e. soft skills, occupational skills, etc.)
- 3) Supportive services

Each LWDB must submit a Transitional Jobs Plan to WFWV for approval. Collaborative partnerships will be an essential piece of a transitional jobs plan and are highly encouraged. LWDBs may allocate up to 10 percent of local Adult and Dislocated Worker funds to transitional jobs for individuals with barriers to employment.

### **On-the-Job Training**

OJT ensures high-quality training for both the participant and the employer because both have a vested interest in the success of the program. The employer has the unique opportunity to train potential candidates in the correct and most efficient way to perform tasks for their company at a subsidized cost. The participant has the opportunity to receive direct training and experience that increases their current skill set. Participants also gain new skills to meet the requirements of a new occupation or industry and are better equipped to compete for available jobs. All OJT experiences are provided through contracts between local employers and the LWDB. OJT is primarily designed to hire the participants and provide them with the knowledge and skills necessary for the full performance of the job. Both training providers and employers providing OJT opportunities must be providing the highest quality training to participants. OJT contracts must be continually monitored so that the WIOA funds allocated are providing participants with the training to retain employment successfully. It is imperative that OJTs provide participants with the relevant skills and opportunities for career advancement and provide employers with a skilled workforce.

### **Incumbent Worker Training**

WV also supports IWT. To qualify as an incumbent worker, the worker needs to be employed, meet the Fair Labor Standards Act requirements for an employer-employee relationship, and have an established employment history with the employer for six months or more. The training must satisfy the requirements in WIOA Section 134(d)(4) and §680.790 and increase the competitiveness of the employee and/or employer. An incumbent worker does not necessarily have to meet the eligibility requirements for career and training services for adults and dislocated workers under WIOA. LWDBs may reserve and expend up to 20 percent of their combined adult and dislocated worker formula allotments for IWT. States may use state Rapid Response funds [WIOA Section 134(a)(3)(A)(i)] for layoff aversion and WIOA Governor's

discretionary funds for statewide incumbent worker training activities.

LWDBs must consider the following factors when determining the eligibility of employers to receive the WIOA share of funds to provide training to incumbent workers using either, local Adult and/or Dislocated Worker formula funds or WIOA statewide discretionary funds provided by the Governor:

- 1) The characteristics of the incumbent workers to be trained, specifically the extent to which they historically represent individuals with barriers to employment as defined in WIOA Section 3(24), and how they would benefit from retention or advancement;
- 2) The quality of the training (e.g., industry-recognized credentials, advancement opportunities);
- 3) The number of participants the employer plans to train or retrain;
- 4) The wage and benefit levels of participants (before and after training);
- 5) The employer must not have laid off workers within 12 months and must have a commitment to retain or avert the layoffs of the incumbent worker(s) being trained;
- 6) The employer must not be delinquent in unemployment insurance or workers' compensation taxes, penalties, and/or interest.
- 7) LWDBs must document these factors in approving an incumbent worker training project with an employer.

Employers participating in incumbent worker training are required to pay the non-WIOA (non-federal) share of the cost of providing training to their incumbent workers. Employers will be reimbursed the WIOA (federal) share. The employer share is based on the size of the workforce (wages paid to the participant while in training can be included as part of that share) as follows:

- At least 10 percent of the cost for employers with 50 or fewer employees.
- At least 25 percent of the cost for employers with 51 to 100 employees.
- At least 50 percent of the cost for employers with more than 100 employees.

Incumbent worker training is designed to either assist workers in obtaining the skills necessary to retain employment or to avert layoffs and must increase both a participant's and a company's competitiveness. The IWT policy allows local Boards the flexibility to provide IWT to employers when needed. Local areas may use up to 20 percent of their local adult and dislocated worker funds for IWT. IWT aims to improve the participants' skills and competitiveness and increase the employers' competitiveness. The training should, wherever possible, allow the participant to gain industry-recognized training experience and ultimately should lead to an increase in wages. To receive incumbent worker funding under WIOA, an incumbent worker must have an employer-employee relationship and an established employment history with the employer. Incumbent workers are employed at the time of their participation, and the contract funds are paid to the employer for training provided to the incumbent worker either to avert a lay-off or otherwise retain employment. A "model" incumbent worker training would be one where a participant acquires new skills, allowing him or her to move into a higher skilled and higher paid job within the company, thus permitting the company to hire a job seeker to backfill the incumbent worker's pre-training position.

Work-based training can be an effective strategy that can provide additional opportunities for participants and employers to find high-quality work and develop a highly skilled workforce. Each of these work-based models can be effectively used to meet a variety of job seeker and employer needs. To ensure high-quality training for both the participant and the employer, priority consideration will be given to training programs related to an in-demand occupation, aligned with career pathways and industry sectors, and resulting in a recognized postsecondary credential. LWDBs must not continue to contract with employers who fail to provide participants with long-term employment opportunities, wages, benefits, and working conditions

comparable to other employees who have worked a similar amount of time doing the same type of work. LWDBs will monitor employer onsite contracts to ensure training, wages, hours, benefits, and working conditions are provided in accordance with the contract. Training participants' performance and progress will be monitored during the training to determine supportive service needs, the appropriateness of the training activity, and if placement in unsubsidized employment has occurred. WFWV will pursue the following strategies to ensure work-based training models are of high quality:

- Promote and develop sector strategies based on labor market information and employer needs.
- Connect employers to participate in business-education partnerships. These partnerships connect schools, employers, and community organizations with individuals to provide career-related experiences and employment opportunities such as soft skills development, internships, OJT, workplace shadowing, and career mentoring.
- Emphasize career pathways to assist individuals entering and moving within the labor force and to educate employers on the advantages of career pathways.
- Ensure career pathways are aligned to in-demand occupations likely to pay sustaining wages. The LWDBs will engage employers to accomplish this goal.
- Require OJT and IWT to be tied to a career pathway.

Policies governing IWT are currently being updated. Once the revisions are complete, copies of these policies will be available on the WFWV website.

Current WIOA Policy 3-16 Transitional Jobs Policy and WIOA Policy 01-16 Incumbent Worker can be found at: <https://workforcewv.org/public-information/guidance-notice-and-policies> or directly at: [https://workforcewv.org/images/files/PublicInfo/guidance-notice/WIOA\\_Policy\\_3-16\\_Transitional\\_Jobs\\_Policy.pdf](https://workforcewv.org/images/files/PublicInfo/guidance-notice/WIOA_Policy_3-16_Transitional_Jobs_Policy.pdf) and [https://workforcewv.org/images/files/PublicInfo/guidance-notice/WIOA\\_Policy\\_No\\_01-16\\_Incumbent\\_Worker\\_Policy.pdf](https://workforcewv.org/images/files/PublicInfo/guidance-notice/WIOA_Policy_No_01-16_Incumbent_Worker_Policy.pdf).

Along with the work-based training discussed so far, Registered Apprenticeships also prove to be a valuable strategy serving both individuals and employers. Examples follow of how the workforce development system intends to further integrate activities:

- Partners taking applications and conducting assessments as necessary.
- Office of Apprenticeship (OA) representatives serve as members of the State Board and Interagency Collaborative Team (ICT).
- OA collaborating on State Plan development.
- WDS partnering and supporting apprenticeship initiatives through Title I funding.

More information can be found in the following section.

## 2. REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

*Describe how the State will incorporate Registered Apprenticeship into its strategy for service design and delivery (e.g., outreach to sponsors and prospective sponsors, identifying potential participants, and connecting them to apprenticeship opportunities).*

The State will continue to incorporate Registered Apprenticeships into its strategies and services by requiring American Job Center (AJC) staff to seek out and assist Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) with recruitment into their individual training programs.

Recruitment will include posting and advertisement of Registered Apprenticeship statewide announcements, job orders, phone notifications of apprenticeship openings, veteran priority of service, pre-application testing, initial screening of eligibility requirements, and referral.

Referral includes referral to the job order and to our partners for orientation and eligibility determination for WIOA funding for training. AJC staff taking applications and conducting assessments will support better service design and delivery for partners, employers, and individuals alike and ensure all customers receive access to all services available across the WDS. Additional strategies and services will include making space available to the apprenticeship programs for onsite job fairs for recruitment, advertising space for apprenticeship marketing items, space for onsite interviews, and assistance, as needed, with testing applicants at offsite locations.

Registered Apprenticeship Program within WFWV and those staff members in the WV Dept. of Economic Development working to promote apprenticeships continue to participate in monthly meetings to ensure partners and employers are aware of their apprenticeship opportunities and the continuing successes that employers and sponsors are having with this vital learn and earn model. Encourage LWDBs to utilize WIOA Incumbent Worker Training and Customized Training funds with other state program funds for employers to train their workforce. These key resources afford WV the opportunity to better align and leverage the WDS's activities and both state and federal funding to serve individuals and employers, providing more dimension and value to an already robust menu of services.

### 3. TRAINING PROVIDER ELIGIBILITY PROCEDURE

*Provide the procedure, eligibility criteria, and information requirements for determining training provider initial and continued eligibility, including Registered Apprenticeship programs (WIOA Section 122).*

WFWV's Policy No. 01-15, Change 3\* regarding its Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) consists of training programs approved by WFWV and LWDBs to provide training services to eligible WIOA Title 1-B participants. All training providers must submit information and criteria established under WIOA §122(d) through (g).

Training providers use the MACC to provide all required information for initial eligibility, including Assurances, as well as the required applications for each program of study. MACC doubles as WFWV's program certification system and the Statewide ETPL, as required by WIOA §122 (a)(3).

All approved programs are available to the public and to WIOA partners in the MACC. WFWV and the LWDBs share the responsibility of managing the ETPL, including approving programs for initial and continued eligibility, ensuring training provider compliance, ensuring the accuracy of information, removing training providers or programs, and monitoring training providers. Upon receipt of the completed application and program data, WFWV shall attempt to make an initial determination of statewide eligibility within 15 business days. Training providers will be contacted via email if the completed application and/or program data requires clarification. The LWDB will then have 10 business days to review and make comments to the state prior to the official determination of eligibility and placement on the ETPL. Subsequent eligibility determinations take place on a biennial basis, where performance data is again evaluated based on the standards. Once the training provider is approved, each training program is evaluated to determine if it meets ETPL requirements, including initial performance data standards, resulting in a federally or locally recognized credential and being related to an in-demand sector or occupation in West Virginia. The State ETPL Coordinator reviews required

ETPL program information on the application, including the following: a detailed description of the program, the total cost of the program, including the cost of tuition, books, and any fees, credential information, and labor market information for the related occupation, including the minimum entry-level wage and demand for the occupation in the local area, and initial performance data.

LWDBs are encouraged to target training programs that support industry sectors and prepare participants for jobs in identified career pathways. Using Labor Market Information (LMI), LWDBs are able to determine higher-paying jobs, in-demand industry sectors, and occupations in the local area, enabling them to work with local employers to determine the minimum requirements for these jobs and the types of training and certification requirements for these positions. Using this information, LWDBs are better equipped to reach out to local training providers to encourage them to add their training program to the ETPL.

The State ETPL Coordinator will review the training provider's program performance based on the performance accountability measures, using data on all WIOA Title I-B participants who participated in the training program during the performance period. Each program's performance will be evaluated against state performance standards to determine if the program will remain on the list.

As policy stands now, training providers who currently have programs listed on the ETPL and want to have their programs remain on the ETPL must follow the procedures for continuing eligibility determination as follows:

- 1) Submit a completed Providers of Training Services Renewal Application for processing to WFWV via <https://public.workforcewv.org/ForgotPassword.asp>.
- 2) The application must include:
- 3) updated provider information; b. updated information on each program pertaining to the alignment of training with in-demand occupations; and c. updated program data.
- 4) Submit student data as referenced in WIOA sections 116 and 122 for calculation of State Performance Information by September 30th for the previous academic year defined as July 1 through June 30 (i.e. on September 30, 2016, data will be due for students who completed by June 30, 2015). This data will be included on the ETPL for the upcoming calendar year (CY).
- 5) Submit ETP performance on WIOA performance indicators (employment 2nd & 4th Quarter after exit, median earnings, credential attainment) as well as: a. Total number of participants enrolled in the program. b. Total number of participants completing the program. c. Total number of participants exiting the program. d. Information regarding the completion rate of participants.
- 6) Provide a description of how the provider will ensure access to training services throughout the state, including rural areas, through the use of technology.
- 7) Information reported to State agencies on Federal and State training programs other than programs within WIOA title 1B, including partner programs, (i.e. Adult Basic Education and Literacy, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, etc.) that are used to provide additional information about overall effectiveness, quality, and utilization of programs.
- 8) Address ETP's ability to offer industry-recognized certificates and credentials.

- 9) Information on recognized post-secondary credentials received by program participants.
- 10) Describe the quality of the program of training services including a program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential.
- 11) Description of ETP's ability to provide training that is physically and programmatically accessible for individuals who are employed and individuals with barriers to employment, including individuals with disabilities.
- 12) Timeliness and accuracy of ETP's performance reports.
- 13) Upon receipt of the completed application and student data, WFWV will make a determination of continuing statewide eligibility based on the completeness of submitted information.
- 14) The LWDB will then have 10 business days to review and comment to the state before the official determination of continuing eligibility and placement on the ETPL.
- 15) The statewide ETPL will be published at:  
<https://public.workforcewv.org/JobSeeker/TrainingCourseSearch.asp>
- 16) Continued eligibility will be reviewed by the state biennially.

Change 3 states it is a substantial violation of the requirements to timely and accurately submit all of the information required for completion of the eligible training provider performance reports required under WIOA sec. 116(d)(4) if the provider knowingly supplies false performance information, misrepresents costs or services, or violates requirements of WIOA law or regulations. Providers who substantially violate the requirements of providing appropriate, accurate, and timely information for participants receiving training under WIOA title 1, subtitle B, will be removed from the ETPL. Such providers are liable to repay all adult, dislocated worker, and youth funds received during the period of non-compliance. WFWV will take into account exceptional circumstances beyond the provider's control, such as natural disasters, unexpected personnel transitions, and unexpected technology-related issues, when determining appropriate action.

Training Providers who currently have programs listed on the ETPL and want to have their programs remain on the ETPL must submit student data as referenced in WIOA Sections 116 and 122 for calculation of State Performance Information for the previous academic year defined as July 1 through June 30. In lieu of answering questions/when data cannot be provided in full from the ETP for all students, training providers may upload information into MACC for exited students during the performance period. The information must include the following: Name, SSN, and exit date (exit defined as completion, withdraw, dropout, or transfer) - preferably in Excel format.

Regarding the role of registered apprenticeship programs, the Final Rule emphasizes the key role WIOA envisions for registered apprenticeship programs by highlighting these programs as a training service for both Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) and On the Job Training (OJT). The Final Rule allows apprenticeship programs that are not registered to go through the eligible training provider (ETP) process if they want to be on the ETP list (ETPL); the rule does not provide apprenticeship programs that are not registered special access to the ETPL. The Department also clarifies in this Final Rule that registered apprenticeship programs are automatically eligible for the ETPL and the State is required to notify them of their automatic eligibility and allow the registered apprenticeship program an opportunity to consent to be on the State ETPL (see § 680.470). This mechanism must be a minimal burden to registered apprenticeship programs and must comply with Federal guidance. The State periodically communicates this information via available contact information (mail and/or

email) to RAP Sponsors and provides the State MIS (MACC) link for their enrollment. The following information is also requested to complete a partial, staff-assisted enrollment onto the ETPL: Registered Apprenticeship Number; Federal Tax ID Number; Provider Name; Mailing and/or Campus Street Address, City/State/Zip/County; Phone Number; Contact Person Name/Information; Course/Program Name; Brief Course Description. RAP Sponsors are encouraged to enroll themselves and their course into the MACC for full enrollment, but it is not required. RAP Sponsors are periodically informed they will remain on the ETPL as long as they remain registered or until we are notified they would like to be removed.

WIOA Policy 01-15 - ETPL Change 3 can be found at: <https://workforcewv.org/public-information/guidance-notice-and-policies> or directly at: [https://workforcewv.org/images/files/PublicInfo/public-notice/WIOA\\_Policy\\_01-15\\_-\\_ETPL\\_Change\\_3.pdf](https://workforcewv.org/images/files/PublicInfo/public-notice/WIOA_Policy_01-15_-_ETPL_Change_3.pdf).

\*Change 4, reflecting the information above and TEGL 08-19 information, will be added to the website link(s) listed above once the Plan is finalized.

*4. Describe how the State will implement and monitor for the Adult Priority of Service requirement in WIOA section 134 (c)(3)(E) that requires American Job Center staff, when using WIOA Adult program funds to provide individualized career services and training services, to give priority of service to recipients of public assistance, low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient (including English language learners).*

West Virginia established Policy 2-16 addressing priority of service\*. Priority of service for individualized career services and training services funded with Title I Adult funds will be as follows:

- First Priority: Veterans and eligible spouses (covered persons) who are low-income or recipients of public assistance or who are deficient in basic skills.
- Second Priority: Individuals (non-covered persons) who are low-income or recipients of public assistance or individuals who are basic skills deficient.
- Third Priority: Veterans and eligible spouses who are not low-income and are not recipients of public assistance or are deficient in basic skills.
- Fourth Priority: Individuals who do not meet the above priorities.

Each WDB Region has the flexibility, when creating its own policies, to include a process that also gives priority to other individuals, as long as priority for those individuals comes after the first four groups described above. An example of how the priority of service is defined and applied to each participant-priority of service does not mean that only those individuals who meet the criteria listed above will be served. It means that if there are individuals who meet those criteria who are registered for service and deemed in need of career and training services, they will be enrolled before other individuals are considered. Intake and career planning services inform decision-making on who will be enrolled, essentially using the rule that if individuals who meet the priority of service definition are available, they will receive consideration for training services (i.e. ITA) and work-based experience programs (i.e. OJT) over others.

Individuals eligible for priority of service shall be identified at the point of entry. Upon identification they shall be notified of their entitlement to priority of service; the full array of programs and services available to them; and any applicable eligibility requirements for those programs and services. LWDB staff must ensure individuals who qualify for priority of service receive individualized career and training services before other non-covered individuals and

receive first priority on any waiting lists that are maintained for training slots. However, once a participant is enrolled in a workshop, training, or service, he or she may not be displaced by an individual qualified for priority of service.

Each WDB Region will document priority in the State MIS/participant file. State MIS provides career planners with the appropriate data fields to record eligibility (data fields include, but are not limited to: Veteran status, eligible spouse, low income, public assistance, basic skills deficient, case notes) and either upload appropriate documents into State MIS or place in the participant's file. On-site monitoring will determine if each WDB Region is in compliance with Federal regulations, as well as all State and Local policies. WFWV staff will review the Participant Individual Record Layout and any other available federal report data elements and performance metrics to test for compliance with the priority of service rule and ensure that priority of service is provided to veterans/eligible spouses, public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient.

Through cross-training, technical assistance, labor market information, monitoring review results, MACC edits, and promoting a 'generalist' mindset across the WDS, there have already been signs of progress, even before the Task Force's assessment and subsequent recommendations.

WIOA Policy 2-16 Priority of Service Policy for Adult Title 1 Funding can be found at: <https://workforcewv.org/public-information/guidance-notices-and-policies> or directly at: <https://workforcewv.org/images/files/PublicInfo/guidance-notices/WIOA Policy 2-16 Priority of Service Policy.pdf>.

\*WFWV implemented TEGL 07-20 into practice upon receipt. WIOA Policy 2-16 is currently being revised to reflect the TEGL's information. WFWV intends to complete this specific policy no later than October 1st, 2022, due to the restructuring of the WVWFD and Partner Committees, who are integral to policy development and issuance. WFWV expects to remove unintended barriers (either by further defining or removing unclear language), convey more streamlined processes, and incorporate and promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and apprenticeships, all the while maintaining compliance with DOL's guidance. The reinforced partnerships within WV's WDS and no wrong door approach will provide more value-added substance as we move forward not only with updating this policy but with others as well.

5. *Describe the State's criteria regarding local area transfer of funds between the adult and dislocated worker programs.*

West Virginia recognizes that WIOA allows up to 100% of funds between programs with prior approval from the Governor. The state will ensure that any transfer of funds between WIOA programs complies with the WIOA law. LWDBs will also be required to record and document the use and application of local funds in accordance with instructions set forth in the grantee-subgrantee agreement. Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act Policy 01-17

To: Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs), Chief Elected Officials, Regional Executive Directors

From: WorkForce West Virginia

Subject: TRANSFER OF FUNDS BETWEEN ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKER LOCAL FORMULA FUNDS

Effective Date: January 18, 2017

WV State Workforce Development Board

Review Date: January 18, 2017



## I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide the guidance and parameters for transferring up to 100 percent of a program year allocation for adult employment and training activities, and up to 100 percent of a program allocation for dislocated worker employment and training services between the two programs.

## II. EFFECTIVE DATE BY WIOA

July 1, 2015

## III. BACKGROUND

Section 133 (b)(4) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) allows the Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) to transfer if such a transfer is approved by the state, up to and including 100 percent of a program year allocation between the local adult and local dislocated worker programs. This transfer provides flexibility to the local workforce development area to provide services in the areas of greatest need.

## IV. REQUIREMENTS

Funds should not be transferred from the dislocated worker program to the adult program without regard to demands for dislocated worker services. The state may question and, if sufficient justification is not provided by the area, may deny any application for rapid response funds to address a need if a transfer has occurred from the dislocated worker program to the adult program. A LWDB cannot transfer youth funds under WIOA.

### Request for Transfer

For transfers of funds the LWDB must make a request to the state for approval of such transfer for a specific appropriation of adult or dislocated worker funding (i.e., program year or fiscal year of appropriation). The request must specify the type of funding (whether adult or dislocated worker) to be transferred to the other program.

There are short-term and long-term effects on program operations that could result from transfers of funds. The LWDB and the fiscal agent should examine the following considerations when deciding to transfer:

1. Are there adequate funds to maintain services to currently enrolled participants?
2. What is prompting the request?
3. How will you respond to unforeseen events?

All requests for transfer must include a written justification addressing each of the above-mentioned considerations and the reasons such transfer is necessary to provide adult or dislocated worker employment and training activities.

Requests are to be scanned to WFWV with "Fund Transfer Request" in the subject line. WFWV will respond to all requests. This transfer pertains only to a program (adult or dislocated worker) and program year or fiscal year of appropriation and will continue to apply for the life of the funds. The request must be signed by the Chief Elected Official, LWDB Chair, and Local Executive Director. The State Deputy Executive Director of Field Operations and Deputy Executive Director of Fiscal Management will review with the Executive Director of WFWV for approval.

### Transfer of Funds

An LWDB should instruct the fiscal agent of the amount to transfer, up to 100 percent of local workforce development area formula allocations, based upon the state's approval if the

percentage being transferred requires approval.

Funds will retain the year of appropriation identity (e.g., program year allocation) and must be reported and accounted for accordingly.

To transfer funds, the LWDB will use the transfer-related expenditure codes of the program from which funds are being transferred in the state's financial system to report costs incurred by the program receiving funding.

With approval from the state, the transfer limit of up to 100 percent shall apply to new allocations of adult and dislocated worker funding issued in the fiscal year beginning on or after July 1, 2015. This higher transfer limit does not apply to funds received in a prior fiscal year that may be carried into the new fiscal year. The transfer authority level that existed when the funding was awarded shall continue to apply to those funds for their period of availability at the local level.

## V. MONITORING

At the local level, the LWDB and/or the fiscal agent must conduct oversight of the transfer of WIOA adult and dislocated worker funds to ensure the transfer is being completed per this policy.

Through the state's monitoring system, fiscal monitors will review the area's transfer of adult and dislocated worker funds during the annual onsite monitoring review for compliance with federal and state laws and regulations. Any issues will be handled through the state's monitoring resolution process.

## VI. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

For additional information, you may send your questions to WorkForce WV, WIOA Unit.

## VII. REFERENCES

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, § 133(b)(4), Public Law 113-128. NPRM § 683.130 found at 80 Fed. Reg. 20877 (April 16, 2015) (to be codified at 20 C.F.R. § 683.130). O.A.C. 5101:9-31-02, Workforce Investment Act (WIA) formulary allocation methodology. (July 24, 2014).

6. *Describe the State's policy on WIOA and TAA co-enrollment and whether and how often this policy is disseminated to the local workforce development boards and required one-stop partners Trade Act Sec. 239(f), Sec. 235, 20 CFR 618.325, 20 CFR 618.824(a)(3)(i).*

The TAA State Office has a WIOA/TAA CO-Enrollment Policy in Place: Workforce West Virginia Policy No.3-22 which identifies the Process of establishing Co-Enrollment for all TAA participants. The policy was reviewed and approved by the US Department of Labor and implemented in March 2022 and identifies the mandatory requirement of Co-Enrollment based on the law. All Local Workforce Development Boards, WIOA Career Planners, TAA case Managers, and Local one-stop staff were given the Policy. and the State offered technical assistance on the requirements of the TAA program.

7. *Describe the State's formal strategy to ensure that WIOA and TAA co-enrolled participants receive necessary funded benefits and services. Trade Act Sec. 239(f), Sec. 235, 20 CFR 618.816(c)*

The current strategy to ensure co-enrolled WIOA/TAA participants receive the necessary funding and benefits is to require WIOA enrollment before participants can enroll in the TAA

program. Since Petitions are not always certified after a layoff, WIOA can offer services prior to TAA participation. WIOA career planners work in conjunction with TAA case managers to establish a coordinated and unified approach to providing timely delivery of benefits and services. The TAA program maintains an electronic file on all TAA participants and WIOA Career Planners have access to these files and the TAA services being offered. Once training is completed and a job search is necessary, the TAA participants are referred back to WIOA if additional services are required

If training is part of the Individual Employment Plan, training outcomes are completed for both programs.

8. *Describe the State's process for familiarizing one-stop staff with the TAA program. 20 CFR 618.804(j), 20 CFR 618.305*

One Stop Staff are given a list of Certified Petitions in their Regions and are part of the Rapid Response Informational meetings where TAA is discussed. The Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) staff are given a monthly listing of all Petitions to identify potential TAA participants. This is an ongoing process. Once a TAA Petition is Certified, the TAA State Staff works with the Local One-Stop staff to ensure all potential TAA participants are identified and served in a timely manner.

### C. YOUTH PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

*With respect to youth workforce investment activities authorized in section 129 of WIOA, States should describe their strategies that will support the implementation of youth activities under WIOA. State's must-*

1. *Identify the State-developed criteria to be used by local boards in awarding grants or contracts for youth workforce investment activities and describe how the local boards will take into consideration the ability of the providers to meet performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance for the youth program as described in section 116(b)(2)(A)(ii) of WIOA.<sup>5</sup> Further, include a description of how the State assists local areas in determining whether to contract for services or to provide some or all of the program elements directly.*

[11] Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(i)(V)

The LWDBs follow the State's procurement policies when awarding grants for workforce investment WDS activities. The following clause is included in the workforce grant agreement:

Sub-granting:

The Grantee shall not enter into a subgrant agreement for any of the work performed under this grant agreement without obtaining the prior written approval of WVWF. If sub-grant agreements are approved, they shall contain, at a minimum, sections of this grant agreement pertaining to indemnity, conflicts of interest, lobbying, nondiscrimination, audit requirements, public notice, and any other state and/or federal requirements. Sub-grantee program performance accountability measures are assessed by program staff.

Examples of how local boards will take into consideration the ability of the providers to meet performance accountability are listed below:

- Utilize an RFP Request for Proposal (RFP) process for youth services. When the rating committee reviews the RFP, performance is one of the key factors in scoring.
- RFPs specifically address USDOL-required performance measures as a requirement for any proposals that are submitted and/or accepted.

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<sup>5</sup> Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(i)(V)

- Reference checks are completed on all proposals received, including USDOL performance in other contracts operated by the proposing organization
  - During the course of the year, if a performance measure is not met, the contractor will be part of any corrective action plans developed.
  - Setting real-time outcome goals for proposers to meet. Meeting the real-time outcome goals would be financially tied to a contract renewal for the option year(s). Real-time outcome goals could be:
    - The provider will be required to hold two recruitment events targeting Out-of-School youth (OSY) during the program year.
    - Provider should enroll a minimum of 80% of their youth (80% Out-of-School and 80% In-School) in a work experience activity during the program year.
    - Provider will be in contact with every active youth during the program year at a minimum of 2 times a month, with one contact being in person. The other contact may be by phone or social media. The contacts will be documented in the youth files and in the MACC as case notes for verification at scheduled file review visits by LWDB staff.
    - The criteria for an award(s) of funding is based on: past performance, cost effectiveness, demonstrated overall program effectiveness, youth group(s) targeted for services, placement and retention efforts in offered education or employment programs, ability of the subcontractor(s) to meet and/or exceed performance goals and ability to meet administrative and fiscal grant responsibilities, to name a few.
    - Subcontractor(s) are made aware of performance measures for the region and the importance of meeting/exceeding them via a contractual agreement. Specific language about meeting and/or exceeding performance measures is included in contractual agreements signed with a subcontractor(s). Performance-based contracts are used for all subcontractor(s). Identified performance measures serve as benchmarks in the contractual agreement and are used for measuring progress.
    - Subcontractor(s) are monitored no less than five (5) times per program year to review and evaluate the delivery of program curriculum, program performance, etc., and address any issues that arise. A corrective action plan, along with technical assistance, is provided to the subcontractor(s) should program performance not be met.
    - Programs for in-school and out-of-school youth will focus on measurable skill gains.
2. *Explain how the State assists local workforce boards in achieving equitable results for out-of-school and in-school youth. Describe promising practices or partnership models that local areas are implementing and the state's role in supporting and scaling those models within the state for both in-school and out-of-school youth.*
- Adhere to WIOA regulations regarding youth.
  - Identify models and effective practices for youth, including recruitment and flexible enrollment, to help local area staff successfully meet the needs of those individuals.
  - Partner with the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education and LWDBs ensuring statistical models and negotiated performance levels are established and calibrated to accurately reflect the profiles of youth being served within the State and in each local area. Continue serving youth as a priority within the WDS;
  - Develop transitional jobs, social enterprises, and other work experience strategies to help OSY with limited work histories develop the skills needed for workplace success.
  - Co-enroll high-risk individuals, ages 18 to 24, as both WIOA Adult and WIOA Youth participants to leverage funds and provide necessary services. Co-enrollment can occur

in Title II adult basic education services, EARN, TANF, or other partner programs. Continue the use of Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for 18 to 24-year-olds in combination with work-based learning opportunities.

- The State will expand opportunities for youth to acquire post—secondary skills and credentials needed for high-wage jobs through increased access to career and technical education programs and work—based learning experiences. The Departments of Education (WVDE) and the Community Technical College System (CTCS) will work cooperatively to explore and develop appropriate connections between WIOA youth activities and the Strengthening Career and Technical Education Act for the 21st Century (Perkins V) and state—funded programming.
  - WVDE will support the transformation and modernization of career and technical education (CTE) and align CTE with the career pathways recognized by the State.
  - LWDBs will collaborate with YouthBuild, JobCorps, and AmeriCorps sites, identifying partnerships in local plans. Collaborate with LWDBs to identify access points that enable individuals to complete training and enter a successful career pathway.
  - The WV Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) has made concerted efforts, in conjunction with the State’s Client Assistance Program (Disability Rights of WV), to provide outreach and services to non-traditional settings for youth with disabilities, such as juvenile centers and facilities, Youth Reporting Centers, and other similar locations. The youth in these settings are afforded the same opportunity to receive VR services, as well as information (e.g., career information and labor market information, as found on the Pathways to the Future website) and referral, as youth in traditional settings, as appropriate. Community leaders in the State’s capital city, Charleston, WV, have also utilized DRS resources, such as materials from the Pathways website to impact the lives of “disconnected youth.”
  - Utilize the Office of Apprenticeship to promote apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities for youth.
3. *Describe how the State assists local workforce boards in implementing innovative models for delivering youth workforce investment activities, including effective ways local workforce boards can make available the 14 program elements described in WIOA section 129(c)(2); and explain how local areas can ensure work experience, including quality pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship, is prioritized as a key element within a broader career pathways strategy.*

[12] Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(i)(I)

The State will contract with each of the LWDBs to ensure that each of the 14 program elements are administered in their local area.

State monitors will utilize the State MIS to determine the availability and provision of the 14 program elements prior to the annual on-site reviews. Supporting evidence will be obtained to ensure that the LWDB has complied with the requirements of WIOA section 129 (c) (2).

The LWDB will be notified of any deficiency and a corrective action plan will be required. The 14 program elements listed below will be added to the statement of work that is included in the grant agreement LWDBs are required to sign-

PROGRAM ELEMENTS-

—In order to support the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized

equivalent, entry into postsecondary education, and career readiness for participants, programs shall provide elements consisting of—tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies that lead to completion of the requirements for a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent (including a recognized certificate of attendance or similar document for individuals with disabilities) or for a recognized postsecondary credential; alternative secondary school services, or dropout recovery services, as appropriate; paid and unpaid work experiences that have as a component academic and occupational education, which may include—

1. summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year;
  2. pre-apprenticeship programs;
  3. internships and job shadowing; and
  4. on-the-job training opportunities;
  5. occupational skill training, which shall include priority consideration for training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials that are aligned with in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the local area involved, if the local board determines that the programs meet the quality criteria described in section 123;
  6. education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster;
  7. leadership development opportunities, which may include community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors, as appropriate;
  8. supportive services;
  9. adult mentoring for the period of participation and a subsequent period, for a total of not less than 12 months;
  10. follow-up services for not less than 12 months after the completion of participation, as appropriate;
  11. comprehensive guidance and counseling, which may include drug and alcohol abuse counseling and referral, as appropriate;
  12. financial literacy education;
  13. entrepreneurial skills training;
  14. services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services; and
  15. activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training.
4. *Provide the language contained in the State policy for “requiring additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment” criterion for out-of-school youth specified in WIOA section 129(a)(1)(B)(iii)(VIII) and for “requiring additional assistance to complete an education program, or to secure and hold employment” criterion for in-school youth specified in WIOA section 129(a)(1)(C)(iv)(VII). If the state does not have a policy, describe how the state will ensure that local areas will have a policy for these criteria.*

An individual must meet the following criteria in order to be identified as a youth who needs additional assistance:

- 1) Must be between the ages of 14 and 24, and
- 2) Require additional assistance to complete an educational program or secure and hold employment and
- 3) Meet one or more of the following conditions:

- a. Youth at risk of dropping out of school. Students at risk for dropping out display certain easily identifiable characteristics, some of which are demographic and some of which are related to their performance in school.
  - i. Factors associated with dropping out of high school:
    - 1. Comes from low-income family
    - 2. Few credits earned
    - 3. Poor attendance
    - 4. Member of racial or ethnic minority group
    - 5. Poor grades (especially in core courses)
    - 6. Older than the average student in their grade
    - 7. Pregnant/Parenting
    - 8. Substance Abuse
    - 9. Youth offender
- b. Immigrant Youth.
- c. Youth with limited English proficiency.
- d. Youth deficient in basic skills. Basic skills deficient means the individual computes or solves problems, reads, writes, or speaks English at or below the eighth-grade level or is unable to compute or solve problems, read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function of the job, in the individual's family, or in society. In addition, states, and grantees have the option of establishing their own definition, which must include the above language. In cases where states or grantees establish such a definition, that definition will be used for basic skills determination.
- e. Youth who reside in areas with high rates of poverty, crime, and/or unemployment.
- f. Youth who have serious barriers to employment, including but not necessarily limited to, stated current or past substance abuse, truancy, absence of positive adult role models, and diagnosed emotional disorders.

By expanding the definition of "youth who needs additional assistance," LWDBs will be able to serve at-risk youth in a more equitable manner. The following is a list of acceptable source documents required to support an eligibility staff person/case manager identifying youth as needing additional assistance (clearly identifying which condition the youth met):

- 1) Individual Service Strategy (ISS).
- 2) Case Note.
- 3) WIOA intake of registration form.
- 4) State MIS.
- 5) Self-Attestation

#### Services for Youth (Rehabilitation Specific)

Youth to be served fall into two separate groups: in-school and out-of-school. Both groups are served primarily by different core partners, though any individual served by the WDS might be served by all core partners, perhaps simultaneously. Out-of-school youth are primarily served by WFWV and Adult Education, while in-school youth are primarily served by the State's education system and DRS, for those eligible students with disabilities. Adult Education is prohibited from providing direct services to in-school youth.

#### In-School Youth

Primary responsibility for services to in-school youth falls, in a general sense, to West Virginia's education system. The primary workforce development need of all in-school youth is a quality, high school-level education, provided by the teachers in the public and private school systems. Because of this need's precedence, the role of WFWV regarding in-school youth is diminished. Among the WIOA core partners, DRS plays the largest role in the development of in-school youth, albeit only for students with disabilities. Students seeking employment who do not qualify for vocational rehabilitation (e.g., not disabled, does not meet the order of selection requirements) are referred from DRS to WFWV as needed. WFWV distributes funding to each of the LWDBs, which are allowed to spend up to 25 percent of their youth funds on WDS activities for in-school youth.

DRS has a long-standing partnership with West Virginia's education system, at both the State and local levels. As such, DRS has cooperative agreements with the State Education Agency and each of the 55 Local Education Agencies (County-level Boards of Education) in West Virginia. These cooperative agreements between DRS and the Education Agencies, assure that each student with a disability in the state who needs special education, vocational education, and/or vocational rehabilitation services is identified and that the appropriate services are made available to the individual.

DRS offices are located in some of the state's schools including the WV School for the Blind, in Romney, WV. Counselors visit every high school in the state to initiate rehabilitation services needed for the transition from school to work. This allows the counselor to develop a collaborative relationship and assist the student in identifying goals, services, and service providers related to employment options prior to transition. A greater emphasis is now being placed on counselors to do outreach with these students and their parents/guardians during their freshman and sophomore years (rather than their junior year, as was formerly practiced) in order to maximize the counseling opportunities.

Since the enactment of WIOA, DRS is focused on providing services, particularly Pre-ETS, to students with disabilities starting in the 9th grade. DRS is now required to reserve at least 15 percent of its budget for the provision of Pre-ETS to students with disabilities. To accomplish this, 59 counselors work with youth with disabilities, especially students with disabilities, including students enrolled at the West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and Blind. Expected benefits include increased counselor presence in schools, increased Individualized Educational Program meeting attendance, increased provision of Pre-ETS, and an increase in outreach and awareness of VR services to students with disabilities. Counselors will also stay in contact with educators to discuss and attempt to resolve educational difficulties as they arise.

Pre-employment transition services are mandated under WIOA and include the following:

- Job exploration counseling
- Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after-school opportunities or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships), that are provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible
- Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institution of higher education
- Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living
- Instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring

The 2018 West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) indicated that job exploration counseling was the most frequently reported Pre-ETS need. In accordance with this, DRS counselors will provide Pre-ETS to students with disabilities, especially job exploration counseling, in order to give students with disabilities and their parents/guardians a better understanding of labor market conditions, current and emerging career opportunities, and the necessary education and training requirements related



to those opportunities. This information, provided to DRS by WFWV, affords students with disabilities the greatest opportunity for an informed decision regarding work and their potential careers.

DRS will continue to work closely with the WV Office of Special Education to ensure that special education teachers, parents, and students with disabilities are aware of the availability of Pre-ETS. This work will continue through joint training conferences with special education staff from across the state. Additional, intensive training on the Pathways to the Future Pre-ETS website will also continue to be provided to special education teachers in upcoming years. As part of its outreach campaign, DRS will continue to place large Pathways to the Future banners in high schools and distribute Pre-ETS materials to students with disabilities across the state. Additional outreach using large posters will target eighth-grade, career and technical education, and post-secondary students at locations across the state.

In addition to ongoing program activities, DRS will continue to sponsor the CEO Summits, four-day summer workshops for students with disabilities statewide. The CEO Summits will be held in multiple locations across the state to ensure statewide coverage. DRS will utilize the assistance of CRPs to conduct the Summit activities. The class size for each of the Summits will be approximately 20 students. Students may earn a stipend for the time that they attend. DRS will also request that WFWV and Adult Education participate in the Summits to provide additional information to the students.

In addition to Pre-ETS, DRS debuted the POWER program in 2015. POWER is a job shadowing program that offers transitioning students, who may be having a difficult time choosing a career path, the opportunity to experience an occupation by spending time with a professional working in the students' vocational goal/career field of interest, including STEM. The POWER program allows the student the opportunity to experience an occupation prior to committing to training. It guides the student to take a serious, realistic look at the occupation, allowing the student to make a more informed choice.

Another DRS activity is STEP. This program utilizes school personnel to facilitate a more seamless transition from high school to post-secondary activities (employment or training) for students with disabilities. By allowing the student to continue working with an individual who has provided them with classroom instruction and/or transition services while in high school, they are working with people who are most familiar with their interests, skills, and barriers to employment. In addition, STEP will also include the use of science and math teachers to provide appropriate students with further career exploration opportunities in STEM fields. These teachers may also provide college preparation activities, such as ACT test preparation, and work-based experiences.

By engaging students with disabilities earlier and providing them with activities such as Pre-ETS, POWER, and STEP, DRS expects recipient students will have a better understanding of the labor market and the value of obtaining a postsecondary credential. Students with disabilities who are eligible for VR services may, in accordance with their IPE, receive assistance from DRS in obtaining postsecondary training.

DRS counselors are also invited to participate in Individualized Education Plan meetings. During these meetings, the counselor describes DRS policies, and procedures as appropriate. The counselor determines the student's eligibility and order of selection category utilizing information generated from the school, the student, and the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services. Prior to or shortly after the student's IEP transition meeting occurs, Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) development begins so both the student and counselor have an idea of what rehabilitation services will be necessary to meet the student's vocational goal. Therefore, if the student needs additional training or assessment prior to vocational goal determination, this information is already collected so that planned rehabilitation services may begin. IPE development and approval for students with disabilities,

including those able to be served if DRS is on an order of selection, will begin as early as appropriate during the transition process but before the student determined to be eligible leaves the school setting.

### Out-of-School Youth

All core partners are able to serve out-of-school youth who qualify for services. Adult Education works exclusively with out-of-school populations, many of whom are ages 24 and under. The core partners work in tandem on many workforce development activities. The partners all have memorandums of understanding at the state and regional levels and also collaborate on specific projects at local levels. For example, the DRS, WFWV, and Adult Education collaborate in Region 2 as part of WIOA One-Stop Management Partner meetings with local development groups to better identify and facilitate needed services for the local area. In DRS Districts 4 and 6, DRS has partnered with Adult Education to increase efforts to reach potential VR consumers being served by Adult Education and the SPOKES program. SPOKES was created by Adult Education under a contract between the WVDE Office of Adult Education and Workforce Development and DHHR and in collaboration with the LWDBs.

DRS understands the importance of having a recognized postsecondary degree from the perspectives of both employers and job seekers. DRS has always strived for quality, career-based employment outcomes for its consumers, when appropriate. In this aim, DRS has a long history of providing its consumers with the necessary training that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential. In FY 2019, over \$6 million, representing over half of all case services expenses went toward training. Of this amount, the majority was for four-year college/university and junior/community college tuition. DRS also has a liaison with postsecondary institutions across the state, including colleges, universities, and community and technical colleges.

For youth with disabilities who do not graduate from high school, DRS works closely with Adult Education, referring individuals as needed, to ensure that these individuals have an adequate opportunity to obtain a completed high school-level education. DRS provides assistance as needed to VR consumers in Adult Education programs to ensure individuals have the means to progress through and complete these programs if doing so requires the circumnavigation of functional limitations based on the consumers' disabilities.

WV's adult basic education programs address the needs of adult learners as they strengthen local communities and businesses. Adults who lack the skills and knowledge to fully participate in, contribute to and benefit from West Virginia's postsecondary education system and economy are eligible to access adult education services in a variety of settings across the state. Core services are offered at all locations to adult learners who meet the federal eligibility requirements for enrollment. These learners:

- Have attained 16 years of age;
- Are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under state law;
- Lack sufficient mastery of basic educational skills to function effectively in society; Do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, or have not achieved an equivalent level of education; and/or
- Are unable to speak, read, or write the English language.

Beginning in July 2015 under WIOA, adult education, and literacy activities were expanded to include adult education, literacy, workplace adult education, and literacy activities, family literacy activities, English language acquisition activities, integrated English literacy and civics education, workforce preparation activities, and integrated education and training.

Comprehensive interventions are designed to address skill and knowledge deficits across the

levels defined in Title II of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and Title II of the WIOA of 2014. Building on policies and initiatives created through this comprehensive system of advising, coordination, and support, providers leverage success using innovative processes. These processes unify and inform the delivery of Adult Basic Education (ABE) courses, English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, and high school credential programs. Following are examples of research—based innovative practices that support the implementation and scaling of college and career pathways that accelerate student completion and foster economic growth.

### 1. FastTrack Programs-Increasing Transitions from Levels 1, 2, and 3

Funded providers will use key elements of research-based programs, e.g. contextualization, team teaching, and enhanced student services to increase the speed at which students master basic and ESL skills at federal levels 1, 2, and 3.

These condensed courses feature managed intake and managed enrollment and are typically a six to twelve-week accelerated program. FastTrack options include, but are not limited to: Basic Skills FastTrack:

- Programs focused on either English/Language Arts, Mathematics and Numeracy, Science or Writing in Response to Text Career Cluster FastTrack:
- Programs focused on career immersion and career clusters
- Partnerships with Career and Technical Centers
- Partnership efforts between community colleges and community-based organizations and LWDBs
- Workplace projects that partner providers, employers, and LWDBs ESL FastTrack:
- Flipped classroom models for ESL

FastTrack students acquire the skills needed to transition to basic skills education classes at federal levels 4-6 and/or Professional/Technical or Academic pathways.

### 2. Professional/Technical Transitions-Moving Students from Levels 4, 5, and 6 to Postsecondary Success in Professional/Technical Programs

Students who function primarily at federal levels 4-6 can be served in Professional/Technical Transition programs that result in recognized certificates leading to progression along a defined educational and career pathway. It is our hope to make these programs available at every West Virginia community and technical college, and to encourage partnerships with local community-based organizations and as part of the education services at state correctional facilities.

- Programs focused on career immersion and career clusters
- Partnerships with Career and Technical Centers
- Partnership efforts between community colleges and community-based organizations and local WDBs
- Workplace projects that partner providers, employers and LWDBs
- Flipped classroom models for ESL
- Developmental and Academic Transition Programs-Moving Students from Levels 4, 5, and 6 to Postsecondary Success in Academic Programs

### 3. Developmental and Academic Transition

Programs will employ the same strategies as professional technical transition programs. They will apply these strategies to credit-bearing classes along 2-year degree pathways and ensure accelerated student progress through higher levels of adult education and pre-college education

and transition into 2-year degree programs.

### Expanding Options for High School Credentials-Certificates and Diplomas

In light of changes to options for acquiring high school credentials made by the federal government and the growing importance of these certificates and high school diplomas, West Virginia has expanded the options available to adults. Our goal is to ensure that adult learners acquire the necessary credentials by gaining the knowledge and skills demanded in the workforce and required for postsecondary success. Toward that end, West Virginia will continue to award state certificates linked to the recognized high school equivalency state exam (TASC).

### Welfare Reform Initiative

Adult Education has a successful history of collaboration with the State's human services agency. Through a cooperative relationship built on trust and commitment to serving economically disadvantaged West Virginians, the two State agencies work together to respond to the mandates of welfare reform.

### SPOKES

In 2003, an academic and job preparation skills program entitled SPOKES was created by Adult Education under a contract between the WVDE Office of Adult Education and Workforce Development and DHHR, and in collaboration with some LWDBs.

The SPOKES program model was also designed to provide intense daily activities that would address academic and soft skills necessary for adults to pursue gainful employment.

Although the program is designed for participants functioning at or above the 4th-grade level (FFL 3 and above), there is some flexibility about including participants who score at lower levels. This 4 to 10-week program allows WV WORKS participants to be referred to the program and receive services at the start of each work week. Referrals can be made for the start-up of any week.

The SPOKES program consists of:

- Assessment
- A six-week repeating cycle of modules related to the following components:
  - Employability Skills
  - Job Readiness
  - Work Process Skills
  - Technology Skills-which may include Internet and Computing Core Certification (IC3) ® work
  - Workplace Academic Skills
- Vocational Training starting Week 5 that may include the following:
  - Customer Service Part 1
  - Customer Service Part 2
  - Microsoft® Office Specialist (MOS)
  - Internet and Computing Core Certification (IC3)
  - Work-based Academic Skills (if applicable in region)
- An additional 2-4 week job readiness component, which includes intense job search.

SPOKES participants prepare to take the WorkKeys assessment. A variety of certificates may be earned by participants who complete the program. Participants officially referred to and enrolled in SPOKES classes must have an identified need for instruction and/or enhancement in

one or more of the module areas that prevents them from getting employment or advancing in a job. Individualized, computer-aided, small/whole group and work-based/site instructional techniques are utilized within the program delivery of services.

In addition to having a certified full—time Adult Education SPOKES instructor, and in some cases a part-time Adult Education SPOKES instructor, the SPOKES program may have access to a career development consultant (CDC) and share a blended classroom with an Adult Education instructor.

Programs are encouraged to pilot and implement additional evidence and research-based strategies for college and career pathways that meet the goals of this plan.

Pursuant to WIOA, WFWV is required to allocate 75 percent of its local area youth funds to OSY. These funds are used to carry out programs that provide the following elements:

- 1) tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies that lead to completion of the requirements for a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent;
- 2) alternative secondary school services, or dropout recovery services, as appropriate;
- 3) paid and unpaid work experiences, including summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year; pre-apprenticeship programs; internships and job shadowing; and OJT opportunities;
- 4) occupational skill training;
- 5) education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster;
- 6) leadership development opportunities;
- 7) supportive services;
- 8) adult mentoring;
- 9) follow-up services for not less than 12 months after the completion of participation, as appropriate;
- 10) comprehensive guidance and counseling;
- 11) financial literacy education;
- 12) entrepreneurial skills training;
- 13) services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area; and
- 14) activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training.

#### D. SINGLE-AREA STATE REQUIREMENTS

*In States where there is only one local workforce investment area, the governor serves as both the State and local chief elected official. In such cases, the State must submit any information required in the local plan (WIOA section 106(d)(2)). States with a single workforce area must include—*

- a. Any comments from the public comment period that represent disagreement with the Plan. (WIOA section 108(d)(3).)
- b. The entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds, as determined by the governor, if different from that for the State. (WIOA section 108(b)(15).)
- c. A description of the type and availability of WIOA title I Youth activities and successful models, including for youth with disabilities. (WIOA section 108(b)(9).)

- d. A description of the roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners.
- e. The competitive process used to award the subgrants and contracts for title I activities.
- f. How training services outlined in section 134 will be provided through individual training accounts and/or through contracts, and how such training approaches will be coordinated. Describe how the State will meet informed customer choice requirements regardless of training approach.
- g. How the State Board, in fulfilling Local Board functions, will coordinate title I activities with those activities under title II. Describe how the State Board will carry out the review of local applications submitted under title II consistent with WIOA secs. 107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA sec. 232.
- h. Copies of executed cooperative agreements which define how all local service providers will carry out the requirements for integration of and access to the entire set of services available in the one-stop delivery system, including cooperative agreements with entities administering Rehabilitation Act programs and services.

*NOT APPLICABLE TO WEST VIRGINIA*

#### E. WAIVER REQUESTS (OPTIONAL)

*States wanting to request waivers as part of their title I-B Operational Plan must include a waiver plan that includes the following information for each waiver requested:*

1. Identifies the statutory or regulatory requirements for which a waiver is requested and the goals that the State or local area, as appropriate, intends to achieve as a result of the waiver and how those goals relate to the Unified or Combined State Plan;
2. Describes the actions that the State or local area, as appropriate, has undertaken to remove State or local statutory or regulatory barriers;
3. Describes the goals of the waiver and the expected programmatic outcomes if the request is granted;
4. Describes how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as:
  - a. supporting employer engagement;
  - b. connecting education and training strategies;
  - c. supporting work-based learning;
  - d. improving job and career results, and
  - e. other guidance issued by the Department.
5. Describes the individuals affected by the waiver, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations or individuals with multiple barriers to employment; and
6. Describes the processes used to:
7. Monitor the progress in implementing the waiver;
8. Provide notice to any local board affected by the waiver;
9. Provide any local board affected by the waiver an opportunity to comment on the request;
10. Ensure meaningful public comment, including comment by business and organized labor, on the waiver.
11. Collect and report information about waiver outcomes in the State's WIOA Annual Report.
12. The most recent data available regarding the results and outcomes observed through implementation of the existing waiver, in cases where the State seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver.

*WEST VIRGINIA IS NOT REQUESTING A WAIVER*

**TITLE I-B ASSURANCES**

<b>The State Plan must include assurances that:</b>		
1.	The State has implemented a policy to ensure Adult program funds provide a priority in the delivery of training services and individualized career services to individuals who are low income, public assistance recipients and basic skills deficient;	Yes
2.	The State has implemented a policy to ensure local areas have a process in place for referring veterans with significant barriers to employment to career services provided by the JVSG program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist;	Yes
3.	The State has established a written policy and procedure that set forth criteria to be used by chief elected officials for the appointment of local workforce investment board members;	Yes
4.	The State established written policy and procedures to ensure local workforce investment boards are certified by the governor every two years in accordance with WIOA section 107(c)(2);	Yes
5.	Where an alternative entity takes the place of a State Board, the State has written policy and procedures to ensure the alternative entity meets the definition under WIOA section 101(e) and the legal requirements for membership;	Yes
6.	The State established a written policy and procedure for how the individuals and entities represented on the State Workforce Development Board help to determine the methods and factors of distribution, and how the State consults with chief elected officials in local areas throughout the State in determining the distributions;	Yes
7.	The State will not use funds received under WIOA Title I to assist, promote, or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA section 181(b)(7);	Yes
8.	The State distributes adult and youth funds received under WIOA equitably throughout the State, and no local area suffers significant shifts in funding from year-to-year during the period covered by this plan;	Yes
9.	If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I;	Yes
10.	The State agrees to report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in its WIOA Annual Report.	N/A

11.	The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance under section WIOA 184(a)(3);	Yes

**WAGNER-PEYSER ACT PROGRAM (Employment Service)**

**A. EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF**

- 1. Describe how the State will staff the provision of labor exchange services under the Wagner-Peyser Act, such as through State employees, including but not limited to state merit staff employees, staff of a subrecipient, or some combination thereof.*

West Virginia will continue to use state employees for all programs.

- 2. Describe how the State will utilize professional development activities for Employment Service staff to ensure staff is able to provide high quality services to both jobseekers and employers.*

WFWV developed an online training focused on expanding the knowledge of local office staff as it relates to services available to our customers. Additionally, training is provided to all staff as needed during statewide staff meetings. These trainings are designed to strengthen staff knowledge of Employment Services and partner services, which would allow well-trained staff to assist the customer in obtaining the proper services needed for employment. Experts in the fields of UI, WIOA, Employment Services, and core partner staff will recommend related topics. WFWV will continue to train employees on the pertinent skills needed in the AJC through peer and management direction.

- 3. Describe strategies developed to support training and awareness across core programs and the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and the training provided for Employment Service and WIOA staff on identification of UI eligibility issues and referral to UI staff for adjudication.*

As training needs are identified, WFWV will develop a curriculum and conduct instructional sessions. Self-paced UI process training tutorials are available via the intranet. These tutorials will be enhanced to incorporate the identification of eligibility issues and appropriate referral for UI adjudication.

**B. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE WILL PROVIDE INFORMATION AND MEANINGFUL ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUALS REQUESTING ASSISTANCE IN FILING A CLAIM FOR UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION THROUGH ONE-STOP CENTERS, AS REQUIRED BY WIOA AS A CAREER SERVICE**

WFWV's UI and ES staff are fully cross-trained to assist individuals access a full range of services. The State maintains a presence in each AJC to ensure that customers meet the eligibility requirements during the initial application process and to offer support throughout the entire claim cycle. Eligibility information and claimant rights and responsibilities are also available on the website in a mobile-friendly environment.



C. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S STRATEGY FOR PROVIDING REEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE TO UI CLAIMANTS AND OTHER UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS

West Virginia claimants are profiled at the time the initial claim is filed to determine the level of assistance and support necessary to return to work. New and additional claims are taken online, and the information is reviewed for UI eligibility. Once a claim is processed, WFWV staff attempt to contact the claimant to explain the services offered by WFWV and partner agencies. Additionally, attempts are made to refer individuals to suitable employment. Every claimant is advised of the requirement to be able, available, and actively seeking full-time work for each week UI is claimed and must attest to the number of job contacts made during the week claimed. They are advised they must apply for and accept suitable work based on their work experience, training, and claim duration. UI eligibility requirements and the consequences for failing to meet them are reviewed during the benefit rights section and are available for further review online or through handout materials by visiting a local office.

In addition, those selected to participate in the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) will receive all of the mandatory program components including the creation of an Individualized Reemployment Plan and additional services such as individual job search assistance or referrals to other partner programs. WFWV has developed an online self-scheduling process for those selected to participate and has moved from phone interviews to a more individualized virtual interview. The RESEA program is designed to motivate and encourage those likely to exhaust benefits by exploring previous work experience, accomplishments, and unique skill sets and how to use them effectively while job searching. During the virtual interview, individuals identify strengths and skill sets, set short- and long-term goals, begin developing a job search plan, and learn how to network effectively both in person and using social media.

D. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT FUNDS TO SUPPORT UI CLAIMANTS, AND THE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE AND UI, AS APPROPRIATE WHEN INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:

1. Coordination of and provision of labor exchange services for UI claimants as required by the Wagner-Peyser Act;

WFWV's UI and ES staff are fully cross-trained to assist individuals in accessing a full range of services. Concentrated, individualized, and group services, including reemployment assessment, continuing eligibility, and job placement, are provided to claimants identified as either most or least likely to exhaust benefits. Regionalized claimant-centered labor market information is available through handouts or via <https://workforcewv.org/>.

2. Registration of UI claimants with the State's employment service if required by State law;

WFWV applies an early intervention approach to delivering services to unemployment compensation recipients. Claimants are dual enrolled from day one for Wagner-Peyser reemployment services and provided an orientation to all available One-Stop services. Information is provided to claimants who file online where detailed information is conveyed about available partner services, WIOA training eligibility, and available opportunities. Common data is uploaded daily from the UI mainframe to the ES registration system.

3. Administration of the work test for the State unemployment compensation system, including making eligibility assessments (for referral to UI adjudication, if needed), and providing job finding and placement services for UI claimants; and

The State administers the unemployment insurance work test as required. Claimants who appear to have failed to participate or report to suitable opportunities are notified to respond as to the reason why. Based on the result a determination will be made as to their eligibility. The UI management information system identifies potential eligibility issues by the claimant's responses to weekly certification questions and by assessing the data entered by staff during eligibility assessments. Any job referral made is reconciled either by the claimant the employer or both. The management information system (MACC) is able to generate a follow-up form for the employer to obtain the results of any referrals.

4. Provision of referrals to and application assistance for training and education programs and resources.

WFWV ES/UI staff will coach and direct claimants to educational opportunities if training is advisable for the desired employment outcome. Income test information will be provided to assist the customer apply for available financial aid. Cost and performance data, when available, will be available for review so customers will be able to make informed decisions on schooling. Joint partner staff training sessions will provide information and resource tools for staff to guide their referrals.

#### E. AGRICULTURAL OUTREACH PLAN (AOP)

*Each State agency must develop an AOP every four years as part of the Unified or Combined State Plan required under sections 102 or 103 of WIOA. The AOP must include an assessment of need.*

1. *Assessment of Need. Provide an assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers in the area based on past and projected agricultural and farmworker activity in the State. Such needs may include but are not limited to: employment, training, and housing.*

Due to the fact that the majority of West Virginia farms are family-owned and only 13% of our farms hire farm workers overall, there are a limited number of agricultural jobs available and limited opportunities for training. Housing has not been reported as an issue, most employers utilizing migrant workers have housing available. Additional farmworker housing is being built in the eastern part of the state to house workers from the poultry factory in the area. Larger employers are hesitant to hire local workers out of concern that they will not stay the entire busy season. While there are healthcare institutions geared towards MSFWs in the eastern panhandle region of the state, healthcare options are limited throughout the rest of the state.

During outreach visits, MSFWs have noted to outreach workers specific needs in the following areas: affordable access to medical care, financial assistance when they first arrive in West Virginia for purchasing personal items such as hygiene products, bedding, and towels; financial assistance for obtaining cell phones to be able to communicate with their families back home; food and clothing assistance; jackets and boots for working in cold weather.

WVWF will work with our NFJP partner as well as our other partners and area charitable organizations to address the financial, food, and clothing needs of MSFWs when they first arrive to work in West Virginia.

2. *Provide an assessment of the agricultural activity in the State: 1) identify the top five labor-intensive crops, the months of heavy activity, and the geographic area of prime activity; 2) Summarize the agricultural employers' needs in the State (i.e. are they predominantly hiring local or foreign workers, are they expressing that there is a scarcity in the agricultural workforce); and 3) Identify any economic, natural, or other factors that are affecting agriculture in the State or any projected factors that will affect agriculture in the State.*

The top 5 labor-intensive crops in WV are hay, apples, corn for grain, soybeans, and tobacco. The eastern panhandle has the majority of our agricultural activity and is most active from June to November.

In general, West Virginia employers have difficulty finding workers, and agriculture employers are no different. Many agricultural employers rely on the use of foreign labor to meet their need for workers. According to the US Census, 40% of West Virginia residents are either under the age of 18 or over the age of 65, which often makes jobs in agriculture unsuitable for that demographic. Additionally, West Virginia has one of the lowest labor participation rates in the nation, so the labor pool for agricultural vacancies is even smaller.

Several of our larger apple growers have experienced issues finding buyers for apples due to a surplus however many of them were able to take advantage of a joint effort by the USDA and the WVDA to purchase the surplus apples and distribute them to hunger-fighting charities across West Virginia.

3. *Provide an assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers by summarizing Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker (MSFW) characteristics (including if they are predominantly from certain countries, what language(s) they speak, the approximate number of MSFWs in the State during peak season and during low season, and whether they tend to be migrant, seasonal, or yearround farmworkers). This information must take into account data supplied by WIOA Section 167 National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantees, other MSFW organizations, employer organizations, and State and/or Federal agency data sources such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration.*

The farm workers we make contact with on a regular basis are primarily migrant and seasonal. These workers are primarily from Mexico, Barbados, and Guatemala. With the exception of our workers from Barbados, our MSFWs primarily speak Spanish.

In West Virginia, the peak agricultural season begins in July and runs through the end of November. During peak season, there are approximately 350 migrant/seasonal farmworkers in West Virginia. The non-peak season runs from December through June – the number of migrant/seasonal farmworkers during this period varies from a low of approximately 60 workers in January to a maximum of 200 by June.

West Virginia's poultry industry continues to grow, primarily in the eastern part of the state. The year-round farmworkers employed in this industry receive outreach services from our NFJP partner in addition to services provided by WFWV.

4. *Outreach Activities. The local offices outreach activities must be designed to meet the needs of MSFWs in the State and to locate and contact MSFWs who are not being reached through normal intake activities. Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:*

- (1) Contacting farmworkers who are not being reached by the normal intake activities conducted by the employment service offices.

WFWV has an adequate number of outreach workers for the amount of MSFWs that are present in West Virginia. Our outreach workers devote 100% of their time to MSFW outreach during the peak season and conduct some level of outreach outside of the peak season. We will continue to attend conferences and partner with relevant organizations to build relationships with agricultural stakeholders in order to identify and locate domestic MSFWs throughout West

Virginia.

WFWV will continue to compile a comprehensive list of agricultural employers around the state. This employer universe will allow us to inform employers of available services and to identify additional domestic MSFWs.

- (2) Providing technical assistance to outreach staff. Technical assistance must include trainings, conferences, additional resources, and increased collaboration with other organizations on topics such as one-stop center services (i.e. availability of referrals to training, supportive services, and career services, as well as specific employment opportunities), the Employment Service and Employment-Related Law Complaint System (“Complaint System” described at 20 CFR 658 Subpart E), information on the other organizations serving MSFWs in the area, and a basic summary of farmworker rights, including their rights with respect to the terms and conditions of employment. (3) Increasing outreach staff training and awareness across core programs including the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and the training on identification of UI eligibility issues.

Outreach staff are provided with training from our Wage and Hour partner, WVDA’s pesticide safety training program, and are trained on all MSFW rights and the complaint system. In addition, the outreach workers will be trained on the warning signs of human trafficking and sexual harassment among farm workers.

West Virginia’s MSFW outreach workers were hired during the 2023 peak agricultural season and, consequently, there has been limited opportunity to provide more intensive training on the full range of Wagner-Peyser, Unemployment, and WIOA services that are available. However, plans are in place to provide such training to our MSFW outreach workers prior to the start of the 2024 peak agricultural season. Weekly training sessions will be conducted with the MSFW outreach workers to ensure that they gain a thorough understanding of the full range of Wagner-Peyser, Unemployment, and WIOA services provided by WFWV and our WIOA partners. Additionally, refresher training will be provided covering all aspects of the MSFW program and the ES Complaint System in preparation for the 2024 peak agricultural season.

We have a partnership with our state’s Department of Agriculture to ensure our outreach workers have the most up-to-date safety training available. In addition, outreach workers will be cross trained in services offered by WFWV and offer Spanish-language translation services.

- (4) Providing outreach staff professional development activities to ensure they are able to provide high quality services to both jobseekers and employers.

Our SMA ensures that outreach workers stay up to date with all MSFW-related policies and laws and they also receive pesticide safety training from the WVDA.

- (5) Coordinating outreach efforts with NFJP grantees as well as with public and private community service agencies and MSFW groups.

We meet with our NFJP partner on a quarterly basis and work to coordinate outreach activities when they are conducted in West Virginia.

5. *Services provided to farmworkers and agricultural employers through the one-stop delivery system. Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:*

- (A) The one-stop delivery system provides the full range of employment and training services to the agricultural community, both farmworkers and agricultural employers. This includes:
- a. How career and training services required under WIOA Title I will be provided to MSFWs through the one-stop centers and
  - b. How the State serves agricultural employers and how it intends to improve such services.

As MSFWs seek out additional services through Employment Service (ES), staff will assess the interests and needs of the worker and make appropriate referrals to partners including WIOA Title 1. Currently, the MSFWs in West Virginia are mostly foreign workers and are not entitled to these services. As we work to locate MSFWs who are not currently being served, we will ensure that all workers are aware of the services offered through the one-stop center and provide information on how they can access those services.

WFWV provides business-driven services responsive to the specific needs of our agricultural employers. WFWV will build relationships with agricultural employers in order to connect businesses to resources, promote employer engagement and employer retention, match employers with qualified workers, and conduct virtual and in-person job fairs. Additionally, WFWV will communicate with employers regularly in an effort to market our services as well as those provided by our partners and other state and federally-funded agencies that serve agricultural employers.

WFWV continues to schedule in-person and virtual meetings with agricultural employers statewide to solicit their feedback on the quality of our services to them in order to seek better methods of serving our agricultural employers. Such meetings also provide an opportunity for WFWV to pass along crucial updates regarding the foreign labor certification process to employers and other pertinent information on additional resources such as grant opportunities, support services for farm workers, and changes in federal regulations.

- (B) Marketing the Complaint System to farmworkers and other farmworker advocacy groups.

WFWV staff will actively promote the complaint system during their field visits and we will work to promote the complaint system to our partner agencies. We also work with our NFJP and WIOA partners to spread awareness of the complaint system.

- (C) Marketing the Agricultural Recruitment System for U.S. Workers (ARS) to agricultural employers and how it intends to improve such publicity.

WFWV will build relationships with employers through outreach and networking to provide information on how they can fulfill their hiring needs. We will continue to work with the WVU Extension Office, the West Virginia Farm Bureau, and the West Virginia Department of Agriculture to raise greater awareness of the services provided by the WDS.

## 6. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

(A) *Collaboration.* Describe any collaborative agreements the State Workforce Agency (SWA) has with other MSFW service providers including NFJP grantees and other service providers. Describe how the SWA intends to build upon/increase collaboration with existing partners and establish new partners over the next four years (including any approximate timelines for establishing agreements or building upon existing agreements).

The state will continue to collaborate with our National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP)

grantees and other service providers. The state will continue to collaborate with the NFJP grantees and the LWDB. The state will exchange information with these groups and seek inclusion in the establishment of the LWDB and NFJP Memorandum of Understanding. The state will work toward identifying the two NFJP grantees and their respective directors who are operating components of this program in West Virginia and work with them to streamline and coordinate services in a seamless manner.

(B) *Review and Public Comment.* In developing the AOP, the SWA must solicit information and suggestions from NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations. In addition, at least 45 calendar days before submitting its final AOP, the SWA must provide a proposed plan to NFJP grantees, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other organizations expressing an interest and allow at least 30 days for review and comment. The SWA must: 1) Consider any comments received in formulating its final proposed AOP; 2) Inform all commenting parties in writing whether their comments have been incorporated and, if not, the reasons therefore; and 3) Transmit the comments and recommendations received and its responses with the submission of the AOP.

- i. The AOP must include a statement confirming NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations have been given an opportunity to comment on the AOP. Include the list of organizations from which information and suggestions were solicited, any comments received, and responses to those comments.

On 12/7/23 WorkForce submitted a draft of the AOP to our NFJP partner Telemon for review and comment. Telemon returned the AOP with no comments or additional feedback and agreed to the state's proposed plan for agricultural outreach over the next 4 years.

(C) *Data Assessment.* Review the previous four years Wagner-Peyser Act data reports on performance. Note whether the State has been meeting its goals to provide MSFWs quantitatively proportionate services as compared to non-MSFWs. If it has not met these goals, explain why the State believes such goals were not met and how the State intends to improve its provision of services in order to meet such goals.

Over the past four years, the state has consistently been unable to meet the Wagner-Peyser Act performance data goals in relation to services for MSFWs. The primary reason for this is a lack of eligible domestic MSFW participants and our inability to capture data on domestic farmworkers in general. WFWV is in the process of developing an agricultural employer universe in order to better understand where our agricultural businesses are located and the nature of the types of workers they hire. Additionally, we have partnered with the WVU extension and the Farm Bureau of WV to raise awareness among farmworkers about our services and programs in order to try to provide services to a larger number of domestic seasonal farmworkers.

(D) *Assessment of progress.* The plan must include an explanation of what was achieved based on the previous AOP, what was not achieved and an explanation as to why the State believes the goals were not achieved, and how the State intends to remedy the gaps of achievement in the coming year.

Since the previous AOP, the landscape of MSFWs in West Virginia has shifted to a population of primarily foreign workers here on H2A visas. Therefore, our focus has shifted from the previous plan to better accommodate outreach and services to this population. WFWV now maintains two full-time bi-lingual outreach workers who dedicate 100% of their time to outreach during

peak season. We have also begun partnering with the WVDA to provide pesticide training to our outreach workers and any farmworkers who may not have access to safety training in their native language. The agency has also produced video trainings on the complaint system, MSFW outreach, and the agricultural recruitment system to train and educate staff at our offices around the state with MSFW activity nearby.

(E) *State Monitor Advocate*. The plan must contain a statement confirming the State Monitor Advocate has reviewed and approved the AOP.

The State Monitor Advocate assisted in the compiling of data for this plan and has reviewed and approved the AOP.

#### WAGNER-PEYSER ASSURANCES

<b>The State Plan must include assurances that:</b>		
1.	The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service is co-located with one-stop centers or a plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time. (sec 121(e)(3));	Yes
2.	If the State has significant MSFW one-stop centers, the State agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111, State Workforce Agency staffing requirements;	Yes
3.	If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser Act services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and	Yes
4.	SWA officials: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Initiate the discontinuation of services;</li> <li>2) Make the determination that services need to be discontinued;</li> <li>3) Make the determination to reinstate services after the services have been discontinued;</li> <li>4) Approve corrective action plans;</li> <li>5) Approve the removal of an employer's clearance orders from interstate or intrastate clearance if the employer was granted conditional access to ARS and did not come into compliance within 5 calendar days;</li> <li>6) Enter into agreements with State and Federal enforcement agencies for enforcement-agency staff to conduct field checks on the SWAs' behalf (if the SWA so chooses); and</li> <li>7) Decide whether to consent to the withdrawal of complaints if a party who requested a hearing wishes to withdraw its request for hearing in writing before the hearing.</li> </ol>	Yes
5.	The SWA has established and maintains a self-appraisal system for ES operations to determine success in reaching goals and to correct deficiencies in performance (20 CFR 658.601).	Yes

## ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a description of the following as it pertains to adult education and literacy programs and activities under title II of WIOA, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA).

### A. ALIGNING OF CONTENT STANDARDS

*Describe how the eligible agency has aligned its content standards for adult education with State-adopted challenging academic content standards, as adopted under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(1)).*

In 2014, West Virginia Adult Education adopted the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) for Adult Education. Thereafter, in 2016, the West Virginia Board of Education implemented West Virginia College- and Career-Readiness Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics which were developed through the collaborative efforts of West Virginia teachers, parents, and business and community stakeholders to address the learning needs of West Virginia's students. West Virginia Adult Education has continued to use the CCRS for Adult Education, as they are aligned with the WVCCR standards.

### B. LOCAL ACTIVITIES

*Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund each eligible provider to establish or operate programs that provide any of the following adult education and literacy activities identified in section 203 of WIOA, including programs that provide such activities concurrently. The Unified or Combined State Plan must include at a minimum the scope, content, and organization of these local activities.*

Adult Education and Literacy Activities (Section 203 of WIOA)

Adult education;

Literacy;

Workplace adult education and literacy activities;

Family literacy activities;

English language acquisition activities;

Integrated English literacy and civics education;

Workforce preparation activities; or

Integrated education and training that—

1. Provides adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both, workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster, and
2. It is for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

West Virginia Adult Education expects to award grants on a multi-year cycle with an annual continuation grant submitted. Each year's renewal will be based on evidence of success in the provision of the contracted services and subject to the availability of funds. West Virginia Adult Education will use the following process to distribute funds to approved applicants: 1. shall use not less than 82.5 percent of the grant funds to award grants and contracts under Section 231 and to carry out Section 225, Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals, of which up to 20 percent of such amount shall be available to carry out Section 225; 2. shall use not more than 12.5 percent of the grant funds to carry out State leadership activities under Section 223; and 3. shall use not more than 5 percent of the grant funds, for administrative expenses of the eligible agency.

As part of the application process, West Virginia Adult Education will collect basic information



from the eligible provider (e.g., location, service area, scope of the program, demographics served, demonstrated need, data collection, and fiscal management procedures). Additionally, each applicant will be required to submit a proposed budget and program design information. Applicants will be expected to respond to West Virginia Adult Education priorities and the Title II considerations for funding Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) programs. The requirements to be considered include:

1. Needs Assessment: The degree to which the provider is responsive to (A) regional needs as identified in the local plan under section 108 and (B) serving individuals in the community who are identified in such plan as most in need of adult education and literacy activities, including individuals who have low levels of literacy skills and who are English language learners.

2. Individuals with Disabilities: The degree to which the provider is able to serve eligible individuals with disabilities, including eligible individuals with learning disabilities.

3. Past Effectiveness: The degree to which the provider demonstrates past effectiveness in improving the literacy of eligible individuals, to meet state-adjusted levels of performance for the primary indicators of performance described in section 116, especially with respect to eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy.

4. Alignment with One-Stop Partners: The degree to which the eligible provider is responsive to, and demonstrates alignment between, proposed activities and services and the strategy and goals of the local plan under section 108, as well as the activities and services of the One-Stop partners.

5. Intensity, Quality, and Instructional Practices: The degree to which the eligible provider's program is of sufficient intensity and quality and based on the most rigorous research available so that participants achieve substantial learning gains and use instructional practices that include the essential components of reading instruction.

6. Research-Based Educational Practices: The degree to which the eligible provider's activities, including reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, and English language acquisition instruction, are based on the best practices derived from the most rigorous research available and appropriate, including scientifically valid research and effective educational practice.

7. Effective Use of Technology: The degree to which the eligible provider's activities effectively use technology, services, and delivery systems, including distance education in a manner sufficient to increase the amount and quality of learning and how such technology, services, and systems lead to improved performance.

8. Integrated Education and Training: The degree to which the eligible provider's activities offer learning in context, including through integrated education and training, so that an individual acquires the skills needed to transition to and complete postsecondary education and training programs, obtain and advance in employment leading to economic self-sufficiency, and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

9. Qualified Staff: The degree to which the eligible provider's activities are delivered by well-trained instructors, counselors, and administrators who meet minimum qualifications established by the state, where applicable, and who have access to high-quality professional development, including through electronic means.

10. Partnerships and Development of Career Pathways: The degree to which the eligible provider's activities coordinate with other available education, training, and social service resources in the community, postsecondary educational institutions, institutions of higher education, Local Boards, One-Stop centers, job training programs, and social service agencies,

business, industry, labor organizations, community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and intermediaries, for the development of career pathways.

11. Flexible Schedules and Coordination with Support Services: The degree to which the eligible provider's activities offer flexible schedules and coordination with federal, state, and local support services (such as child care, transportation, mental health services, and career planning) that are necessary to enable individuals, including individuals with disabilities or other special needs, to attend and complete programs.

12. Data Collection: The degree to which the eligible provider maintains a high-quality information management system that has the capacity to report measurable participant outcomes (consistent with section 116) and to monitor program performance.

13. English Language Acquisition and Civics Education: The degree to which the eligible provider has a demonstrated need for additional English language acquisition programs and civics education programs.

**The Scope of West Virginia Adult Education Local Activities:** Previously funded programs will be required to provide data demonstrating they have met previously proposed state targets for the required percentage of students making a measurable academic gain. Programs must also provide data demonstrating successful transition to post-secondary education or employment by students. For programs not previously funded, programs with data demonstrating student learning gain and successful transition to post-secondary education or employment, especially for individuals with low levels of literacy, will be given preference. Both measurable skill gain data and transition data must be disaggregated to demonstrate a history of success with students who have low levels of literacy, disabilities (including learning disabilities), or are English language learners.

Programs will need to clearly articulate how their instructional delivery model will be aligned to the needs of one-stop, postsecondary, and employer partners. This alignment at a minimum must include the ability to offer flexible scheduling so that adult education services coordinate with the students' wrap-around support services and logistic needs. The delivery model must be of sufficient intensity and duration so that the students will exit with the necessary skills to attain their career goals. Existing programs will base intensity and duration of service on demonstrated past effectiveness (student skill gain and transition outcomes) and the latest research on the effectiveness of time and intensity. It will be critical for each program to validate its commitment to an instructional delivery model that can support high school equivalency attainment, as well as preparation for entrance into postsecondary, a training program, or employment for adults with, or without, a high school diploma. This support must lead to preparation for a career pathway for all students, including the low-skilled and under-employed, who are most in need of increasing their knowledge and skills for the next career step. All eligible programs will assess the need for providing an English language acquisition and civics education program in their area and provide services when there is a demonstrated need.

**The Content of West Virginia Adult Education Local Activities:** Eligible programs will verify that adult education activities are conducted by licensed instructional staff and confirm that all staff will participate in high-quality professional development offered by the state professional development unit. Professional development activities will include face-to-face and distance education, so all staff will be able to participate in a variety of delivery venues. Programs must ensure they will follow all state assessment policies and publisher guidelines for administering and scoring.

Instruction in all content areas (reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, and English language acquisition) will be delivered by staff who are knowledgeable of the essential components of

high-quality instruction. Programs must use scientific, effective research-based instructional delivery models for students in all content areas. Programs will articulate how distance learning and other modes of technology will be integrated into instruction to support digital literacy attainment and meet students' specific learning needs. The overarching goal of instruction for all students will be a successful transition to employment, postsecondary, or training according to their chosen career pathway. This will require instruction to be contextualized and student pathways guided by labor market needs and data from collaborative partnerships (education, one-stop partners, and employers).

The array of program activities that support the individual student's career pathway must be based on each student's Education and Career Plan (ECP). Eligible programs will describe how they will assist all students in setting up their ECP through a series of lessons on the College Foundation of West Virginia's website at [www.CFWV.com](http://www.CFWV.com) or alternative career exploration resource. Programs will detail how teachers will be assisting students in aligning their skills and interests with a career choice and helping them to create long-term short-term goals to enter their career pathway. Each program will share its protocol for linking student career pathways to academic lessons that are relevant and supportive of students' career goals. Programs will confirm that they are providing learning activities that are contextualized, so students acquire the knowledge and skills needed for transition to their individual career pathway. Programs will ensure that the teaching staff offers a variety of instructional strategies that engage students and promote student persistence and retention; this should include whole group instruction, peer tutoring, and individualized instruction along with distance learning. The variety of instructional strategies will integrate academics, career counseling, and soft skills to bolster the students' ability to gain employment, go to college, or enter a training program that could include an apprenticeship. Integrated education and training programs will align with the needs of the local labor market. The occupational training provided as part of an integrated education and training program will be connected to realistic, existing employment opportunities in the local area that connect to a career pathway for the participants.

**The Organization of West Virginia Adult Education Local Activities:** The state management information system will collect all data elements required for the WIOA Annual Statewide Performance Report. Primary indicators of performance that will be reported include:

- participants in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit,
- participants in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit,
- median earnings from unsubsidized employment in the second quarter after exit,
- the percentage of students who obtain a postsecondary credential or a high school equivalency diploma,
- the percentage of students who participate in an education or training program, and
- percent achieving a measurable skill gain.

To facilitate this process, funded programs must ensure they will collect and provide participant social security numbers to enable a data match (to the best of their ability), input data accurately and within prescribed timelines, and adhere to all state policies and guidelines regarding data privacy.

Programs must provide evidence of activities with other education institutions, local workforce partners, and agencies that support student career pathways. The National Career Clusters® Framework provides a vital structure for organizing and delivering quality Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs through learning and comprehensive programs of study. This National Career Clusters® Framework is the basis for the Career Pathways Programs established at WV Career and Technical Centers and articulated with WV Community College and University Systems.

Beyond assisting students with the attainment of a measurable skill gain, achieving a high

school equivalency or postsecondary credential, or entering a career pathway, eligible programs must demonstrate that they have established cross-agency partnerships to help students navigate system challenges (completing applications, writing resumes, scheduling campus visits, etc.) that can be barriers to success. Programs must be willing to cooperate with agency partners to provide the wrap-around services common clients will require.

Through ongoing labor market analysis all programs will have an awareness of regional labor market needs to provide teachers with a working knowledge of regional career opportunities. Programs must be able to disclose their methodology to ensure that employer and labor market needs are driving their instructional practice. Effective programs will be those that deliver instructional activities that support student transition to specific occupations or career clusters.

**Special Rule.** Each eligible agency awarding a grant or contract under this section shall not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that such agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

#### C. CORRECTIONS EDUCATION AND OTHER EDUCATION OF INSTITUTIONALIZED INDIVIDUALS

*Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund eligible providers to establish or operate programs that provide any of the following correctional educational programs identified in section 225 of WIOA:*

- *Adult education and literacy activities;*
- *Special education, as determined by the eligible agency;*
- *Secondary school credit;*
- *Integrated education and training;*
- *Career pathways;*
- *Concurrent enrollment;*
- *Peer tutoring; and*
- *Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.*

*Each eligible agency using funds provided under Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution must give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within 5 years of participation in the program.*

West Virginia Office of Diversion and Transition Programs (WV ODTP) prepares incarcerated adults for successful transition to school, employment, and life in their communities as responsible and productive citizens.

This is done by:

- offering innovative, research-based educational opportunities, best practices and approaches
- teaching the content, skills, and attitudes for success in school, community, and the workplace

- providing the appropriate academic, social, and vocational skills development and transitional services
- collaborating with others vested in achieving the same outcomes
- employing and encouraging dedicated, quality staff throughout the organization
- acting as a role model and mentor for students to learn positive attitudes and behaviors and high standards of ethical and moral conduct
- being accountable and fostering performance improvement
- reducing recidivism through education
- advocating the value of each individual's re-entry into the community
- promoting successful reintegration into school, community, and the workplace
- encouraging participation in educational opportunities, including career technical education co-enrollment
- supporting all aspects of classroom operations to ensure a quality environment for teaching and learning

#### D. INTEGRATED ENGLISH LITERACY AND CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

*Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund eligible providers to establish or operate Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) programs under section 243 of WIOA. Describe how adult English language learners, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, are served in IELCE programs.*

*Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be offered in combination with integrated education and training activities found in 34 CFR section 463.36.*

*Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation.*

*Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency.*

*Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.*

West Virginia Adult Education will consider whether an eligible provider has demonstrated the need for these types of services through its use of data sources that may include tables from the U.S. Census Bureau, reports from the Office of Immigration Services, and documentation of prior participation in these types of services, or other data. West Virginia Adult Education will award grants for a multi-year period with yearly grant contracts. Renewal of the grant for the continuation years will be based on evidence of success and subject to the availability of funds.

Programs applying for IELCE funds under Section 243 will be required to provide IELCE instruction that includes integrated education and training activities. Applicants will be required to provide extensive data to demonstrate the need and potential for the success of IELCE activities in conjunction with integrated education and training in the proposed service area. Such data will include, but not be limited to, immigration trends, demographics of the English language learners in the area where the program will be provided, and employment and

labor market statistics for the area. In addition, applicants will be asked to provide evidence that they have developed or will be able to develop in a timely fashion, partnerships that support the purpose of the program. Applicants will be required to provide assurances that qualified providers will provide the occupational training included as part of the program. Funding under this title will be awarded based upon the criteria for evaluation of program applications contained in Section 231(e) of WIOA.

Adult Education receives the minimum (\$60,000) allotment of Section 243 funds to prepare English language learners for unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency. Programs partner with local businesses to develop workplace activities and lessons to enhance specific related job skills.

Workplace literacy provides individuals the ability to read, write, and speak at levels proficient to function on the job, within the family, and in society. Programs focus on enhancing occupational language skills, along with workplace preparation training. Participants receive additional support beyond the curriculum, including assistance with resume building, career assessments, and job search assistance.

Programs are designed to include instruction and lessons on citizenship and civic participation. It is important for immigrants and refugees to understand the rights, responsibilities, and legal requirements of the national, state, and local governments. Civic involvement can include voting, political activism, volunteering, community engagement, and democratic processes.

IELCE program(s) use regional labor market information showing in-demand industries and occupations from which employer partnerships are established. In cooperation with the employer, a specific educational pathway will be determined. Elements that may be included: workplace employability skills, contextualized English workplace vocabulary, and industry-recognized stackable credentials.

*Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.*

IELCE program(s) works with LWDBs to provide training on online job search skills and resume writing. Workforce provides weekly on-the-job training opportunities and individuals are referred who may be qualified for these positions. Regional labor market results are used to develop integrated training opportunities.

#### E. STATE LEADERSHIP

*Describe how the State will use the funds to carry out the required State Leadership activities under section 223 of WIOA.*

*Describe how the State will use the funds to carry out permissible State Leadership Activities under section 223 of WIOA, if applicable.*

#### **Required: Alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other core programs and one-stop partners to implement strategies identified in the unified or combined State plan**

West Virginia collaborates with other core programs and one-stop partners to implement strategies of the Unified Plan. All funded providers will be required to detail the process that will be used to collaborate with all stakeholders. All providers will describe how they will fulfill one-stop responsibilities in their region. All providers have representation with their Regional

Adult Education Coordinator as members of LWDBs to participate in ongoing plan development and implementation of WIOA.

**Career pathway programs are a "series of connected education and training programs and support services that enable individuals to secure employment within a specific industry or occupational sector and to advance over time to successively higher levels of education and employment within that sector" as reported by Jenkins and Davis in *The Career Pathways How-To Guide* published by Workforce Strategy Center in October 2006. Career pathways often include "stackable" credentials and accelerated courses offered at flexible times that support student entry and exit along the pathway.**

Bridge programs, one of the first steps in a career pathway for low-skill adults, support the transition from adult education to the next step in an occupational pathway. By connecting adult education programs to CTE and community college occupational programs, bridge programs seek to increase the rates at which low-skill adults move into postsecondary occupational programs, persist in these programs, and obtain postsecondary credentials in industries offering family-sustaining wages and career advancement.

Bridge programs help adult students identify career and education goals and develop the skills, content knowledge, and learning strategies they need to enter and succeed in postsecondary education and employment. They combine basic skill instruction in reading, math, writing, and English language, including preparation for the high school equivalency test, with occupational content, employability skills, and postsecondary success strategies. Some Bridge programs also offer college credit and certificates, which may be the first step toward a college degree. State and local labor market information is used to develop Bridge programs focused on occupations or industry sectors with a high demand for employees. These programs are designed to prepare individuals for productive futures and meet the State's need for well-trained and industry-certified technical workers.

Adult Education is partnering very closely with CTE to create Bridge Programs to the CTE adult programs offered in many of the CTE centers. In addition, Adult Education collaborates closely with the Community College System of West Virginia in establishing a clear pathway for adult students.

**Required: Establish or operate high-quality professional development programs to improve adult education instruction including:**

- **incorporating essential components of reading instruction**
- **instruction related to specific needs of adult learners**
- **instruction provided by volunteers or other personnel**
- **dissemination of information about models and promising practices**

The goal of a good professional development program is to support and continuously improve adult education programs. West Virginia Adult Education continues to design, implement, and operate a large-scale, statewide professional development system to increase program outcomes.

The professional development team carries out this vision by using state leadership funds to plan, coordinate, and continue the implementation of the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) for all eligible providers in the state. The professional development team provides support in the form of in-depth training for the implementation of standards-based instruction both in English language arts and mathematics. State leadership funds are used to hold conferences and trainings to ensure ongoing professional development in standards-based instruction and other West Virginia Adult Education priority areas. Additionally, state leadership funds are used to design, facilitate, and offer access to online courses covering the areas of competency-based reading instruction, writing, numeracy, basic and multilevel ESOL

classes, ABE instruction, ASE instruction, and other research-based practices which lead to program improvement.

**Required: Provision of technical assistance to local providers receiving funds including –**

- **Development and dissemination of instructional and programmatic practices based on best available research in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language acquisition, distance education, and staff training**
- **Role of local providers as one-stop partners**
- **Assistance in use of technology including staff training and improving efficiencies**

State leadership funds are used to develop and maintain the West Virginia Adult Education Teacher Group within Schoology for the purpose of disseminating instructional and programmatic practices to eligible providers. In addition, funds are used to maintain the West Virginia Adult Education website with information for interested parties in need of adult education resources. The West Virginia Adult Education shares resources such as publications; CCRS; distance education software; digital media; and information on career pathways information, program management, assessments, and special populations. On-site technical assistance is available to all programs.

West Virginia Adult Education has Technology Integration Specialists (TIS) who provide training and support to staff on technology integration. They assist programs in the use of technology to enhance learning, model and explain the use of blended learning to increase student participation in distance education, ensure all instructional staff are proficient in the use of Microsoft Office for productivity and communication, provide guidance for the proctoring of industry-recognized credential exams, and support instructional staff with basic technology troubleshooting techniques.

**Required: The monitoring and evaluation of the quality of, and the improvement in, adult education and literacy activities and the dissemination of information about models and proven or promising practices within the State.**

The West Virginia Adult Education plans to use state leadership funding to support monitoring and evaluation activities. All adult education programs are monitored to ensure compliance with the National Reporting Standards (NRS), as well as state standards. In West Virginia, this is done in two ways, Data Quality Audits (DQA) and On-Site Monitoring (OSM) visits. One hundred percent of programs will be monitored annually through the use of Desktop Monitoring. A minimum of 15% will be monitored annually via on-site visits. All programs will be monitored on a recurring cycle. The programs identified for on-site monitoring are selected using a Class Ranking Report (CRR) that utilizes and applies performance data across a broad range of performance metrics.

Desk Monitoring findings and results will determine the additional course of action, including:

- 1) For those grantees with no significant findings, no further monitoring will take place in the current year. However, as with all grantees, desk monitoring will occur on an annual basis, regardless of compliance (or non-compliance).
- 2) For grantees with minor compliance issues based on the desk review, a DQA by the regional coordinator may be conducted via desk and/or on-site.
- 3) For grantees with multiple compliance issues based on the desk review and DQA, an on-site monitoring visit will occur to address specific non-compliant areas.

DQAs ensure local programs are administering file checks and reviewing program data for the purpose of technical assistance and improved program performance outcomes. A DQA also ensures the accuracy of data input, data integrity, and processes are followed according to NRS and state policy. It allows the program an opportunity to analyze data and check their progress. The second method is On-Site Monitoring visits. Programs that do not meet federal and/or state



performance measures or fall in the bottom 20% on the Class Ranking Report are subject to an on-site monitoring visit.

A typical monitoring visit will include the following:

- a) Interview the local Administrator/Director, discussing areas of concern, including NRS performance, staffing, budget, and grantee expenditures to date.
- b) Discuss Desk Monitoring Report, Data Quality Audit, NRS Tables, Class Summary Reports, and other forms previously submitted.
- c) Interview instructional staff
- d) Review pertinent student and class files
- e) Financial Reports
- f) Closing interviews with all staff to review findings, commendations, and recommendations.

Upon receipt of the final report, the Grantee will:

- 1) Respond in writing to all findings contained within the Final Report
- 2) Formulate a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) utilizing the approved West Virginia Adult Education template
- 3) Request technical assistance

Technical assistance will be available for all low-performing programs, but continued failure to meet minimum state performance measures may result in decreased funding or program cancellation. Any local program or regional coordinator may request an on-site visitation for purposes of program improvement or technical assistance.

## F. ASSESSING QUALITY

*Describe how the eligible agency will assess the quality of providers of adult education and literacy activities under title II. Describe how the eligible agency will take actions to improve such quality, including providing the activities described in section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA. Describe how the eligible agency will use evaluations, data analysis, program monitoring, or other methods to improve the quality of adult education activities in the State.*

West Virginia Adult Education strives to focus professional development on skills instructors require to address students' needs and challenges to help students learn and raise achievements. The quality of professional development provided will be assessed by reviewing various data reports and the student achievement reports available in the state management information system. Student outcomes, achievements, successes, and measurable skill gains will be monitored for each class by regional adult education staff.

All professional development training sessions, online courses, and conferences are evaluated. Presenters and training teams review the evaluations, consider feedback, and adjust as needed. A comprehensive statewide needs assessment is utilized to determine professional development areas of need and/or improvement. Those identified areas are addressed regionally and at the annual West Virginia Adult Education Association, Inc. (WVAEA) statewide conference where guest speakers and selected instructional staff present creative and innovative research-based practices such as the essential components of reading instruction. Providers and instructional staff are encouraged to attend state and national conferences relating to adult education to further enhance their knowledge base and program. All professional development is tracked via the state management information system, where reports can be generated to identify non-compliance with state-mandated requirements.

## **ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM CERTIFICATIONS AND ASSURANCES**

<b>States must provide written and signed certifications that:</b>		
1.	The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan;	Yes
2.	The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program;	Yes
3.	The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan;	Yes
4.	All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law;	Yes
5.	A State officer, specified by title in the certification, has authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the plan;	Yes
6.	The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan;	Yes
7.	The agency that is submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan; and	Yes
8.	The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program;	Yes
<b>The State Plan must include assurances that:</b>		
1.	The eligible agency will expend funds appropriated to carry out title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with fiscal requirements under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding the supplement-not-supplant requirement);	Yes
2.	The eligible agency will ensure that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA;	Yes
3.	The eligible agency will not use any funds made available under title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not “eligible individuals” within the meaning of section 203(4) of WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA;	Yes
4.	Using funds made available under title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.	Yes
5.	The eligible agency agrees that in expending funds made available under Title II of WIOA, the eligible agency will comply with sections 8301 through 8303 of the Buy American Act (41 U.S.C. 8301-8303).	Yes

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)

*Instructions: In the text box below, describe the steps the applicant proposes to take to ensure*

*equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally-assisted program for students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries with special needs provide the information to meet the requirements of Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA), consistent with the following instructions. Click here to enter text.*

OMB Control No. 1894-0005 (Exp. 04/30/2020)

#### NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS

*Review the linked document. Where “applicant” is mentioned, that refers to the State eligible agency and “application” refers to the state plan. This element does not apply to local providers for state plan purposes. State eligible agencies are required to maintain local GEPA responses separately from the state plan. The State eligible agency must provide a response to GEPA regarding use of AEFLA State Administration and State Leadership funds in the State Plan.*

The purpose of this enclosure is to inform you about the following provision in the Department of Education's General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) that applies to applicants for new grant awards under Department programs. This provision is Section 427 of GEPA, enacted as part of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law (P.L.) 103-382).

#### **To Whom Does This Provision Apply?**

Section 427 of GEPA affects applicants for new grant awards under this program. **ALL APPLICANTS FOR NEW AWARDS MUST INCLUDE INFORMATION IN THEIR APPLICATIONS TO ADDRESS THIS NEW PROVISION IN ORDER TO RECEIVE FUNDING UNDER THIS PROGRAM.**

(If this program is a State-formula grant program, a State needs to provide this description only for projects or activities that it carries out with funds reserved for State-level uses. In addition, local school districts or other eligible applicants that apply to the State for funding need to provide this description in their applications to the State for funding. The State would be responsible for ensuring that the school district or other local entity has submitted a sufficient section 427 statement as described below.)

#### **What Does This Provision Require?**

Section 427 requires each applicant for funds (other than an individual person) to include in its application a description of the steps the applicant proposes to take to ensure equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally-assisted program for students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries with special needs. This provision allows applicants discretion in developing the required description. The statute highlights six types of barriers that can impede equitable access or participation: gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age. Based on local circumstances, you should determine whether these or other barriers may prevent your students, teachers, etc. from such access or participation in, the Federally-funded project or activity. The description in your application of steps to be taken to overcome these barriers need not be lengthy; you may provide a clear and succinct description of how you plan to address those barriers that are applicable to your circumstances. In addition, the information may be provided in a single narrative, or, if appropriate, may be discussed in connection with related topics in the application.

Section 427 is not intended to duplicate the requirements of civil rights statutes, but rather to ensure that, in designing their projects, applicants for Federal funds address equity concerns that may affect the ability of certain potential beneficiaries to fully participate in the project and to achieve to high standards. Consistent with program requirements and its approved application, an applicant may use the Federal funds awarded to it to eliminate barriers it

identifies.

### **What are Examples of How an Applicant Might Satisfy the Requirement of This Provision?**

The following examples may help illustrate how an applicant may comply with Section 427.

- (1) An applicant that proposes to carry out an adult literacy project serving, among others, adults with limited English proficiency, might describe in its application how it intends to distribute a brochure about the proposed project to such potential participants in their native language.
- (2) An applicant that proposes to develop instructional materials for classroom use might describe how it will make the materials available on audio tape or in braille for students who are blind.
- (3) An applicant that proposes to carry out a model science program for secondary students and is concerned that girls may be less likely than boys to enroll in the course, might indicate how it intends to conduct "outreach" efforts to girls, to encourage their enrollment.
- (4) An applicant that proposes a project to increase school safety might describe the special efforts it will take to address concern of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students, and efforts to reach out to and involve the families of LGBT students

We recognize that many applicants may already be implementing effective steps to ensure equity of access and participation in their grant programs, and we appreciate your cooperation in responding to the requirements of this provision.

#### *Estimated Burden Statement for GEPA Requirements*

**According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1.5 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to obtain or retain benefit (Public Law 103-382. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20210-4537 or email [ICDocketMgr@ed.gov](mailto:ICDocketMgr@ed.gov) and reference the OMB Control Number 1894-0005.**

1. [SF424B - Assurances – Non-Construction Programs](http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html)  
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)
2. [Grants.gov - Certification Regarding Lobbying](http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html)  
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)
3. [SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities \(required, only if applicable\)](http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html)  
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)

## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

### Program-Specific Requirements for State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA.

#### A. STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

*All VR agencies, except for those that have an independent consumer-controlled commission, must have a State Rehabilitation Council (Council or SRC) that meets the criteria in section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable, has (select A or B):*

(A) is an independent State commission.

(B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council.

*In accordance with Assurance 3(b), please provide information on the current composition of the Council by representative type, including the term number of the representative, as applicable, and any vacancies, as well as the beginning dates of each representative's term.*

<b>Council Representative</b>	<b>Current Term Number/ Vacant</b>	<b>Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.</b>
Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)	1	December 2023
Parent Training and Information Center	N/A	November 2014, appointment requested
Client Assistance Program	N/A	December 2023
Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor (Ex Officio if Employed by the VR Agency)	1	August 2023
Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider	2	October 2021
Business, Industry, and Labor	1	October 2021
Business, Industry, and Labor	2	September 2023, appointment requested
Business, Industry, and Labor	1	August 2023
Business, Industry, and Labor	1	August 2023
Disability Advocacy Groups	2	October 2021
Current or Former Applicants for, or Recipients of, VR services	1	August 2023
Section 121 Project Directors in the State (as applicable)	N/A	N/A
State Educational Agency Responsible for Students with Disabilities Eligible to Receive Services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	N/A	August 2023, appointment requested
State Workforce Development Board	1	September 2023
VR Agency Director (Ex Officio)	N/A	July 2023, appointment requested
Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider	1	August 2023

Disability Advocacy Groups	2	September 2023, appointment requested
Other: Higher Education Representative	2	October 2021
Other: Special Education Representative	1	October 2021

*If the SRC is not meeting the composition requirements in section 105(b) of the Rehabilitation Act and/or is not meeting quarterly as required in section 105(f) of the Rehabilitation Act, provide the steps that the VR agency is taking to ensure it meets those requirements.*

Not Applicable

*In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(21)(A)(ii)(III) of the Rehabilitation Act, include a summary of the Council's input (including how it was obtained) into the State Plan and any State Plan revisions, including recommendations from the Council's annual reports, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction and other Council reports.*

The West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (WVDRS) received input from the West Virginia State Rehabilitation Council (WVSRC) members and chairperson regarding the Combined State Plan to be submitted by the WIOA partners in 2024. The input and the agency responses are reported below.

Observation 1: The partnership between the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (WV DRS), the WV Department of Education (DOE), WV Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (WV SDB), WIOA partners create a valuable community for people with disabilities. WV DRS continues to have successful outreach to students with disabilities from ages 14 – 21 to encourage increased enrollment at a younger age for VR services like pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) to achieve vocational training, postsecondary education, and employment goals. WV SRC recognizes the inclusion of its partnerships and CRPs on the “Pathways to the Future” website ([pathwayswv.org](http://pathwayswv.org)) and looks forward to seeing additional growth in this area.

Recommendation 1: The WV SRC recommends WV DRS continue longitudinal tracking with WIOA measurements to highlight the benefits of Pre-ETS and VR services for the student’s long-term success. WV DRS has increased communication efforts with their long-standing and newly innovated partnerships which can offer additional support for students’ continuation of care. WV DRS could bring in the local agencies, councils, partners, and programs, like CRPs, at the end of their Pre-ETS camps or have their booths at the Pre-ETS camps. These WV DRS connections help students receive more services, more frequently, from this evolved community of support. The ongoing communication and collaborative efforts made by WV DRS are beneficial for students throughout the 55 counties of WV.

Observation 2: WV DRS prioritizes people with disabilities to go through the application and enrollment process to receive individualized services as soon as possible. This is evident as WV DRS continues in its innovative efforts to serve students in their secondary education, as young as 14 years of age. The Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) will encourage the student to get on board and include VR services while identifying their future goals.

Recommendation 2: The WV SRC recommends that WV DRS continue its frequent presence in high schools and/or vocational schools. Having VR Counselors available to inform students about all the WV DRS services and programs will give the students a variety of choices on what to incorporate into their IPE. Keeping the students well-informed allows them to have ownership of their personalized IPE. Building awareness of WV DRS services is also crucial in non-traditional educational settings, such as Home Schools. WV DRS counselors have opportunities to assess the needs of students’ families for additional supportive programs from WV DRS and their partners.

Observation 3: There has been an increased awareness of how effective communication between first responders and people with disabilities is vital. WV DRS continues to empower individuals with varying disabilities to live more independently, including driving and excelling in their career goals. There have been noticeable efforts from WV DRS to assure their consumers have a multitude of resources to achieve their goals. One of these efforts can be seen on the WV DRS website's Consumer Affairs Committees (CAC) page, which reads, "The committees' activities focus on a broad range of goals, including public awareness and support for the rights, individual dignity, personal responsibility, full inclusion, equal access, self-determination, and community involvement of people with disabilities."

Recommendation 3: The WV SRC recommends that WV DRS has their Consumer Affairs Committees collaborate with partners, such as the WV Department of Education (DOE), West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and the Blind, WorkForce, and additional partners as needed, to create materials for effective communication between first responders and people with disabilities statewide. The WV SRC and partnering councils, such as WV SILC could provide support in this endeavor as well.

After further discussion with the CSAVR Director, she described training programs that have been created, alongside law enforcement, for disability awareness with an emphasis on effective communication and interaction. One specific example can be seen on the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services website (<https://oklahoma.gov/okWVDRS/newsroom/2023/09/sdhhdeafawarenessweek.html>). David Hankinson is a Program Manager, from the Services to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (SDHH), within the Oklahoma WVDRS VR division. The Oklahoma School for the Deaf also provided support with SDHH and OK WVDRS to collaboratively work with law enforcement to create laminated "police communication cards." These cards were distributed in 2023 for free, during Deaf Awareness Week, in September. The laminated card is something that people who are hearing impaired can keep in their car visor for easy access, which can be used by other first responders, for effective communication. This allows the person with hearing impairments to point out the laminated card items, like their preferred way of communication if they need roadside assistance or emergency medical attention. The first responder can also point to the card to communicate why the individual is being stopped if they need to see identification and additional commands. Hankinson explained that first responders' interactions can cause misunderstandings and frustration on both sides; especially if there is a flashlight obstructing the person with hearing impairments to not see the queues or read lips, possibly leaving the officer to assume they are being intentionally non-compliant. If a person who is hard of hearing relies on sign language, but their interaction leads to handcuffs, they are physically silenced. WV DRS has the resources and support to create a variety of first responder, community, and employment communication cards to reduce barriers experienced by people with disabilities (vision, hearing, etc.). This initiative would build a relationship with first responders, increase community awareness statewide, create promotional opportunities, and most importantly – empower individuals with disabilities.

Observation 4: WV DRS continues collaborative efforts with partners at WFWV, WV DOE, WV SDB, CRPs, councils, and local agencies who can optimize an individual's independence and provide support in helping someone maximize their employment opportunities and income. These programs can help individuals achieve their employment goals, which increase career options through local connections (especially in rural areas). Stronger collaboration promotes employment sustainability for consumers with a significant disability. This previous observation has been expanded since there has been a noticeable decline in "Performance Indicator 1.4 – Significance of Disability" which measures the percentage of consumers with a significant disability to earn at least minimum wage. Even though the measurement was less than 5% shy of RSA's federal benchmark of 62.4%, there has been a significant decline from FY 2019 being at 99.4% to FY 2022 reporting at 57.7%. This goal was understandably impacted during the global COVID 19 pandemic as the economy continues in the recovery process.

Recommendation 4: WV SRC recommends WV DRS and consumers benefit from all the effort

WV DRS has put into building better relationships with partners at WFWV, WV DOE, WV SDB, CRPs, councils, and local agencies. WV SRC commends WV DRS in their ongoing and newer strategies, like hosting Quarterly CRP Meetings. WV SRC recommends WV DRS have an updated supportive services summary sheet, categorized and divided by region, to be made easily accessible on the WV DRS website for potential and current consumers. WV DRS Counselors could provide this updated supportive services summary sheet along with WV DRS handouts to offer additional services to encourage employment retention and continued support.

Observation 5: WV DRS continues collaboration with WIOA partners, such as when WV DRS hosted the first-ever WIOA Partners Conference in June of 2022 to enhance teamwork and coordination with hundreds of participants from WIOA partners and stakeholders. WV DRS has an opportunity to further integrate and coordinate with WIOA program partners on WIOA common performance measures, such as the Measurable Skills Gain Rate measure. The American Job Centers (AJC) buildings house WFWV programs, as well as other community partners. There is a WV DRS office in AJC buildings, such as the Kanawha County location.

Recommendation 5: WV SRC recommends WV DRS coordinate with WIOA program partners for historical knowledge on WIOA common performance measures for leverage and reuse of resources and methodologies. This will further prepare WV DRS consumers while increasing measures, like the Measurable Skills Gain Rate. WV DRS will build onto its top-tier services with educational, skills, employment, and networking opportunities. Since the relationship pre-exists between WV DRS and WIOA partners (e.g., AJC) this would be a streamlined process for the most elite toolkit to benefit WV DRS and consumers.

Observation 6: Persistent efforts are needed for competitive long-term employment in the business industry. This was another area impacted nationally by the COVID-19 Pandemic and was reflected in the Performance Indicator 1.6 — Self-Support. This measured consumers whose earnings were at least minimum wage, the difference in the percentage of individuals who at program entry reported their income as the largest single source of support, and the percentage that reported their personal income as the largest single source of support at program exit. (Federal Requirement – 53% mathematical differences). WV DRS reported above the federal benchmark in FY 2019 at 62.9% but in FY 2022 it was 37.5% - causing a 15.5% gap in meeting the federal standard, which is a national, if not global issue, deriving from the job market and economy shift during and post-COVID 19. The pandemic also impacted reporting from the mandated social distancing policies with the service industry and virtual schooling inevitably posing as a problem for this measurement.

Recommendation 6: The WV SRC recommends the continuation of educating and showcasing businesses who integrate WV DRS consumers as noted in the “WV DRS Annual Report 2022.” - There were barrier-shattering accomplishments by WV DRS Employment Services Unit for FY 2022. Some of these accomplishments include increasing business engagement strategies like joining the Chamber of Commerce to more than double employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities in On-the-Job Trainings (OJT); implementing an Employer Recognition Program; Providing a comprehensive two-day disability inclusion training from WINDMILLS; and many more. WV SRC encourages WV DRS to continue conducting workshops and include firsthand testimonials in email blasts. Coordinating WV DRS presence with local organizations, such as the Charleston Area Alliance which hosts monthly “Business After Hours” social events. There are also WV One Stop Business Center locations that are frequented by new and established business owners. Additional income opportunities for those qualifying for WVABLE is another program WV DRS partners with and should continue to encourage consumers to include WVABLE as a resource for financial support.

Observation 7: WV DRS has opportunities to raise awareness of their consumers’ vocational rehabilitation and successful careers. Having this additional knowledge spread throughout our state lowers barriers for people with disabilities and raises opportunities in the community. WV DRS has proven this ongoing initiative from the success of job opportunities derived when joining a local Chamber of Commerce, more than doubling On-the-Job Training (OJT) for people



with disabilities.

Recommendation 7: WV SRC recommends WV DRS have a publicity committee established, or rejuvenated to boost publication efforts through websites, newspaper articles, statewide magazine advertisements, and being more active on social media platforms. Public broadcasting on local news channels can be increased, especially for special events, like the WV DRS Annual Ability Works Ceremony, and the Annual Essay Contest. Further opportunities and services will be made available to people with disabilities as communities witness the WV DRS consumer success stories.

Observation 8: WV DRS has been working with The Behavioral Health, Corrections, and Community Assets Programs and other agencies to provide information on WV DRS programs and services. WV DRS Counselors have also received resources to offer to consumers involved in the criminal justice system. This networking has assisted consumers with co-occurring conditions, such as mental health and substance-related disorders to manage barriers and achieve employment goals.

Recommendation 8: The WV SRC recommends WV DRS continues working together with active participation in Behavioral Health Planning Council, WV Olmstead Council, WV Achieving a Better Life Experience (WVABLE) Advisory Committee, Developmental Disabilities Council, Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board, Fair Shake Network, Dangerous Assessment Advisory Board, Bridging Resources West Virginia Advisory Committee, the Creating Opportunities for Recovery Employment (CORE) Regional Advisory Council, and Jobs and Hope program. WV SRC recommends expanding these endeavors, like Jobs and Hope, to the known underserved areas with transportation barriers. WV SRC is interested in reviewing additional reporting deriving from these impressive partnerships to combat this complex crisis.

Observation 9: WV DRS consumers typically need a variety of transportation methods, depending on their short-term and long-term goals. Some consumers may require public transportation education until they can afford a vehicle, regain their driving privileges, and/or have vehicle modifications. Others will benefit from options, such as transportation services programs, or drivers' education and tutoring. WV DRS consumers receive support to increase independence with programs such as the Rehabilitation Technology Unit, which travels across the state to provide accommodation services and driving instructors. This unit offers continued training, such as self-advocacy, workplace readiness, money management, driver education, and training for various modes of transportation.

Recommendation 9: WV SRC recommends WV DRS continue growing programs, such as the Rehabilitation Technology Unit. WV DRS counselors should be well informed of the more unique services, such as vehicle modifications, accommodation services, and driving instructors. WV DRS impresses the importance of employment, so incorporating preparation for the appropriate transportation resource is crucial for the consumers' careers and independence. WV DRS consumers would benefit from the education of the public transportation system, specifically for people with visual, hearing, or mobility-classified disabilities.

WV SRC recommends WV DRS research Driving Simulators, including Commercial Driver License (CDL) Training Simulators (e.g., WVU Occupational Therapy and WV Community College). These additional driving training opportunities would significantly increase skills and confidence in WV DRS consumers to go into careers requiring specialized driving operational licenses, like CDLs.

Observation 10: WV DRS continues to host dynamic and impactful conferences for internal training and collaboration with partners. This large undertaking assures knowledge of the services and programs available from WV DRS and their abundant amount of collaborations are known internally and across the rehabilitation network in West Virginia. A healthy company culture increases productivity, which can also be seen in the high quality of services provided to WV DRS consumers.

Recommendation 10: WV SRC recommends WV DRS continue hosting valuable conferences and training courses with their partners and CRPs, as well as internally. These events and recurring meetings provide a platform to encourage a positive working culture of appreciation. Having keynote speakers can re-ignite passion and purpose. WV SRC recommends incorporating feedback from the WV DRS consumers' real-life experiences to WV DRS internally. This effort would be another source of encouragement like the success stories shared at the Ability Works Ceremony. WV SRC recommends WV DRS have a publicity committee established. WV DRS also has self-advocacy training for consumers. Encouraging WV DRS consumers in self-advocacy training to communicate the barriers they are overcoming and their successes along the way will increase their self-advocacy skills. Connecting these WV DRS consumers to an internal publicity committee would allow them to confidently use their voice. Utilizing opportunities like this will support recognition for the valuable work of the WV DRS staff as well; and share knowledge of consumer services available.

## CONSUMER SATISFACTION

As part of its program improvement efforts, WVDRS continued to support the implementation of consumer satisfaction surveys of its clients to ensure quality services for WVDRS consumers. The WV State Rehabilitation Council (WVSRC) conducted the surveys (with full WVDRS assistance and cooperation). WVSRC is primarily responsible for the completion of the consumer satisfaction survey for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) consumers. WVDRS continued to provide and supplement the fiscal and human resources needed for its successful completion. WVSRC members selected a survey method that allowed former WVDRS clients and individuals who were not accepted for VR services to be contacted via mail surveys as soon as they exit WVDRS from various statuses throughout the fiscal year. The findings were based on consumer satisfaction information gathered from 211 responses across the six WVDRS districts. Respondents to the consumer satisfaction survey were asked to rate their agreement with statements about their interactions with WVDRS. The ratings were "strongly agree," "agree," "neutral," "disagree," and "strongly disagree." Respondents were provided an option to indicate replies that were neutral or that the survey item was not applicable. Selected highlights of the December 2022 Consumer Satisfaction Survey of WVDRS clients as reported by the WVSRC were: Overall, responses for the 2021-2022 survey were slightly higher than the reported satisfaction in previous years. The mean rating across the ten satisfaction items was 88% for 2021-22, compared to 86% for 2020-21, 86% for 2019-20, 80% for 2018-19, 78% for 2017-18, and 76% for 2016-17. Major findings of the consumer satisfaction survey included: (1) respondents felt their rehabilitation counselor treated them with respect (94%), (2) they felt that the eligibility requirements and process for receiving services were clearly explained by WVDRS staff (94%), (3) their questions were answered clearly by WVDRS (93%), (4) they received the services they needed (90%), and (5) they were satisfied with the services provided (90%). Respondents also reported that their counselor stayed in contact, so they knew what was happening (89%) and that they were made aware of the steps and responsibilities to achieve their employment goal (89%). Consumers also reported high ratings ("Above Average" or "Excellent") for accessibility of local offices (95%), and the overall experience with WVDRS (91%).

## STRATEGIC PLANNING

Strategic planning discussions occur on a regular basis at WVDRS Executive Management Group meetings, which include representatives of the SRC and Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), as appropriate. Needs assessment results are shared with the SRC and SILC. WVDRS Goals and Priorities were presented at meetings of the SRC, where the SRC has opportunities for input. The SRC meetings include a variety of stakeholders, including representatives from the Client Assistance Program, SILC, other state agencies, and stakeholders.

To ensure transparency and public awareness regarding the Program Year (PY) 2024 VR portion of the WV Combined State Plan, WVDRS posted a draft version on the agency's website for review.

The West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (WVDRS) held a public meeting on the Vocational Rehabilitation portion of the WV Combined State Plan for Program Years 2024-2027 on December 19, 2023, to receive comments and questions from VR stakeholders pertaining to the Vocational Rehabilitation Portion of the Combined State Plan. The meeting was publicized on both the WV Secretary of State's and WVDRS' websites. The meeting was also announced during stakeholder meetings and emails to stakeholders, including the WV State Rehabilitation Council and the Client Assistance Program. Thirteen individuals attended the meeting either in person or virtually. DRS also held a public comment period on the Vocational Rehabilitation portion of the WV Combined State Plan for Program Years 2024-2027 from December 11, 2023-January 10, 2024. Disability Rights of West Virginia (DRWV), the federally mandated protection and advocacy system for the state of West Virginia, submitted comments on the VR Portion; there were no other comments received. The following is a summary of the comments received from DRWV and the WVDRS responses to the comments.

#### **DRWV Comment:**

**Page 6: WVDRS Response to Observation/Recommendation 2:** "WVDRS agrees that it is important for students and youth with disabilities to begin the vocational rehabilitation process as early as appropriate after reaching 14 years of age. WVDRS is open to the recommendation and has requested that counselors identify any possible opportunities for additional embedded VR offices within high schools. WVDRS continues to maintain an office on campus at the WV Schools for the Deaf and Blind to provide awareness and services, including Pre-ETS, in an expeditious manner. If additional opportunities arise, WVDRS will move forward to establish offices, where appropriate and agreed upon by both parties." **DRWV also agrees that it's important for students and youth with disabilities to begin vocational rehabilitation services as early as appropriate after reaching 14 years of age. However, while providing advocacy services throughout the state of WV, DRWV has become aware of gaps in DRS services. DRWV recommends that DRS work closely with the Local Educational Agency (LEA) to educate parents, students, and school personnel on DRS services and eligibility requirements. DRS could set up resource tables and/or request time on assembly agendas during open houses, Local School Improvement Council (LSIC) meetings, and /or parent resource fairs. In addition, most LEAs have a communication system that regularly sends information blasts to parents, students, and school personnel. DRS could request the LEA to share information regarding DRS services. There are many students across West Virginia who are enrolled in public schools and some students who receive services in facilities that could benefit from DRS services, but the information is not readily available. DRWV believes that there are opportunities for DRS to have a meaningful presence at LEAs. However, it appears that DRS Counselors mostly visit schools to attend IEP meetings for a few students but have no other interaction with potential clients.**

#### **WVDRS Response:**

WVDRS has a long history of serving students and transitioning youth with disabilities and has sustained this focus through the continued implementation of the WIOA. WVDRS' ongoing efforts are evidenced by the large percentage of applicants who are students with disabilities, which comprise over half of all individuals who apply for and receive WVDRS services. WVDRS serves students with disabilities who are enrolled in both public and private schools, homeschool, and other educational settings.

WVDRS maintains formal interagency agreements with the WV Department of Education, the WV Schools for the Deaf and the Blind, and each of the 55 county boards of education. For many years, WVDRS has assigned a vocational rehabilitation counselor to each public high school in the state, and this practice continues today.

WVDRS and Education have a shared partnership and shared responsibility to students with disabilities, and WVDRS takes its role to fully engage with and supplement education for students and transitioning youth with disabilities very seriously. Through the Systemic Transition Enhancement Project starting in 2021 (STEP21) initiative, WVDRS has encouraged

full participation from our partners, stakeholders, staff, and consumers to increase awareness of the availability of our services and to advance high-quality employment outcomes for participating students with disabilities.

WVDRS works with the WV Department of Education (WVDE) and the Office of Special Education to cross-train WVDRS and Education staff, including special education coordinators and teachers. WVDRS also works with WVDE to develop and disseminate outreach materials to students with disabilities and their parents, grandparents, and/or guardians. Special education staff across the state have been trained on the use of PathwaysWV.org, WVDRS's website, which targets students with disabilities, their parents/guardians, and education staff.

As part of the STEP21 initiative, WVDRS renewed its commitment to maximize outreach and services to students with disabilities while calling on stakeholders, including the school system, to assist WVDRS with its outreach and referral efforts. Additionally, WVDRS conducts a variety of outreach efforts across the state that vary by county and school. These activities include outreach by WVDRS and/or Education staff and are not limited to parents' nights, transition fairs, job fairs, and community and sporting events. For over five years, WVDRS has provided large informational banners to all public high schools in the state to be placed in high-traffic areas of the schools. The banners target high school students with disabilities and provide a summary of WVDRS' services, DRS contact information, website address, and a QR code to allow smartphone users to quickly access the WVDRS website.

WVDRS rehabilitation professionals do attend IEP meetings whenever invited (WVDRS staff cannot attend unless invited), but as illustrated, these meetings are not the only WVDRS presence within West Virginia's educational system.

#### **DRWV Comment:**

**Page 7: continue WVDRS Response to Observation/Recommendation 2:** "Additionally, WVDRS has made concerted efforts to provide outreach and services to nontraditional education settings for youth with disabilities, such as juvenile centers and facilities, Youth Reporting Centers, and other similar locations. The youth in these settings are afforded the same opportunity to receive Pre-ETS and other VR services as individuals in traditional settings, as appropriate. Further outreach continues to be conducted with stakeholder groups, such as parent and grandparent organizations, to include those students who may be in homeschool, private school, or other educational settings." **DRWV's direct advocacy with youth with disabilities in non-traditional education settings has NOT shown that DRS provides the same outreach and services to these individuals. Often, the facility staff are not familiar with DRS services. DRWV recommends that DRS becomes actively involved and responsive and works closely with the Youth Transitional Facilities and private and state Children's Residential Facilities.**

#### **WVDRS Response:**

In recent years, WVDRS Director Bua-Iam launched a targeted outreach effort to increase awareness of its services to individuals working and residing in Youth Transitional Facilities, state Children's Residential Facilities, and other nontraditional educational settings. The initial efforts were conducted in conjunction with a DRWV staff attorney, who was also a member of the WV State Rehabilitation Council during this time, WVDRS' Program Specialist over Behavioral Health/Corrections/Community Assets, and local WVDRS rehabilitation counselors and managers. After the initial outreach process, which included direct contact with all related facilities, WVDRS staff continues to visit and meet with potential consumers and facility staff. As always, WVDRS is ready and willing to act on any specific information regarding potential locations where additional outreach may benefit potential consumers.

#### **DRWV Comment:**

**Page 8: WVDRS Response to Observation/Recommendation 3:** “WVDRS is in agreement with the benefits of materials that enhance the communication between individuals with disabilities and first responders. The agency appreciates the research and examples provided by the SRC, CSAVR, and other VR agencies. WVDRS will work with its CACs and other stakeholders, including the SRC, to explore the development, creation, and distribution of materials that would afford more effective communication between first responders and people with disabilities statewide, as appropriate.” **DRWV developed an EMS Communication Card with WVU CED, National Down Syndrome Society, City of St. Albans Fire Rescue, and WV Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. There is also a D/HH Visor Card for use by a Deaf or hard-of-hearing individual in a vehicle. This material that has already been developed may be of assistance to DRS and its clients. DRWV shared electronic and physical copies of this material.**

**WVDRS Response:**

WVDRS greatly appreciates DRWV providing these valuable materials to assist individuals with disabilities across the state with communicating with first responders. WVDRS will make those materials, in both electronic and physical forms, available to its consumers and other stakeholders whenever appropriate and allowable.

**DRWV Comment:**

**Page 14 of the VR Portion of the WV Unified State Plan for Program Years 2020-2023, effective beginning July 1, 2020:** “DRS also maintains communication and works with other non-educational agencies that serve out-of-school youth in order to introduce and provide VR services. These agencies include Youth Reporting Centers under the WV Division of Juvenile Services and Peer Support Centers, funded by the WV Bureau for Behavioral Health. Youth Reporting Centers are community-based centers that provide intervention programs for at-risk youth and also provide reintegration services for youth returning to the community. The Peer Support Centers provide a variety of support services for qualifying youth with behavioral health conditions.” **Page 13: of the draft Vocational Rehabilitation Portion of the WV Combined State Plan for Program Years 2024-2027, 4. Non-Educational Agencies Serving Out-Of-School Youth: DRWV questions the removal of language outlined in the PY 2020-2023 plan. It appears DRS has transferred all efforts to introduce and provide VR services to Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) partners.**

**WVDRS Response:**

WVDRS appreciates the opportunity to clarify the referenced section of the VR Portion of the WV Combined State Plan. To be clear, WVDRS has not “transferred all efforts to introduce and provide VR services to WIO partners.” This section of the VR Portion of the WV Combined State Plan requires DRS to describe its interagency cooperation with other agencies, including those noneducational agencies serving out-of-school youth (a separate and distinct population served by a required program under Title I of WIOA and administered by the U.S. Department of Labor at the federal level and by WFWV in West Virginia). This program is required to serve youth who are not enrolled in certain educational or training programs. Participants and potential participants of this program may also have disabilities, making them potentially eligible for VR services through WVDRS. Because of these potential VR consumers, WVDRS works with this program to coordinate outreach and referrals. Furthermore, WFWV and WVDRS strive to co-serve eligible individuals, whenever appropriate and allowable, to maximize services, resources, and expertise to increase quality employment outcomes.

**DRWV Comment:**

**Page 15: Subminimum Wage Employment:** “Section 511 of the WIOA imposes requirements on WVDE and Rehabilitation with regard to youth with disabilities seeking subminimum wage employment. Rehabilitation and WVDE shall work cooperatively to ensure that the individual,

before beginning work that is compensated at a subminimum wage, has completed and produces documentation indicating completion of each of the following actions..." **DRWV would like to know why DRS is promoting subminimum wage employment to students. DRWV suggests that DRS educate students about competitive integrated employment. According to the US Department of Labor's website list of 14c Certificate holders, there is only one employer that is listed from WV with a current certificate to allow subminimum wage. It would be more in line with the current Employment First framework to promote competitive pay for all people with disabilities.**

**WVDRS Response:**

WVDRS appreciates the opportunity to clarify this section of the VR Portion of the WV Combined State Plan. This section references a federal requirement of the formal interagency agreement between WVDRS and the WV Department of Education to address Section 511 of the Rehabilitation Act [Title IV of WIOA; see 34 C.F.R. §361.22(b)(6), 34 C.F.R §397.31, and 34 C.F.R. §397.5(d)] regarding subminimum wage employment, specifically students and youth with disabilities seeking subminimum wage employment.

As the state agency responsible for administering the WIOA Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation program, WVDRS is not permitted to assist individuals with disabilities, including students and youth, with gaining or maintaining subminimum wage employment. WVDRS only serves eligible individuals with disabilities seeking competitive integrated employment, which supports the employment first philosophy. WVDRS is also an active member of the West Virginia Employment First Task Force.

Additionally, as required by Section 511, WVDRS regularly provides information and resources regarding competitive integrated employment and available vocational rehabilitation services to all individuals with disabilities in the state working in subminimum wage employment under a 14(c) certificate holder.

**DRWV Comment:**

**Page 17:** "As part of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), WVDRS attempted a one-on-one Pre-ETS needs assessment discussion with teachers and administrators in all of West Virginia's 55 counties. WVDRS received participation from 64 high schools in 29 (out of 55) counties in 2023." The VR Portion of the WV Unified State Plan for Program Years 2020-2023, effective beginning July 1, 2020, referenced a 2019 joint training with the WV Office of Special Education, that included cross-training for over 200 staff." **What efforts were made in 2023 to reach all high schools, non-traditional educational settings, and the WV Office of Special Education? It appears that the 2019 training was relatively successful. DRWV recommends that DRS make all the necessary attempts to train all stakeholders.**

**WVDRS Response:**

As previously mentioned, WVDRS conducts outreach in a variety of ways. This includes direct outreach by vocational rehabilitation counselors, large informational banners in high schools, outreach by state-level staff including the Program Specialist over Behavioral Health/Corrections/Community Assets, and a full-time outreach coordinator. As part of the CSNA, WVDRS relied on a variety of methods from its own staff and through coordinated efforts with state and local level partners. This included direct, in-person, and email efforts. While WVDRS would prefer more respondents, participation in the CSNA is completely voluntary, and we greatly appreciate all respondents to the CSNA, including those who serve students with disabilities.

WVDRS agrees with the benefits of cross-training staff from other agencies and continues to do so on local and state levels. For example, DRS hosted a partner agency conference with attendees from over 80 different agencies/programs. During the conference, each agency/program was afforded the opportunity to present information about their agency/program to the entire audience and have informational tables set up for the duration of

the conference. Conference attendees included representatives from the WV Department of Education, Office of Special Education, and other agencies and programs that serve individuals with disabilities.

**DRWV Comment:**

**Page 19: Transition and Pre-Employment Transition Services Planning:** “The participation of Rehabilitation counselors, or other Rehabilitation staff, as appropriate, in the IEP process, will help students and parents understand the differences in and facilitate the provision of educational and rehabilitation services.” **As mentioned during the public comment session held on December 19, 2023,” DRWV recommends that “other Rehabilitation staff,” be defined. DRWV has concerns with the vague reference to “other Rehabilitation staff” language. DRWV believes that DRS clients could potentially be at risk of receiving services from unqualified DRS staff.**

**WVDRS Response:**

WVDRS appreciates the opportunity to clarify this section of the VR Portion of the WV Combined State Plan. As described in the quoted section above, WVDRS utilizes its staff, as appropriate, to attend IEP meetings to inform students and parents about VR services and what type of services may be the responsibility of WVDRS and those that may be the responsibility of the LEA. While WVDRS has a Rehabilitation Counselor assigned to each high school in the state, the number and timing of IEP meetings greatly exceeds the capacity of its VR counselors to attend every IPE meeting. To maximize its presence at IEP meetings, WVDRS utilizes other staff, including District Managers and Branch Office Managers (all former Rehabilitation Counselors), and Rehabilitation Services Associates (RSA), who are paraprofessionals who assist Rehabilitation Counselors. To be clear, there is no risk of any consumer being provided services from unqualified WVDRS staff. Rehabilitation Counselors, including those in management positions, are the only WVDRS staff permitted to conduct certain activities and provide certain services to WVDRS consumers. This includes determining eligibility and the development and implementation of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). To maximize efficiency with existing human and fiscal resources, other WVDRS staff, including RSAs and Employment Specialists, may assist the Rehabilitation Counselor with various clerical and paraprofessional aspects of casework and service provision. However, the Rehabilitation Counselor is responsible for overseeing consumers' cases.

**DRWV Comment:**

**Page 22: Outreach and Identification:** “Outreach activities and student identification will be conducted as early as possible, preferably no later than the students' 10th grade year, and shall include...” **DRWV suggests that DRS focus on the student's age and not the grade. If the LEA has a requirement to begin transition services at age 14, and DRS is an important part of transition services it seems as though DRS would want to train and educate potential clients as soon as possible. There are some 9th graders who are 14 years of age. If DRS waits until the student is in the 10th grade, then an entire school year will be missed.**

**WVDRS Response:**

WVDRS appreciates this opportunity to clarify that this language is an excerpt from its interagency agreement with the WV Department of Education (WVDE), which primarily focuses on coordinated efforts and is not exhaustive of WVDRS' additional efforts and activities outside the scope of the agreement with WVDE. WVDRS is required to have an agreement with WVDE, and that agreement must contain certain information; certain sections of this agreement are required to be included in the VR Portion of the WV Combined State Plan, and the referenced section reflects WVDRS' response to those requirements. In accordance with federal regulations and the state definition of "student with a disability," WVDRS only provides services to individuals who are a minimum of 14 years of age. As quoted above from the interagency agreement between WVDRS and the WVDE, outreach activities begin and student identification

is conducted as early as possible. WVDRS does not have a grade-level requirement and actively and fully serves students with disabilities prior to their 10th-grade year, including students aged 14 and above who are currently enrolled in the 9th grade or below (e.g., middle school).

**DRWV Comment:**

**Page 95: Order of Selection:** “The Counselor will determine the significance of an individual’s disability after conducting a diagnostic study that allows for assessing the permanency of the disability, the number of functional capacities limited by the disability, the number of vocational rehabilitation (VR) services needed, and the time in service required to complete those services. These criteria are used when determining whether the individual’s disability is non-significant, significant, or most significant.” **DRWV believes that the language could be misleading and gives the impression that the counselor has the absolute authority to make disability determinations based on vague guidelines and limited information.**

**WVDRS Response:**

WVDRS appreciates the opportunity to clarify the Order of Selection section of the VR Portion of the WV Combined State Plan. As outlined in the VR Portion, as well as the WVDRS Client Services Manual, which is available on the WVDRS website, a Rehabilitation Counselor does not and cannot base the significance of disability on vague guidelines and/or limited information. In 2020, WVDRS revised the previous Order of Selection categories and their respective definitions per request of the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). At the time, WVDRS held a public meeting and a public comment period to provide an opportunity for feedback on the RSA-approved changes. After reviewing the full content of the VR Portion of the WV Combined State Plan and WVDRS policy, WVDRS is confident that the specific requirements and definitions are clear to consumers, stakeholders, and the general public.

**DRWV Comment:**

**Page 3: Recommendation 4:** “WV SRC recommends WV DRS have an updated supportive services summary sheet, categorized and divided by region, to be made easily accessible on the WV DRS website for potential and current consumers.” Page 7: WVDRS Response to Observation/Recommendation 4: “The agency is currently in the process of developing a fully redesigned, accessible website that will allow for easier navigation, including information about available services. WVDRS will notify the SRC when the new site is ready for demonstration.” **It is DRWV’s opinion that the WVDRS website ([www.wvdrs.org](http://www.wvdrs.org)) is not user-friendly and is incredibly outdated. DRWV understands that DRS is in the process of developing a new website. However, DRWV would like to know if there is a time frame for updating the website.**

**WVDRS Response:**

WVDRS has been working with an outside firm to create a new website. The website will be accessible and more user-friendly to all users, including those using smartphones and tablets. Presently, the site is nearing completion and is in the quality assurance review stage. WVDRS anticipates the new site going public prior to March 2024.

**DRWV Comment:**

In addition, after reviewing the plan, DRWV does not believe that DRS provided concrete responses to the SRC’s recommendations. It would be helpful if DRS outlined specific timelines as it relates to the plan. For example, the language in the plan that addresses training does not specify how often DRS plans to provide training.

**WVDRS Response:**

As this is a VR Portion of the WV Combined State Plan for Program Years 2024-2027, a specific timeline for certain activities covering the next four years would not be appropriate. However, WVDRS remains committed to conducting training and other activities as needed and



appropriate. As a member of SRC, DRWV will remain informed of WVDRS' ongoing and planned activities.

Provide the VR agency's response to the Council's input and recommendations, including an explanation for the rejection of any input and recommendations.

WVDRS Response to Observation/Recommendation 1:

WVDRS agrees with the benefits of collecting and utilizing data to assess the impact of Pre-ETS and VR services on the long-term success of students with disabilities. WVDRS continues to expand and enhance partnerships at the state and local levels to ensure students with disabilities and their families, are aware of the full range of services available through other agencies and programs. Since the enactment of WIOA, WVDRS has continually expanded its Pre-ETS offerings through in-house and purchased services from CRPs and other community providers. Many Pre-ETS providers incorporate presentations, resources, and materials from additional partners, including local employers, as part of their services. WVDRS will continue to encourage this practice, whenever appropriate.

WVDRS Response to Observation/Recommendation 2:

WVDRS agrees that it is important for students and youth with disabilities to begin the vocational rehabilitation process as early as appropriate after reaching 14 years of age. WVDRS is open to the recommendation and has requested that counselors identify any possible opportunities for additional embedded VR offices within high schools. WVDRS continues to maintain an office on-campus at the WV Schools for the Deaf and Blind to provide awareness and services, including Pre-ETS, in an expeditious manner. If additional opportunities arise, WVDRS will move forward to establish offices, where appropriate and agreed upon by both parties. In support of this aim, WVDRS currently has 64 vocational rehabilitation counselors assigned to serve youth and students with disabilities, including a counselor assigned to each high school in the state. Thirty-seven counselors are assigned exclusively to transitioning youth territories, allowing for more time and resources to provide outreach and services, particularly Pre-ETS to high school students. These counselors are also beginning outreach to students in the ninth grade to ensure sufficient time to provide Pre-ETS and develop and implement a plan for the student's transition from high school to postsecondary education, employment, or training. Additionally, WVDRS has made concerted efforts to provide outreach and services to nontraditional education settings for youth with disabilities, such as juvenile centers and facilities, Youth Reporting Centers, and other similar locations. The youth in these settings are afforded the same opportunity to receive Pre-ETS and other VR services as individuals in traditional settings, as appropriate. Further outreach continues to be conducted with stakeholder groups, such as parent and grandparent organizations, to include those students who may be in homeschool, private school, or other educational settings. For an example of the agency's efforts to educate parents, WVDRS utilizes the West Virginia Parent Training and Information, Inc. (WVPTI). The WVPTI is the only organization in West Virginia charged by the U.S. Department of Education/Office of Special Education Programs to serve as the state's Parent Training and Information Center. As mandated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the WVPTI provides parents of children with disabilities with the information and skills necessary to become effective partners in their children's provisions for special education and related services, including vocational rehabilitation services provided by WVDRS.

In 2021, the WVDRS developed the Systemic Transition Enhancement Project (STEP 21). The STEP 21 initiative encourages WVDRS consumers, WVDRS vocational rehabilitation counselors and other staff, WVDRS partners, and stakeholders to work harder together to increase coordination and cooperation to expand access and opportunities for individuals with disabilities, especially students with disabilities, to participate in and succeed in education and training programs that will lead to high-quality employment. Through STEP 21, WVDRS is also expanding coordination and outreach efforts with WVDRS partners including Special Education,

Career Technical Education, local schools and their administrators, community service providers, and other partners to further enhance relationships and increase buy-in that will facilitate systemic change and a systematic approach to jointly support students with disabilities in maximizing their potential.

#### WVDRS Response to Observation/Recommendation 3:

WVDRS is in agreement with the benefits of materials that enhance communication between individuals with disabilities and first responders. The agency appreciates the research and examples provided by the SRC, CSAVR, and other VR agencies. WVDRS will work with its CACs and other stakeholders including the SRC, to explore the development, creation, and distribution of materials that would afford more effective communication between first responders and people with disabilities statewide, as appropriate.

#### WVDRS Response to Observation/Recommendation 4:

WVDRS agrees that consumers are better served when additional partners are involved, whenever appropriate. WVDRS strives to continually enhance communication, awareness, and collaboration with partner agencies and stakeholders. As mandated by the Rehabilitation Act, as amended by WIOA, WVDRS provides individualized services to its consumers, as outlined in consumer IPEs. The IPE is the product of the informed choice of the consumer and VR counselor expertise. In addition to print materials, the agency's websites, [www.WVDRS.org](http://www.WVDRS.org) and [www.pathwayswv.org](http://www.pathwayswv.org), provide descriptions of available services. The agency is currently in the process of developing a fully redesigned, accessible website that will allow for easier navigation, including information about available services. WVDRS will notify the SRC when the new site is ready for demonstration.

#### WVDRS Response to Observation/Recommendation 5:

WVDRS agrees with the value of partner conferences and other cross-training opportunities and will continue to coordinate with WV Combined State Plan partner agencies to share knowledge, information, and resources at the local, regional, and state levels. As mentioned, WVDRS is present at AJCs across the state. These co-locations allow for greater coordination among partner agencies to better serve individuals with disabilities. Data sharing with core WIOA partners, WFWV and WV Adult Education, allows for enhanced and efficient service delivery for consumers who are co-enrolled across multiple programs, even when served through a non-AJC location.

#### WVDRS Response to Observation/Recommendation 6:

WVDRS agrees with the importance of informing and coordinating with employers to better serve consumers and employees with disabilities. The agency will continue to highlight business success stories through a variety of methods, including recognition events, social media, and email blasts. WVDRS will also continue to actively participate in Chambers of Commerce meetings and events to enhance its relationship with businesses across the state. WVDRS supports and promotes WVABLE to its staff and consumers and appreciates the SRC having WVABLE as a presenter during a previous SRC meeting in 2023. WVABLE was also invited to attend its most recent conference to provide additional information to WVDRS staff.

#### WVDRS Response to Observation/Recommendation 7:

WVDRS agrees with the importance of ensuring public awareness of the VR program in West Virginia and will continue to utilize a variety of methods to conduct outreach. As evidenced by the substantial increase in the number of consumers over the last several years, from 6,326 in FY 2020 to 12,172 in FY 2023, West Virginians with disabilities are increasingly aware of WVDRS and its services.

WVDRS has further enhanced its outreach efforts to potentially underserved areas and populations across the state by adding a full-time position responsible for conducting outreach

across the state to ensure individuals are aware of the vocational rehabilitation program in WV. Outreach strategies are developed based on information and data provided by the WVDRS State Plan and Program Evaluation Unit on unserved or underserved populations that are not currently participating in WVDRS services.

The role of the full-time position is to raise awareness and promote WVDRS services to individuals, communities, and organizations on a statewide level and to share information on a level that allows individuals to make an informed decision to seek WVDRS services when they are ready to enter the workforce. Strategies include presenting at conferences, partnering with clinics and recovery centers, and attending health fairs, school fairs, and other community events throughout West Virginia's 55 counties. WVDRS also continues conversations with mandated partners and state agencies as services change.

WVDRS' primary messages include that we work with individuals with disabilities beginning at age 14 and through retirement; we provide career exploration services for students with disabilities, as well as Pre-ETS services; we promote quality employment outcomes in competitive integrated employment through STEP 21; and our service delivery system is set up to take advantage of additional services provided by partner agencies to maximize the benefits for consumers in the West Virginia workforce system.

#### WVDRS Response to Observation/Recommendation 8:

WVDRS agrees with the SRC regarding the importance of working with various councils, boards, and programs including Jobs and Hope. The members of the WVDRS Executive Management Group, as well as WVDRS Field Specialty Program staff, regularly participate in numerous meetings and events of partner councils, boards, government agencies and organizations, and other stakeholder groups as part of their ongoing job duties to represent WVDRS and promote WVDRS services and programs. WVDRS will continue to expand and enhance partnerships and participation whenever and wherever possible.

#### WVDRS Response to Observation/Recommendation 9:

WVDRS agrees that driving and transportation, in general, continue to be a barrier to employment for many West Virginians with disabilities of all ages. WVDRS continues to seek solutions to transportation issues and maintains this as an agency goal and priority. During the initial phase of the vocational rehabilitation process, WVDRS counselors discuss transportation-related issues with consumers. Counselors work with consumers to address and resolve any identified disability-related employment barriers; services to circumvent barriers are included in Individualized Plans for Employment and may include transportation services. WVDRS also emphasizes individualized transportation services, including driver training, bioptic training, vehicle modification, and vehicle purchase, when necessary. WVDRS agrees that counselors need to stay abreast of resources available to consumers with disabilities regarding driving licensure, including provisional licensure, to best meet their needs for necessary transportation related to employment. WVDRS will also continue to enhance transportation and other rehabilitation technology services through community-based providers as needed and appropriate.

#### WVDRS Response to Observation/Recommendation 10:

WVDRS agrees that training conferences are extremely valuable for agency staff members. In the past, these conferences have provided expert speakers, training sessions, and networking opportunities for field staff from across the state. Additionally, it is an enriching experience for staff members to meet others from throughout West Virginia. The conference promotes cohesiveness among VR staff and team building to serve consumers with disabilities statewide. In 2023, WVDRS held a partner conference, a WVDRS staff training conference, and an in-person and virtual Ability Works Ceremony. The hybrid Ability Works ceremony allows all WVDRS staff and other stakeholders to participate live or view at their convenience. WVDRS intends to continue conferences and ceremonies of this nature in the future.

The agency has included former WVDRS consumers as speakers and panel members at various conferences and events, such as transition fairs, and agrees with the SRC regarding their powerful, beneficial impact on WVDRS staff and potential and current consumers.

#### THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S EXPLANATIONS FOR REJECTING ANY OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT OR RECOMMENDATIONS.

The agency agrees with the input and recommendations provided by the SRC. Please see the previous section for the full WVDRS responses to the SRC input and recommendations.

### B. COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT (CSNA)

*Section 101(a)(15), (17), and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to provide an assessment of:*

1. *The VR services needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the State, including:*

#### **(A) Individuals with the most significant disabilities and their need for Supported Employment;**

To comply with provisions of Title I, Section 101, State Plans, of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 and Section 721, State Plans, of the Rehabilitation Act as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (WVDRS) and the West Virginia State Rehabilitation Council (WVSRRC) conducted a three-year comprehensive statewide assessment of the vocational rehabilitation (VR) services needs of individuals with disabilities in West Virginia. The CSNA was conducted in conjunction with the full WVSRRC, which was involved from inception to reporting of results.

Four major objectives of the CSNA study included examination of the rehabilitation needs of (1) individuals with significant and most significant disabilities, including their needs for supported employment services, (2) individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program, (3) individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide WDS, and (4) youth with disabilities and students with disabilities, including their need for pre-employment transition services or other transition services. The role of community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) as service providers was reviewed to address the need to establish, develop, or improve CRPs in West Virginia.

To maintain effective and comprehensive service delivery programs for West Virginians with disabilities, the needs assessment identified the service needs of individuals with significant and most significant disabilities. Some needed services such as transportation, housing, and personal assistance are beyond the scope of the state VR program and thus require coordination and cooperation among a diverse range of public and private agencies and other organizations serving West Virginians with disabilities. In addition to consumer input, the needs assessment recognized service providers' perceptions of the needs of consumers with disabilities, including rehabilitation services associates, counselors, supervisors and managers of WVDRS, CRPs, and WVWDB members throughout West Virginia.

#### **The Statewide Needs Assessment of Consumers with Significant Disabilities**

##### **Results of the Analysis of the Reported Service Needs of Persons with Significant Disabilities**

To identify the service needs of consumers with significant disabilities, the State Plan and Program Evaluation (SPPE) Unit of WVDRS used the same valid method utilized for the FY 2021

CSNA. As part of the intake process for VR services at WVDRS, a question regarding service needs was posed to potential consumers at the time of application. The reported service needs (hereafter called needs comments) were then recorded in the WVDRS electronic case management system (iECM).

In 2023, using data from iECM, SPPE staff members conducted a qualitative analysis of the needs comments of 1,209 persons with significant disabilities of various age and disability groups statewide in pre-service statuses. These individuals represent a good sample of consumers with significant disabilities that will continue to seek assistance from agencies in coming years (with other conditions remaining the same). The qualitative analysis of the needs comments of persons with significant disabilities included 1,209 statewide applicants with significant disabilities across all WVDRS districts. All 55 counties in West Virginia were represented in the sample and the sample resembles population proportions by county.

Also included in the sample were the expressed VR service needs across the state of transitioning youth (aged 24 years or under) with significant disabilities (including students with disabilities), consumers with significant disabilities from minority backgrounds, and consumers with significant disabilities aged 65 years or older.

SPPE staff members conducted a qualitative analysis of the needs comments of the 1,209 consumers. The needs comments were analyzed and grouped into one or more of five general themes: Education, Training, Health, Employment/CRP, and Support. Needs comments were further sub-grouped by more specific types of service (e.g., Life Skills Training, Job Placement, Hearing/Audiological Service, etc.). Additionally, the needs comments of a subset of 568 students with disabilities were analyzed separately and grouped into one or more of six categories of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS): Job Exploration Counseling, Work-Based Learning Experiences, Counseling on Postsecondary Opportunities, Workplace Readiness Training, Instruction in Self-Advocacy, and General Pre-ETS.

The following report presents the results of the qualitative analysis on the needs comments of these 1,209 consumers. Results will first be presented regarding the entire sample of consumers with significant disabilities. This will be followed by results regarding transitioning youth with significant disabilities, consumers with significant disabilities from minority backgrounds, and consumers with significant disabilities aged 65 years or older. Finally, the Pre-ETS needs of students with disabilities will be discussed.

## **Findings – Consumers with Significant Disabilities**

The demographics profile of these individuals with significant disabilities consists of the following characteristics:

- *Gender*: (48.6%) male, (51.1%) female, (0.2%) did not self-identify
- *Race*: (89.8%) White, (9.8%) Other (African American/Hispanic Latino/American Indian or Alaska Native/Asian/Pacific Islander), (0.3%) Unspecified
- *Age*: (56.9%) under 22 years old, (16.4%) 22-34 years, (9.2%) 35-44 years, (14.0%) 45-64 years, (3.6%) 65 years or older
- *Primary Impairment*: (7.8%) sensory/communicative impairments (including blindness, other visual impairments, deafness–primary communication visual, deafness–primary communication auditory, hearing loss–primary communication visual, hearing loss–primary communication auditory, other hearing impairments, deaf-blindness, and communicative impairments), (13.9%) physical impairments (including mobility orthopedic/neurological impairments, manipulation/dexterity orthopedic/neurological impairments, both mobility and manipulation/dexterity orthopedic/neurological impairments, other orthopedic impairments, respiratory impairments, general physical debilitation, and other physical impairments), (78.2%) mental impairments (including cognitive impairments, psychosocial impairments, and other mental impairments)

- *Referral Source*: (1.0%) adult education and literacy programs, (0.1%) Centers for Independent Living, (0.2%) Child Protective Services, (2.3%) community rehabilitation programs, (0.9%) consumer organizations or advocacy groups, (0.1%) corrections/other, (0.3%) DOL employment and training service programs, (30.9%) educational institutions (elementary/secondary), (6.2%) educational institutions (postsecondary), (0.5%) employers, (0.1%) faith-based organizations, (18.8%) family/friends, (0.3%) intellectual and developmental disabilities providers, (0.3%) Jobs and Hope, (0.1%) juvenile justice, (3.9%) medical health provider (public or private), (3.9%) mental health provider (public or private), (0.7%) One-stop Employment/Training Centers, (1.2%) other state agencies, (0.3%) other VR state agencies, (0.2%) other WIOA-funded programs, (0.2%) public housing authority, (23.3%) self-referral, (0.1%) Social Security Administration (Disability Determination Service or District Office), (0.2%) Veteran's Administration, (0.6%) welfare agency (State or local government), (3.3%) other sources

- *Employment Status at Application*: (16.5%) employed, (83.5%) employment not reported

- *Primary Source of Support*: (18.5%) personal income, (65.6%) family and friends, (13.2%) public support (SSI, SSDI, TANF, etc.), (2.4%) other (private disability insurance, private charities).

### ***Service Needs Reported by Consumers with Significant Disabilities***

#### **Education**

Education needs were identified by 305 (25.2%) of the needs comments. Of these 305, education needs identified were categorized as transition (47.2%), 2-year or 4-year college (36.4%), other (11.5%), graduate degree education (3.3%), high school education (3.0%), accommodations (3.0%), vocational education (2.6%), tutoring (2.3%), assessments (1.0%), and adult basic education (0.3%). Note: percentages add to more than 100% because consumers utilized more than education service.

#### **Most Frequently Reported Education Needs**

-*Transition*: Nearly half of the consumers with expressed education needs indicated a need for transition services. This was generally indicated with phrases such as "assistance with transition" or "help with transitioning after high school."

-*2-year or 4-year college*: Many of the consumers with significant disabilities who expressed needs regarding education were particularly interested in attending and completing college. While some needs comments were rather general (e.g., "help going to college") others were relatively specific, indicating a particular school of interest or a particular major.

-*Other*: This category included responses by consumers with significant disabilities who indicated a need for education, or assistance with education, but were not much more specific than that. A typical need comment in this category may have included phrases such as "help with continuing my education," or "assistance with school."

#### **Training**

Training needs were identified with 442 (36.6%) of the needs comments. Of these 442, training needs identified were categorized as business/vocational training (86.2%), drive training/licensing (12.0%), job search training/assistance (5.2%), other (1.8%), and independent living skills (0.5%). Note: Percentages add to more than 100% because consumers utilized more than one training service.

#### **Most Frequently Reported Training Needs**

-*Business/Vocational Training*: By far, the most identified training need was training for employment. Within this category, responses varied from the general (e.g., "seeking assistance with training") to the rather specific (e.g., "...wants to obtain her phlebotomy certificate from Med-Care").

*-Drive Training/Licensing:* Several consumers with significant disabilities identified the need for driving skills or legal driving capability. This was referred as “driver’s training,” “driver’s license,” or “learner’s permit.” CDL training was also included in this category.

*-Job Search Training/Assistance:* Some consumers with significant disabilities identified the need for assistance with job searching. This was referred to as either “job search assistance” or something phrases such as “help with finding employment.”

## **Health**

Health needs were identified by 138 (11.4%) of the needs comments. Of these 138, health needs identified were categorized as hearing/audiological services (50.7%), psychological/psychiatric (32.6%), eye care (8.7%), other (7.2%), physician’s services (2.9%), dental care (1.4%), hospital services (1.4%), and speech/communication therapy (0.7%).

### **Most Frequently Reported Health Needs**

*-Hearing/Audiological Services:* The most common health needs for consumers with significant disabilities were related to hearing. Most of these needs comments specifically stated the need for hearing aids.

*-Psychological/Psychiatric:* Comments in this category indicated the need for mental health services of some type; however, specific needs varied. Some consumers with significant disabilities simply expressed the need for “therapy” or “counseling,” while others were interested in treatment for specific diagnoses, such as ADHD or anxiety.

*-Eye Care:* Some comments indicated the need for eye care services, including “needing a pair of glasses,” “help with low vision,” and “rapidly deteriorating vision.”

*-Other:* Comments in this category indicated the need for health services of some type that did not fit in another category. This varied from the general (physical restoration) to the specific (“help with prosthesis”).

## **Employment/CRP**

Employment/CRP service needs were the most frequently identified, noted in 61.2% of the comments. Of these 740, employment/CRP service needs identified were categorized as job placement (71.6%), vocational counseling and guidance (21.6%), job retention (6.5%), other (5.0%), life skills training (1.9%), work-related tools or equipment (1.8%), supported employment (SE) (1.2%), community-based assessment (CBA) (0.4%), small business development (0.4%), worksite modification or accommodation (0.3%), psychological evaluation (0.3%), job coaching other than SE (0.3%), work skills assessment (0.1%), vocational evaluation (0.1%), and work adjustment training (0.1%).

### **Most Frequently Reported Employment/CRP Needs**

*-Job Placement:* A large number of consumers with significant disabilities were primarily interested in finding a job. Many simply needed placement in a job, already having the requisite skills and abilities to work. Comments that specifically included the word “placement” fit into this category. However, many stated the need to “find work” or “find a job.” Some consumers with significant disabilities expressed an interest in a specific occupation or field of work, such as “work with animals” or “employment driving a truck.”

*-Vocational Counseling and Guidance:* Some respondents indicated a need for vocational counseling and guidance. Key phrases in this category include “vocational counseling,” “job exploration,” and “planning a vocational goal.”

*-Job Retention:* Some respondents expressed interest in keeping the job they already had. This was frequently tied to the acquisition of hearing aids. Key phrases in this category included “job retention” and “maintain employment,” and others.

*-Other:* Some consumers indicated a need for services related to employment, but the need indicated was either too general to be classified (e.g., “CRP services”) or otherwise didn’t fit in one of the sub-categories (e.g., “acquiring certifications”).

## **Support**

Support needs were identified by 214 (17.7%) of the 1,209 consumers. Of these 214, support needs identified were categorized as financial assistance (82.2%), assistive technology (6.5%), orientation/mobility services (3.7%), housing assistance (2.3%), other (2.3%), vehicle modification (1.9%), home modification (1.0%), transportation (1.0%), assistive devices (0.5%), and vehicle maintenance/repair (0.5%). Note: Percentages add to more than 100% because consumers utilized more than one support service.

### **Most Frequently Reported Support Needs**

*-Financial Assistance:* Most consumers with significant disabilities identified the need for financial assistance, usually for hearing aids, education, or other training. Key words and phrases for this category include “help with tuition,” “sponsorship,” and “purchase of hearing aids,” among others.

*-Assistive Technology:* Some respondents identified the need for assistive technology. This need was sometimes acknowledged simply as “assistive technology” or “rehab tech,” but was occasionally referred to more specifically (e.g., “help with technology to help him drive”).

## **Findings – Transitioning Youth with Significant Disabilities**

Of the statewide total of 1,209 persons with significant disabilities at the time of their WVDRS application, 757 persons (62.6%) were determined to be of transition status (age 24 and under). The demographic profile of this subset of transition status individuals with significant disabilities consists of the following characteristics:

- *Gender:* (50.3%) male, (49.3%) female, (0.4%) did not specify

- *Race:* (88.6%) White, (11.1%) Other (African American/Hispanic Latino/American Indian or Alaska Native/Asian/Pacific Islander), (0.3%) Unspecified

- *Age:* 79.4% under 20 years old, 20.6% 20-34 years

- *Primary Impairment:* (4.1%) sensory/communicative impairments (including blindness, other visual impairments, deafness–primary communication visual, deafness–primary communication auditory, hearing loss–primary communication visual, hearing loss–primary communication auditory, other hearing impairments, deaf-blindness, and communicative impairments), (10.2%) physical impairments s (including mobility orthopedic/neurological impairments, manipulation/dexterity orthopedic/neurological impairments, both mobility and manipulation/dexterity orthopedic/neurological impairments, other orthopedic impairments, respiratory impairments, general physical debilitation, and other physical impairments s), (85.5%) mental impairments (including cognitive impairments, psychosocial impairments, and other mental impairments)

- *Referral Source:* (0.9%) adult education and literacy programs, (0.3%) Child Protective Services, (1.2%) community rehabilitation programs, (0.8%) consumer organizations or advocacy groups, (48.9%) educational institutions (elementary/secondary), (7.4%) educational institutions (postsecondary), (0.1%) faith-based organizations, (18.9%) family/friends, (0.4%) intellectual and developmental disabilities providers, (1.3%) medical health provider (public or private), (2.0%) mental health provider (public or private), (0.4%) One-stop Employment/Training Centers, (1.8%) other sources, (0.3%) other State agencies, (0.1%) other VR State agencies, (0.1%) other WIOA-funded programs, (0.1%) public housing authority, (14.4%) self-referral, (0.4%) welfare Agency (state or local government)

- *Employment Status at Application:* (4.7%) employed, (95.3%) employment not reported

- *Primary Source of Support:* (5.8%) personal income, (86.8%) family and friends, (5.9%) public support (SSI, SSDI, TANF, etc.), (1.3%) other (private disability insurance, private charities).

## **Service Needs Reported by Transitioning Youth with Significant Disabilities**

### **Education**

Education needs were identified in 263 (34.7%) of the needs comments of transitioning youth with significant disabilities. Of these 263, education needs identified were categorized as transition (54.8%), 2-year or 4-year college (37.6%), other (8.0%), accommodations (2.7%),



vocational education (2.3%), tutoring (2.3%), high school education (1.5%), assessments (1.1%), graduate education (0.8%), and adult basic education (0.4%).

#### Most Frequently Reported Education Needs

*-Transition:* Most responses by transitioning youth with significant disabilities indicated a need for transition from school-to-work. These comments included phrases such as “help with transitioning after high school” or “assistance with transition services.”

*-2-year or 4-year college:* Several of the respondents were interested in attending and completing college. Many of these needs comments were general (e.g., “help going to college”), while some others were specific, indicating a particular school of interest or a particular major.

*Other:* Some responses indicated a need for education, or assistance with education, but were not specific. A typical response was “help with school” or “educational services.”

#### Training

Among transitioning youth with significant disabilities, 324 of 757 (42.8%) of comments involved training. Of these 324, training needs identified were categorized as business/vocational training (86.7%), drive training/licensing (11.7%), job search training/assistance (4.6%), other (2.1%), and independent living skills (0.3%).

#### Most Frequently Reported Training Needs

*- Business/Vocational Training:* The most identified training need by transitioning youth with significant disabilities, by a substantial margin, was training for employment. Within this category, responses varied from the general (e.g., “training services”) to the specific (e.g., “phlebotomy program at Med Care”).

*Drive Training/Licensing:* Some respondents identified the need for driving skills or legal driving capability. This was referred to in a number of ways, including “driver’s license,” “driver’s training,” or “learner’s permit.” CDL training was also included in this category.

#### Health

Among transitioning youth with significant disabilities, 45 of 757 (5.9%) comments involved health. Of these 45, health needs identified were categorized as psychological/psychiatric (68.9%), hearing/audiological services (20.0%), eye care (4.4%), physician’s services (2.2%), hospital services (2.2%), and other (2.2%).

#### Most Frequently Reported Health Needs

*-Psychological/Psychiatric:* Comments in this category indicated the need for mental health services of some type. Some transitioning youth with significant disabilities expressed the need for “therapy,” “counseling,” or “mental restoration,” while others were interested in psychological evaluations.

*- Hearing/Audiological Services:* Some of the comments were related to hearing. Most of these needs comments specifically stated the need for hearing aids.

#### Employment/CRP

Among transitioning youth with significant disabilities, 448 of 757 (59.2%) comments involved employment/CRP services. Of these 448, employment/CRP service needs identified were categorized as job placement (75.0%), vocational counseling and guidance (27.9%), other (5.1%), life skills training (1.6%), work-related tools or equipment (1.6%), supported employment (SE) (0.7%), job retention (0.4%), vocational evaluation (0.2%), psychological evaluation (0.2%), community-based assessment (0.2%), work skills assessment (0.2%), and job coaching other than SE (0.2%).

#### Most Frequently Reported Employment/CRP Needs

*- Job Placement:* A large percentage of transitioning youth with significant disabilities were primarily interested in placement in a job. Comments that specifically included the word “placement”, “work” or “employment” fit in this category.

- *Vocational Counseling and Guidance*: Some respondents indicated a need for vocational counseling and guidance. Key phrases in this category include “vocational counseling and guidance,” “career exploration,” and “planning a vocational goal.”
- *Other*: Some respondents indicated a need for services related to employment, but the need indicated was either too general to be classified (e.g., “vocational services”) or did not fit in one of the sub-categories (e.g., “interview skills”).

### **Support**

Among transitioning youth with significant disabilities, 11.4% of 757 needs comments involved support. Of these, support needs identified were categorized as financial assistance (88.4%), assistive technology services (5.8%), other (3.5%), housing assistance (1.2%), and orientation/mobility services (1.2%).

### **Most Frequently Reported Support Needs**

- *Financial Assistance*: Many transitioning youth with significant disabilities identified the need for financial assistance, usually for education or other training. Key words and phrases for this category include “assistance with educational expenses,” “sponsorship,” and “tuition assistance,” among others.
- *Assistive Technology Services*: Some respondents identified the need for assistive technology. These needs comments specifically indicated “assistive technology” or “AT.”

### **Findings – Consumers with Significant Disabilities Aged 65 Years or Older**

Of the statewide total of 1,209 persons with significant disabilities at the time of their WVDRS application, 43 persons (3.6%) were determined to be aged 65 years or older. The demographic profile of this subset of individuals with significant disabilities aged 65 years or older consists of the following characteristics:

- *Gender*: (58.1%) male, (41.9%) female
- *Race*: (90.7%) White, (9.3%) Other (African American/Hispanic Latino/American Indian or Alaska Native/Asian/Pacific Islander)
- *Age*: (100%) 65 years or older
- *Primary Impairment*: (63.6%) sensory/communicative impairments (including blindness, other visual impairments, deafness–primary communication visual, deafness–primary communication auditory, hearing loss–primary communication visual, hearing loss–primary communication auditory, other hearing impairments, deaf-blindness, and communicative impairments), (9.1%) physical impairments (including mobility orthopedic/neurological impairments, manipulation/dexterity orthopedic/neurological impairments, both mobility and manipulation/dexterity orthopedic/neurological impairments, other orthopedic impairments, respiratory impairments, general physical debilitation, and other physical impairments), (27.3%) mental impairments (including cognitive impairments, psychosocial impairments, and other mental impairments)
- *Referral Source*: (2.3%) community rehabilitation programs, (2.3%) DOL employment and training programs, (2.3%) educational institutions (postsecondary), (2.3%) employers, (18.6%) family/friends, (16.3%) medical health provider (public or private), (4.7%) other State agencies, (2.3%) other VR State agencies, (34.9%) self-referral, (14.0%) other sources
- *Employment Status at Application*: (60.5%) employed, (39.5%) employment not reported
- *Primary Source of Support*: (58.1%) personal income, (9.3%) family and friends, (27.9%) public support (SSI, SSDI, TANF, etc.), (4.6%) other (private disability insurance, private charities).

### ***Service Needs Reported by Consumers with Significant Disabilities Aged 65 Years or Older***

#### **Education**

Among consumers with significant disabilities aged 65 years or older, 2.3% of needs comments involved education (tutoring).

### **Training**

Among consumers with significant disabilities aged 65 years or older, 4.7% of needs comments involved training (business/vocational training; drive training/licensing).

### **Health**

Among consumers with significant disabilities aged 65 years or older, 72.1% of needs comments involved health. Health needs identified were categorized as hearing/audiological services (90.3%), other (6.5%), eye care (3.2%), and psychological/psychiatric (3.2%).

#### **Most Frequently Reported Health Needs**

-*Hearing/Audiological Services:* Most consumers with significant disabilities aged 65 or older identified needs related to hearing. Most comments specifically stated the need for hearing aids.

### **Employment/CRP**

Among consumers with significant disabilities aged 65 years or older, 44.2% of needs comments involved employment/CRP services. Employment/CRP service needs identified were categorized as job retention (52.6%) and job placement (47.4%).

#### **Most Frequently Reported Employment/CRP Needs**

- *Job Retention:* Some consumers with significant disabilities aged 65 years or older expressed interest in keeping the job they already had. This was usually tied to the acquisition of hearing aids, but not necessarily. Key phrases in this category included “job retention” and “maintain employment.”

- *Job Placement:* Some respondents were primarily interested in finding a job. Their needs comments included a variety of phrases, including “job placement,” “help going to work,” and “wants to work.”

### **Support**

Among consumers with significant disabilities aged 65 years or older, 44.2% of needs comments involved support. Support needs identified were categorized as assistive technology (10.5%), financial assistance (78.9%) and orientation/mobility services (10.5%).

#### **Most Frequently Reported Support Needs**

- *Financial Assistance:* Many consumers with significant disabilities aged 65 years or older identified the need for financial assistance. This was typically for hearing aids, but a couple of consumers requested financial assistance for higher education costs. Key words and phrases for this category include “sponsorship” and “financial assistance.”

### **Pre-Employment Transition Services**

Pursuant to the Rehabilitation Act, as amended by WIOA, VR agencies are mandated to provide for the delivery of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to students with disabilities. As part of the CSNA, agencies are required to assess the needs of students with disabilities, including their need for Pre-ETS. To meet this requirement, WVDRS' SPPE Unit analyzed the needs comments of a subset of students with disabilities to assess their need for the five required Pre-ETS activities: 1) job exploration counseling, 2) work-based learning experiences, 3) counseling on postsecondary opportunities, 4) workplace readiness training, and 5) instruction in self-advocacy. Additionally, needs comments that expressed a need for Pre-ETS without identifying a specific type of activity were grouped separately as “General Pre-ETS.”

### **Findings – Pre-ETS needs of Students with Disabilities**

Of the statewide total of 1,209 persons with significant disabilities at the time of their WVDRS application, 568 persons (47.0%) were determined to be students. The demographic profile of this subset of individuals with significant disabilities who are students consists of the following characteristics:

- *Gender:* (51.9%) male, (47.5%) female, (0.5%) did not self-identify

- *Race*: (89.8%) White, (10.2%) Other (African American/Hispanic Latino/American Indian or Alaska Native/Asian/Pacific Islander)
- *Age*: (93.7%) under 20 years old, (6.3%) 20-34 years
- *Primary Impairment*: (3.7%) sensory/communicative Impairments (including blindness, other visual impairments, deafness–primary communication visual, deafness–primary communication auditory, hearing loss–primary communication visual, hearing loss–primary communication auditory, other hearing impairments, deaf-blindness, and communicative impairments), (11.3%) physical impairments (including mobility orthopedic/neurological impairments, manipulation/dexterity orthopedic/neurological impairments, both mobility and manipulation/dexterity orthopedic/neurological impairments, other orthopedic impairments, respiratory impairments, general physical debilitation, and other physical impairments), (85.0%) mental impairments (including cognitive impairments, psychosocial impairments, and other mental impairments)
- *Referral Source*: (0.5%) adult education and literacy programs, (0.4%) Child Protective Services, (0.7%) community rehabilitation programs, (1.1%) consumer organizations or advocacy groups, (62.0%) educational institutions (elementary/secondary), (6.5%) educational institutions (postsecondary), (0.2%) faith-based organizations, (13.9%) family/friends, (0.2%) intellectual and developmental disabilities providers, (1.2%) medical health provider (public or private), (0.9%) mental health provider (public or private), (0.2%) other WIOA-funded programs, (10.6%) self-referral, (1.8%) other sources
- *Employment Status at Application*: (1.4%) employed, (98.6%) employment not reported
- *Primary Source of Support*: (3.9%) personal income, (91.2%) family and friends, (4.0%) public support (SSI, SSDI, TANF, etc.), (0.9%) other (private disability insurance, private charities).

### ***Pre-ETS Needs Reported by Students with Disabilities***

Among students with disabilities, 241 of 568 (42.4%) comments indicated the need for Pre-ETS. These comments either addressed Pre-ETS in general terms or addressed a specific type of Pre-Employment Transition Service.

### **Job Exploration Counseling**

Among students with disabilities indicating the need for Pre-ETS, 47.7% of comments involved job exploration counseling, the most requested Pre-ETS category. These comments included key words and phrases such as “career exploration,” “job exploration,” and “vocational counseling and guidance,” among others.

### **Work-Based Learning Experiences**

Among respondents indicating the need for Pre-ETS, 8.7% of comments involved work-based learning experiences. These comments typically included phrases like, “work-based learning” and “work experience.”

### **Counseling on Postsecondary Opportunities**

Among respondents indicating the need for Pre-ETS, 28.2% of comments involved counseling on postsecondary opportunities. These comments included a variety of key words and phrases, such as, “postsecondary education” and “help with transition to college.”

### **Workplace Readiness Training**

Among respondents indicating the need for Pre-ETS, 12.9% of comments involved workplace readiness training. These comments expressed the need for “help preparing for work,” “employment readiness,” “workplace readiness,” and other similar ideas.

### **Instruction in Self-Advocacy**

Among respondents indicating the need for Pre-ETS, 8.3% of comments involved instruction in self-advocacy. These comments typically included the phrase “self-advocacy” specifically.

## **General Pre-ETS**

Among respondents indicating the need for Pre-ETS, 32.8% of comments involved a general need for Pre-Employment Transition Services, either without specifying a type of service, or while additionally specifying a particular service. These comments usually included key words and phrases such as, "Pre-ETS" or "Pre-Employment Transition." Some comments referred to summer programs, indicating desire for the Career Exploration Opportunity Summit conducted by WVDRS that provides Pre-ETS to high school students during a week-long summer internship.

## **Results of the Survey of WVDRS Field Staff on the Needs of Persons with Significant Disabilities**

To comply with provisions of the WIOA, the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (WVDRS) must conduct a triennial comprehensive statewide assessment (CSNA) of the vocational rehabilitation (VR) service needs of individuals with disabilities in West Virginia. Major objectives of the comprehensive statewide needs assessment (CSNA) study include examination of the rehabilitation needs of 1) individuals with significant and most significant disabilities, including their needs for supported employment services, 2) individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program, 3) individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system, and 4) youth with disabilities (24 years old and younger), and students with disabilities (14-21 years old and enrolled in an education/training program), including their need for pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS). The role of community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) as service providers is also reviewed to address the need to establish, develop, or improve CRPs in West Virginia. The CSNA also requires the agency to work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities.

The CSNA includes input from WVDRS field staff (District Managers, Branch Office Managers, Supervisors, VR Counselors, and Rehabilitation Services Associates) on the service needs and service gaps of their consumers. Given that field staff interact directly with WVDRS consumers, they are a key resource on the service needs and service gaps in specific service areas statewide. Analysis provides insights into service needs and gaps from a statewide perspective as well as on district, branch office, and counselor territory levels. This assists WVDRS in making appropriate, targeted, and effective data-driven decisions.

## **Method**

The State Plan and Program Evaluation (SPPE) Unit developed a multiple-choice and open-ended response survey for WVDRS field staff to provide feedback on the service needs and service gaps of their consumers. An online survey was developed, and links were distributed to field staff for them to complete the survey. Field staff were given approximately a month for survey completion and were told to contact SPPE Unit staff with any questions regarding the survey.

## **Respondent Information**

The survey collected information about respondents for use in data analyses and to assist WVDRS in making targeted and necessary changes based on the service needs and service gaps by office and district. Respondents were asked to provide information about their primary caseload by selecting from: General Field, Blind/Visually Impaired, School/Transition, Deaf/Hearing Impairment. Respondents could select 'Other' and write in a caseload not listed.

Respondents were asked to provide their WVDRS office location(s) and which county or counties in the state they covered. Respondents were asked to provide the number of years they have worked in field services and to indicate job titles they have held at WVDRS by selecting

from the following: Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee, Rehabilitation Counselor, Senior Rehabilitation Counselor, Certified Rehabilitation Counselor, Branch Office Manager/Supervisor, District Manager, or Rehabilitation Services Associate. Respondents were also given an option for “Other” and write in their job title if not listed.

### **Assessing Service Needs and Service Gaps**

The main objective of the survey was to assess the service needs and service gaps for WVDRS consumers with significant or most significant disabilities. Seventy-one services were placed into six categories: *Educational, Training, Health, Employment and CRP, Support, and Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)*. Each service had checkboxes in two columns: Needed and Gap. Respondents were asked to “For each item, please indicate (in the Needed column) whether most of the consumers you serve in your area can benefit from the service.” Respondents were also asked to “indicate if you feel there is a service gap (i.e., services are needed, but not sufficiently available) for each service by checking the Gap column.” Services from the survey are listed below by category.

*Educational Services:* 2-year or 4-year college, adult basic education, graduate degree education, high school education, literacy instruction, special education, tutoring, and vocational education

*Training Services:* business/vocational training, career planning training, disability rights training, driver training, independent living skills, job club training, job search training, lip reading, on-the-job training, reading in Braille, sign language, and work adjustment training

*Health Services:* dental care, eye care, hearing/auditory services, hospital services, occupational therapy, physical therapy, physician's services, psychological/psychiatric treatment, speech/communication therapy, and substance abuse treatment

*Employment and CRP Services:* community-based assessment, direct placement by CRPs, extended assessment, extended supported employment service (ESES), job coaching other than supported employment, job development, job placement, labor market information, psychological evaluation, small business development, supported employment, trial work experience, vocational counseling and guidance, vocational evaluation, work adjustment training, worksite modification or accommodation, work-related tools or equipment, and work skills assessment

*Support Services:* assistive devices (e.g., cane, wheelchair), assistive technology devices, childcare, family services, financial assistance, home modification, housing assistance, interpreter services, orientation/mobility Services, peer support, personal assistant/attendant services, post-employment services (follow-up), reader services, transportation, vehicle maintenance/repair, and vehicle modification

*Pre-Employment Transition Services:* counseling on postsecondary opportunities, job exploration counseling, self-advocacy training, work-based learning experiences, and workplace readiness training.

### **Overall Service Needs for WVDRS Consumers**

The survey included five questions for which respondents were asked to list up to five services consumers in their service area need. The question was repeated for 1) consumers with disabilities in WVDRS general territories, 2) transitioning youth with disabilities (age 24 and younger), 3) individuals who are deaf/hearing impaired, 4) individuals who are blind/visually impaired, and 5) minority individuals with disabilities. Respondents were also asked to indicate if they did not have experience working with consumers described in each question.

### **Barriers to Employment**

Respondents were asked to indicate whether any of the following are substantial barriers, preventing the consumers you serve from gaining and/or maintaining employment.”

Respondents were provided a list of the following 28 potential barriers. Space was provided to write in and rate any additional barriers not found on the list, if needed.

- Adequate Housing
- Childcare
- Consumer Attitudes
- Displaced Homemaker
- Employer Attitudes
- Ex-Offender
- Exhausted TANF
- Family Support
- Foster Care
- Homeless/Runaway
- Illiteracy
- Inadequate Medical Care and/or Medical Insurance
- Lack of Available Services from CRPs
- Lack of Disability Benefits and/or Food Assistance
- Lack of Information Regarding Disability Resources
- Lack of Long-Term Support after Job Placement
- Lack of Personal Care Attendant Services
- Lack of Physical Access to Employer or Services (e.g., ramps, etc.)
- Lack of Time Spent with VR Counselor
- Limited English
- Long-term Unemployment
- Low Income
- Migrant/Seasonal Worker
- Single Parent
- Slow Job Market
- Transportation
- WVDRS Budget Restriction

### **Integration with Core Partners**

The survey included four open-ended response questions regarding respondents' familiarity, experience, and recommendations on integrating services with WDS Core Partners of WFWV and WV Adult Education:

- Please describe your familiarity with the services that WFWV and WV Adult Education provide.
- Please describe the level of need that our consumers with significant disabilities have for services that WFWV and WV Adult Education provide.
- Please comment on your experiences with integrating service (not including referrals) with WFWV and WV Adult Education (e.g., using Labor Market Information, co-serving a client with Adult Education). In addition to your experiences, please discuss other activities that WVDRS could conduct with our core partners to further help our consumers with significant disabilities.
- Please provide recommendations on how to better facilitate our partnerships with WFWV and WV Adult Education (e.g., specific cross-trainings, co-location, etc.).

### **Other Comments**

The survey concluded with three open-ended response questions: 1) What can WVDRS provide you to better serve our consumers and help you perform your job more effectively?, 2) Based on your experience, what services can WVDRS provide to employers to increase employment of individuals with significant disabilities?, and 3) Please provide any additional comments regarding unmet service needs of individuals with significant or most significant disabilities with whom you work.

## Results

Results are based on 186 surveys that were completed by WVDRS field staff.

### Respondent Information

#### *Primary Caseload*

General Field caseloads were reported as the primary caseload by 76 respondents (49.4% of 154 people who responded to this question), while 77 (50%) reported a primary caseload of School/Transition. Fourteen (9.1%) reported Blind/Visually Impaired primary caseloads and Deaf/Hearing Impaired primary caseloads were reported by 18 respondents (11.7%) Twenty-eight respondents (22.7%) indicated a primary caseload of "Other" or "None." These were generally managers with a specialty caseload, but also included some Rehabilitation Services Associates (RSAs) and Employment Specialists who indicated that they did not have a caseload. *Note:* The total number of respondents sums to more than 100% because some counselors have multiple caseload types.

#### *Office Location*

The total number of respondents by district and office location are below. The numbers for each office may be more than the total number of respondents because some staff work out of more than one office.

District 1 (33 Respondents): Charleston-12, Point Pleasant-6, Ripley-5, Teays Valley-10.  
District 2 (26 Respondents): Clarksburg-6, Elkins-4, Fairmont-5, Morgantown-7, Weston-4.  
District 3 (28 Respondents): New Martinsville-2, Parkersburg-6, Weirton-8, Wheeling-12.  
District 4 (46 Respondents): Beckley-17, Lewisburg-10, Princeton-9, Summersville-10.  
District 5 (39 Respondents): Huntington-22, Logan-8, Mullens-4, Welch-5.  
District 6 (21 Respondents): Keyser-6, Martinsburg-7 Moorefield-8, Romney-0.

#### *Years of Experience in WVDRS Field Services*

169 respondents reported the number of years worked in WVDRS Field Services. Respondents had varying amounts of experience working in Field Services, from less than one year to 45 years (mean = 10 years). Fifty-eight respondents (33%) reported four or fewer years of Field Services experience.

#### *Titles Held*

176 of respondents reported their titles within Field Services. Of those, 22 reported their title as Rehabilitation Counselor Trainees, 29 were Rehabilitation Counselors, 30 were Senior Rehabilitation Counselors, and 8 were Certified Rehabilitation Counselors. Respondents included 52 Rehabilitation Services Associates (RSAs), 18 Branch Office Managers/Supervisors, and 3 former District Managers. There were also 11 Employment Specialists and 3 clerical staff among the respondents.

### Service Need/Use

167 respondents addressed service need/use for each service by indicating which services their consumers need/use most often. This was done independently of the service gap assessment as some services may be highly needed/used but are readily available and therefore do not require an increase in availability. The top services are listed for each service category below with the percentage of identified needs in parentheses.

#### *Educational Services*

- Vocational Education (84.4%)
- 2-year or 4-year College (70.7%)
- High School (68.3%)



- Tutoring (62.9%)
- Special Education (55.7%)
- Adult Basic Education (50.3%)

#### *Training Services*

- Career Planning (73.1%)
- Business Vocational (72.5%)
- On-the-job Training (65.9%)
- Job Search Training (64.7%)
- Work Adjustment Training (64.1%)
- Independent Living Skills (63.5%)
- Driver Training (61.1%)
- Disability Rights Training (52.1%)

#### *Health Services*

- Psychological/Psychiatric Treatment (73.7%)
- Eye Care (59.3%)
- Hearing/Auditory Services (55.7%)
- Dental Care (51.5%)

#### *Employment and CRP Services*

- Vocational Counseling & Guidance (76%)
- Job Placement (68.9%)
- Psychological Evaluation (68.3%)
- Community Based Assessment (67.1%)
- Direct Placement by CRPs (66.5%)
- Vocational Evaluation (64.7%)
- Work Skills Assessment (63.5%)
- Job Coaching other than SE (62.3%)
- Work Adjustment Training (61.7%)
- Job Development (59.3%)
- Work-related tools/equipment (58.7%)

#### *Support Services*

- Transportation (62.3%)
- Financial Assistance (52.7%)
- Assistive Technology Services (49.7%)
- Vehicle Maintenance/Repair (48.5%)
- Assistive Devices (44.9%)
- Childcare (40.1%)

#### *Pre-ETS Services*

- Job Exploration Counseling (73.1%)
- Counseling on Postsecondary Opportunities (71.9%)
- Workplace Readiness Training (70.7%)
- Work-based Learning Experiences (69.5%)
- Self-Advocacy Training (67.1%)

### **Service Gaps**

Respondents that indicated a perceived service gap were totaled for each service. The top five service gaps are listed for each service category below with percentage of respondents in parentheses.

#### *Educational Services*

- Tutoring (19.2%)
- Adult Basic Education (18.6%)

- Literacy Instruction (15%)
- Vocational Education (13.2%)
- Graduate Degree Education (6%)

#### *Training Services*

- Driver Training (33.5%)
- Sign Language (23.4%)
- Disability Rights Training (20.4%)
- Independent Living Skills (20.4%)
- Reading in Braille (20.4%)

#### *Health Services*

- Dental Care (29.9%)
- Psychological/Psychiatric (25.1%)
- Substance Abuse Treatment (22.2%)
- Speech/Communication Therapy (17.4%)
- Occupational Therapy (13.2%)

#### *Employment/CRP Services*

- Small Business Development (21.6%)
- Direct Placement by CRPs (18.6%)
- Job Development (17.4%)
- Supported Employment (17.4%)
- Trial Work Experience (17.4%)

#### *Support Services*

- Transportation (53.3%)
- Childcare (32.3%)
- Housing Assistance (30.5%)
- Financial Assistance (24.6%)
- Vehicle Modification and Repair (21.6%)

#### *Pre-ETS Services*

- Work-based Learning Experience (10.8%)
- Workplace Readiness Training (10.2%)
- Self-Advocacy Training (7.8%)
- Counseling on Postsecondary Opportunities (6%)
- Job Exploration Counseling (6%)

### **Overall Service Needs for West Virginians with Disabilities**

Participants were asked to identify the top five overall service needs for different consumer groups with which they have experience providing VR services. They were asked to indicate if they did not have experience working with the consumer group. The number and percentage of respondents who indicated a gap for the service are in parentheses followed by the number of responses by WVDRS office location. Some respondents identified more than one office.

*Note: New categories were created for answers that were not specific to a pre-existing service category from the survey. For example, the "Overall Training" category was created to include a number of open-ended responses where the respondent indicated a need for training, but not a specific type, such as, "Training options" and "Training services." The "Miscellaneous" category contains individual responses that were not clear or could not be grouped into a particular theme.*

#### *General Territories*

Participants were asked to "Select the five most needed services by your consumers with

significant disabilities in WVDRS general territories that you work with.” There were 113 responses. The most reported service needs were:

- Transportation (44.3%)
- Mental Health Counseling (42.5%)
- 2-year to 4-year college (35.4%)
- CRP Services (35.4%)
- Vocational Counseling and Guidance (25.7%)

#### *Transitioning Youth*

Participants were asked to “Select the top five most needed services by your consumers with significant disabilities in transition/school territories that you work with.” There were 115 responses. The most reported service needs were:

- Driver Education, Tutoring and Licensing (42.6%)
- Transportation (36.5%)
- 2-year to 4-year college (36.7%)
- CRP Services (35.7%)
- Vocational Counseling and Guidance (32.2%)

#### *Deaf/Hard of Hearing*

Participants were asked to “Select the top five most needed services by your consumers with significant disabilities in deaf/hearing impaired territories that you work with.” There were 48 responses. The most reported service needs were:

- Hearing/Auditory Services (54.2%)
- Assistive Technology Services (37.5%)
- Interpreter Services (31.3%)
- Sign Language (27%)
- Assistive Devices (cane, wheelchair, etc.) (25%)

#### *Blind/Visually Impaired*

Participants were asked to “Select the top five most needed services by your consumers with significant disabilities in blind/visually impaired territories that you work with.” There were 25 responses. The most reported service needs were:

- Assistive Technology (64%)
- Orientation and Mobility Training (56%)
- Assistive Devices (cane, wheelchair, etc.) (44%)
- Reading in Braille (40%)
- Transportation (36%)

#### *Minority Individuals*

Participants were asked to “Select the top five most needed services by your minority consumers with significant disabilities that you work with.” There were 144 responses. The most reported service needs were:

- Transportation (43%)
- 2-year to 4-year college (34%)
- Job Placement (29.9%)
- CRP Services (26.4%)
- Overall Training (26.4%)

### **Barriers to Employment**

Participants were asked to indicate substantial barriers that prevent consumers from gaining and/or maintaining employment. There were 154 responses. The top five barriers to employment were:

- Transportation (70.4%)
- Low Income (35.5%)
- Family Support (34.9%)
- Childcare (32.3%)
- Ex-offender (28%)

## **Integration with Core Partners**

WVDRS Field Staff members were asked the following questions regarding their familiarity, experience, and recommendations on integrating services with the WDS Core Partners of WFWV and WV Adult Education. *Note:* Some percentages sum to more than 100% because some staff provided more than one suggestion.

*Please describe your familiarity with the services WFWV and WV Adult Education provide.*

There were 135 responses. Responses were judged to express either high familiarity, some familiarity, limited familiarity, or no familiarity. Sixty-three responses (46.7%) expressed high familiarity, forty-seven responses (34.8%) indicated some familiarity, 13 (9.6%) expressed limited familiarity, and 12 (8.9%) responses suggested no familiarity.

*Please describe the level of need that our consumers with significant disabilities have for the services that WFWV and WV Adult Education provide.*

There were 130 responses. Responses were judged to express either high need, some need, or no indication of need. Sixty-three responses (48.5%) expressed high need, forty-one responses (31.5%) indicated some need, and eight (6.2%) responses provided no indication of need. In addition, 18 responses (13.8%) provided responses that clearly did not relate to the question.

*Please comment on your experiences with integrating services (not including referrals) with WFWV and WV Adult Education (e.g., using labor market information, referrals to and from WFWV, co-serving a client with Adult Education). In addition to your experiences, please discuss other activities that WVDRS could conduct with our core partners to further help our consumers with significant disabilities.*

There were 130 responses. Responses were categorized as 1) whether the field staff had experience with integrating services with WFWV and WV Adult Education, 2) whether the respondent had sent or received referrals from core partners, and 3) whether other activities that WVDRS could conduct with core partners were discussed. A plurality of respondents (33.1%) indicated experience with integrating services with core partners, 8.5% mentioned that they had referred consumers to partners or had received referrals from partners, and 31.5% stated that they had limited or no experience with integrating services. The responses from 21.5% of staff discussed activities that WVDRS could conduct with core partners, and 5.4% of respondents discussed activities that core partners could conduct (e.g., forward labor market research information with a client's referral).

*Please provide recommendations on how to better facilitate our partnerships with WFWV and WV Adult Education (e.g., specific cross-trainings, co-location, etc.).*

There were 115 responses. The most common theme (40% of responses) involved training or cross-training (generally focusing on learning what other partners provide). Meetings with partners was the next most common theme (20%), followed by improved communication (18.3%), greater accessibility (12.2%), and better coordination of services (6.1%). Other responses (21.7%) indicated no recommendations.

## **Comments and Suggestions**

*What can WVDRS provide to better serve our consumers with significant disabilities and help you perform your job more effectively and efficiently?*

There were 125 responses. The most common themes were budget/staffing (29.6%), service

provision (18.4%), training (15.2%), communication (14.4%), and technology/innovation (13.6%); 16.8% had no recommendations.

*Based on your experience, what services can WVDRS provide to employers to increase the employment of individuals with significant disabilities?*

There were 123 responses. The most common response themes were employer education (35.8%), better communication and support (27.6%), on-the-job training (14.6%), increasing rapport (9.8%), and providing incentives (8.9%); 19.5% of respondents provided no recommendations.

*Please provide any additional comments regarding unmet service needs of individuals with significant or most significant disabilities with whom you work.*

Seventy-nine respondents provided additional comments; 27.8% of responses were related to service provision, and the next most common responses were transportation (21.5%), budget/staffing issues (15.2%), and policy changes (6.3%). An additional 31.6% of responses indicated no comment.

## **Discussion**

As part of the FY 2024 CSNA, WVDRS field staff members were surveyed on the service needs and gaps within VR for West Virginians with significant disabilities. Responses will be used in conjunction with other CSNA activities to develop future Combined State Plans, including agency goals and priorities and related strategies. A total of 186 WVDRS field staff members provided detailed insights into the perceived service needs and gaps in the state. The current survey echoes previous CSNA results with many of the same service needs and gaps being reported. Overall, the most commonly reported service needs for the FY 2024 CSNA were transportation, overall training, job coaching/supported employment services, job placement, and vocational counseling and guidance. Transportation has consistently been the most reported barrier for West Virginians with significant disabilities. WVDRS continues to implement and monitor various strategies to improve transportation availability.

## **CRP Services**

As required by WIOA, the survey asked respondents to identify the need for CRP services, including Supported Employment (SE). The top reported CRP service needs were community-based assessment, work skills assessment, direct placement, work adjustment training, and life skills training. In recent years, WVDRS has adopted goals and priorities to improve access to CRP services. As of November 2023, there are 82 WVDRS-acknowledged parent company CRPs in West Virginia at 85 service sites. These CRPs provide valuable services throughout the state, benefiting West Virginians with significant disabilities. Transitioning youth also benefit from CRP services through the provision of pre-employment transition services, including career exploration and work-based learning experiences.

## **Transitioning Youth**

Respondents were asked to provide the top service needs for Transitioning Youth (TY) with significant disabilities. The top reported needs for TY were transportation, life skills training, work-based learning experiences, job exploration counseling, and vocational counseling and guidance. WVDRS will continue to partner with state and local school systems to ensure access to VR and other pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities. Through these partnerships and shared resources, TY will have increased opportunities to achieve competitive, integrated employment.

## **(B) Individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with**

## **disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;**

### **Findings – Consumers with Significant Disabilities from Minority Backgrounds**

In 2023, SPPE staff members conducted a qualitative analysis of the reported service needs of 1,209 persons with significant disabilities of various age and disability groups statewide. Of the statewide total of 1,209 persons with significant disabilities at the time of their WVDRS application, 119 (9.8%) were determined to be of minority status. The demographic profile of this subset of minority status individuals with significant disabilities consists of the following characteristics:

- *Gender:* (56.3%) male, (43.7%) female
- *Race:* (3.4%) American Indian or Alaska Native, (3.4%) Asian, (73.9%) African American, (17.6%) Hispanic Latino, (1.7%) Pacific Islander
- *Age:* (52.9%) under 20 years old, (27.7%) 20-34 years, (5.0%) 35-44 years, (10.9%) 45-64 years, (3.4%) 65 years or older
- *Primary Impairment:* (8.0%) sensory/communicative impairments (including blindness, other visual impairments, deafness/primary communication visual, deafness/primary communication auditory, hearing loss/primary communication visual, hearing loss/primary communication auditory, other hearing impairments, deaf-blindness, and communicative impairments), (13.8%) physical impairments (including mobility orthopedic/neurological impairments, manipulation/dexterity orthopedic/neurological impairments, both mobility and manipulation/dexterity orthopedic/neurological impairments, other orthopedic impairments, respiratory impairments, general physical debilitation, and other physical impairments), (78.2%) impairments (including cognitive impairments, psychosocial impairments, and other mental impairments).
- *Referral Source:* (2.5%) adult education and literacy programs, (0.8%) community rehabilitation programs, (0.8%) consumer organizations or advocacy groups, (1.7%) DOL employment and training service programs, (35.3%) educational institutions (elementary/secondary), (5.9%) educational institutions (postsecondary), (0.8%) faith-based organizations, (12.6%) family/friends, (2.5%) medical health provider (public or private), (3.4%) mental health provider (public or private), (0.8%) other one-stop partner, (0.8%) other sources, (0.8%) other State agencies, (0.8%) other VR State agencies, (0.8%) other WIOA-funded programs, (0.8%) public housing authority, (27.7%) self-referral, (0.8%) Veteran's Administration
- *Employment Status at Application:* (5.0%) employed, (95.0%) employment not reported
- *Primary Source of Support:* (6.7%) personal income, (73.1%) family and friends, (17.6%) public support (SSI, SSDI, TANF, etc.), (2.5%) other (private disability insurance, private charities).

### ***Service Needs Reported by Consumers with Significant Disabilities from Minority Backgrounds***

#### **Education**

Among consumers with significant disabilities from minority backgrounds, 26.9% of the responses involved education. Education needs identified were categorized as transition (65.6%), 2-year or 4-year college (18.8%), other (9.4%), high school education (3.1%), tutoring (3.1%), assessments (3.1%), accommodations (3.1%), and graduate degree education (3.1%).

#### **Most Frequently Reported Education Needs**

- *Transition:* Many responses indicated a need for transition from school to work. These comments included phrases such as “transition from school to work” or “assistance with transition services.”
- *2-year or 4-year College:* A few of the consumers who expressed needs regarding education were particularly interested in attending and completing college. This was expressed in a

number of ways, such as “assistance with college” or “higher education.”

### **Training**

Among consumers with significant disabilities from minority backgrounds, 35.3% of responses involved training. Of these, training needs identified were categorized as business/vocational training (83.3%), drive training/licensing (14.3%), job search training/assistance (2.4%), and other (2.4%).

#### **Most Frequently Reported Training Needs**

*-Business/Vocational Training:* The most identified training need was training for employment. Within this category, responses were typically of the general sort (e.g., “training and employment”), although a few responses targeted training for specific jobs.

*-Drive Training/Licensing:* Some consumers identified the need for driving skills or legal driving capability. This was generally referred to by phrases such as “driver’s license” or “learn to drive.”

### **Health**

Among consumers with significant disabilities from minority backgrounds, 16% of responses involved health. Of these, health needs identified were categorized as psychological/psychiatric (42.1%), hearing/audiological services (31.6%), eye care (10.5%), other (10.5%), physician’s services (2.2%), and hospital services (5.3%).

#### **Most Frequently Reported Health Needs**

*-Psychological/Psychiatric:* Comments in this category indicated the need for mental health services; however, specific needs varied. Some consumers expressed the need for “counseling” or “mental restoration,” while others were interested in psychological evaluations.

*-Hearing/Audiological Services:* Some consumers identified needs related to hearing. Most of the comments specifically stated the need for hearing aids.

### **Employment/CRP**

Among consumers with significant disabilities from minority backgrounds, 59.7% comments involved employment/CRP services. Of these, employment/CRP service needs identified were categorized as job placement (76.1%), vocational counseling and guidance (21.1%), life skills training (5.6%), other (5.6%), work-related tools or equipment (2.8%), job retention (1.4%), work adjustment training (1.4%), and supported employment (SE) (1.4%).

#### **Most Frequently Reported Employment/CRP Needs**

*-Job Placement:* Nearly half of consumers were primarily interested in placement in a job. Comments that specifically included the word “placement” fit into this category. However, some simply stated the need for “employment” or a “job.”

*-Vocational Counseling and Guidance:* Some consumers indicated a need for vocational counseling and guidance. Key phrases in this category include “vocational planning” and “job exploration.”

### **Support**

Among consumers with significant disabilities from minority backgrounds, 20.2% of needs comments involved support. Of these, support needs identified were categorized as financial assistance (75.0%), assistive technology services (12.5%), other (8.3%), orientation/mobility services (4.2%), and transportation (4.2%).

#### **Most Frequently Reported Support Needs**

*-Financial Assistance:* Some consumers identified the need for financial assistance, typically for hearing aids, education, or other training. Key words and phrases for this category include “sponsorship” and “financial assistance.”

### ***Service Needs of Consumers with Significant Disabilities from Minority Backgrounds as Reported by WVDRS Field Staff***

In compliance with the Rehabilitation Act, the survey asked respondents to identify the top five service needs of individuals from minority backgrounds. The most commonly reported service needs were transportation, 2-year to 4-year college, job opportunities, search, and placement, CRP services, and training.

### ***Service Gaps for Consumers with Significant Disabilities from Minority Backgrounds as Reported by WVDRS Field Staff***

*Note:* New categories were created to incorporate answers that were not specific to a pre-existing service category from the survey. For example, the “Overall Training” category was created to include a number of open-ended responses where the respondent indicated a need for training, but not a specific type; for example, “Training options” and “Training services.” The percentage of respondents who indicated a gap for the service are in parentheses.

The survey asked, “Select the top five most needed services by your minority consumers with significant disabilities that you work with.” There were 144 responses. The most reported service needs were:

- Transportation (43%)
- 2-year to 4-year college (34%)
- Job Placement (29.9%)
- CRP Services (26.4%)
- Overall Training (26.4%)

### **Minority Populations**

In compliance with the Rehabilitation Act, the survey asked respondents to identify the top five service needs of individuals from minority backgrounds. The most commonly reported service needs were transportation (43.1%), 2-year to 4-year college (34%), job opportunities, search and placement (29.9%), CRP services (26.4%), and training (26.4%).

According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2020 Decennial Census, there are approximately 182,967 racial minorities (including multi-racial) in West Virginia, making up 10.2% of the state’s total population. This is a 3.5 percentage point increase from the 2017 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates, which were used in the PY 2020 WV Unified State Plan. Based on the 2020 Census data, WVDRS exceeded the minority percentage in terms of minority consumers served for PY 2021 (10.7%), PY 2022 (11.3%), and PY 2023 (12.0%).

The 2020 Census Bureau data reveal a total of 14 counties in West Virginia that have minority populations that exceed 3,000: Berkeley (23,795/19.5% of total county population), Cabell (11,685/12.4%), Fayette (4,005/9.9%), Harrison (5,587/8.5%), Jefferson (10,876/18.8%), Kanawha (27,108/15.0%), Marion (5,627/10.0%), Mercer (7,110/11.9%), Monongalia (15,810/14.9%), Ohio (4,656/11.0%), Preston (3,384/9.9%), Putnam (4,076/7.1%), Raleigh (10,566/14.2%), and Wood (6,126/7.3%).

Each year since PY 2021, the WVDRS minority service percentage has exceeded the county minority population percentage in only five of the 14 aforementioned counties: Fayette, Kanawha, Mercer, Ohio, and Raleigh. The counties of Berkeley, Cabell, Harrison, Jefferson, Marion, Putnam, and Wood had a WVDRS minority service percentage that met or exceeded the county minority population percentage in at least one PY since 2021. The WVDRS minority service percentage was below the county minority population percentage in each year since PY 2021 for the counties of Monongalia and Preston. The list below shows each of these 14 counties (with minority population and percentage in parentheses), followed by the WVDRS



minority service percentage in PY 2021, PY 2022, and PY 2023.

- Berkeley (23,795, 19.5%): PY 2021 – 15.7%; PY 2022 – 21.6%; PY 2023 – 25.3%
- Cabell (11,685, 12.4%): PY 2021 – 10.9%; PY 2022 – 12.4%; PY 2023 – 13.2%
- Fayette (4,005, 9.9%): PY 2021 – 17.0%; PY 2022 – 13.5%; PY 2023 – 14.5%
- Harrison (5,587, 8.5%): PY 2021 – 5.6%; PY 2022 – 9.0%; PY 2023 – 10.5%
- Jefferson (10,876, 18.8%): PY 2021 – 18.4%; PY 2022 – 20.3%; PY 2023 – 24.5%
- Kanawha (27,108, 15.0%): PY 2021 – 18.6%; PY 2022 – 18.3%; PY 2023 – 17.7%
- Marion (5,627, 10.0%): PY 2021 – 8.3%; PY 2022 – 12.8%; PY 2023 – 11.3%
- Mercer (7,110, 11.9%): PY 2021 – 14.6%; PY 2022 – 16.0%; PY 2023 – 14.6%
- Monongalia (15,810, 14.9%): PY 2021 – 10.6%; PY 2022 – 13.1%; PY 2023 – 14.4%
- Ohio (4,656, 11.0%): PY 2021 – 12.2%; PY 2022 – 15.6%; PY 2023 – 20.8%
- Preston (3,384, 9.9%): PY 2021 – 5.5%; PY 2022 – 3.7%; PY 2023 – 2.7%
- Putnam (4,076, 7.1%): PY 2021 – 5.7%; PY 2022 – 7.3%; PY 2023 – 5.2%
- Raleigh (10,566, 14.2%): PY 2021 – 15.8%; PY 2022 – 16.0%; PY 2023 – 21.1%
- Wood (6,126, 7.3%): PY 2021 – 8.5%; PY 2022 – 6.6%; PY 2023 – 6.4%

The 2020 Decennial Census data indicated two counties in West Virginia with a minority population under 3,000 and a county minority population percentage equal to or greater than West Virginia’s minority population percentage of 10.2%: Gilmer (1,382/18.7%) and Hardy (1,614/11.3%). Neither of these counties had a WVDRS minority service percentage higher than its respective county minority population percentage since PY 2021. Below is a list of each of these counties (with minority population and percentage in parentheses), followed by the WVDRS minority service percentage for each county in PY 2021, PY 2022, and PY 2023.

- Gilmer (1,382; 18.7%): PY 2021 – 11.1%; PY 2022 – 10.0%; PY 2023 – 11.4%
- Hardy (1,614, 11.3%): PY 2021 – 6.2%; PY 2022 – 7.7%; PY 2023 – 6.8%

To determine potentially underserved areas, the average WVDRS minority service percentage for the three-year period (PY 2021– PY 2023) for each county was compared to that county’s total minority population percentage. Counties with mean WVDRS minority service percentages that are lower than their minority population percentage are considered to be potentially underserved. Of the 16 aforementioned counties, eight counties met this criterion: Cabell, Gilmer, Hardy, Harrison, Monongalia, Preston, Putnam, and Wood. It is important to note that as previously described, some of these counties had a minority service percentage that exceeded the county’s minority population percentage in select fiscal years.

WVDRS will expand and enhance outreach activities, particularly in the counties identified through this process, to ensure awareness of and access to services in potentially underserved areas and among potentially underserved populations. WVDRS will continue to work with community partners and stakeholders to maximize the impact of outreach activities and increase referrals.

As has been the case for many years, WVDRS’ direct client services units located at WVDRS’ Nitro location will continue to be crucial for WVDRS to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities who would otherwise be unserved and/or underserved, including individuals with disabilities who live in the rural parts of the State, blind and visually impaired individuals, and deaf and hard of hearing individuals. The WVDRS Environmental Modifications Unit provides consumer services to assure they have the highest level of independence in and around their home and work by providing evaluations, technical assistance, and modifications.

### **(C) Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the workforce development system**

#### ***Introduction***

One requirement of the CSNA is an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide WDS. In West Virginia, this system is overseen at the state level by the WDWDB and the Interagency Collaborative Team (ICT) and locally by seven LWDBs. AJCs are physical locations where consumers, including those with disabilities, can utilize services provided by partner agencies operating under the WIOA. WFWV is the agency, within the WV Department of Commerce, that operates American Job Centers across the seven workforce development regions across the state. WVDRS' involvement in the State WDB, ICT, and LWDBs in addition to its presence at American Job Centers ensures that people with disabilities are considered for employment training needs and services are identified.

As part of the FY 2024 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (WVDRS) emailed a survey to all members of the ICT in June of 2023. In addition to the seven regional WDB directors, ICT membership includes the following WV state agencies:

- Bureau of Senior Services
  - State Unit on Aging
- Council for Community and Technical College
- Department of Education
  - Office of Adult Education and Workforce Development
  - Office of Diversion and Transition Programs
- Department of Commerce
  - WVDRS
  - WFWV
    - WV Employment Service
  - Development Office
    - Community Development Division
    - Business Industry Development Representatives
- Department of Veterans Assistance
- Department of Health and Human Resources
  - Bureau of Children and Families
  - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
  - Food Stamp Employment and Training

## Survey

The survey consisted of eight questions to collect information about the respondent, the agency they represent, and their perception of the rehabilitation service needs and gaps of both the individuals with significant disabilities that they serve and employers. The questions were:

- Name
- Title
- Agency
- Approximately how many consumers with significant disabilities are served by your agency per year?
- Please identify up to five vocational rehabilitation and support services most needed by consumers with significant disabilities served by your agency (e.g., transportation, career exploration, education/training, soft skills training, assessment for accommodations, financial assistance, job search/placement, etc.).
- Please identify up to five vocational rehabilitation and support services gaps - those that are needed but not available in sufficient quantities for consumers with significant disabilities served by your agency.

- Please identify up to five disability-related services employers need (e.g., workplace accommodations, assistive technology, staffing assistance, tax credit information, disability etiquette training, etc.).
- How can WVDRS assist your agency to better serve your customers with significant disabilities? Please add any additional comments here.

## Results

Nine surveys were completed online. Respondents represented WFWV, WV Adult Education, WV Office of Economic Development, Department of Health and Human Resources, Office of Family Assistance, WV Department of Veterans Assistance and WDB Regions 2 and 6.

### *Number of Individuals with Disabilities Served*

The approximate number of consumers with disabilities served by each agency varied from 0 to 3,000. Four respondents were unable to provide a response for this question.

### *Services Most Often Needed*

The most reported service needs were education assistance, job search/placement, transportation, financial assistance, and soft skills/employability skills training.

### *Service Gaps*

Responses included assessments, transportation, financial assistance, assistive technology, education/training, mental health practitioners, childcare, and case management.

### *Services to Employers*

The most reported service needs were disability etiquette training, information regarding accommodations, staffing assistance, and equipment/assistive technology.

### *WVDRS Assistance and Additional Comments*

Respondents encouraged a continuation of the services and partnership that WVDRS provides, suggestions for better communication to streamline services and referrals, recommendations for improved database interface between involved agencies, and a more active role in marketing services to veterans.

## Discussion

The West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services takes the input of its partners seriously and plans to use the information provided to make well-informed decisions regarding policy and service provision moving forward. As WVDRS continues to provide vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, the agency will continue to collaborate, as needed, with its core WIOA partners of WFWV and WV Adult Education, as well as with fellow ICT members. This collaboration will ensure that individuals with the most significant disabilities receive maximized service provision in their mission to obtain competitive, integrated employment.

### **(D) Youth with disabilities, including students with disabilities and their need for pre-employment transition services.**

In 2023, SPPE staff conducted a qualitative analysis of the reported service needs of 1,209 persons with significant disabilities of various age and disability groups statewide. These individuals represent a good sample of consumers with significant disabilities that will continue to seek assistance from agencies. All 55 counties in West Virginia were represented in the sample; the sample resembles population proportions by county. Of the statewide total of 1,209 persons with significant disabilities at the time of their WVDRS application, 757 persons (62.6%) were determined to be of transition status (age 24 and under). The demographic

profile of this subset of transition status individuals with significant disabilities consists of the following characteristics:

- *Gender*: (50.3%) male, (49.3%) female, (0.4%) did not specify
- *Race*: (88.6%) White, (11.1%) Other (African American/Hispanic Latino/American Indian or Alaska Native/Asian/Pacific Islander), (0.3%) Unspecified
- *Age*: (79.4%) under 20 years old, (20.6%) 20-34 years
- *Primary Impairment*: (4.1%) sensory/communicative impairments (including blindness, other visual impairments, deafness–primary communication visual, deafness–primary communication auditory, hearing loss–primary communication visual, hearing loss–primary communication auditory, other hearing impairments, deaf-blindness, and communicative impairments), (10.2%) physical impairments (including mobility orthopedic/neurological impairments, manipulation/dexterity orthopedic/neurological impairments, both mobility and manipulation/dexterity orthopedic/neurological impairments, other orthopedic impairments, respiratory impairments, general physical debilitation, and other physical impairments), (85.5%) mental impairments (including cognitive impairments, psychosocial impairments, and other mental impairments)
- *Referral Source*: (0.9%) adult education and literacy programs, (0.3%) Child Protective Services, (1.2%) community rehabilitation programs, (0.8%) consumer organizations or advocacy groups, (48.9%) educational institutions (elementary/secondary), (7.4%) educational institutions (postsecondary), (0.1%) faith-based organizations, (18.9%) family/friends, (0.4%) intellectual and developmental disabilities providers, (1.3%) medical health provider (public or private), (2.0%) mental health provider (public or private), (0.4%) One-stop Employment/Training Centers, (1.8%) other sources, (0.3%) other State agencies, (0.1%) other VR State agencies, (0.1%) Other WIOA-funded programs, (0.1%) public housing authority, (14.4%) self-referral, (0.4%) welfare agency (State or local government)
- *Employment Status at Application*: (4.7%) employed, (95.3%) employment not reported
- *Primary Source of Support*: (5.8%) personal income, (86.8%) family and friends, (5.9%) public support (SSI, SSDI, TANF, etc.), (1.3%) other (private disability insurance, private charities)

### ***Service Needs Reported by Transitioning Youth with Significant Disabilities***

#### **Education**

Education needs were identified in 34.7% of the needs comments of transitioning youth with significant disabilities. Of these, education needs identified were categorized as transition (54.8%), 2-year or 4-year college (37.6%), other (8.0%), accommodations (2.7%), vocational education (2.3%), tutoring (2.3%), high school education (1.5%), assessments (1.1%), graduate education (0.8%), and adult basic education (0.4%).

#### **Most Frequently Reported Education Needs**

- *Transition*: Most responses by transitioning youth with significant disabilities indicated a need for transition from school to work. These comments included phrases such as “help with transitioning after high school” or “assistance with transition services.”
- *2-year or 4-year college*: Several respondents were interested in attending and completing college. Many of these needs comments were general (e.g., “help going to college”), but some others were specific, indicating a particular school of interest or a particular major.
- *Other*: Some respondents indicated a need for education, or assistance with education, but were not much more specific than that. A typical response in this manner may have included phrases such as “help with school” or “educational services.”

#### **Training**

Among transitioning youth with significant disabilities, 42.8% of the comments involved training. Training needs identified were categorized as business/vocational training (86.7%), drive training/licensing (11.7%), job search training/assistance (4.6%), other (2.1%), and independent living skills (1, 0.3%).

### Most Frequently Reported Training Needs

- *Business/Vocational Training*: The most identified training need, by a substantial margin, was training for employment. Responses varied from the general (e.g., “training services”) to the specific (e.g., “phlebotomy program at Med Care”).

- *Driver Training/Licensing*: Some respondents identified the need for driving skills or legal driving capability. This was referred to in a number of ways, including “driver’s license,” “driver’s training,” or “learner’s permit.” CDL training was also included in this category.

### Health

Among transitioning youth with significant disabilities, 5.9% of 757 comments involved health. Health needs identified were categorized as psychological/psychiatric (68.9%), hearing/audiological services (20.0%), eye care (4.4%), physician’s services (2.2%), hospital services (2.2%), and other (2.2%).

### Most Frequently Reported Health Needs

- *Psychological/Psychiatric*: Comments indicated the need for mental health services of some type. However, the specific needs varied. Some transitioning youth with significant disabilities expressed the need for “therapy,” “counseling,” or “mental restoration,” while others were interested in psychological evaluations.

- *Hearing/Audiological Services*: Some of the comments were related to hearing. Most of these needs comments specifically stated the need for hearing aids.

### Employment/CRP

Among transitioning youth with significant disabilities, 59.2% of 757 needs comments involved employment/CRP services. Employment/CRP service needs identified were categorized as job placement (75.0%), vocational counseling and guidance (27.9%), other (5.1%), life skills training (1.6%), work-related tools or equipment (1.6%), supported employment (SE) (0.7%), job retention (0.4%), vocational evaluation (0.2%), psychological evaluation (0.2%), community-based assessment (0.2%), work skills assessment (0.2%), and job coaching other than SE (0.2%).

### Most Frequently Reported Employment/CRP Needs

- *Job Placement*: A large percentage of respondents were primarily interested in placement in a job. Many stated the need for “work” or “employment.”

- *Vocational Counseling and Guidance*: Some respondents indicated a need for vocational counseling and guidance. Key phrases in this category include “vocational counseling and guidance,” “career exploration,” and “planning a vocational goal.”

- *Other (5.1%)*: Some respondents indicated a need for services related to employment, but the need indicated was either too general to be classified (e.g., “vocational services”) or didn’t fit in one of the sub-categories (e.g., “interview skills”).

### Support

Among transitioning youth with significant disabilities, 11.4% of 757 needs comments involved support. Of these, support needs identified were categorized as financial assistance (88.4%), assistive technology services (5.8%), other (3.5%), housing assistance (1.2%), and orientation/mobility services (1.2%).

### Most Frequently Reported Support Needs

- *Financial Assistance*: Many respondents identified the need for financial assistance, usually for education or other training. Key words and phrases for this category included “assistance with educational expenses,” “sponsorship,” and “tuition assistance.”

- *Assistive Technology Services*: Some respondents identified the need for assistive technology. These needs comments specifically indicated “assistive technology” or “AT.”

## **Identifying Student Needs as Reported by WVDRS Field Staff**

WIOA requires that the comprehensive statewide needs assessment include an assessment of the vocational rehabilitation service needs of “youth with disabilities and students with disabilities, including their need for pre-employment transition services.” WVDRS field staff that serve transitioning youth are one key resource in identifying the service needs of youth with disabilities in West Virginia. Therefore, needs assessment surveys completed by 186 WVDRS field staff were analyzed in order to identify needs for Pre-Employment Transition Services.

#### *Overall Service Needs for Transitioning Youth (ages 14-24)*

The survey asked, “Select the top five most needed services by your consumers with significant disabilities in transition/school territories that you work with.” There were 115 respondents to this question. The most reported service needs were:

- Driver Education, Tutoring and Licensing (42.6%)
- Transportation (36.5%)
- 2-year to 4-year college (36.7%)
- CRP Services (35.7%)
- Vocational Counseling and Guidance (32.2%)

#### *Pre-Employment Transition Service Needs for Students with Disabilities*

Services that were identified as needed by 50% or more of the total respondents are listed for each service category below:

- Job Exploration Counseling (73%)
- Work-Based Learning Experiences (70%)
- Self-Advocacy Training (67%)
- Counseling on Postsecondary Opportunities (72%)
- Workplace Readiness Training (71%)

#### *Pre-Employment Transition Service Gaps for Students with Disabilities*

Respondents that indicated a perceived service gap were totaled for each service. The top five service gaps are listed for each service category below:

- Work-based Learning Experience (10.8%)
- Workplace Readiness Training (10.2%)
- Self-Advocacy Training (7.8%)
- Counseling on Postsecondary Opportunities (6%)
- Job Exploration Counseling (6%)

### **Results of the Analysis of Reported Pre-Employment Transition (Pre-ETS) Services Provision by West Virginia High Schools to Students with Disabilities**

In October 2023, as part of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, WVDRS assessed the need and availability of Pre-ETS for students with disabilities at high schools across the state. The five required Pre-ETS activities (as mandated by WIOA) for students with disabilities are:

1. Job exploration counseling
2. Work-based learning experiences
3. Counseling on opportunities for transitioning from school to work or into postsecondary training or education programs, including college, university (Counseling on Postsecondary Opportunities)
4. Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living skills
5. Instruction in self-advocacy

To assess the availability of Pre-ETS for students with disabilities at high schools, WVDRS counselors held formal meetings with school principals, vice principals, counselors, special education teachers, and other related staff. During these meetings, WVDRS counselors asked school staff (for each of the five required Pre-ETS activities) whether the service was currently available to the school’s students with disabilities, and if so, how the service was provided.

The SPPE Unit rated each of the responses to the five Pre-ETS questions using a 1-3 Likert scale. A rating of 1 indicated that the school does not provide the service (or has a very limited capacity) to its students with disabilities. A rating of 2 indicated that the school was providing services to some students with disabilities but not all, or by providing a minimal level of service to all students with disabilities, suggesting remaining unmet need/demand. A rating of 3 indicated that the school was sufficiently providing the service to its students with disabilities.

### **Results**

A total of 94 surveys were collected; however, three surveys were eliminated from analysis due to a lack of school identification and meaningful data. The final sample consisted of 91 surveys collected from 64 high schools from 29 counties. All six WVDRS districts were represented.

Total scores for each survey were calculated by adding the scores for each required Pre-ETS activity. A total score of 5 indicated that none of the services were being provided by the school, while a total score of 15 indicated that all five required activities of Pre-ETS were provided sufficiently by the school. Scores were averaged for schools responding to the survey multiple times. Total scores ranged from 5-to-14, with a mean of 7.7 and a mode of 5. Twelve schools had a total score of 5 and no school had a total score of 15.

Statewide average scores were calculated for each service ranging from 1 (indicating no provision of service in high schools across the state) to 3 (indicating sufficient service provision by all high schools in the state). The most sufficiently provided Pre-ETS statewide was job exploration counseling (1.55) and workplace readiness training (1.55), followed by counseling on postsecondary opportunities (1.41), work-based learning experiences (1.40), and instruction in self-advocacy (1.40). Across all five Pre-ETS categories, the statewide average score was 1.48.

Across all five required Pre-ETS activities statewide, a rating of 1 was scored for a total of 275 responses: (job exploration counseling (51), work-based learning experiences (57), counseling on postsecondary opportunities (61), workplace readiness training (48), and instruction in self-advocacy (58). A rating of 2 was scored for a total of 141 responses: (job exploration counseling (28), work-based learning experiences (30), counseling on postsecondary opportunities (21), workplace readiness training (34), and instruction in self-advocacy (28). A rating of 3 was scored for a total of 39 responses: (job exploration counseling (12), work-based learning experiences (4), counseling on postsecondary opportunities (9), workplace readiness training (9), and instruction in self-advocacy (5).

Applied thematic analysis was used to determine themes in the recorded service gaps that were identified by respondents. For *Job Exploration Counseling*, respondents identified gaps related to the accessibility and availability of resources, including transportation, job opportunities, and staffing; information and awareness regarding services and options; and difficulties in working with parents. For *Work-Based Learning Experiences*, identified gaps were related to transportation and the availability of opportunities for experiences. For *Counseling on Postsecondary Opportunities*, identified gaps were related to support and involvement from parents, as well as assistance with completing college applications. For *Workplace Readiness Training*, identified gaps were related to transportation and a lack of training opportunities. For *Instruction in Self-advocacy*, identified gaps were related to a lack of resources and training opportunities.

The results of the survey indicate that many high schools in West Virginia are providing some level of required Pre-ETS activity. However, there are many locations within the state in which Pre-ETS are not provided or are provided minimally by the school. Several schools indicated that the required Pre-ETS activities are being provided by WVDRS or by a Community Rehabilitation Program. Additionally, respondents identified a number of gaps in service provision. Many of these gaps centered on a need for transportation, training opportunities, and human resources.

To ensure that Pre-ETS are available to students with disabilities in high schools statewide, as

well as eliminate duplication of services, WVDRS will prioritize and emphasize Pre-ETS provision in categories and high schools which were rated as 1, with secondary priority to those high schools and Pre-ETS categories which were rated as 2. Additionally, WVDRS will continue to explore and expand options for Pre-ETS provision and best practices statewide.

*2. Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State.*

As described throughout the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, WVDRS' direct client services units are crucial for WVDRS to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities identified under the unserved and underserved portion of this assessment, including individuals with disabilities who live in the rural parts of the State, blind and visually impaired individuals, and individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. WVDRS' direct client services units focus on providing specialized services for consumers with sensory impairments, which includes those who are blind, visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing; rehabilitation technology, which includes job accommodations, product fabrication and driver education; assistive technology; and environmental modifications, which ensures consumers have the highest level of independence in and around their home and work by providing evaluations, technical assistance, and modifications. Ongoing development and improvement of direct client services units are necessary to maintain its operation in the most efficient and cost-effective manner possible.

### **Survey of CRPs/Community Service Providers**

As part of the FY 2024 CSNA, WVDRS conducted a survey of CRPs/community service providers (CSPs) with acknowledged vendor status to provide services (including supported employment services) to WVDRS consumers across the state. A survey for CRPs was developed online, with a request that service providers indicate the types of services provided for WVDRS consumers and the counties in which those services are provided. CRPs were asked to indicate the service types from a list, with an additional option to include an "other" service. CRPs were also asked to indicate which Pre-Employment Transition Services they provided to students with disabilities.

CRPs were also asked to rate their communication with WVDRS personnel using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from *Excellent* to *Very Poor*, and whether the WVDRS liaison counselor was in contact on a regular basis. Finally, CRPs were given the opportunity to provide comments on 1) their communication with WVDRS, 2) specific things WVDRS could do to improve services or service delivery, and 3) what, if anything, the CRP urgently needed to better serve West Virginians with significant disabilities. The full survey is show in the table below.

*This survey is part of the 2024 West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services' (WVDRS) Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, and your responses are critical to ongoing program improvement and expansion to better serve West Virginians with significant disabilities.*

1. Contact information for the CRP/CSP:
  - Name
  - Company
  - Phone Number
2. For which counties do you provide services? (Checkbox for each county)
3. Please indicate the types of services your CRP/CSP provides for WVDRS consumers. (Checkboxes)
  - Community-based assessment
  - Counseling on postsecondary opportunities
  - Direct Placement



- Extended Assessments
  - Extended Supported Employment (ESES)
  - Job Coaching (Other than SE)
  - Job Exploration Counseling
  - Life Skills
  - Self-Advocacy Training
  - Supported Employment (SE)
  - Work Adjustment Training
  - Work-based Learning Experience
  - Work Skills Assessment
  - Workplace Readiness Training
  - Other
4. Please indicate which Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) listed below you provide to students with disabilities (i.e., enrolled in school and under the age of 21). (Checkboxes)
    - Counseling on postsecondary enrollment opportunities
    - Job exploration counseling
    - Self-advocacy training
    - Work-based learning experience
    - Workplace readiness training
  5. Please describe your perception of communication between your CRP/CSP and WVDRS personnel today. (Checkboxes)
    - Excellent
    - Very Good
    - Good
    - Poor
    - Very Poor
  6. Does your WVDRS counselor contact you on a regular basis? (Multiple Choice)
    - Yes
    - No
  7. Please provide additional comments regarding your responses on communication with WVDRS personnel. (Comment box)
  8. Please identify specific things that WVDRS can do to improve services or service delivery for West Virginians with significant disabilities. (Comment box)
  9. What else does your CRP/CSP urgently need to better serve West Virginians with significant disabilities? (Comment box)

### **Results of Survey of CRPs/Community Service Providers**

#### *Service Provision*

Sixty-one CRPs responded to the survey. All nine categories of services were reported as being provided in each of the six WVDRS districts. Services were also reported as being provided in all 55 counties in West Virginia. All nine services were reported as being provided in 45 of 55 counties (81.8%). The remaining counties were reported to be provided with between three and eight CRP services. Additionally, in several counties, various services were reported as provided by multiple CRPs. However, based on records in the WVDRS CRP directory, all nine categories of CRP services are provided in all 55 counties. Response counts for provision of each of the service categories are presented in the table below.

<b>CRP Response Counts for Provision of Service Categories</b>		
Service	Number of Respondents Reporting Provision	Percentage of Respondents (N = 61)
<i>CBA</i>	49	80.3%
<i>DP</i>	43	70.5%
<i>EA</i>	20	32.8%
<i>ESE</i>	31	50.8%
<i>JCOTHER</i>	40	65.6%
<i>LS</i>	46	75.4%
<i>SE</i>	41	67.2%
<i>WAT</i>	44	72.1%
<i>WSA</i>	39	63.9%
<i>OTHER</i>	23	37.7%

#### *Pre-Employment Transition Services*

All five categories of Pre-ETS were reported as being provided by CRPs in all six WVDRS districts. Services were also reported as being provided by CRPs in all 55 counties in West Virginia, with all five categories of Pre-ETS being reported as provided in 46 of 55 counties (83.6%). The remaining counties were provided with between one and four categories of Pre-ETS. Additionally, in some counties, various Pre-ETS were provided by multiple CRPs. Response counts for provision of each of the Pre-ETS service categories are presented in the table below.

<b>CRP Response Counts for Provision of Pre-ETS Service Categories</b>		
Pre-ETS Service	Number of Respondents Reporting Provision	Percentage of Respondents (N = 61)
<i>CPSO</i>	28	45.9%
<i>JEC</i>	33	54.1%
<i>SAT</i>	33	54.1%
<i>WBLE</i>	40	65.6%
<i>WRT</i>	35	57.4%

#### *Communication and Liaison Contact*

All 61 of the CRP respondents provided a rating of their communication with WVDRS. Options ranged from *Excellent* to *Very Poor*. No CRPs gave a rating of *Very Poor* and 58 of the 61 CRPs (95.1%) gave a response of *Good* or better. When asked whether a WVDRS liaison counselor was in contact on a regular basis, 35 of 61 CRPs responded *yes*, while 26 CRPs responded *no* (57.4% and 42.6%, respectively). All respondents answered this question. The table below shows the breakdown of responses.

<b>CRP Responses Regarding Communication with WVDRS</b>		
Response Option	Number (percentage)	Cumulative Percentage
<i>Excellent</i>	16(26.2%)	26.2%
<i>Very Good</i>	15 (24.6%)	50.8%
<i>Good</i>	27 (44.3%)	95.1%
<i>Poor</i>	3 (4.9%)	100.0%
<i>Very Poor</i>	0 (0.0%)	100.0%

### **Comments**

*Communication:* Forty-three of 61 respondents gave additional comments regarding communication with WVDRS. Most of these comments were positive (e.g., “Communication very fluid, constant, and results oriented!”), but a few negative comments were noted that generally

focus on a lack of communication or that the CRP must initiate any interaction.

***WVDRS Improvement:*** Thirty-five of 61 respondents gave comments regarding specific things that WVDRS could do to improve services or service delivery. The most common themes found in the comments were in higher fee schedules (e.g., “The fee schedule needs to increase so that providers can pay their staff”) and networking (e.g., “A way for CRPs to network with community businesses to establish relationships for CBA, WAT, and WBLE placements”). Other themes referred to WVDRS staffing (e.g., “More DRS counselors”) and service provision issues (e.g., “...more personalized services...can be difficult to address individual needs in a group setting”).

***CRP Needs:*** Thirty-six of 61 CRP respondents gave comments on what the CRP urgently needed to better serve West Virginians with disabilities. Referrals and authorizations (which generate funding for CRPs) were the most reported needs. These comments ranged from the convenient (e.g., “The only issues I’ve had is for referrals to be sent, it’s not happening right away”) to the necessary (e.g., “Referrals to reach underserved school systems”). Other themes that could be found in the comments included increases/improvements in service provision, transportation, and improved willingness of employers to facilitate placement. Other topics were mentioned as well, and some comments merely stated that there were no pressing needs at this time.

## **Discussion**

No less than four services were reported by CRPs as being provided in each of West Virginia’s counties listed. All nine CRP services were reported as being provided in all six WVDRS districts and in all West Virginia counties. At least two Pre-ETS services were reported by CRPs as being provided in each of the listed counties, with all five categories of Pre-ETS being reported as provided in all six WVDRS districts and in all West Virginia counties.

Over 95% of CRPs reported a *Good* or better rating of communication with WVDRS and no CRP rated communication with WVDRS as being *Very Poor*. This is somewhat contradictory with the fact that only 57.4% of the CRPs claimed that a WVDRS liaison counselor was in contact on a regular basis. This may indicate that communication does not have to be frequent, or even regularly occurring, in order to be good. Comments regarding communication (provided by nearly all respondents) reflected this at times, suggesting that communication was good when it occurred. At other times, comments indicated that the lack of regular communication was indeed a problem.

Comments on WVDRS improvement focused on referrals and improved communication.

Transportation and service provision were also highlighted. Comments on CRP needs generally emphasized referrals, but also addressed service provision, transportation, and employer education. As WVDRS continues to provide services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, CRP services will be a vital resource in helping these individuals attain their goal of competitive, integrated employment. WVDRS takes the feedback of its acknowledged vendors seriously and aims to make improvements, as needed, to facilitate relationships and performances with CRPs statewide.

## **CRP Service Responses from WVDRS Field Staff Survey**

### **CRP Service Need/Use**

Service need/use for each service was assessed to allow respondents to indicate which services their consumers need/use most often. This was done independently of the service gap assessment as some services may be highly needed/used but are readily available, and therefore, do not require an increase in availability.

Employment and CRP services that were identified as needed by 50% or more of the total respondents are listed for each service category below with the percentage of respondents in

parentheses:

- Vocational Counseling & Guidance (76%)
- Job Placement (68.9%)
- Psychological Evaluation (68.3%)
- Community-Based Assessment (67.1%)
- Direct Placement by CRPs (66.5%)
- Vocational Evaluation (64.7%)
- Work Skills Assessment (63.5%)
- Job Coaching other than SE (62.3%)
- Work Adjustment Training (61.7%)
- Job Development (59.3%)
- Work-related tools/equipment (58.7%)

### **Service Gaps**

Respondents that indicated a perceived service gap were totaled for each service. The top five employment and CRP service gaps are listed for each service category below with percentage of respondents in parentheses:

1. Small Business Development (21.6%)
2. Direct Placement by CRPs (18.6%)
3. Job Development (17.4%)
4. Supported Employment (17.4%)
5. Trial Work Experience (17.4%)

### **C. Goals, Priorities, and Strategies**

*Section 101(a)(15) and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe the goals and priorities of the State in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs. The goals and priorities are based on (1) the most recent CSNA, including any updates, (2) the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA, and (3) other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the SRC and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107 of the Rehabilitation Act. VR agencies must:*

1. *Describe how the SRC and the VR agency jointly developed and agreed to the goals and priorities and any revisions.*

The West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (WVDRS) employs strategies to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities, particularly those individuals with the most significant disabilities. WVDRS recognizes the services that are essential to meeting needs identified in the comprehensive assessment, evaluation of the Designated State Unit's performance on the WIOA common performance measures to ensure quality services for individuals with significant disabilities, and services vital to the operation and effectiveness of the VR program in West Virginia.

For the development of agency goals and priorities, WVDRS followed WIOA guidance in the development of the Combined State Plan. WVDRS worked closely with the WIOA core partners including WFWV and the WV Adult Education. WVDRS goals and priorities were developed to support the overall state goals and priorities in achieving a well-integrated WDS that provides customer-focused services to job seekers in West Virginia.

The West Virginia State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) maintained involvement throughout the development and assessment of agency goals and priorities in a variety of ways and provided WVDRS with valued input and recommendations. WVDRS executive managers, representatives of SRC, the West Virginia Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), and the Client Assistance

Program (CAP) were invited to discuss WVDRS goals and priorities for carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs. The Executive Directors of the SRC and SILC attend monthly WVDRS Executive Management Group (EMG) meetings to discuss various ongoing issues affecting the agency and are informed about current goals, objectives, and strategies pertaining to specific agency issues. Additional involvement occurs through WVDRS staff members attending SRC and SILC meetings to share information regarding agency performance, needs assessment, and State Plan activities. The SRC was afforded electronic access to the PY 2024 State Plan for review. SRC members discuss WVDRS activities at regularly scheduled meetings and provide input to WVDRS.

2. *Identify measurable goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs and the basis for selecting the goals and priorities (e.g., CSNA, performance accountability measures, SRC recommendations, monitoring, other information). As required in section 101(a)(15)(D), (18), and (23), describe under each goal or priority, the strategies or methods used to achieve the goal or priority, including as applicable, description of strategies or methods that—*

- (A) Support innovation and expansion activities;
- (B) Overcome barriers to accessing VR and supported employment services;
- (C) Improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities, including the coordination of services designed to facilitate the transition of such students from school to postsecondary life (including the receipt of VR services, post secondary education, employment, and pre-employment transition services); and
- (D) Improve the performance of the VR and Supported Employment programs in assisting individuals with disabilities to achieve quality employment outcomes.

West Virginia has a labor supply shortage for current and future demands for skilled workers in specific industries. Well-trained and qualified workers with disabilities are essential to meet the demand for qualified workers in targeted and growing industrial sectors to enable West Virginia to achieve its maximum economic development potential. STEP21 has been WVDRS' strategy for the last two years; it is designed to meet the mandates of WIOA and to satisfy West Virginia's labor needs. STEP21 requires all VR stakeholders (e.g., consumers, VR counselors, school counselors, special education teachers, parents, CRPs/service providers, etc.) to demand more and do more to enhance the system's service provision and its final outcomes of generating more well-qualified workers, especially those with disabilities. WVDRS and WV Combined State Plan partners have been working with the Governor's Office to develop a pipeline of qualified and needed workers for in-demand jobs and industries to continue economic growth and prosperity for the State and citizens of West Virginia. This belief is embedded in the Combined State Plan and the ways in which WVDRS has been, and will be, operating during the next 4-year period (PY24 to PY27). The new goals and strategies of the Combined State Plan are consistent and parallel to WVDRS goals and priorities and will help prepare the West Virginia to experience economic growth and prosperity and improve economic benefits of West Virginia workers, especially those with disabilities.

The WDS of West Virginia believes that its successful activities positively contribute to the ongoing mission of increasing the labor force participation rate. **Following are the current goals of the WDS, which will be updated when new WDS goals for Program Years 2024-2027 have been formally approved.**

*WDS Goal 1: Work-Based Learning:* West Virginia will expand and implement high-quality work-based learning opportunities for youth and adult learners.

*WDS Goal 2: Reduce Barriers to Sustainable Employment:* West Virginia will increase referrals and integration of services to improve access to supportive services customized for individuals needing education and employment.

*WDS Goal 3: Sector Strategies:* West Virginia will implement comprehensive sector strategy approaches to reduce skills mismatches and enhance faster labor market attachment while informing education and training priorities.

*WDS Goal 4: Integration and Innovation in Service Delivery:* West Virginia will implement the Blue Ribbon Franchise Model of workforce service delivery to increase the efficiency of service delivery and effectiveness in serving businesses, workers, and job seekers.

WVDRS is committed to coordinating its activities and services with core and community partners to ensure successful completion of the WDS goals. **The following goals highlight specific focus areas for WVDRS that will also contribute to the overall goals of the West Virginia WDS:**

***WVDRS Goal 1: Provide integrated vocational rehabilitation services to West Virginians with disabilities to promote attainment of a high school education or greater in order to increase their ability to move through meaningful career pathways.***

*Linked to WDS Goal 1: Work-Based Learning; WDS Goal 3: Sector Strategies; WDS Goal 4: Integration and Innovation in Service Delivery*

In West Virginia, 58.2% of people 25 and older with disabilities have a high school degree or lower, compared to 44.1% of people without disabilities. Of those who have some college or above, 13.7% of people with disabilities graduate from college, compared to the 23.2% of people with disabilities who have some college experience or an associate degree. Meanwhile, the levels for people without disabilities are closer, 27.1% of that population have some college or associate degrees, while 27.1% have graduated from college. Close relationships with the WV Adult Education Program and the WV Higher Education Policy Commission, as well as State and local education agencies, will help to close this education gap.

### *Strategies and Methods*

WVDRS will continue to monitor the educational achievement of all of its consumers, especially those in the transition youth (TY) population. Youth have become a primary focus in vocational rehabilitation and WVDRS will work closely and diligently with State and local education agencies to ensure that its TY population receives the services needed, including pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) for students with disabilities.

Each high school in WV has a WVDRS counselor assigned to it to guarantee service provision for students with disabilities. A greater emphasis is being placed for counselors to do outreach with these students and their parents/guardians during students' freshman and sophomore years (rather than their junior year, as was formerly practiced) in order to maximize counseling opportunities. WVDRS counselors participate in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) development of students with disabilities when they are invited. Counselors also stay in contact with educators to discuss and resolve educational difficulties. WVDRS also works closely with WV Adult Education, referring consumers as needed, to ensure that individuals with disabilities have an adequate opportunity to obtain a completed high school level education.

***WVDRS Goal 2: Provide Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to students with disabilities.***

*Linked to WDS Goal 1: Work-Based Learning; WDS Goal 3: Sector Strategies; WDS Goal 4: Integration and Innovation in Service Delivery*

Pursuant to requirements of WIOA and findings from the 2024 CSNA, WVDRS will, in cooperation with State and local education agencies, provide Pre-ETS to students with disabilities, focusing on students 21 years or younger while they are in high school. The provision of Pre-ETS offers students with disabilities information about careers, career opportunities, education and training programs, and self-advocacy. This information and work-

based learning experiences can lead to more well-informed career decision making and can empower students with disabilities to become more educated and skilled, moving toward a career that meets their needs.

### Strategies and Methods

The 2024 CSNA indicated that job exploration counseling was the most frequently reported pre-employment transition service need. Per WIOA requirements, WVDRS counselors in high schools provide Pre-ETS to students with disabilities, especially job exploration counseling, in order to give students with disabilities and their parents/guardians a better understanding of labor market conditions, current and emerging career opportunities, and the necessary education and training requirements related to those opportunities.

WVDRS works closely with the WV Office of Special Education to ensure that special education teachers, parents, and students with disabilities are aware of the availability of Pre-ETS. This work will continue through joint training conferences with special education staff from across WV. Additionally, intensive training on the Pathways to the Future Pre-ETS website will be provided to special education teachers in upcoming years. As part of the outreach campaign, WVDRS will place large banners in high schools and distribute Pre-ETS materials to students with disabilities across the state. Outreach using large posters will target eighth grade, career and technical education, and postsecondary students at locations across WV.

In addition to ongoing program activities, WVDRS will sponsor Career Exploration Opportunity (CEO) Summits, four-day summer workshops for students with disabilities. CEO Summits will be held in multiple locations across WV to ensure statewide coverage. WVDRS will utilize the assistance of CRPs to conduct Summit activities. Approximately 20 students will attend each Summit; students will earn a stipend for attending. WVDRS will also request WFWV and WV Adult Education to participate in Summits to provide additional information to students. Topics covered in Summits include:

- *Career planning*
- *Career preparation*
- *SSI/SSDI information*
- *Understanding the importance of necessary personal documents (e.g., social security card, driver's license, birth certificate, pay stubs)*
- *Communication*
- *Conflict management*
- *Employer expectations*
- *Attendance and punctuality*
- *Timeliness of task completion*
- *Be able to work without supervision*
- *Positive work ethic*
- *Manage multiple tasks*
- *High-growth jobs*
- *Personal brand*
- *Job hunting tools (resumes, cover letters, interviews, and digital profiles)*

**WVDRS Goal 3: Provide integrated vocational rehabilitation services to West Virginians with disabilities, committing to the use of the Employment First framework, to enable them to obtain competitive, integrated employment, especially in occupations and careers within emerging industries statewide.**

*Linked to WDS Goal 1: Work-Based Learning; WDS Goal 2: Reduce Barriers to Sustainable Employment; WDS Goal 3: Sector Strategies; WDS Goal 4: Integration and Innovation in Service Delivery*

The Bureau of Labor Statistics report (October 2023) showed that WV had the second lowest workforce participation rate (all individuals, with and without disabilities) in the U.S. with

55.1%, as compared to the national average of 62.7%. Individuals with barriers to employment, including those with disabilities, have lower employment/workforce participation rates. Labor force participation among persons with disabilities in WV has been steadily declining; labor force participation among these individuals has fallen from 31.7% (63,609) in 2010 to 29.7% (50,814) in 2021. In 2021, labor force participation for persons with disabilities in WV was 11 percentage points below the national rate of 40.7%.

West Virginia also has a high poverty rate, with 17.9% of residents living below the Federal Poverty Level (compared to 11.5% nationally). The poverty rate is especially high for individuals with disabilities, with 31.3% of West Virginians with disabilities between the ages of 18-64 living in poverty. Among those who are employed, there are significant numbers of West Virginians whose annual earnings do not put them above the Federal Poverty Level. WFWV expects the largest change in employment growth (from 2016 to 2026) to occur in the industries of Health Care and Social Assistance (+19,026/14.94%), Ambulatory Health Care Services (+9,675/23.90%), Educational Services (+4,498/7.52%), Government (+3,996/5.40%), Construction (+3,701/12.36%), and Social Assistance (+3,507/19.67%).

### Strategies and Methods

Collaboration with WFWV: WVDRS maintains regular communication with WFWV to stay abreast of trends in employment, including changes in education and training requirements. This is accomplished through regular meetings of the WDS, written communications, teleconferences, and other media, as appropriate. WVDRS, particularly through its employment specialists, also stays informed of emerging careers and occupations via WFWV's Labor Market Information website. WVDRS employment specialists continuously collect employment information from their business contacts. This information, including job orders for open positions, is immediately input into WFWV's online Mid Atlantic Career Consortium (MACC) system and shared within the WDS.

WVDRS serves on Business Service Teams (BSTs) with WFWV, Adult Education, LWDBs, and other entities. Through training and standardizing informational materials, these teams provide a full range of WDS information for employer visits. This allows the WDS to maximize the impact of employer visits and ensure that businesses are aware of all resources available through the WDS.

Use of WVDRS Employment Specialists: WVDRS uses employment specialists to gather information regarding employers at the local level, including information regarding job placements for individuals with disabilities and regarding current and expected employer needs.

WVDRS has an Employer Services Section that specializes in providing employers with disability-related information, services, and pre-screened job seekers. The WVDRS Employer Services Section has nine employment specialists that cover all 55 counties in West Virginia. WVDRS' team of employment specialists provide business owners and employers with assistance in staffing, employee retention strategies, education on disability-related issues, job accommodations, and information about financial incentives for employers who hire individuals with disabilities. Direct contact with employers is a key strategy to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities for VR consumers, including students with disabilities.

Employment specialists contact employers to identify current and future job openings. To facilitate this, WVDRS utilizes labor market information provided by WFWV to identify the top employers in each county; employment specialists always contact the top ten employers in each county. Employment specialists provide employers with valuable information, including the WVDRS Employer Resource Guide and employment-related WFWV information. The WVDRS Employer Resource Guide provides the following information:



- *Staffing services*
- *Training programs and incentives for hiring people with disabilities*
- *Financial incentives*
- *Accessibility assessments*
- *Accommodating employees with disabilities*
- *Basic disability etiquette*
- *Attitudinal barriers*
- *Americans with Disabilities Act*
- *Locating a WVDRS office*
- *Where to find additional resources*

The Employer Services Section maintains a database of each WVDRS–employer interaction with VR employment specialists. Information collected includes the business name, contact person, and current job openings by occupation. Through these partnerships, 47 employers send job postings directly to WVDRS’ Employer Services Section. This list is distributed to field staff to help match job-ready VR consumers with current job openings. If needed, a referral to the WVDRS Rehabilitation Technology Unit is made to address workplace accommodations.

The Employer Services Section also works with employers to better serve transitioning youth with disabilities, including providing career exploration opportunities for students with disabilities. In 2015, WVDRS debuted the Positive Outcomes within Education and Rehabilitation (POWER) program. POWER is a job shadowing program that offers transitioning students who may have a difficult time choosing a career path the opportunity to experience an occupation by spending time with a professional in the students’ vocational goal/career field of interest. The POWER program allows students the opportunity to experience an occupation prior to committing to training and guides students to take a realistic look at the occupation, allowing them to make a more informed choice.

*Assistive Technology:* WVDRS provides rehabilitation technology solutions to individuals with disabilities (as needed) so they can become employed or maintain employment. WVDRS has working relationships and agreements for the coordination of activities with the West Virginia Assistive Technology System (WVATS) of the West Virginia University Center for Excellence in Disabilities. WVATS’ role is to provide access to and help with the acquisition of assistive technology (AT) devices and services for individuals with disabilities. WVATS also provides device demonstrations, device loans, training, AT information, and technical assistance.

WVDRS has a Rehabilitation Technology Unit which provides AT consultations and solutions to eligible VR consumers with AT needs throughout the state. With the coordination of services between WVDRS and WVATS, assurances are made that needed AT solutions can be provided to individuals with disabilities.

**Findings from the 2024 CSNA indicated the need to improve VR services relating to Goals 4 and 5, which were recently added to the WVDRS plan.**

***WVDRS Goal 4: Improve access and availability of transportation options for WVDRS consumers who need transportation assistance to achieve or maintain competitive, integrated employment.***

*Linked to WDS Goal 2: Reduce Barriers to Sustainable Employment; WDS Goal 4: Integration and Innovation in Service Delivery*

FY 2024 CSNA findings from field staff surveys indicate a need for continued efforts to increase the availability of transportation throughout WV. Based on responses from stakeholders, including observations and recommendations by the WV State Rehabilitation Council, transportation continues to be an issue and a perceived barrier to employment/training. WVDRS continues to focus on individualized transportation solutions (ITS) to help alleviate the transportation gap while considering the challenges that West Virginians with disabilities

experience. WVDRS counselors also encourage consumers' family members to assist with reimbursable transportation. WVDRS will inform consumers of transportation options and identify targeted solutions to transportation issues for West Virginians with disabilities, focusing specifically on ITS.

### Strategies and Methods

Due in part to the rural nature of the State, transportation is an ongoing issue for West Virginians with disabilities; many people live great distances from employment, agency offices, and other resources. WVDRS is committed to reducing transportation barriers for consumers with disabilities and focusing on individual transportation solutions (ITS) to meet transportation needs. To help reduce these barriers, WVDRS counselors encourage consumers to plan for transportation needs early in the development of each rehabilitation program. At the time of application, counselors identify transportation issues and focus on finding solutions to include in the consumer's Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). This helps to ensure that consumers can achieve vocational goals unimpeded by transportation barriers. Transportation issues are also addressed using a standard instrument used by supervisors and quality assurance staff in case reviews. WVDRS has a staff member in each branch office who maintains a transportation list, has knowledge of local transportation options, and connects regularly to local and State initiatives to coordinate and expand transportation resources.

**WVDRS Goal 5: Continue to build collaborative relationships with community providers [including Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs), Independent Living, and other community providers] to enhance the availability of services to WVDRS consumers.**

*Linked to WDS Goal 2: Reduce Barriers to Sustainable Employment; WDS Goal 4: Integration and Innovation in Service Delivery*

VR consumers require specialized services provided by CRPs to achieve an integrated, competitive employment outcome. Responses from the CSNA indicate a need for WVDRS to improve collaborative relationships with all community providers. Findings from the CSNA point to a need to focus these efforts in specific areas in WV where miscommunication issues were identified between community providers and WVDRS counselors. WVDRS will increase its focus on the provision of services for consumers with most significant disabilities under a Supported Employment Individualized Plan for Employment, especially for those who reside in rural areas.

### Strategies and Methods

WVDRS' mission to enable and empower individuals with disabilities to work and to live independently hinges on maintaining positive relationships with CRPs. In general, WVDRS has good working relationships with CRPs throughout WV; however, CSNA results suggest a need to improve relationships, particularly in specific geographic areas. To facilitate this improvement, WVDRS has established these actionable strategies:

- Educate field staff, especially new counselors, about CRPs and their services. Using the new 'CRP Locator' tool (a web-based, user-friendly vendor guide) and counselor CRP site visits will increase awareness of available service options, maintain collaborative relationships with CRPs, and enhance the availability of services to consumers.
- Maintain regular communications between WVDRS and community providers in each district and at the State level. Each WVDRS district will host joint meetings with WVDRS district and branch office staff and CRPs in those districts to provide opportunities for CRP representatives and WVDRS personnel to discuss local service needs of WVDRS consumers, particularly to enhance service availability in rural areas. The local WVDRS office will be required to send a brief report to the CRP Program Manager following each meeting. This process will allow all parties involved in the expansion of community-

based services to be informed of progress and issues. WVDRS will analyze information and recommendations collected from meetings between CRP and WVDRS staff members.

- Increase the focus on service provision for consumers with most significant disabilities (especially those who live in rural areas) under a Supported Employment Individualized Plan for Employment.

WVDRS will make progress on these goals as the agency gains more understanding of the issues and barriers CRP and WVDRS staff members face in their service provision to persons with significant disabilities. To accomplish this, communication activities with CRPs include:

- Utilize an email listserv of current vendors that is updated and sent to inform of training opportunities, policy changes, and general updates.
- Assign WVDRS counselors in each district as liaisons to each CRP and required to complete a monthly update. Having CRP liaisons that regularly discuss service-related issues specific to the local service area(s) helps to maintain collaborative working relationships and enhance the availability of services to consumers.
- Ensure that two rehabilitation specialists covering all districts in WV provide technical assistance to CRPs and WVDRS staff through site visits to district and branch offices. During these visits, the specialists provide technical assistance, schedule training and other meetings, and serve as a communication link by attending communication meetings and transition team meetings.
- Conduct site visits to ensure that community providers continue to meet WVDRS standards and requirements.
- Increase the service provision of acknowledged vendors and work with community providers to expand their service areas to enhance availability of community services.
- Conduct Transition Team meetings at the district level with WVDRS, WV Department of Education, and CRP staff members. Meetings promote interagency collaboration by allowing staff from each agency/CRP to become familiar with the different eligibility requirements and service definitions across agencies.
- Conduct cross training and face-to-face meetings with community partners at the local level.
- Assign liaison responsibilities to staff members and provide staff with guidance about the purpose of WVDRS participation in community events.
- Monitor WVDRS counselors/supervisors/managers perceptions of the quality of CRP services using a survey instrument.
- Monitor and assess the impact of the Quality Assurance Unit on counselors' case management practices by using data from quality assurance specialists' case reviews.

To foster a customer-focused approach to VR services, WVDRS works with the WV State Rehabilitation Council and Statewide Independent Living Council and uses Innovation and Expansion (I&E) resources to support the activities of these groups. As appropriate, WVDRS will use I&E funds to discover, generate, and improve upon service delivery processes to individuals with disabilities. Additionally, with the emphasis on Pre-ETS to students with disabilities now in place by WIOA, there are significant opportunities to improve using I&E resources.

WVDRS acknowledges the legal requirement to report on the performance accountability indicators under Section 116 of WIOA. However, data collection on the performance accountability indicators is only beginning, making a full report of WVDRS performance impossible at this time. As WVDRS moves forward to place individuals with disabilities into competitive, integrated employment in PY 2024, we will collect and monitor participant data to generate reports on:

- The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;

- The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program;
- The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;
- The percentage of program participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential, or a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within 1 year after exit from the program;
- The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains toward such a credential or employment; and
- The indicators of effectiveness in serving employers.

For PY 2022, WVDRS achieved the following performance on the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA:

- The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program: 72.8%
- The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program: \$7,063
- The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program: 70.1%
- The percentage of program participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential, or a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within 1 year after exit from the program: 48.8%
- The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains toward such a credential or employment: 46.3%

### C. EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS

*For the most recently completed program year, provide an evaluation and report of progress for the goals or priorities, including progress on the strategies under each goal or priority, applicable to that program year. Sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe—*

1. *Progress in achieving the goals and priorities identified for the VR and Supported Employment Programs;*

#### **WVDRS Goal 1: Provide integrated vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to West Virginians with disabilities to enable them to attain a high school education or greater.**

WVDRS has worked hard to strengthen its relationship with State and local education agencies and has sought to increase service capacity to students with disabilities statewide. This includes formal agreements and Memorandums of Understanding, the provision of Pre-employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) in and outside of school settings, the continuation of WVDRS' Student Transition to Employment Program (STEP) and coordinated training with Special Education teachers statewide.

WVDRS monitored the educational achievement of all of its consumers, especially those in the transition youth (TY) population. WVDRS worked closely and diligently with State and local education agencies to ensure that the TY population receives the services needed, including pre-employment transition services for high school students with disabilities. WVDRS assigned a counselor to each high school in WV to enhance the service provision for students with disabilities. WVDRS emphasizes that counselors do outreach with these students and their

parents/guardians during students' sophomore year (rather than their junior year, as was formerly practiced) to maximize counseling opportunities.

WVDRS counselors took part in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) development of students with disabilities when invited. Counselors stayed in contact with educators to discuss and resolve educational difficulties as needed. WVDRS also worked closely with WV Adult Education, referring consumers as needed, to ensure that individuals with disabilities have an adequate opportunity to obtain a completed high school level education. WVDRS will continue to conduct these activities as part of its progress toward the achievement of this goal.

**WVDRS Goal 2: Provide Pre-ETS to students with disabilities.**

WVDRS has demonstrated considerable commitment to providing Pre-ETS to students with disabilities statewide since the implementation of WIOA. WVDRS established and regularly enhances the Pathways to the Future website, a self-service one-stop for students, parents, and educators in the provision of Pre-ETS that can be accessed at any time. The site provides extensive information and resources regarding career planning, education planning, independent living skills, self-determination, and work-based learning.

In addition to this self-service portal, WVDRS has been active, both in-school and outside of school settings, to ensure that students with disabilities receive the Pre-ETS needed to promote awareness of employment, career pathways, independent living and soft skills, and self-advocacy. Numerous initiatives and activities provided by WVDRS staff, Education staff, and Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) have been delivered to thousands of students in all 55 counties of WV. This has allowed WVDRS to consistently reserve and spend the WIOA-mandated 15% earmark of federal funds on Pre-ETS. Some of these activities include:

- *Career Exploration Opportunities (CEOs)*: CEOs provide participants with information about career planning and preparation, self-assessments, completing job applications, interviewing skills, how to dress for employment, work ethic, cell phone and internet safety, and self-advocacy. The service is a total of 24 hours, typically completed in four days with six hours of each day. The service is provided in a group setting (maximum of 25 participants) and can be completed in person or virtually.
- *Instruction in Self-Advocacy programs (ISAs)*: ISAs provide participants with information about self-awareness, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504, ADA, IEPs, centers for independent living, college accessibility offices, accommodations, and communication skills. The service is a total of 24 hours, typically completed in four days with six hours of service each day. The service is provided in a group setting (maximum of 25 participants) and can be completed in person or virtually.
- *Postsecondary Education Opportunities (PSEOs)*: PSEOs provide participants with counseling on post-secondary educational opportunities by coordinating structured day visits (up to eight hours) to campuses of colleges and universities, career and technical education, or other vocational/adult education programs.
- *Positive Outcomes Within Education and Rehabilitation (POWER)*: The POWER program is WVDRS' job shadowing program. POWER offers WVDRS transition students who are interested in careers an opportunity to spend several hours or a day with a professional in the student's vocational field of interest, allowing the student to explore a specific career of interest by observing an employee perform his/her work duties at the place of employment. The experience provides realistic career information that aids students in making career choices.
- *Work-Based Learning Experiences*: Provided in conjunction with CRPs, work-based learning experiences pair students with disabilities with local employers who provide short-term work experiences. These experiences help students develop an understanding of the demands of paid work, improve soft skills needed to be successful in employment, and increase understanding of career choices. Students complete the experience after a maximum of 40 work hours over 60 days, earning at least minimum wage. CRPs are paid to arrange and monitor the experience, as well as to pay the

students.

The 2024 CSNA indicated that job exploration counseling continues to be the most frequently reported pre-employment transition service need. In accordance with this, and per the requirements of WIOA, WVDRS counselors in high schools provided, through purchased and direct services, Pre-ETS to students with disabilities, especially job exploration counseling, to give students with disabilities and their parents/guardians a better understanding of labor market conditions, current and emerging career opportunities, and the necessary education and training requirements related to those opportunities. In PY 2022, WVDRS provided Pre-ETS to over 1,500 students with disabilities.

WVDRS Employment Specialists also provided Pre-ETS in virtual and in person formats during the academic year. Employment Specialists conducted mock interviews, career exploration, and other employment-related topics. Employment Specialists have worked to identify employers across WV who participate in the POWER program; 85 employers are currently engaged in POWER.

As previously described, the Pathways to the Future website serves as a self-service resource for students with disabilities statewide to receive Pre-ETS. Awareness of this website was enhanced using banners placed in high schools in all 55 counties of WV. Additionally, the College Foundation of West Virginia's website has several links to the Pathways to the Future website. These banners and links directed students with disabilities to the website and its resources.

***WVDRS Goal 3: Provide integrated vocational rehabilitation services to West Virginians with disabilities to enable them to obtain competitive employment, especially in occupations and careers within emerging industries statewide.***

With the passage of WIOA, WVDRS has made several adjustments to its service provision model, including a greater emphasis toward youth and students with disabilities. In Program Year (PY) 2021, WVDRS served 9,049 participants, including 6,341 youth with disabilities, while enabling 1,401 job seekers with disabilities to obtain or retain employment. In Program Year (PY) 2022, WVDRS served 12,362 participants, including 8,305 youth with disabilities, while enabling 1,809 job seekers with disabilities to obtain or retain employment.

#### Collaboration with WFWV and LWDBs

WVDRS has maintained regular communication with WFWV to stay abreast of trends in employment, including changes in education and training requirements. This has been accomplished through regular meetings of the Workforce Development System (WDS), written communications, teleconferences, and other media. WVDRS, particularly through its Employment Specialists, stayed informed of emerging careers and occupations via WFWV's Labor Market Information website. WVDRS Employment Specialists have also continuously collected employment information from their business contacts. This information is shared within the WDS. WVDRS registers its job-ready consumers with WFWV in order to better serve employers by providing them with a base of potential employees.

WVDRS maintained and continues to maintain a presence with each of West Virginia's seven LWDBs Region 1 WDB; Region 2 – South Western WV WDB, Inc.; Region 3 – WDB of Kanawha County, Inc.; Region 4 Mid-Ohio Valley WDB; Region 5 – Northern Panhandle WDB; Region 6 WDB, and Region 7 WDB. WVDRS has signed MOUs and Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFAs) with each board. Each Local WDB has a WVDRS representative who is active in the Board's activities and decision-making process.

#### Use of WVDRS Employment Specialists

WVDRS used its Employment Specialists to gather information regarding employers at the local level, including information regarding job placements for individuals with disabilities and regarding current and expected employer needs.

WVDRS has an in-house Employer Services Section that specializes in providing employers with disability-related information, services, and pre-screened job seekers. The WVDRS Employer Services Section has nine Employment Specialists that cover all 55 counties in West Virginia. Each Employment Specialist has a unique understanding of local labor market information (LMI) including what jobs are available, what jobs are in demand or decline, and employer networks.

WVDRS' team of Employment Specialists provided business owners and employers with critical business options and assistance in staffing, employee retention strategies, education on disability-related issues, job accommodations, and information about financial incentives for employers who hire individuals with disabilities.

Direct contact with employers is a key strategy to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities for VR consumers, including students with disabilities.

Employment Specialists therefore contact employers directly to identify current and future job openings. To facilitate this, WVDRS utilizes labor market information provided by WFWV to identify the top employers in each county; contact is always made with the top ten employers in each county. When meeting with employers, Employment Specialists provide valuable information, including the WVDRS Employer Resource Guide. The resource guide provides information regarding staffing services, training programs and incentives for hiring people with disabilities, financial incentives, accessibility assessments, accommodating employees with disabilities, basic disability etiquette, attitudinal barriers, the Americans with Disabilities Act, locating a WVDRS office, and where to find additional resources. WVDRS Employment Specialists provided various services and over 1,000 employer visits in Program Year 2020.

The Employer Services Section maintains a database of each WVDRS-employer interaction with VR employment specialists. The information collected includes the business name, contact person, and current job openings by occupation. If needed, a referral to the WVDRS Rehabilitation Technology Unit is made to address workplace accommodations. This list is distributed to Counselors to potentially match a job-ready VR consumer with a current job opening. Through positive working relationships, 47 employers, including some of the largest in the state, now send job postings directly to WVDRS' Employer Services Section.

The Employer Services Section also worked with employers to better serve transitioning youth with disabilities, including providing career exploration opportunities for students with disabilities through the POWER program. POWER is a job shadowing program that offers transitioning students, who may be having a difficult time choosing a career path, the opportunity to experience an occupation by spending time with a professional working in the students' vocational goal/career field of interest. The POWER program allows the student the opportunity to experience an occupation prior to committing to training. It guides the student to take a serious, realistic look at the occupation, allowing the student to make a more informed choice. Currently, there are 85 employers statewide that participate in the POWER program.

#### Assistive Technology (AT)

WVDRS will continue to provide rehabilitation technology and AT solutions to individuals with disabilities, as needed, so those individuals can participate in training programs in addition to gaining or maintaining competitive, integrated employment. These services are provided directly by WVDRS staff as well as purchased from various service providers.

WVDRS' Rehabilitation Technology Unit provides AT consultations and solutions to eligible VR consumers with AT needs statewide. WVDRS is working on maintaining its own supply of commonly used AT equipment to have on-hand when needed by a consumer. This will enable consumers (especially students with disabilities) to continue towards successfully completing their individualized plans for education, training and/or employment without interruption. WVDRS will maintain this AT equipment supply at different strategic locations in the state.

WVDRS has developed working relationships and agreements for the coordination of activities

with the West Virginia Assistive Technology System (WVATS) of the West Virginia University Center for Excellence in Disabilities to maximize available resources. WVATS' role is to provide access to and help with the acquisition of assistive technology (AT) devices and services for individuals with disabilities. WVATS also provides device demonstrations, device loans, training, AT information, and technical assistance.

WVDRS Goal 4 – Improve access and availability of transportation options at the community level for WVDRS consumers who need transportation assistance to achieve or maintain competitive, integrated employment.

WVDRS continues to work toward finding individualized transportation solutions for West Virginians with disabilities as needed for their employment goals. In PY 2021, WVDRS expended \$95,890 on transportation services for 179 consumers. In PY 2022, WVDRS expended \$461,361 on transportation services for 258 consumers.

Transportation is an ongoing issue for West Virginians with disabilities, due to the rural nature of the state. A large proportion of the State's inhabitants live far away from jobs, agency offices, and other resources. WVDRS continued its commitment to reduce transportation barriers for consumers with disabilities and focused on Individual Transportation Solutions (ITS) to satisfy immediate transportation needs. To help reduce these barriers, WVDRS counselors encouraged planning for transportation needs early in the development of a consumer's rehabilitation program. At application, counselors identified transportation issues and focused on finding solutions to include in the consumer's Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). This ensured that the ability of consumers to reach their vocational goal was not impeded by preventable transportation barriers. Transportation issues were also addressed by the standard instrument prescribed for routine use by supervisors and quality assurance staff in case reviews. Beyond ITS, WVDRS continued to assign responsibility to a staff member in each branch office to maintain a list and working knowledge of local transportation options and continued to participate in local and state initiatives to coordinate and expand transportation resources. These activities will be ongoing as WVDRS strives to accomplish transportation access for all of its consumers in need.

WVDRS Goal 5 – Continue to build collaborative relationships with community providers (including CRPs, Independent Living, and other community providers) to enhance the availability of services to WVDRS consumers.

A comparison of findings from the 2021 CSNA and the 2024 CSNA indicates that there is still a need to continue to improve collaborative relationships with community providers. A smaller percentage of CRP survey respondents acknowledged that a WVDRS liaison counselor was in contact on a regular basis (i.e., 71.4% in 2021 vs. 57.4% in 2024). However, there was an increase in the percentage of CRP survey respondents who rated their communication with WVDRS to be good or better (87.5% in 2021 vs. 95.1% in 2024).

2021 - Forty out of the 42 CRPs provided a rating of their communication with WVDRS. Options ranged from excellent to very poor. No CRP gave a rating of very poor and 35 of the 40 CRPs (87.5%) gave a response of good or better. When asked whether a WVDRS liaison counselor was in contact on a regular basis, 30 of 42 CRPs responded yes, while 10 CRPs responded no (71.4% and 23.8%, respectively). Two CRPs did not respond to this question

2024 – All 61 CRP respondents provided a rating of their communication with WVDRS. Options ranged from excellent to very poor. No CRP gave a rating of very poor and 58 of the 61 CRPs (95.1%) gave a response of good or better. When asked whether a WVDRS liaison counselor was in contact on a regular basis, 35 of 61 CRPs responded yes, while 26 CRPs responded no (57.4% and 42.6%, respectively). All respondents answered this question.

WVDRS continues to utilize CRPs to provide services to its consumers. In PY 2021, WVDRS authorized over \$2,408,790 in CRP services to 1,021 consumers. In PY 2022, WVDRS authorized over \$2,500,443 in CRP services to 1,197 consumers.



WVDRS continued to educate field staff, especially new counselors, about CRPs and their services. Use of the new 'CRP Locator' tool (a web-based, user-friendly, vendor guide) and counselor CRP site visits increased awareness of available service options, which helped to maintain collaborative relationships with CRPs and enhance the availability of services to WVDRS consumers. WVDRS continued to maintain regular communications with community providers in each district and at the state level. Progress on communication will continue to be made as the Division acquires more understanding of the issues and barriers facing the CRP and WVDRS staff members in their service provision to persons with significant disabilities in WV.

Ongoing communication activities with CRPs also includes:

1. An email listserv with all current vendors that is updated periodically and utilized to send out training opportunities, policy changes, and general updates when needed.
2. WVDRS counselors in each district continue to be assigned as liaisons to each CRP and continue to be required to complete a monthly update regarding the CRP. They collect this information by visits and/or phone calls. Having CRP liaisons that regularly discuss service-related issues specific to the local service area(s) aids in maintaining collaborative working relationships and enhancing the availability of services to consumers.
3. Two Rehabilitation Specialists covering all districts in the state provide technical assistance to CRPs and WVDRS staff. They make site visits to CRP and WVDRS district and branch offices to ensure that community providers continue to meet WVDRS standards and requirements. During these visits, they provide technical assistance and schedule training and other meetings that need to occur. They serve as a communication link when issues arise and make themselves available to attend communication meetings and transition team meetings.

Additionally, the agency works to:

- Increase the service provision of acknowledged vendors and work with community providers to expand their service areas to enhance the availability of community services within needed areas.
- Conduct Transition Team meetings at the district level with WVDRS, WV Department of Education, and CRP staff members. The meetings are held to promote interagency collaboration by allowing staff from each agency/CRP to become familiar with the different eligibility requirements and service definitions across agencies.
- Conduct cross training and face-to-face meetings with community partners at the local level.
- Assign liaison responsibilities to staff members and provide guidance about the purpose of WVDRS participation in community events.
- Monitor the WVDRS counselors/supervisors/managers' perception of the quality of CRP services through a survey instrument; and
- Monitor and assess the impact of the Quality Assurance unit on the counselor's case management practices by using data generated from the quality assurance specialists' review of cases.

In Program Year 2022, WVDRS authorized \$625,497 in CRP Supported Employment (SE) services for 236 consumers with the most significant disabilities.

As previously addressed in the discussion of WVDRS Goal 5, WVDRS continued to build collaborative relationships with community providers (including CRPs, Independent Living, and other community providers) to enhance the availability of services to WVDRS consumers. A comparison of findings from the 2021 CSNA and the 2024 CSNA indicates that there is still a

need to continue to improve collaborative relationships with community providers. A smaller percentage of CRP survey respondents acknowledged that a WVDRS liaison counselor was in contact on a regular basis (i.e., 71.4% in 2021 vs. 57.4% in 2024) and an increase in the percentage of CRP survey respondents rated their communication with WVDRS to be Good or better (87.5% in 2021 vs. 95.1% in 2024).

*2. Performance on the performance accountability indicators under Section 116 of WIOA for the most recently completed program year, reflecting actual and negotiated levels of performance. Explain any discrepancies in the actual and negotiated levels; and*

As WVDRS moves forward in its task to place individuals with disabilities into competitive, integrated employment in PY 2023, it will continue to collect and monitor participant data in order to generate reports on:

- The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program.
- The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program.
- The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program.
- The percentage of program participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential, or a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within 1 year after exit from the program.
- The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains toward such a credential or employment; and
- The indicators of effectiveness in serving employers.

For PY 2022, WVDRS achieved the following performance on the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA:

- The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program – 72.8% (negotiated level for PY 2022– 64%)
- The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program – \$7,063 (negotiated level for PY 2022– \$5,371%)
- The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program – 70.1% (negotiated level for PY 2022– 61.6%)
- The percentage of program participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential, or a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within 1 year after exit from the program – 48.8% (negotiated level for PY 2022– 44.2%)
- The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains toward such a credential or employment – 46.3%
- WVDRS recognizes the importance of measurable skill gain (MSG). Since WVDRS was unable to meet the latest negotiated level of MSG, WVDRS will take necessary steps to

improve performance levels on the MSG rate. WVDRS will work with staff, consumers, and partners to implement the following actions:

- Increase training for vocational counselors on measurable skill gains, including what they are, documentation requirements, and the content and process of the conversations to have with students regarding documentation needed to complete an MSG.
  - Increase the reminders and pre-warning indicators of the current case management system to ensure counselors are aware of MSG requirements.
  - Increase the frequency of collection of MSG information from consumers during the year.
  - Employ supervision validation. MSG data will be consistently reviewed to ensure the necessary documentation needed for MSG are being collected and reported. This will also confirm accurate information for the purpose of RSA 911 reporting.
- The indicators of effectiveness in serving employers – N/A (baseline data collection is still ongoing)

*3. The use of funds reserved for innovation and expansion activities (Sections 101(a)(18) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act) (e.g., SRC, SILC).*

WVDRS fully embraces the Congressional intent that individuals with disabilities and their advocates are full partners in the state rehabilitation program. Therefore, WVDRS has established a goal to improve its service delivery system through involvement of consumers and their advocates to increase the ease of access to, timeliness of, and quality of rehabilitation services and ultimately to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. The Division's concentration of I&E efforts on consumer partnerships demonstrates its commitment to enhanced consumer involvement.

Success in working with consumers and their advocates is fundamentally important in developing and using innovative approaches to achieve long-term success in expanding and improving rehabilitation services, including supported employment. WVDRS pursues that work primarily through partnership initiatives with the West Virginia State Rehabilitation Council (WV SRC) and the West Virginia Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC).

WVDRS believes that the activities of these councils provide a promising foundation for the kind of partnership envisioned by the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. If that partnership is to achieve its full potential, however, it must receive the necessary support.

Therefore, WVDRS annually allocates I&E funds to support general operations of the WV SRC and the SILC.

Program Year (PY) 2022 highlights for each appear below.

#### WEST VIRGINIA STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

I&E funds support operations and activities undertaken by members of the WV SRC, as mandated by WIOA. WVDRS allocated \$52,168 for WV SRC in PY 2022.

As required by the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998, WV SRC assists WVDRS by conducting a survey of consumer satisfaction for WVDRS consumers whose VR cases have been closed. Surveys were mailed to approximately 3,379 individuals in PY 2022. WV SRC uses I&E funds to share the costs of contracting an independent consultant to compile a report of survey results.

I&E funding assists WV SRC to prepare, publish, and distribute its annual report. WV SRC also participates in the development and establishment of WVDRS goals and priorities outlined in this state plan. I&E funds are used for travel costs, as necessary.

## WEST VIRGINIA STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL

In combination with Title VII money, I&E funds help support operations and activities undertaken by the SILC. WVDRS allocated \$228,900 for the SILC in PY 2022.

The SILC, in partnership with WVDRS, jointly develops and submits the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL), as appropriate. The SILC continues to monitor and evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the SPIL. In conjunction with WVDRS, the SILC prepares and submits the 704 Report for West Virginia.

SILC members and/or employees collaborate with and/or participate in activities of the WV Centers for Independent Living (WVCIL), WV Developmental Disabilities Council, WV SRC, WV Olmstead Council, WV Mental Health Consumers Association, WV American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), Medley Hartley Advocacy Project Advisory Council, WV Transportation Alliance, and the Fair Shake Network. Training for service providers on sexual victimization of individuals with disabilities has been scheduled.

The SILC conducts a survey of consumer satisfaction for consumers who received independent living services. The SILC uses I&E funds to share costs with WVDRS and WVCIL for distribution of the survey and contracting an independent consultant to compile survey results and prepare an annual report of findings.

The SILC ensures that all meetings are open to the public and provides notice through the WV Secretary of State's Office as well as through statewide media at least two weeks prior to the meetings.

### D. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS, AND ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

#### 1. Acceptance of title VI funds:

- (A)  VR agency requests to receive Title VI funds.
- (B)  VR agency does NOT elect to receive Title VI funds and understands that supported employment services must still be provided under Title I.

#### 2. *If the VR agency has elected to receive Title VI funds, Section 606(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act requires VR agencies to include specific goals and priorities with respect to the distribution of Title VI funds received under section 603 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services. Describe the use of Title VI funds and how they will be used in meeting the goals and priorities of the Supported Employment program.*

The methodology of the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (WVDRS) for distribution of Title VI-B funds is based exclusively on a fee-for-service authorization process with approved vendors of supported employment (SE) services. WVDRS uses no Title VI-B funds for administrative costs. Utilizing the WVDRS fee schedule for SE services, rehabilitation counselors utilize Title VI-B and Title I funds to provide needed SE services for eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities.

WVDRS established a statewide fee-for-service funding approach for job development services for SE-eligible individuals. This structure provides vendors an effective and efficient way of meeting the costs of this critical element of the job placement process. The process provides reimbursement for employment outcomes and brings increased energy and vendor resources to support job development activities.

In PY 2022, WVDRS authorized \$358,806 of its Title VI-B funds to serve individuals with the most significant disabilities in its SE program through community rehabilitation program (CRP) services. When Title VI-B funds (\$300,000 total per year with \$150,000 available only for youth

with disabilities) are exhausted, WVDRS defrays supported employment program service costs with Title I funds for individuals who require the services or who qualify and have not yet been served under the supported employment program. In PY 2022, WVDRS authorized \$247,949 in SE services for 113 adults with disabilities and \$548,103 in SE services for 159 youth with disabilities.

WVDRS uses three models of supported employment services: individual placement, mobile work crews, and enclaves. Additionally, WVDRS encourages and supports development of affirmative industries that integrate workers with disabilities and workers without disabilities throughout the CRP network. WVDRS considers each placement on an individualized, case-by-case basis to ensure the placement setting meets the definition of an integrated employment setting. For consumers with the most significant disabilities in supported employment, WVDRS strives for each consumer to achieve a competitive, integrated employment outcome.

WVDRS policies defining competitive employment settings promote linking CRPs with federal and state work contracts that may exist within the community. Such links expand job opportunities for individuals receiving SE, particularly those who reside in rural locations. This approach also directs Title VI-B and Title I funds into placement-related services and activities.

As appropriate, WVDRS will use the State funds allocated (\$78,000) for ESES to expand employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities (MSD). WVDRS will continue to educate the legislature regarding ESES for youth with MSD to ensure continued funding for ESES.

3. *Supported employment services may be provided with Title 1 or Title VI funds following placement of individuals with the most significant disabilities in employment. In accordance with section 101(a)(22) and section 606(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act, describe the quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities; and the timing of transition to extended services.*

The WVDRS vendor acknowledgment process includes an in-service training session for prospective vendors and training updates as requested. During the training session, participants receive a Service Provider Guide and an introduction to the WVDRS process for providing SE services. WVDRS also loans SE training books and materials at no cost. The quality of SE services is directly tied to the competency of the personnel performing job development and community-based training services. WVDRS encourages and supports the provision of a broad range of in-service training programs for personnel directly involved in SE service delivery.

WVDRS is committed to ensuring the availability of SE services throughout WV as reflected in the progress made toward WVDRS Goal 5; “continue to build collaborative relationships with community providers including CRPs, Independent Living, and other community providers to enhance the availability of services to WVDRS consumers.” There are currently 64 WVDRS-acknowledged SE vendors from all districts in WV, a substantial increase from PY 2021. These vendors make SE services available to an increasing number of individuals with the most significant disabilities. This trend is expected to continue with the increase in the number of providers, due in part to the increase in reimbursement rates for SE vendors.

In accordance with federal regulations, the SE services that may be provided to individuals and youth with disabilities placed in SE include:

1. Evaluation of rehabilitation potential for SE to supplement the comprehensive assessment conducted under the Title I program
2. Job development
3. Job placement
4. Intensive on-the-job training provided by skilled job coaches/employment specialists
5. Case management services

6. Job monitoring, (onsite or offsite) that includes regular contact with employees, employers, parents, guardians, and other professionals to reinforce and maintain the job placement
7. Rehabilitation technology assessment and services as appropriate
8. Post-employment services (following transition to extended SE services) that are available from the extended service provider and that are needed to maintain the SE job placement

The demand and need for SE services is significant, particularly in rural areas, as well as for those individuals who are transitioning from school to the workforce. WVDRS is committed to expanding the statewide capacity for SE services acknowledging additional SE service providers where needed. The Division considers non-traditional approaches to SE service delivery and emphasizes the development of natural supports wherever possible. WVDRS anticipates that more individuals will receive services with the increased number of approved SE providers. WVDRS authorized SE services to 272 individuals in PY 2022.

While SE services vary in scope and duration from individual to individual, core services that may be provided to individuals and youth with disabilities placed in SE can include:

1. Assessment of the individual's environmental circumstances
2. Job analysis and job development
3. Rehabilitation technology assessment
4. Job placement following appropriate match of job/consumer characteristics identified during assessment, job analysis, and job development (services 1 and 2 above)
5. Intensive, one-on-one, on-the-job training
6. Job stabilization, job coach fading as much as possible
7. Extended Supported Employment Services (ESES), optimally including natural supports.

#### E. THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES

WVDRS receives state funds earmarked to provide ESES for SE clients who, after an assessment of their progress and continuing needs for services, are found to require ongoing job coaching to maintain employment and are not eligible for services through other funding sources. The consumer's Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) includes an estimate of the time needed for transition to extended services. In accordance with an approved IEP, provision of ESES (job coaching) to all eligible SE clients, including youth with the most significant disabilities, will not exceed four years, as required by federal regulations. Consumers in SE placement are eligible to receive any services traditionally available through the WVDRS Title I program.

1. *Sections 101(a)(22) and 606(b)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act require the VR agency to describe efforts to identify and arrange, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services. The description must include extended services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including the provision of extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities in accordance with 34 CFR 363.4(a) and 34 CFR 361.5(c)(19)(v).*

WVDRS concentrates efforts on educating interested parties regarding the process of becoming a nontraditional provider source for SE services. A variety of SE provider choices are needed, particularly due to the rural nature of the state. WVDRS focuses on providing technical assistance and coordinating training for vendors of SE services, WVDRS staff members, and staff members of other public and private agencies. WVDRS keeps current on changes and advances in SE through documented research, literature, and reviews of best practices.

Other agencies with which WVDRS collaborates for the provision of time-limited supported employment services are:

- West Virginia Developmental Disabilities Council funds
- West Virginia Title XIX--Home and Community-Based Waiver Program for intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD) recipients
- Social Security Administration work incentives programs

In implementing school-to-work transition services for individuals exiting the school system, WVDRS also collaborates with family resource networks.

Through a combined effort with other disability organizations, \$78,000 was appropriated (annually since 2017) by the West Virginia Legislature for SE follow-along services (extended supported employment services). WVDRS serves as the fiscal agent for these funds. WVDRS has created program guidelines governing the use of state-appropriated funds for extended services under the supported employment program created by state statute in 1993. The sole use of the state funds attached to this program is to provide extended services for individuals not eligible from any other funding source. All providers of supported employment services may access these funds for individuals who are eligible under the guidelines. At the end of PY 2022, WVDRS had sponsored 24 individuals in the extended supported employment program so they could maintain and retain their jobs in their community. This figure represents the cooperative efforts of seven CRPs.

Agreements between WVDRS and all acknowledged providers of SE services document collaboration for extended services. Each agreement details the time-limited and extended services that WVDRS will secure through the vendor. Extended services specified in the agreement will be provided by the vendor and include, at minimum, monitoring two hours per month (no more than eight) at the job site of each individual, unless the individual can be better served through offsite monitoring. If offsite monitoring is determined to be appropriate, it must, at a minimum, consist of two hours per month with the individual and at least one contact with the employer during those hours. The vendor also agrees to provide other support services as needed and specified in the IPE.

In addition to the basic vendor agreement identifying the time-limited and extended services to be mutually provided by WVDRS and the vendor, WVDRS attempts to collaborate with other agencies and organizations to provide funding for extended services. These sources of extended supported employment services are:

- West Virginia Title XIX--Homes and Community-Based Waiver Program for I/DD recipients
- WVDRS program funds for persons receiving extended services at WVDRS-acknowledged CRP work centers
- Social Security Administration programs such as Impairment Related Work Expenses and Plan to Achieve Self Support for approved Social Security recipients

WVDRS continues its efforts to expand the number of acknowledged vendors of supported employment services, particularly in areas underserved and unserved within the current system. As of November 2023, the number of supported employment service providers was 64, an increase of 26 providers since FY 2006.

## F. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

*Sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require all VR agencies to annually conduct a full assessment of their resources and ability to serve all eligible individuals before the start of the Federal fiscal year. In accordance with 34 CFR § 361.29(b), annual estimates must*

include the following projections:

1. Estimates for next Federal fiscal year—

**(A) VR Program**

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services
1	4,137
2	6,344
3	1,691

**(B) Supported Employment Program**

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services
n/a	357

**G. ORDER OF SELECTION**

*The VR agency is **not** implementing an order of selection and all eligible individuals will be served.*

*The VR agency is implementing an order of selection with one or more categories closed.  
\* VR agencies may maintain an order of selection policy and priority of eligible individuals without implementing or continuing to implement an order of selection.*

*Pursuant to section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act, this description must be amended when the VR agency determines, based on the annual estimates described in description (f), that VR services cannot be provided to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for and are determined eligible for services.*

1. For VR agencies that have defined priority categories describe—

(A) The justification for the order;  
N/A

(B) The order (priority categories) to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided VR services ensuring that individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities; and  
N/A

(C) The VR agency's goals for serving individuals in each priority category, including how the agency will assist eligible individuals assigned to closed priority categories with information and referral, the method in which the VR agency will manage waiting lists, and the projected timelines for opening priority categories. NOTE: Priority categories are considered open when all individuals in the priority category may be served.  
N/A



2. *Has the VR agency elected to serve eligible individuals outside of the order of selection who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment?*

- Yes  
 No  
 N/A

#### H. WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS

*The State plan shall be in effect in all political subdivisions of the State; however, the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (Commissioner) may waive compliance with this requirement in accordance with section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and the implementing regulations in 34 CFR 361.26. If the VR agency is requesting a waiver of statewideness or has a previously approved waiver of statewideness, describe the types of services and the local entities providing such services under the waiver of statewideness and how the agency has complied with the requirements in 34 CFR 361.26. If the VR agency is not requesting or does not have an approved waiver of statewideness, please indicate "not applicable."*

The West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services has not requested a waiver of statewideness.

#### I. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

*In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act, the VR agency must develop and maintain annually a description (consistent with the purposes of the Rehabilitation Act) of the VR agency's comprehensive system of personnel development, which shall include a description of the procedures and activities the VR agency will undertake to ensure it has an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessionals that provides the following:*

1. *Analysis of current personnel and projected personnel needs including—*
  - (A) The number and type of personnel that are employed by the VR agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, including ratios of qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors to clients;**
  - (B) The number of personnel currently needed by the VR agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and**
  - (C) Projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the VR agency to provide VR services in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.**

WVDRS is committed to providing a comprehensive system of personnel development (CSPD) that complies with Section 101(a)(7)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 and Section 721(a)(7)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014. Members of the State Rehabilitation Council are afforded the opportunity to review and comment upon this entire section, particularly the WVDRS plan for recruitment, preparation, and retention of qualified personnel, agency personnel standards, and staff development needs and activities.

Provisions of this section should assist in recruiting and retaining qualified staff members to

ensure skilled personnel are available to provide rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, these endeavors will help ensure an improved level of competence and expand and improve vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities, especially those with the most significant disabilities, allowing them to reach employment.

The Human Resources Unit is primarily responsible for performing WVDRS personnel administration activities in keeping with guidance from the West Virginia Division of Personnel (WVDOP), Rehabilitation Services Administration, Social Security Administration, and other appropriate bodies. The Quality Assurance (QA) Unit also works closely with the Field Services Unit to ensure quality and timely training for new field counselors and rehabilitation services associates (RSAs).

The following narrative describes the WVDRS CSPD and policies, procedures, and activities relating to the establishment and maintenance of standards to ensure that personnel needed within WVDRS are appropriately and adequately prepared and trained for WVDRS operations.

#### *WVDRS Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development Needs*

Statistics and information utilized for personnel planning are maintained within the Human Resources Unit. WVDRS administrators can review salary, pay grade, job title, reporting unit, and personal employee information. This information is available to WVDRS Assistant Directors and District Managers for use in planning, hiring negotiations, and pay equity. WVDRS retiree information may also be obtained from these databases.

The Human Resources Senior Manager periodically (at least monthly) maintains and provides statistical data to the WVDRS Director. The data includes a list of the number of individuals under various classifications who are employed by WVDRS in the provision of rehabilitation services, as well as a ratio of the number of counselors to the number of consumers served each year. WVDRS estimates the ratio of consumers served (12,172) to the number of counselors (78) will be 156:1 in PY 2024.

Each year, the WVDRS Director receives a summary report that estimates and projects the number of personnel that will be needed during the next five-year period. In November 2023, WVDRS had 78 counselors in various offices across the state. Of the 78 counselors, WVDRS had 24 Rehabilitation Counselors, 21 Senior Rehabilitation Counselors, 12 Certified Rehabilitation Counselors, and 21 Rehabilitation Counselor Trainees. WVDRS believes its existing counselors and field staff members are needed to provide services to consumers currently in the WVDRS system.

WVDRS had several unfilled positions as of November 2023: 5 Rehabilitation Counseling positions, 3 Senior Rehabilitation Counselor positions, 3 Certified Rehabilitation Counselor positions, and 2 Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee positions. Each unfilled position is being used to expand the number of field counselors as needed.

A breakdown by personnel category, including the number of personnel in relation to the estimated number of individuals served in PY 2024, is as follows (information current as of November 2023):

- Rehabilitation Counselors: 29 total positions (including 5 vacancies), and 12 projected vacancies over the next five years. The number of Rehabilitation Counselors is 420.
- Senior Rehabilitation Counselors: 24 total positions (including 3 vacancies), and 7 projected vacancies over the next five years. The ratio of individuals to be served to the number of Senior Rehabilitation Counselors 507:1.
- Certified Rehabilitation Counselors: 15 total positions (including 3 vacancies), and 5 projected vacancies over the next five years. The ratio of individuals to be served to the number of Certified Rehabilitation Counselors is 811:1.

- Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee: 23 total positions (including 2 vacancies), and 9 projected vacancies over the next five years. The ratio of individuals to be served to the number of Rehabilitation Counselor Trainees is 529:1.
- Fiscal personnel: 9 total positions (including 2 vacancies), and 1 projected vacancy over the next five years. The ratio of individuals to be served to the number of Fiscal personnel is 1,352:1.
- Administrative Services personnel: 9 total positions (including 1 vacancy), and 6 projected vacancies over the next five years. The ratio of individuals to be served to the number of Administrative Services personnel is 1,352:1.
- Field Services personnel: 185 total positions (including 25 vacancies), and 65 projected vacancies over the next five years. The ratio of individuals to be served to the number of Field Services personnel is 66:1.
- Support Services personnel (e.g., human resources, rehabilitation technology unit): 42 total positions (including 3 vacancies), and 17 projected vacancies over the next five years. The ratio of individuals to be served to the number of Support Services personnel is 290:1.
- Information Technology personnel: 8 total positions (including 0 vacancies), and 4 projected vacancies over the next five years. The ratio of individuals to be served to the number of Information Technology personnel is 1,522:1.
- Other personnel (e.g., vocational instructors, technical analysts): 21 total positions (including 3 vacancies), and 10 projected vacancies over the next five years. The ratio of individuals to be served to the number of other personnel is 580:1.

Each year, the WVDRS Director receives a summary report that estimates and projects the number of such personnel that will be needed during the next five-year period. In November 2023, WVDRS had 78 counselors in offices across WV. Of these 78 counselors, there were 24 Rehabilitation Counselors, 21 Senior Rehabilitation Counselors, 12 Certified Rehabilitation Counselors, and 21 Rehabilitation Counselor Trainees. WVDRS believes its existing counselors and field staff members are needed to provide services to consumers who are currently in the WVDRS system.

WVDRS had several unfilled positions as of November 2023: 5 Rehabilitation Counseling positions, 3 Senior Rehabilitation Counselor positions, 3 Certified Rehabilitation Counselor position, and 2 Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee positions. Each unfilled position is being used to expand the number of field counselors when needed.

WVDRS expects to see an increase in the number of consumers in its caseload system, from 10,652 individuals in PY 2022 to a projected 13,595 individuals in PY 2027. WVDRS administrators believe that the expected future caseload size will be managed by existing counseling personnel and gradually filling the 13 vacant counselor positions over the next five years. Additionally, WVDRS employs 55 RSAs to assist Counselors with their caseloads in order to meet the needs of the increasing number of consumers more efficiently.

The following table projects the number of counselors and other agency personnel projected to leave WVDRS employment by PY 2027 after becoming eligible for early retirement under the West Virginia Public Employees Retirement System. Of the 23 counselors who will be eligible, there will be 6 Rehabilitation Counselors, 7 Senior Rehabilitation Counselor, and 10 Certified Rehabilitation Counselors; no Rehabilitation Counselor Trainees are projected to retire by PY 2027. WVDRS continues to experience a gradual retirement of counselors and other personnel; the agency expects this trend will continue over the coming years.

Personnel Category	No. of Personnel Employed	No. of Personnel Currently Needed	Projected No. of Personnel Needed in 5 Years
Counselor (includes four distinct counselor position categories, see narrative for detailed breakdown)	78	91	99
Administrative (includes fiscal and IT personnel, see narrative for detailed breakdown)	23	26	26
Support Services	39	42	42
Field Services	160	185	190
Other	18	21	21

**(D) Ratio of qualified VR counselors to clients**

Statistics and information utilized for personnel planning are maintained within the Human Resources Unit. WVDRS administrators can review salary, pay grade, job title, reporting unit, and personal employee information. Such information is available to WVDRS Assistant Directors and District Managers who use it for planning, hiring negotiations, and pay equity. WVDRS retiree information may also be obtained from these databases.

The Human Resources Senior Manager periodically (at least monthly) maintains and provides statistical data to the WVDRS Director. The data includes a list of the number of individuals under various classifications who are employed by WVDRS in the provision of rehabilitation services, as well as a ratio of the number of counselors to the number of consumers served each year. WVDRS estimates the ratio of consumers served (12,172) to the number of counselors (78) will be 156 in Program Year (PY) 2024.

Each year, the WVDRS Director receives a summary report that estimates and projects the number of such personnel that will be needed during the next five-year period. In November 2023, WVDRS had 78 counselors in various offices across the state. Of the 78 counselors, WVDRS had 24 Rehabilitation Counselors, 21 Senior Rehabilitation Counselors, 12 Certified Rehabilitation Counselors, and 21 Rehabilitation Counselor Trainees. WVDRS believes its existing counselors and field staff members are needed to provide services to consumers who are currently in the WVDRS system.

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- Senior Rehabilitation Counselors: 24 total positions (including 3 vacancies), and 7 projected vacancies over the next five years. The ratio of individuals to be served to the number of Senior Rehabilitation Counselors 507.
- Certified Rehabilitation Counselors: 15 total positions (including 3 vacancies), and 5 projected vacancies over the next five years. The ratio of individuals to be served to the number of Certified Rehabilitation Counselors is 811.
- Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee: 23 total positions (including 2 vacancies), and 9 projected vacancies over the next five years. The ratio of individuals to be served to the number of Rehabilitation Counselor Trainees is 529.
- Fiscal personnel: 9 total positions (including 2 vacancies), and 1 projected vacancy over the next five years. The ratio of individuals to be served to the number of Fiscal personnel is 1,352.
- Administrative Services personnel: 9 total positions (including 1 vacancy), and 6 projected vacancies over the next five years. The ratio of individuals to be served to the number of Administrative Services personnel is 1,352.
- Field Services personnel: 185 total positions (including 25 vacancies), and 65 projected vacancies over the next five years. The ratio of individuals to be served to the number of Field Services personnel is 66.
- Support Services personnel (e.g., human resources, rehabilitation technology unit): 42 total positions (including 3 vacancies), and 17 projected vacancies over the next five years. The ratio of individuals to be served to the number of Support Services personnel is 290.
- Information Technology personnel: 8 total positions (including 0 vacancies), and 4 projected vacancies over the next five years. The ratio of individuals to be served to the number of Information Technology personnel is 1,522.
- Other personnel (e.g., vocational instructors, technical analysts): 21 total positions (including 3 vacancies), and 10 projected vacancies over the next five years. The ratio of individuals to be served to the number of other personnel is 580.

**(E) Projected number of individuals to be served in 5 years:**

WVDRS expects to see an increase in the number of consumers in its caseload system, from 10,652 individuals in PY 2022 to a projected 13,595 individuals in PY 2027. WVDRS administrators believe that the expected future caseload size will be managed by existing counseling personnel and the gradual filling of the 13 vacant counselor positions over the next five years. Additionally, WVDRS employs 55 RSAs to assist Counselors with their caseloads to more efficiently meet the needs of the increasing numbers of consumers.

The following information presents a range of the number of counselors and other agency personnel projected to leave WVDRS employment after becoming eligible for early retirement under the West Virginia Public Employees Retirement System by PY 2027. Of the 23 counselors who will be eligible, there will be 6 Rehabilitation Counselors, 7 Senior Rehabilitation Counselor, and 10 Certified Rehabilitation Counselors; no Rehabilitation Counselor Trainees are projected to retire by PY 2027. WVDRS continues to experience a gradual retirement of counselors and other personnel. The agency expects this trend will continue over the coming years.

*2. Data and information on personnel preparation and development, recruitment and retention, and staff development, including the following:*

**(A) A list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program; the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the**

**personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.**

WVDRS annually collects information from higher education institutions that provide training to prospective rehabilitation personnel. Based on information provided by West Virginia University (WVU) and Marshall University, WVU reports 57 students enrolled in the Clinical Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling graduate programs in the Fall 2023 semester and 27 graduates in the 2022-2023 academic year. For the Counseling graduate program, WVU reports 51 enrolled students for Fall 2023 and 26 graduates during the 2022-2023 academic year. For the Social Work graduate program, WVU has an approximate enrollment of 58 students in Fall 2023 and 35 graduates in the 2022-2023 period. The table below shows the number of enrolled students, type of program and institution of enrollment.

Institute of Higher Education	Type of Program	No. of Students Enrolled	No. of Prior Year Graduates
West Virginia University	Clinical Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling	57	27
West Virginia University	Counseling	51	26
West Virginia University	Social Work	58	35

**(B) The VR agency’s plan for recruitment, preparation and retention of qualified personnel, which addresses the current and projected needs for qualified personnel; and the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the VR agency and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.**

WVDRS Recruitment Efforts

WVDRS continues efforts to recruit and advance employees of traditionally underrepresented groups such as people with disabilities, seniors, women, and members of racial or ethnic minority groups.

In 2021, WVDRS enhanced its recruitment efforts with several WV postsecondary institutions. Through a partnership with WVU, WVDRS is providing internship opportunities for graduate students in several programs of study, including Clinical Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling. WVDRS is also working with West Virginia State University, one of the State’s Historically Black Colleges and Universities, to provide internship opportunities for its students. In addition to offering internships, WVDRS is working with postsecondary institutions to increase applicants to rehabilitation counselor job postings through outreach at career service centers and job fairs hosted by colleges and universities.

WVDRS Re-training Efforts for Existing Rehabilitation Professionals

WVDRS is in full compliance with the CSPD requirement and its standard to employ only rehabilitation counselors who (1) possess a master’s degree in rehabilitation counseling or a counseling-related field, or (2) are employees who have two years of full-time or equivalent part-time paid experience in the position of Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee. As stated above, WVDRS makes no exceptions to the state standard when hiring new rehabilitation counselors. Therefore, WVDRS provides for existing personnel to receive the training necessary to meet requirements of the state standard.

As part of its non-discriminatory employment practices, WVDRS ensures that all personnel are selected for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, or gender identity), national origin, age (40 or older), disability, and genetic information (including family medical history). The WVDRS affirmative action plan is updated annually, and the agency has formally adopted this policy of non-discriminatory employment practices.

**(C) Description of staff development policies, procedures, and activities that ensure all personnel employed by the VR agency receive appropriate and adequate training and continuing education for professionals and paraprofessionals:**

- i. Particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and
- ii. Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to VR agency professionals and paraprofessionals and for providing training regarding the amendments to the Rehabilitation Act made by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

#### Staff Development and Training Activities

The selection of WVDRS participants for training activities is based on documented organizational, unit, or individual training needs. Training programs are provided for all classes and types of staff members on an internally assessed priority basis. Particular emphasis is placed on programs addressing assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, policy and procedure, ethics, and rehabilitation technology. WVDRS does not discriminate in the selection of trainees for these programs based on age, sex, religion, disability, and national or ethnic origin.

WVDRS is committed to utilizing only institutions or training facilities that are accessible programmatically and architecturally free of other barriers with respect to trainees with disabilities. In addition, WVDRS will ensure that program materials are accessible in the most appropriate format for all participants with disabilities (assistive communication devices, interpreters, large print, audio tapes, Braille material, etc.). The technology to ensure these accommodations is available through various support units within WVDRS. To promote equal access for individuals with disabilities in institutions of higher education, WVDRS houses a rehabilitation counselor on campus at Marshall University and West Virginia University.

The majority of the training needs are typically met through local training and the agency's annual State Training Conference. WVDRS staff also participate in other training opportunities, when appropriate, through institutions of higher education, particularly those receiving funds from the Rehabilitation Services Administration to train rehabilitation professionals. This is to ensure that personnel are appropriately and adequately prepared for employment. In 2022, 20 WVDRS staff participated in Pre-ETS training provided by West Virginia University Research Corporation through an RSA Innovative Training program grant.

Throughout PY 2022 and PY 2023, WVDRS utilized a group training approach for newly hired counselors and RSAs; 20 new counselors and counselor trainees and 34 RSAs were trained during PY 2022, and 25 new counselors and counselor trainees and 17 RSAs were trained during PY 2023 (through October 2023). The training is led by QA Unit staff members and consists of multiple sessions, provided on an as-needed basis for new hires (minimum of 2 new hires per cohort). The training begins with introductory materials and training on case management and agency policies and procedures. Later sessions cover Decision Tree Training, detailing appropriate casework practices from referral to closure. In addition to the training, as part of their NCT/RSA module training, new hires receive a CRP services overview, information

about the Rehabilitation Services Programs Unit, and a tour of their work area(s), including the Rehabilitation Technology Unit. This approach ensures that all rehabilitation counselors and paraprofessionals receive standardized and accurate training.

QA Unit staff members and branch office managers conduct regular case record reviews to ensure compliance with federal, state, and agency casework standards. Any deficiencies identified from the reviews are addressed through appropriate training.

All WVDRS-sponsored programs provide continuing education credits that assist WVDRS CRCs, Licensed Professional Counselors, and members of other certified groups to maintain or obtain their certification. WVDRS has received approval authority from the CRCC to provide CRC continuing education credits for training programs meeting CRCC criteria.

WVDRS managers and supervisors also attend management training events to meet the requirements for the West Virginia Division of Personnel Policy 18, which mandates specialized training for all supervisors and managers. New managers and supervisors are required to take eight classes in their first two years. During PY 2022, 45 managers or supervisors participated in 154 DOP-18 training courses.

In June 2022, WVDRS held a WIOA Partners Conference in Morgantown, WV. Thirty-three partner agencies were represented, including representation from WV Combined State Plan agencies, with a total of 216 participants. This conference was followed by the WVDRS State Conference, also held in Morgantown with 220 participants. In June 2023, WVDRS held a Statewide Conference in Morgantown attended by 200 staff members and 16 exhibitors. In September 2023, WVDRS held a Clerical Conference at its Administrative Office in Nitro, WV; 52 staff members attended this conference. These conferences help ensure that all staff members are connected to the overall mission and vision of the agency.

WVDRS staff confront the challenge of refining and improving their skills and knowledge while dealing with the current explosion of knowledge, technology, and treatment modalities. WVDRS continues to make intensive efforts to provide ongoing information that will ensure the skills of WVDRS employees are responsive to the needs of the people they serve.

With respect to training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under Section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, WVDRS maintains a working relationship and a formal MOU with the West Virginia Assistive Technology System (WVATS). In West Virginia, the WVATS, under the Center for Excellence in Disabilities at West Virginia University, is the administrator of the assistive technology grant. WVDRS is also represented on the West Virginia Assistive Technology Board and works with WVATS in a number of ways, including:

- Maintain an updated resource database for Assistive Technology services in West Virginia
- Participate in special projects (i.e., finding and advocating for accessible recreational resources)
- Provide information resources, awareness, and training for consumers and professionals in assistive technology services and devices
- Provide information to WVATS partners regarding WVDRS and other disability-related subjects
- Participate as a member on an interagency team, Partnerships in Assistive Technologies, with a focus of interagency collaboration for the provision of Assistive Technology training and conferences

3. *Description of VR agency policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards consistent with section 101(a)(7)(B) to ensure that VR agency professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including—*



- (A) Standards that are consistent with any national or State-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing VR services; and**
- (B) The establishment and maintenance of education and experience requirements, in accordance with section 101(a)(7)(B)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act, to ensure that the personnel have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities.**

To ensure a high standard of competency and credentials for its qualified rehabilitation professionals, WVDRS has established job classifications. The lowest standard for Rehabilitation Counselors requires a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling, counseling and guidance, social work, or closely related behavioral science field or two years of experience as a Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee. Senior Rehabilitation Counselors require (1) a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling or counseling-related field, and (2) two years of full-time or equivalent part-time paid professional experience in vocational rehabilitation counseling.

Certified Rehabilitation Counselors require (1) a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling or counseling-related field, (2) current national certification as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor or Certified Vocational Evaluator or current West Virginia licensure as a Licensed Professional Counselor, and (3) at least three years of full-time or equivalent part-time paid professional experience as a rehabilitation counselor.

WVDRS has established the position of Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee. An employee in this position is under direct supervision and performs work at the entry level in a probationary training capacity, which is intended to qualify the employee for specific duties for this position. The employee may become eligible for the position of Rehabilitation Counselor after two years of full-time or equivalent part-time paid experience in the position of Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee. The minimum qualifications for the Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee position are a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university.

WVDRS strives to recruit graduates of accredited master's degree programs in rehabilitation such as the program at WVU but does not require the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) credential as the minimum qualification for a new counselor. Graduates of accredited master's degree programs in rehabilitation counseling are eligible for certification by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC), which sets the national standards for quality rehabilitation counseling services. WVDRS encourages the achievement of CRC by existing counselors and gives special preference to applicants with the CRC credential and qualified applicants with disabilities and from minority backgrounds. The WVDRS standard is specific to rehabilitation counselors only and is consistent with registration requirements of WVDOP, the WV state hiring authority. WVDOP administers and scores unassembled examinations to potential rehabilitation counselor candidates.

To ensure that counselors and other personnel remain up to date with evolving labor force needs and the needs of individuals with disabilities, WVDRS provides ongoing training opportunities for its field staff in group and individual settings. This occurs through educational activities such as the state training conference, periodic district-level training sessions, continuing education credit opportunities (Certified Rehabilitation Counselor), and training sessions by WVDRS Quality Assurance Specialists and WVDRS Employment Specialists. These activities allow WVDRS counselors and field staff to enhance their knowledge of labor force needs and better serve individuals with disabilities.

Individuals not meeting the above personnel standards for rehabilitation professionals are ineligible to interview for vacant rehabilitation counseling positions. Classification specifications for each position utilized by WVDRS are available through the WVDOP website. When employing new rehabilitation counselors, WVDRS makes no exceptions to its standards and provides the training necessary to meet requirements of the state standard only to existing

personnel. These efforts are described later in this section.

Should qualified candidates be unavailable, the WVDRS Director, Assistant Directors, Human Resources Manager, and the Unit Manager or District Manager may reassess staffing/consumer needs and reassign qualified employees to assume duties of the vacant position. Qualified WVDRS retirees may also be rehired on a contractual/intermittent basis until permanent qualified employees can be hired. The career ladder for advancement within the rehabilitation counseling ranks requires additional experience and credentials as well as increased responsibilities.

#### WVDRS Requirements for Qualified Rehabilitation Paraprofessionals

In order to meet the needs of its consumers more efficiently, WVDRS upgraded several clerical positions to paraprofessional status. A Rehabilitation Services Associate must be a high school (or equivalent) graduate and have at least four years of full-time or equivalent part-time paid experience in paraprofessional or responsible clerical office support work, which requires familiarity with casework procedures and delivery of direct consumer services in a state vocational rehabilitation services agency. A bachelor's degree from an accredited four-year college or university may be substituted for the required experience. Specifications for the Rehabilitation Services Associate position may be accessed at <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/wv/classspecs>.

A Rehabilitation Services Associate assists qualified rehabilitation counselors in several ways: providing information about the rehabilitation process and services available to interested applicants and members of the general public, obtaining information needed to complete the application process, initiating vocational diagnostic interviews, arranging medical, psychological, and vocational evaluations for WVDRS consumers, and assisting consumers in applying for student financial aid.

WVDRS employed 55 Rehabilitation Services Associates as of November 2023. These paraprofessionals are assigned to WVDRS offices throughout West Virginia. To ensure statewide coverage, at least one is located within each WVDRS district.

#### System of Staff Evaluation

WVDRS requires that each permanent employee receive an annual job performance evaluation. The work performance of probationary employees is reviewed upon completion of the third and sixth (and for certain job classifications, twelfth) months during a probationary period. This evaluation system enables WVDRS to monitor the job performance of all staff members and identify areas of weakness and skill deficiencies that need training or remediation, as well as areas of strong performance. The evaluation also provides a systematic method of determining training needs for all staff members.

- 4. Method(s) the VR agency uses to ensure that personnel are able to communicate in appropriate modes of communication with or in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability.*

West Virginia does not have large populations of ethnic groups who speak a language other than English. Consequently, WVDRS has not experienced difficulties making its programs accessible and available statewide. In rare instances where non-English language interpreters are needed, WVDRS has obtained those services from interpreters at the local level. An additional resource for non-English language interpreters is through the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) housed at West Virginia University. If needed, there are interpreters registered with the State of West Virginia who also offer interpreting services for languages other than English. In 2023, WVDRS added multiple options for virtual language and American Sign Language (ASL) interpreting services available on demand.

The agency's main language accessibility needs concern people who are deaf. Each WVDRS

district is staffed with a specialist counselor providing full access to programs and services for people who have deafness or hearing impairments. If needed, virtual interpreting services are available anytime on demand. WVDRS works with the West Virginia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to train and certify interpreters to strengthen the network of providers for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind. Numerous workshops and seminars are conducted to increase the number of interpreters, improve their communication skills, and provide better statewide coverage.

WVDRS also ensures that its employees and consumers with blindness or visual impairments receive information and materials in their preferred mode of communication through various accommodations. Upon request, various WVDRS support units provide such services as assistive communication devices, large print and/or Braille materials, audiotapes, and electronic (computer) copies.

5. *As appropriate, describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated State unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.*

WVDRS coordinates its system of personnel development with the West Virginia Department of Education's (WVDE) personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act/No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. This coordination includes collaborative efforts to share information, liaison activities, and provide cooperative training endeavors for WVDRS school counselors, teachers, and WVDE employees, particularly those assigned to the Office of Special Education.

The WVDRS state level liaison attends WVDE training functions related to special education and disseminates information about education policy or law changes to WVDRS school counselors as needed. WVDRS school counselors receive information during their annual meeting and also participate in cross-training efforts. In some areas of WV, WVDRS school counselors and managers participate in local interagency planning groups where training issues are discussed and planned.

## **COOPERATION, COLLABORATION, AND COORDINATION (Section 101(a)(11) of the Rehabilitation Act)**

### **J. COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS**

*In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(11)(D) of the Rehabilitation Act—*

1. *Describe plans, policies, and procedures for coordination between the designated State agency and education officials responsible for the public education of students with disabilities, that are designed to facilitate the transition of the students with disabilities from the receipt of educational services in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services, including pre-employment transition services.*

WVDRS has cooperative agreements with the WVDE Office of Special Education, the WVDE Division of Technical and Adult Education, Office of Adult Education and Workforce Development, local education agencies (boards of education), and the West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and the Blind. The current cooperative agreement between WVDRS and WVDE (the state education agency) went into effect on November 27, 2023. Cooperative agreements between WVDRS and WVDE, both at the state and the local levels, assure that each student with a disability in the state who needs special education, vocational education, and/or vocational rehabilitation services is identified and that the appropriate services, including Pre-ETS, are made available to the individual. The cooperative agreements cover:

- Determination of agency responsibility

- Transition and Pre-ETS planning
- Outreach and identification
- Financial responsibility of education
- Financial responsibility of rehabilitation
- Consultation and technical assistance
- Confidentiality of information/sharing of information
- The duration of the agreement
- Local agreements
- Dispute resolution
- Modification of the agreement
- Subminimum wage employment

## SUBMINIMUM WAGE EMPLOYMENT

The following excerpt from the current formal agreement between WVDRS and WVDE outlines the coordination and documentation requirements, including the provision of Pre-ETS and transition services, for students seeking subminimum wage employment:

“Section 511 of the WIOA imposes requirements on WVDE and Rehabilitation with regard to youth with disabilities seeking subminimum wage employment. Rehabilitation and WVDE shall work cooperatively to ensure that the individual, before beginning work that is compensated at a subminimum wage, has completed, and produces documentation indicating completion of, each of the following actions:

1. The individual has received pre-employment transition services that are available to the individual under section 113, or transition services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.) such as transition services available to the individual under section 614(d) of that Act (20 U.S.C. 1414(d)).
2. The individual has applied for vocational rehabilitation services under Title I, with the result that:
  - the individual has been found ineligible for such services pursuant to that title and has documentation consistent with section 102(a)(5)(C) regarding the determination of ineligibility; or
  - the individual has been determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services;
  - the individual has an individualized plan for employment under section 102;
  - the individual has been working toward an employment outcome specified in such individualized plan for employment, with appropriate supports and services, including supported employment services, for a reasonable period of time without success; and
  - the individual's vocational rehabilitation case is closed; and
  - the individual has been provided career counseling and information and referrals to Federal and State programs and other resources in the individual 's geographic area that offer employment-related services and supports designed to enable the individual to explore, discover, experience, and attain competitive integrated employment; and
  - such counseling and information and referrals are not for employment compensated at a subminimum wage provided by an entity described in this subsection, and such employment-related services are not compensated at a subminimum wage and do not directly result in employment compensated at a subminimum wage provided by an entity described in this subsection.

Any student considering subminimum wage employment upon exiting high school should be referred to Rehabilitation. When appropriate, Rehabilitation may request documentation from WVDE for purposes related to this section. Rehabilitation will collect and document the

necessary prerequisites, corresponding services, and information (described above) required of individuals (aged 24 and younger) seeking subminimum wage employment. This documentation will be provided to the individual within 45 days after the completion of services, or 90 days if a longer period of time is needed due to extenuating circumstances.

Furthermore, this agreement assures, pursuant to 34 CFR 397.31, that Rehabilitation and WVDE agree not to enter into a contract or other arrangement with an entity for purposes of operating a program in which youth with disabilities are employed at subminimum wage.”

WVDRS has a long history of working closely with State and local education agencies. Since the implementation of WIOA, WVDRS has further strengthened these working relationships. WVDRS has worked with the WVDE Office of Special Education to align WVDE policy with aspects of WIOA, particularly the provision of Pre-ETS. WVDE and WVDRS have jointly developed materials that are distributed to special education students and teachers across the state.

WVDRS’ Pathways to the Future materials are made available to students with disabilities, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders across the state. These materials include:

- The PathwaysWV.org website
- Pre-ETS transition slide guide
- Parent/student guide
- Transition Services Planner
- Sample Lessons for Life After High School

As part of its ongoing outreach activities, WVDRS developed new Pathways to the Future banners and posters during FY 2022. These were distributed to all high schools in WV to ensure that students, parents, and teachers are aware of the availability of Pre-ETS. Additional outreach using large posters targets eighth grade, career and technical education, and postsecondary students to ensure that students ages 14-21 are aware of the availability of Pre-ETS. The banners are also used by WVDRS during job fairs, transition fairs, and other activities involving students with disabilities.

As part of the CSNA, WVDRS attempted a one-on-one Pre-ETS needs assessment discussion with teachers and administrators in all of West Virginia’s 55 counties. WVDRS had participation from 64 high schools in 29 counties in 2023; all six WVDRS districts were represented. Details and results of this assessment are provided in the Statewide Assessment section of the state plan.

To better serve students, WVDRS has offices located in some of the state’s largest schools, as well as the WV Schools for the Deaf and the Blind. Additionally, counselors visit every high school in the state to initiate rehabilitation services needed for transition from school to work. This allows the counselor to develop a collaborative relationship and assist students in identifying goals, services, and service providers related to employment options prior to transition. In FY 2023, there were 82 rehabilitation counselors assigned to work with the 55 local education agencies and the West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and Blind.

School rehabilitation counselors are invited to participate in Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings to describe WVDRS services, policies, and procedures. The WVDRS counselor determines a student’s eligibility and order of selection category utilizing information generated from the school, the student, and WVDRS. Prior to (or shortly after) the student’s IEP transition meeting, development begins on the student’s Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) so both the student and counselor have an idea of what rehabilitation services will be necessary to meet the student’s vocational goal. Therefore, if the student needs additional training or assessment prior to vocational goal determination, this information is already collected so that planned rehabilitation services may begin. IPE development and approval for students with disabilities, including those able to be served if WVDRS is on an order of selection, will begin as early as appropriate during the transition process, but before the eligible student leaves the school setting.

WVDRS continues to work with WVDE on WV Guideposts to Graduation (WVGtG; formerly known as Graduation 20/20), a West Virginia initiative that uses a data-driven intervention framework developed by the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC–SD) to address issues that have negatively impacted school completion. WVGtG utilizes the innovation configuration on evidence-based transition practices and predictors of post-school success to guide professional learning, which was published by the Collaboration for Effective Educator, Development, Accountability, and Reform (CEEDAR) Center. The program, using tools from NDPC–SD and CEEDAR, trains local school-based teams and team leaders to diagnose the causes of dropout and to develop site-specific improvement plans and strategies.

Information about the WVDRS school program is widely disseminated to education professionals, students, and parents. An updated fact sheet and brochure explaining WVDRS transition services are made available. WVDRS has negotiated an agreement with the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission for its consumers who attend in-state public colleges and universities. The agreement describes the financial responsibility of WVDRS and the appropriate public institution of higher education, provides procedures to resolve interagency disputes, and coordinates policies and procedures to ensure timely delivery of vocational rehabilitation services. To better serve individuals in postsecondary school, WVDRS has liaisons assigned to 43 postsecondary community/technical colleges, four-year colleges, and universities across the state.

WVDRS also coordinates with the WVDE Office of Adult Education and Workforce Development, a WIOA core partner, to better serve individuals receiving adult education. The agencies have a formal MOU and collaborate at the state and local level. The MOU includes screening students for potential disabilities, including learning disabilities, and the collaboration between WVDE and WVDRS to provide necessary accommodations (e.g., assistive technology, interpreters) for eligible individuals. WVDRS evaluates the disability or disabilities and provides specific recommendations regarding testing accommodations, recommendations for instructional accommodations, and recommendations for job accommodations. If it is found that the student requires assistive technology (which includes information technology products such as software applications, operating systems, web-based information applications, web accessibility, video equipment, multimedia products, and office equipment), WVDE and WVDRS will share, as appropriate, the cost for this technology. If it is determined that the person has a hearing disability and it is deemed necessary that an interpreter, CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation), notetaker, or other appropriate accommodations be provided, WVDE and WVDRS will share the cost. WVDE will only hire qualified interpreters who are registered through the West Virginia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

2. *Describe the current status and scope of the formal interagency agreement between the VR agency and the State educational agency. Consistent with the requirements of the formal interagency agreement pursuant to 34 CFR 361.22(b), provide, at a minimum, the following information about the agreement:*

- (A) Consultation and technical assistance, which may be provided using alternative means for meeting participation (such as video conferences and conference calls), to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including pre-employment transition services and other vocational rehabilitation services;**
- (B) Transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency personnel for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs (IEPs) under section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;**
- (C) The roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel**

**responsible for transition services and pre-employment transition services;**

- (D) Procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services and pre-employment transition services. Outreach to these students should occur as early as possible during the transition planning process and must include, at a minimum, a description of the purpose of the vocational rehabilitation program, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and scope of services that may be provided to eligible individuals;**
- (E) Coordination necessary to satisfy documentation requirements set forth in 34 CFR part 397 regarding students and youth with disabilities who are seeking subminimum wage employment; and**
- (F) Assurance that, in accordance with 34 CFR 397.31, neither the SEA nor the local educational agency will enter into a contract or other arrangement with an entity, as defined in 34 CFR 397.5(d), for the purpose of operating a program under which youth with a disability is engaged in work compensated at a subminimum wage.**

*The following excerpt from the current formal agreement between WVDRS and WVDE includes the following:*

#### CONSULTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Rehabilitation agrees to provide consultation and technical assistance services to WVDE and LEAs to aid them in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including pre-employment transition services and other vocational rehabilitation services. Rehabilitation will provide WVDE and LEAs with information, as appropriate, regarding disability awareness, disability etiquette, accommodations and assistive technology, eligibility for Rehabilitation and the application process, vocational rehabilitation services, the availability of community-based services, independent living, competitive integrated employment, and career pathways. Additionally, Rehabilitation will provide consultation and technical assistance to WVDE and LEAs regarding pre-employment transition services including job exploration and labor market information, opportunities for work-based learning experiences, postsecondary enrollment opportunities, workplace readiness training opportunities, and self-advocacy.

Rehabilitation assures that communication with WVDE officials shall be done in the most meaningful and convenient manner possible. To that end, Rehabilitation will provide consultation and technical assistance through a variety of methods, including face-to-face contact, phone calls, email, conference calls, and video conferencing.

#### TRANSITION AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES PLANNING

It is important that WVDE and Rehabilitation work together to determine logistics for providing transition and pre-employment transition services. The IEP and the IPE must be developed with coordinated goals, objectives, and planned services for effective and successful transition to post-school settings. Each agency will cooperate to provide referral, support, relevant documentation, and assistance to the agency with responsibility for services.

IDEA 2004 and WIOA require the individual's participation in the development of the IEP and IPE, respectively, and emphasize informed choice. Identification of transition services for the IEP is focused on a coordinated set of activities which considers the student's preferences and interests. Likewise, the IPE is developed by a rehabilitation counselor and the individual by identifying goals through reviewing assessments, individual strengths, resources, interests, and needs. WVDE and Rehabilitation provide both awareness and exploration activities in the areas of living, learning, and work to support decisions about post-school outcomes. This interagency cooperation assures the provision of transition and pre-employment transition services that prepare the student to pursue adult goals.

The participation of Rehabilitation counselors, or other Rehabilitation staff, as appropriate, in the IEP process will help students and parents understand the differences in and facilitate the provision of educational and rehabilitation services. To this end, Rehabilitation staff should be invited to IEP meetings, when appropriate, to provide information on available services and eligibility requirements. The Rehabilitation counselor may also assist in the development and coordination between the IEP and the IPE. Both WVDE and Rehabilitation should document any coordinated services outlined in both the IEP and the IPE. Planning, coordinating, and providing transition and pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities may be conducted at the state and local level to maximize service provision and individual choice.

Professional development activities between WVDE and Rehabilitation, when and where appropriate, shall be provided and facilitated by WVDE and/or Rehabilitation staff, including participating in topic-specific learning events and regional support for transition teams.

#### DETERMINATION OF AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY

Education, through participation in IDEA 2004, has assured the United States Department of Education (USDE) that it has established general supervisory authority over all education programs administered within the State. General supervisory authority means that:

1. All programs serving eligible students meet all requirements of IDEA 2004;
2. All programs serving eligible students within the state must meet State standards; and
3. Funds which support services to eligible school-age students with disabilities, including state and local education funds and funds under Title V, Title VI, Title IX, and Title XX of the Social Security Act, will continue to provide any and all services provided by these funds prior to the passage of IDEA 2004; and no program will alter eligibility requirements for participating in federal, state, and local programs in order to increase the financial responsibility of agencies receiving IDEA 2004 funds. Part B of IDEA does not limit the responsibility of agencies other than educational agencies for providing for and paying for some or all of the costs of FAPE to students with disabilities in the State.

Education has responsibility for providing appropriate special education and related services for each eligible student with a disability, ages 3 to 21, enrolled in the public school system. For each eligible student with a disability at age 14 or younger, if determined appropriate, the transition service needs of the student must be identified, including interagency linkages. Students with disabilities shall have equal access to services that are normally provided by public schools for non-disabled individuals, provided that reasonable accommodations or modifications can be made.

Transition services are defined in IDEA 2004 as a coordinated set of activities for a student with an exceptionality that are designed within a results-oriented process focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the student to facilitate movement from school to post-school activities including postsecondary education, vocational education, competitive, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation.

Rehabilitation is mandated by WIOA, in collaboration with LEAs, including the county-level Boards of Education in each of West Virginia's 55 counties and all public charter schools, to provide or arrange for the provision of pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities (ages 14 through the end of the school year in which the student turns 21) in need of such services who are eligible or potentially eligible for Rehabilitation services - specifically, those students with an IEP and those students with a disability for the purposes of section 504. The five required pre-employment transition service activities are: 1) job exploration counseling, 2) work-based learning experiences, 3) counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education, 4) workplace readiness training, and 5) instruction in self-advocacy. These services may be provided directly by Rehabilitation staff, school personnel, and/or through



Rehabilitation-acknowledged vendors. Pre-employment transition services may be provided in a group or individual setting.

Rehabilitation is required to conduct, at a local level, a CSNA to determine the need for the five required pre-employment transition service activities. The CSNA will be used to determine: 1) the level of need for each of the required pre-employment transition service activities, statewide, 2) the amount of service provision delivered by the Education system regarding these five required activities, and 3) the amount of service gap that remains for Rehabilitation to provide. If the student needs one or more of the five required Pre-ETS services that have not already been provided as a transition service under IDEA by the local education agency, Rehabilitation will provide or arrange for the provision of those services.

For students with disabilities, the responsibility for vocational rehabilitation services rests with Rehabilitation. Rehabilitation will provide services, which are legally the responsibility of Rehabilitation, for those individuals determined to be eligible for Rehabilitation services.

Eligibility for Rehabilitation services is determined by the following criteria:

- An individual must have a permanent physical or mental impairment which, for that individual, constitutes or results in a substantial impediment for employment; and
- The individual can benefit in terms of a competitive integrated employment outcome from vocational rehabilitation services.

At present, WVDRS has representation in all high schools in all 55 WV counties. WVDRS counselors/staff regularly communicate with local school personnel to promote the awareness and usage of VR services. When permitted, WVDRS school counselors maintain an office in high schools to strengthen the WVDRS resolve to serve students with disabilities (ages 14-21). WVDRS continually sponsors grants and activities to educate all stakeholders in high schools about VR services and employment opportunities for students with disabilities.

The State Education Agency (SEA) and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) have responsibility for providing appropriate special education and related services for each eligible student with a disability, ages 3-to-21, enrolled in the public school system. The transition service needs must be identified for each eligible student with a disability age 14 or younger (if determined appropriate) including interagency linkages. From the perspective of the SEA and LEAs, students with disabilities shall have equal access to services typically provided by public schools for non-disabled individuals, provided that reasonable accommodations or modifications can be made.

It is important that Education and Rehabilitation work together to determine logistics for providing transition services. The IEP and the IPE must be developed with coordinated goals, objectives, and planned services for effective and successful transition to post-school settings. Each agency will cooperate to provide referral, support, and assistance to the agency with responsibility for services.

#### OUTREACH AND IDENTIFICATION

*The following excerpt from the current formal agreement between WVDRS and WVDE includes the following regarding outreach and identification;*

Rehabilitation and Education will utilize a variety of activities to provide outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who are in need of transition and pre-employment transition services. These activities will be conducted both jointly and individually for students with IEPs, students with 504 plans, and other potentially eligible students with disabilities not currently receiving services. Activities may include, but are not limited to, participation in career/job fairs, presentations to students and parents, website links, brochures, surveys, conferencing between Rehabilitation staff and School Counselors, and regularly scheduled contact with individual schools.

Outreach activities and student identification will be conducted as early as possible, preferably no later than the students' 10<sup>th</sup> grade year and shall include information regarding (1) the purpose of the Rehabilitation program, (2) the eligibility requirements of the Rehabilitation program, (3) the application procedures of the Rehabilitation program, and (4) the scope of services that may be provided by the Rehabilitation program.

*The following excerpt from the current formal agreement between WVDRS and WVDE outlines the coordination and documentation requirements, including the provision of Pre-ETS and transition services, for students seeking subminimum wage employment:*

#### SUBMINIMUM WAGE EMPLOYMENT

Section 511 of the WIOA imposes requirements on WVDE and Rehabilitation with regard to youth with disabilities seeking subminimum wage employment. Rehabilitation and WVDE shall work cooperatively to ensure that the individual, before beginning work that is compensated at a subminimum wage, has completed, and produces documentation indicating completion of, each of the following actions:

1. The individual has received pre-employment transition services that are available to the individual under section 113, or transition services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.) such as transition services available to the individual under section 614(d) of that Act (20 U.S.C. 1414(d)).
2. The individual has applied for vocational rehabilitation services under Title I, with the result that:
3. the individual has been found ineligible for such services pursuant to that title and has documentation consistent with section 102(a)(5)(C) regarding the determination of ineligibility; or
4. the individual has been determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services;
5. the individual has an individualized plan for employment under section 102;
6. the individual has been working toward an employment outcome specified in such individualized plan for employment, with appropriate supports and services, including supported employment services, for a reasonable period of time without success; and
7. the individual's vocational rehabilitation case is closed; and
8. the individual has been provided career counseling and information and referrals to Federal and State programs and other resources in the individual's geographic area that offer employment-related services and supports designed to enable the individual to explore, discover, experience, and attain competitive integrated employment; and
9. such counseling and information and referrals are not for employment compensated at a subminimum wage provided by an entity described in this subsection, and such employment-related services are not compensated at a subminimum wage and do not directly result in employment compensated at a subminimum wage provided by an entity described in this subsection.

Any student considering subminimum wage employment upon exiting high school should be referred to Rehabilitation. When appropriate, Rehabilitation may request documentation from WVDE for purposes related to this section. Rehabilitation will collect and document the necessary prerequisites, corresponding services, and information (described above) required of individuals (aged 24 and younger) seeking subminimum wage employment. This documentation will be provided to the individual within 45 days after the completion of services, or 90 days if a longer period of time is needed due to extenuating circumstances.

Furthermore, this agreement assures, pursuant to 34 CFR 397.31, that Rehabilitation and WVDE agree not to enter into a contract or other arrangement with an entity for purposes of operating

a program in which youth with disabilities are employed at subminimum wage.

## K. COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

*In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(11)(E) of the Rehabilitation Act, describe how the VR agency will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of VR services; and transition services for youth and students with disabilities, including pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities.*

WVDRS believes that coordination with employers is integral to improving the workforce development system. Gathering/collecting information about employer needs, which is shared with other WIOA partners, allows WVDRS to provide training and other services to VR consumers to meet business needs and expectations of current and future workers. WVDRS takes a multifaceted approach to optimize coordination with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities for consumers with disabilities. WVDRS utilizes its own personnel and partners with WFWV to coordinate with employers. Additionally, WVDRS has specific programs/strategies to identify employment and career exploration opportunities for students with disabilities, including the provision of Pre-ETS. These strategies are described below.

WVDRS has an in-house Employer Services Section that specializes in providing employers with disability-related information, services, and pre-screened job seekers. The Employer Services Section has nine employment specialists that cover all counties in West Virginia. WVDRS' team of Employment Specialists provide business owners and employers with assistance in staffing, employee retention strategies, education on disability-related issues, job accommodations, and information about financial incentives for employers who hire individuals with disabilities. In FY 2023, Employment Specialists provided 647 services to 402 employers, coordinated with WFWV, attended statewide and local Business Services Team meetings, participated in rapid response events, attended local WDB meetings, provided Job Clubs for students with disabilities, and participated in opportunities for collaboration with community colleges, community rehabilitation programs, and other organizations responsive to the workforce needs of businesses.

Services provided to employers include:

- Pre-screened qualified applicants to reduce employers' cost of recruitment and hiring
- Consultation, recommendation, and training for retention of employees who acquire a disability
- Technical assistance on the Americans with Disability Act (ADA)
- Accessibility options and solutions
- Employer onsite disability awareness training
- Information on tax credits available to employers

Direct contact with employers is a key strategy used to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities for VR consumers, including students with disabilities. Employment Specialists contact employers to identify current and future job openings. WVDRS utilizes labor market information provided by WFWV to identify the top employers in each county and Employment Specialists consistently contact the top ten employers in each county. When meeting with employers, employment specialists provide valuable information, including the WVDRS Employer Resource Guide. The resource guide provides the following information:

- Staffing services
- Training programs and incentives for hiring people with disabilities
- Financial incentives

- Accessibility assessments
- Accommodating employees with disabilities
- Basic disability etiquette
- Attitudinal barriers
- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Locating a WVDRS office
- Where to find additional resources.

The Employer Services Section inputs information into the WFWV database of each WVDRS-employer interaction with employment specialists. The information collected includes the business name, contact person, and current job openings by occupation. If needed, a referral to the WVDRS Rehabilitation Technology Unit is made to address workplace accommodations. This list is distributed to field staff to potentially match job-ready VR consumers with current job openings. Some of the largest employers in WV send job postings directly to the Employer Services Section.

WVDRS also coordinates with employers through participation and membership in community and regional organizations. These activities range from employer-specific organizations to public-private partnerships and allow WVDRS to better understand the needs of employers while jointly developing employment-related activities. These partnerships include:

- Regional Workforce Development Boards
- Tri-State Society for Human Resource Management
- Chamber of Commerce of Beckley/Raleigh County
- Chamber of Commerce of Fayette County
- Chamber of Commerce of Jefferson County
- Cabell County Family Resource Network
- Greater Wheeling Reentry Policy Council
- Chamber of Commerce of the Mid-Ohio Valley
- Workforce Business Services Units – Fayette, Greenbrier, Mercer, Monroe, Nicholas, Pocahontas, Raleigh, Summers, and Webster counties
- Community Relations Board meetings at the Federal Prisons in Alderson and Beckley

Another key strategy used to coordinate with employers is through partnering with WFWV at all levels, including local offices, regional workforce development boards, and state level Interagency Collaboration Team meetings. WFWV has the largest database of both job seekers and job openings in WV, allowing WVDRS to identify current employment opportunities for VR consumers, identify needs of employers, and utilize detailed labor market information to assist individuals (including students) with disabilities in identifying future career opportunities. This allows VR consumers to identify potential employment opportunities and any training or other VR services required for the job. Job-ready VR consumers can create an account with WFWV to find employers seeking workers with the specific skills they possess.

In addition to the previously described activities, the Employer Services Section works with employers to better serve transitioning youth with disabilities, including providing career exploration opportunities for students with disabilities. These services, including Pre-ETS are:

- POWER job shadowing program
- Transition fairs
- Job readiness workshops
- Job clubs
- Interviewing
- Resume preparation
- Application assistance
- Dressing for an interview/employment
- Job retention and good work habits
- Job search and employer contacts

- Assisting students to identify employment opportunities and apply for employment
- Advocating on the student's behalf to employers when requested by the student

#### L. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

*In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(11)(C) and (K), describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are **not** carrying out activities through the statewide workforce development system to develop opportunities for community-based employment in integrated settings, to the greatest extent practicable for the following:*

1. *State programs (designate lead agency(ies) and implementing entity(ies)) carried out under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998;*

With respect to state programs carried out under Section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, WVDRS has a MOU with the West Virginia Assistive Technology System (WVATS) of the West Virginia University Center for Excellence in Disabilities (CED). The purpose of this MOU is to delineate the working relationship between WVDRS and CED in order to provide effective services to individuals with disabilities and their families, ensuring statewide coverage of assistive technology (AT) needs.

CED provides free services to individuals of all ages and abilities. Device demonstrations are available in the CED office and in the community for individuals to receive hands-on guidance from CED staff. Device loans are also available to allow individuals to try out a device before purchasing or to use during a short-term disability (up to 30 days). CED provides technical assistance to government agencies, institutions of higher education, industry, and other entities. This technical assistance includes consultation on AT-related programs and service design. When appropriate, CED provides information and referrals to ensure that individuals are connected with available resources relating to disability needs, AT devices, and funding options.

CED also provides professional development and group training around the state. These trainings are customized to increase knowledge, skills, and competencies in AT devices and service delivery. Training topics include:

- Creating accessible documents
- Creating accessible PowerPoint presentations
- AT and transition
- Switch access basics
- iPads as AT
- AT for recreation
- AT for aging

CED WVATS activities are overseen by a Consumer Advisory Council which includes a WVDRS representative. Similarly, CED is represented on the West Virginia State Rehabilitation Council, which works closely with WVDRS to help ensure that all West Virginians with disabilities are provided with an equal opportunity to receive the VR services for which they are eligible.

CED also receives partial funding from WVDRS in exchange for direct services to eligible individuals in need of AT that is unavailable from WVDRS. WVDRS has an AT unit which provides AT solutions to eligible individuals with AT needs. Additional assistance from CED assures that high-quality AT solutions can be provided statewide at any time. Additionally, both parties agree to consult with each other on an as-needed basis for atypical cases.

Individuals aged 14 or older and families receiving AT services at CED also receive information on the eligibility requirements for WVDRS and their VR services. If an eligible individual in the

VR system requests AT services from CED, WVDRS staff will make the proper referral. WVDRS will also refer eligible individuals to CED in the event that WVDRS is unable to provide the necessary AT.

*2. Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the Department of Agriculture;*

Although WVDRS does not maintain a formal agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) through the office of the Under Secretary for Rural Development, it provides rehabilitation services (as necessary and as needed) to eligible migrant and seasonal farm workers with disabilities. Another available resource is the WV AgrAbility Project, a USDA-funded program established to assist farmers and farm families who need to find ways to accommodate their disabilities in order to remain active in agriculture.

WVDRS shares the vision of WV AgrAbility “to enhance the quality of life for farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural workers with disabilities, so that they, their families, and their communities continue to succeed in rural America.” Success indicators may be gainful employment in production agriculture or a related occupation, access to appropriate assistive technology needed for work and daily living activities, evidence-based information related to the treatment and rehabilitation of disabling conditions, and targeted support for family caregivers of WV AgrAbility customers. WV AgrAbility addresses a variety of disabling conditions in agriculture, including, but not limited to:

- Arthritis
- Spinal cord injuries/paralysis
- Back impairments
- Amputations
- Brain injury
- Visual impairments
- Hearing impairments
- Disabling diseases
- Cerebral palsy
- Respiratory impairments
- Head injury

WV AgrAbility also provides training for allied health professionals on farm culture, how to tailor treatments to the farmer, and using assistive technology on the farm for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, Physical Therapists, and Occupational Therapists. WV AgrAbility continues advocacy efforts with WVDRS, to positively impact WVDRS’ view on agriculture in WV as a viable self-employment option. If a WV AgrAbility participant becomes a WVDRS consumer, they may receive vocational rehabilitation services to help them reach their employment goal. Services may include:

- Evaluation and assistance in purchasing recommended adaptive devices
- Assistive technology
- Rehabilitation technology home, business, and/or vehicle modification
- Assistance with vocational training
- Physical or mental health restoration
- Self-employment and business-related services, if applicable

*3. Non-educational agencies serving out-of-school youth;*

WVDRS works with a variety of non-educational agencies serving out-of-school youth. The primary coordinated activities serving this population are WIOA partners WFWV and regional WDBs. WVDRS strives to coordinate referrals and services to eligible out-of-school youth served by WIOA youth programs. These partnerships allow for improved service delivery through the

blending of resources and sharing expertise across agencies. For example, sharing costs allows WVDRS and other agencies to enhance outreach efforts, serve increased numbers of out-of-school youth, and improve outcomes for participants. In addition to collaborative initiatives with WIOA partners to serve out-of-school youth, the agency uses CRPs (WVDRS-acknowledged vendors) to support the needs of this population.

#### 4. *State use contracting programs;*

West Virginia's State Use Program was created by the Legislature in 1984 and strengthened in 1989. The program allows employment opportunities to be created for citizens with disabilities through nonprofit CRPs. The State Use Law allows these programs and their clients to produce commodities and perform services for various state agencies without requiring competitive bidding.

Prices charged for these special commodities and services are established by the Governor's Committee for the Purchase of Commodities and Services from the Handicapped. The Governor's Committee consists of six members appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. Members serve two-year terms. An ex-officio, non-voting member of the committee is also appointed by the Director of the Purchasing Division to serve as the Executive Secretary. There are no geographical or political party constraints on who may be appointed. The Governor selects one member to serve as chairperson. Members represent the following:

- a private citizen who is conversant with the problems incidental to the employment of persons with disabilities
- a representative of a producing nonprofit workshop
- a representative of the Division of Rehabilitation Services
- a representative of the Department of Administration who is knowledgeable in the purchasing requirements of the state
- a representative of private business who is knowledgeable in the activities involved in the sale of commodities or services to governmental entities
- a representative of organized labor who is knowledgeable in matters relating to employment of people with disabilities.

The state network of CRPs is crucial to the effective and efficient delivery of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with significant disabilities. In 2023 there were 82 WVDRS-acknowledged parent company CRPs in West Virginia located at 85 service sites; some participate in state use contracting programs.

WVDRS maintains working relationships with nonprofit CRPs in West Virginia that provide supported and direct employment, community-based assessment, and/or work skills assessment. CRPs also provide employment readiness services such as life skills and work adjustment, job site training, and trial work experience. While respecting freedom of choice, WVDRS encourages work center programs to expand community-based programs for individuals. Any CRP meeting the WVDRS acknowledgment process is permitted under a written Vendor Acknowledgment to bill for services provided to WVDRS consumers.

To become a WVDRS-acknowledged vendor, an applicant must request, complete, and return a Vendor Acknowledgment Packet. The packet contains an application for Vendor Acknowledgment to provide supported employment services, an annual data summary that provides the agency's name, address, contact information, a checklist of those WVDRS services they will be providing, and a Vendor Acknowledgment form addressing conditions of and payment for services rendered to WVDRS consumers. Upon receipt of the completed packet, a recommendation to acknowledge or not acknowledge is made to the WVDRS Director.

A signed Vendor Acknowledgment indicates that the vendor agrees to follow conditions set forth regarding standards, antidiscrimination, indemnification, and conditions/standards of

operation. The acknowledgment is good for three years.

5. *State agency responsible for administering the State Medicaid plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.);*

WVDRS maintains a MOU with the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Medical Services (BMS), the state agency responsible for the State Medicaid plan under the Title XIX of the Social Security Act (also known as the Waiver program). An advisory group for the program is constituted with the WV Developmental Disability Council (WVDDC). WVDRS has a position on the council. WVDRS and BMS interact as part of this advisory group through the WVDDC.

The primary involvement of the Title XIX Medicaid Waiver program in fostering competitive, integrated employment outcomes through vocational rehabilitation is by mandating referral to WVDRS and providing ongoing support funding for those cases closed by WVDRS in Supported Employment. The WVDDC also advises BMS on policy development and meeting unmet needs of those participating in the Title XIX Medicaid Waiver program. In addition to interacting with Title XIX Medicaid Waiver staff as part of the WVDDC meetings, WVDRS participates in two subcommittees: Employment First and Medley Management.

WVDRS counselors will, at the time of application, gather information regarding an individual's third-party resources, including Medicaid. If it is determined that the individual receives Medicaid benefits, BMS will provide all Medicaid-covered services to the individual, regardless of that individual's continued status with WVDRS. If an individual is approved to receive services from WVDRS and begins to receive Medicaid benefits at a later time, BMS will provide all Medicaid-covered services to the individual from that time forward.

Individuals receiving services from BMS will receive information on the eligibility requirements for WVDRS and the services WVDRS provides. If an individual receiving services from BMS expresses a desire to work, he or she will be referred to WVDRS. Similarly, WVDRS consumers who are Medicaid-eligible will be referred to BMS.

WVDRS also maintains an MOU with the Division of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD), within the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Services, Bureau for Behavioral Health (BBH), the state agency with primary responsibility for providing services and supports for individuals with intellectual disabilities and individuals with developmental disabilities. WVDRS, BBH, and DIDD agree to collaborate to facilitate delivery of services, including extended services, to individuals with the most significant disabilities in the following ways:

- The DIDD program manager and WVDRS interact regularly as part of the WVDDC meetings, as well as on the Employment First and Medley Management committees. The Employment First committee focuses on promoting employment for IDD individuals as a first option among services providers, legislators, state policy makers, and the community at large. The Medley Management committee provides oversight and advice to the BBH on the state's Medley program, which serves a specific group of IDD individuals that are at risk of institutionalization. These are often individuals that are also Title XIX Medicaid Waiver eligible. On these committees, WVDRS promotes a focus on competitive, integrated employment outcomes.
- The BBH administers several Customized Employment grants with vendors of WVDRS. BBH and WVDRS jointly train the Community Rehabilitation Programs receiving these grants as well as WVDRS staff working with these programs.
- BBH and WVDRS work together in mediating problems in cases being served jointly in the programs.



- WVDRS meets monthly with BBH staff to review applicants for an unmet needs funding program to foster assistance to IDD individuals where traditional funding sources do not provide needed supports.
- Individuals receiving services from BBH or DIDD receive information on the eligibility requirements for WVDRS and the services WVDRS provides. If an individual receiving services from BBH or DIDD expresses a desire to work, he or she is referred to WVDRS.

WVDRS collaborates with the BBH and its partners to provide quality and timely vocational rehabilitation services to West Virginians with behavioral health conditions who qualify. WVDRS and BBH staff regularly attend various meetings to receive program updates which allows for collaboration whenever possible. Examples of meetings include:

- The Olmstead Council: WVDRS and BBH are both state agencies that are required to participate in quarterly Olmstead Council meetings. *Olmstead v. L.C.* (1999) is a landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision upholding the civil rights of people with disabilities (including those with behavioral health conditions that result in disability) to receive services and supports in the most integrated setting in the community.
- West Virginia Behavioral Health Planning Council (WVBHPC): BBH and WVDRS are two of the principal state agencies that must have membership on WVBHPC and attend quarterly meetings, working with others to accomplish the goals of the council. The WVBHPC is a unified voice that promotes wellness, recovery, and resiliency for all West Virginians. The primary purpose of the WVBHPC is to advocate for and evaluate the provision of community-based behavioral health services.
- West Virginia Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC): WVDRS and BBH are two of the principal state agencies that must have membership on SILC and attend quarterly meetings to get program updates and collaborate. SILC's mission is to ensure persons who have disabilities have access to community-based resources that promote personal choice and facilitate the achievement of their independent living goals.

*6. State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental disabilities;*

WVDRS maintains an MOU with the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Medical Services (BMS), the state agency responsible for the State Medicaid plan under the Title XIX of the Social Security Act; this is also known as the Waiver program. An advisory group for the program is constituted with the WVDDC. WVDRS has a position on the council. WVDRS and BMS interact as part of this advisory group through the WVDDC. The primary involvement of the Title XIX Medicaid Waiver program in fostering competitive, integrated employment outcomes through vocational rehabilitation is by mandating referral to WVDRS and providing ongoing support funding for those cases closed by WVDRS in Supported Employment. The WVDDC also advises BMS on policy development with the goal of meeting unmet needs of those participating in the Title XIX Medicaid Waiver program.

In addition to interacting with Title XIX Medicaid Waiver staff as part of the WVDDC meetings, WVDRS participates in two subcommittees, Employment First and Medley Management. The Employment First committee focuses on promoting employment for IDD individuals as a first option among services providers, legislators, state policy makers, and the community at large. The Medley Management committee provides oversight and advice to the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Behavioral Health on the state's Medley program, which serves a specific group of IDD individuals that are at risk of institutionalization. These individuals are often Title XIX Medicaid Waiver-eligible also. On both committees, WVDRS promotes a focus on competitive, integrated employment outcomes.

*7. State agency responsible for providing mental health services;*

The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Services Bureau for Behavioral Health is

the federally designated State Authority for mental health and substance abuse, as well as the lead agency for intellectual and developmental disabilities and provides planning, direction, training and funding for prevention, treatment, and recovery services throughout the state. WVDRS also maintains an MOU with the Division of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD), within the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Services, Bureau for Behavioral Health (BBH). WVDRS interacts with both BBH and its subsidiary, DIDD.

WVDRS, BBH, and DIDD agree to interact in the following ways to facilitate delivery of services, including extended services, to individuals with the most significant disabilities:

- The BBH administers several Customized Employment grants with vendors of WVDRS. BBH and WVDRS will jointly train the Community Rehabilitation Programs receiving these grants as well as WVDRS staff working with these programs.
- BBH and WVDRS will work together in mediating problems in cases being served jointly in the programs.
- Individuals receiving services from BBH or DIDD will receive information on the eligibility requirements for WVDRS and the services WVDRS provides. If an individual receiving services from BBH or DIDD expresses a desire to work, he or she will be referred to WVDRS at that time.
- WVDRS collaborates with the BBH and its partners to provide quality and timely vocational rehabilitation services to West Virginians with behavioral health conditions who qualify.

WVDRS and BBH regularly attend various meetings together to receive program updates which allows for collaboration whenever possible. Examples of meetings include:

- The Olmstead Council - WVDRS and BBH are required state agencies that participate in quarterly Olmstead Council meetings. *Olmstead v. L.C.* (1999) is a landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision upholding the civil rights of people with disabilities (including those with behavioral health conditions that result in disability) to receive services and supports in the most integrated setting in the community.
- BBH and WVDRS are two of the principal state agencies that must have membership on the West Virginia Behavioral Health Planning Council (WVBHPC) and attend quarterly meetings, working together and with others, to accomplish the goals of the council. The WVBHPC is a unified voice that promotes wellness, recovery, and resiliency for all West Virginians. The primary purpose of the WVBHPC is to advocate for and evaluate the provision of community-based behavioral health services.
- WVDRS and BBH are two of the principal state agencies that must have membership on the West Virginia Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) and attend quarterly meetings allowing each agency to get program updates and collaborate wherever possible. The SILC's mission is to ensure persons who have disabilities have access to community-based resources that promote personal choice and to facilitate the achievement of their independent living goals.

#### *8. Other Federal, State, and local agencies and programs outside the workforce development system;*

The West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (WVDRS) maintains cooperation and coordination with various agencies and entities. This section describes WVDRS' association with agencies or entities that are not in the WDS, education officials, private nonprofit vocational rehabilitation service providers, and supported employment and extended services providers for individuals with the most significant disabilities.

WVDRS maintains strong relationships with agencies and organizations that are not in the statewide WDS and whose functions, in some capacity, involve the provision of services to

individuals with disabilities. WVDRS' association with other organizations occurs with varying degrees of involvement depending upon joint initiatives that are planned and/or that occur within any given year. Generally, WVDRS representatives may be included in advisory functions for other agencies, including:

- A WVDRS representative is actively involved with the West Virginia Behavioral Health Planning Council in the monitoring and oversight of behavioral health services in the state. The WVDRS representative participates in quarterly Council meetings and serves on various subcommittees.
- WVDRS representatives participate with the West Virginia Developmental Disabilities Council. WVDRS maintains a close working relationship with the staff and members of this Council and has provided support and received effective feedback for its work.
- WVDRS is partnering with the West Virginia Bureau for Behavioral Health in implementing the pilot project "Enhancing Employment for People with Mental Illness."
- WVDRS collaborates with the West Virginia Bureau for Behavioral Health, which involves increasing employment opportunities for individuals in recovery who want to become Peer Recovery Support Specialists through WVDRS' on-the-job training program.
- WVDRS is represented on the State's Interagency Collaborative Team (ICT), a group (including agencies not under the state WDS) centered around WFWV to provide ongoing attention to addressing issues that build and continually improve the WDS. The ICT is the single State-level interagency group for addressing issues or concerns regarding building and maintaining the most effective and efficient implementation of the overall WDS in WV. WVDRS participates in and hosts monthly meetings of the ICT and is one of the signatories of the ICT MOU, which is drafted annually. ICT membership includes:
  - Department of Commerce WFWV – WV Employment Service
  - Department of Commerce Division of Rehabilitation Services
  - Department of Commerce Development Office Community Development Division
  - Department of Commerce Development Office Business Industry Development
  - Bureau of Senior Services State Unit on Aging
  - Council for Community and Technical College Education
  - Department of Education Office of Adult Education and Workforce Development
  - Department of Education Office of Diversion and Transition Programs
  - Department of Health and Human Resources Bureau of Children and Families
  - Department of Health and Human Resources Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
  - Department of Health and Human Resources Food Stamp Employment and Training, United States Department of Agriculture

WVDRS has a working relationship with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) at the district level, which allows direct referrals of appropriate veterans from VA facilities to WVDRS' Rehabilitation Technology Unit for assistive technology and rehabilitation engineering services. WVDRS maintains liaisons for multiple VA offices in WV. WVDRS representatives from one district office also attend the yearly Homeless Veteran Stand Down event to increase outreach to veterans who are unhoused. WVDRS provides internship opportunities for veterans to increase their knowledge, skills, and abilities which will allow them to be more competitive job seekers.

#### *9. Other private nonprofit organizations*

The state network of CRPs is crucial to the effective and efficient delivery of vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to individuals with significant disabilities. CRPs also provide

services, including pre–employment transition services (Pre-ETS), to students with disabilities. As of November 2023, there were 82 WVDRS-acknowledged parent company CRPs in West Virginia located at 85 service sites. There are also an additional 52 Student Transition to Employment Program (STEP) vendors that focus on serving students with disabilities.

WVDRS maintains working relationships with nonprofit CRPs in West Virginia that provide supported and direct employment, community-based assessment, and/or work skills assessment. CRPs also provide employment readiness services such as life skills and work adjustment, job site training, and extended employment assessment. While respecting freedom of choice, WVDRS encourages work center programs to expand community-based programs for these individuals.

Any CRP meeting the WVDRS acknowledgment process will be permitted under a written Vendor Acknowledgment to bill for services provided to WVDRS consumers. To become a WVDRS-acknowledged vendor, an applicant must request, complete, and return a Vendor Acknowledgment Packet. Upon receipt of the completed packet, a recommendation to acknowledge or not acknowledge will be made to the WVDRS Director.

The Vendor Acknowledgment Packet contains an application for Vendor Acknowledgment to provide supported employment services, an annual data summary that provides the agency’s name, address, contact information, a checklist of those WVDRS services they will be providing, and a Vendor Acknowledgment form addressing conditions of and payment for services rendered to WVDRS consumers. A signed Vendor Acknowledgment indicates that the vendor agrees to follow conditions set forth regarding standards, antidiscrimination, indemnification, and conditions/standards of operation. The acknowledgment is valid for three years.

CRPs also supplement work exploration activities and provide opportunities for VR consumers, especially students. WVDRS utilizes school personnel as CRP vendors; these teacher/vendors work with students outside of school hours to provide them with CRP services such as community-based assessment, work skills assessment, work adjustment training, job placement, and job coaching. Students benefit from working with a trusted adult, who is already familiar with the student’s strengths and weaknesses, eliminating the need for a new and/or additional assessment by a service provider and allowing WVDRS to ensure that services are available in rural areas.

## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CERTIFICATIONS AND ASSURANCES

### CERTIFICATIONS

<b>States must provide written and signed certifications that:</b>		
1.	The Division of Rehabilitation Services is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by title IV of WIOA, <sup>6</sup> and its State Plan supplement under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act;	Yes
2.	In the event the designated State agency is not primarily concerned with vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities, the designated State agency must include a designated State unit for the VR program (Section 101(a)(2)(B)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act). As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the Division of Rehabilitation Services <sup>7</sup> agrees to operate and is responsible for the administration of the State VR Services Program in accordance with the VR services portion of the Unified or	Yes

<sup>6</sup> Public Law 113-128.

<sup>7</sup> All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

<b>States must provide written and signed certifications that:</b>		
	Combined State Plan <sup>8</sup> , the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.13(b) and (c), and all applicable regulations <sup>9</sup> , policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available to States under section 111(a) of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of VR services and the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;	
3.	As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated State agency or the designated State unit when the designated State agency has a designated State unit, agrees to operate and is responsible for the administration of the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan <sup>10</sup> , the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations <sup>11</sup> , policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under title VI are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;	Yes
4.	The designated State unit, or if not applicable, the designated State agency has the authority under State law to perform the functions of the State regarding the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, and is responsible for the administration of the VR program in accordance with 34 CFR 361.13(b) and (c);	Yes
5.	The State legally may carry out each provision of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement.	Yes
6.	All provisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement are consistent with State law.	Yes
7.	The DRS Director the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement;	Yes
8.	The DRS Director has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment services;	Yes
9.	The agency that submits the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement.	Yes

## ASSURANCES

<sup>8</sup> No funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

<sup>9</sup> Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76, 77, 79, 81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3474; and the State VR Services program regulations at 34 CFR part 361.

<sup>10</sup> No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supported employment supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

<sup>11</sup> Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 4, as well as Supported Employment program regulations at 34 CFR part 363.

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner, that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances:

<b>The State Plan must provide assurances that:</b>		
1.	<b>Public Comment on Policies and Procedures:</b> The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.	Yes
2.	<b>Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement:</b> The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a Unified State plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 C.F.R. 76.140.	Yes

<b>The State Plan must provide assurances that:</b>		
3.	<p><b>Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan:</b> The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) the establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act.</li> <li>(b) either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act.</li> <li>(c) consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act.</li> <li>(d) the financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3).</li> <li>(e) as applicable, the local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.</li> <li>(f) as applicable, the shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act.</li> <li>(g) statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act.</li> <li>(h) the requirements for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.</li> <li>(i) all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act.</li> <li>(j) the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act.</li> <li>(k) the compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.</li> <li>(l) the reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities as set forth in section 101(a)(18)(A).</li> <li>(m) the submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.</li> </ul>	Yes
4.	<p><b>Administration of the Provision of VR Services:</b> The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(E) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.</li> <li>b) impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act.</li> <li>c) provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act, as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services or, if implementing an order of selection,</li> </ul>	Yes

<b>The State Plan must provide assurances that:</b>		
	<p>in accordance with criteria established by the State for the order of selection as set out in section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>d) determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>e) comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>f) comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>g) provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>h) comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by sections 101(a)(14) and 511 of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>i) meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs.</p> <p>j) with respect to students with disabilities, the State:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) has developed and will implement, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A) strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and</li> <li>(B) strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and</li> </ul> </li> <li>(ii) has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15), 101(a)(25), and 113).</li> <li>(iii) shall reserve not less than 15 percent of the allocated funds for the provision of pre-employment transition services; such funds shall not be used to pay for the administrative costs of providing pre-employment transition services.</li> </ul>	
5.	<p><b>Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement to the State plan:</b></p> <p>(a) The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.</p>	Yes
6.	<p><b>Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program (Title VI):</b></p> <p>(a) The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of</p>	Yes



<b>The State Plan must provide assurances that:</b>		
	<p>carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(H) and (I) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(b) The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act.</p>	
7.	<p><b>Provision of Supported Employment Services:</b></p> <p>(a) The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(b) The designated State agency assures that the comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act an individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act , which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(7)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p>	Yes