

**2024-2028**

**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act**

**Local Plan**

**Illinois Local Workforce Innovation Area 7**

Prepared by:



Submitted to the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity on **[DATE]**

# LWIA 7 Local Plan Components

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### Attachments:

A – LWIA 7 WIOA Memorandum of Understanding PY2023

B – Service Integration Self-Assessments and Plans

C – WIOA Policy Letters and Agreements as required in Chapter 4, Section B.

D – Public Comments

**Chapter 4: Operating Systems and Policies – Local Component**

This chapter provides an overview of all the operating systems and policies within the Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIAs). LWIAs must incorporate key documents into the plan that describe the one-stop delivery system and the services that are provided by the workforce partners. LWIAs are required to provide information and analysis regarding the challenges and opportunities that are associated with the local operating system and policies.

➤ **Challenges and Opportunities Associated with Local Operating System and Policies**

Challenge or Opportunity	Analysis: How LWIA 7 is addressing or will address this challenge or opportunity.
Facility costs. Finding the right sizing system to meet community needs and be most responsive. Locations, size, etc.	LWIA 7 continues to evaluate its facilities and locations from a range of factors, including accessibility; services targeting most at-risk and economically disadvantaged populations; commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and accessibility (DEIA).
Airtable© referral system is new. This is addressing a challenge we faced regarding referrals.	By bringing online a new system, we expect improvement in making and tracking referrals among sites and partners. We will continue to closely monitor the progress of this new system as it is rolled out to evaluate its impact.
Influx of new arrivals and other arrivals of migrants that are arriving in Chicagoland.	Chicago and Cook County are major locations for the current influx of migrants, including those coming across the southern border and directly from crisis regions. LWIA 7 will continue to leverage the diversity among our AJCs and Delegate Agencies, with broad language capability and specialty capacity in working with certain nationalities and language groups. We will expand engagement with Title II for ESL and other Adult Education and with community-based organizations for ongoing supportive human and social services.

## **A. Coordination of Planning Requirements**

1. The Local Workforce Innovation Area 7 **Memorandum of Understanding** provides a description of the area's one-stop delivery system, and other information that is essential to the establishment and operation of effective local workforce development services as required by WIOA Rule (20 CFR Part 678.705). The Memorandum of Understanding and any subsequent modifications is incorporated by reference into this plan. *See Attachment A for a copy of the LWIA 7 Memorandum of Understanding.* (Of note, the MOU guides the work at the 4 Comprehensive American Job Centers.) Throughout this Plan LWIA 7 will reference its entire one-stop system which at the time of this Plan submission is made up of 10 American Job Centers (including 4 Comprehensive centers), 4 Sector Centers, 24 Delegate Agency Affiliates, and 27 Youth providers. The Partnership's American Job Center service delivery system is made up of comprehensive and affiliate centers, as well as virtual access points. The AJC brings together key workforce, education, and other providers to offer seamless services to individuals searching for jobs and hoping to build their technical and employability skills, and to employers looking for skilled workers. Comprehensive AJCs offer a physical location where job seekers and employers can access the programs, services, and activities of all required partner programs.

2. The Local Workforce Innovation Area 7 **Service Integration Self-Assessment Tool** provides a description of how local workforce partners will align and coordinate services as required by the State of Illinois Service Integration Policy (WIOA Policy Chapter 1, Section 13). The Service Integration Self-Assessment Tool, and any subsequent modifications, is incorporated by reference into this plan. *See Attachment B for a copy of the LWIA 7 Service Integration Action Plan.*

**B. Copies of the following local policies and agreements are attached to this Plan as**

**Attachments numbered according to the Regional and Local Planning Guide.**

1. Chief Elected Official (CEO) Functions and Agreement Between Multiple Chief Elected Officials (WIOA Policy Chapter 1, Section 2)
2. Chief Elected Official Delegation of Authority and Acknowledgment of Financial Liability (WIOA Policy Chapter 1, Section 3)
3. Local Workforce Innovation Board (LWIB) Certification and Recertification Requirements (WIOA Policy Chapter 1, Section 5). *Note, LWIA 7 does not have a separate Policy document, but follows DCEO Policy which mirrors WIOA Final Rule, Part 679, Subpart C).*
4. One-Stop Operator Procurement (WIOA Policy Chapter 1, Section 7)
5. Career Planning (WIOA Policy Chapter 4, Section 2)
6. General Follow-Up Services (WIOA Policy Chapter 4, Section 3)
7. Selective Service Registration Requirements (WIOA Policy Chapter 5, Section 1.1)
8. Youth Eligibility (WIOA Policy Chapter 5, Section 4)
9. Service Priorities (WIOA Policy Chapter 5, Section 6)
10. Veterans' Priority of Service Requirements (WIOA Policy Chapter 5, Section 7). *Note the Veterans Priority policy is included in the preceding item #9, Service Priorities Policy.*
11. Individual Training Accounts (WIOA Policy Chapter 7, Section 2.1)
12. On-the-Job Training (WIOA Policy Chapter 7, Section 2.2.1)
13. Incumbent Worker Training (WIOA Policy Chapter 7, Section 2.2.3)
14. Work Experience (WEX) and Transitional Jobs (WIOA Policy Chapter 7, Section 2.5)
15. Training Provider and Training Program Eligibility – Eligible Training Provider List (WIOA Policy Chapter 7, Section 3)
16. Supportive Services (WIOA Policy Chapter 7, Section 4)
17. Privacy and Security (Personally Identifiable Information) (WIOA Policy Chapter 8, Section 2.2)
18. Property Control for Property Purchased with WIOA Funds (WIOA Policy Chapter 8, Section 3.6)
19. Compliant and Grievance Procedures (Nondiscrimination) (WIOA Policy Chapter 8, Section 5)

**C. Describe the use of technology and other alternative means of service delivery in the**

**one-stop delivery system, including a description of:**

1. **How the workforce centers are implementing and transitioning to an integrated, technology enabled intake and case management information system for programs carried out under WIOA (§ 679.560(b)(20)).**

The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership developed its data system, Career Connect, to reduce silos in workforce service provision. In June 2017, the Case Management component of Career Connect was launched across all area workforce providers. The Case Management functions paired with the Business Service components have been in use since 2015. In 2018, the Individual Training Account (ITA) application process was integrated into Career Connect, allowing career coaches to build ITA applications for participants and submit for approval and voucher processing. In 2020, customer self-service functions were enabled as a response to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and customer profile creation presently remains active. Career Connect allows The Partnership and its network of workforce service providers to:

- Conduct WIOA Title I eligibility, case management, and performance management
- Track participation and outcomes in non-WIOA grants, including tracking co-enrollment in WIOA
- Create an individualized employment plan for each job seeker customer
- Initiate ITA applications on behalf of eligible participants
- Post job orders on behalf of employer clients
- Track services provided to employers
- Easily pull reports to track job seeker and employer status and outcomes

All WIOA data entered in Career Connect transfers to the State's Illinois Workforce Development System (IWDS) where it is compiled for WIOA Title I federal reporting and performance management. The annual maintenance cost of the Career Connect system are high and LWIA 7 will continue to explore cost efficient ways of collecting customer data.

LWIA 7 is aware that the State of Illinois is planning to replace or upgrade the IWDS system with a new system under Illinois workNet, projected to occur during the period of this Local Plan. LWIA 7 plans to utilize that system when it is brought online and transition its data and case management system to reduce costs and achieve greater efficiencies.

In 2023, The Partnership launched the new Airtable© cloud application for referrals among partners and to supplement the case management systems. Airtable© is a collaborative, form-

collection database that will allow OSO and the AJC Network to view real-time data and referrals across organizations and agencies. Partners using Airtable© can send, receive, and track referrals to/from other agencies via a single referral form as well as view and update the status of a sent referral. Airtable users can create different views/ways to present data and automate messages and notifications. Job Seekers and employers can sign up directly using a basic interest form that stores contact information in Airtable and then notifies the appropriate AJC staff of new interested customers. Additionally, Partners can view and update the status of a sent referral, provide comments on the outcome of referrals, and collect additional information as needed.

They also can communicate whether customers want to receive training, resources, or support relevant to their disclosed needs and interests. The Airtable database was custom designed for LWIA 7 partners and processes. The goal of implementing the Airtable© Referral System is to address the immediate needs of our partners by providing a pathway for inter-agency referrals. At the same time, the OSO will work with stakeholders to implement a statewide or regional referral solution. With this tool LWIA 7 is better able to streamline referrals from service providers across Chicago and Cook County.

**2. How the local area is using multiple methods to provide orientations for customers, including but not limited to, virtual and asynchronous orientations.**

The AJCs and Delegate Agencies each deliver in-person orientation based on a standard orientation template with customization for the specific site and provider. All customers regardless of where they are viewing the orientation will receive the same information. The template is customer-centered, minimizes bureaucratic language and jargon, is in line with our equity commitments and includes both English and Spanish language versions. Partner programs, especially those that are on-site at the AJCs, are also invited to present directly at orientations as

their capacity allows. In-person orientations are typically held weekly or on another regular schedule based on the scale and specifics of the site.

LWIA 7 partners also developed a virtual orientation for our American Job Centers that provides a standard overview of available services across the mandated partners. The universal orientation is available online for customers to view remotely or for staff to show in the centers. The virtual orientation is a 10-minute pre-recorded standard orientation video, available online in both English and Spanish, for prospective customers to view at their convenience. The orientation was created with input from all the Core and Required Partners in 2021. All ten AJCs use the same orientation video to ensure consistency across the LWIA 7 network. The orientation can be viewed virtually or used in person at the AJC. The AJC Operator worked with Literacy Works to ensure the orientation uses plain language that can be easily understood at an eighth-grade education level.

The in-person and virtual orientations includes information on:

- The resources the AJCs offer to support customers in their career including information about all Core and Required Partner Programs
- The availability of auxiliary aids and services for individuals with disabilities
- The AJC Network in LWIA 7, which includes five AJCs in the City of Chicago and 5 AJCs in suburban Cook County
- Using the Resource Room(s)
- Services available at no-cost and the availability of additional services for older adults, youth, individuals with a disability, veterans, individuals who were formerly incarcerated, individuals who were recently laid off, and individuals who lost their job as a result of foreign trade
- How to access the services that best meet a customer's individual needs



- Services available to everyone (Basic Career Services) including the Computer and Resource Rooms, job search workshops, hiring events, job referral boards and more
- Individualized services requiring an eligibility determination including one-on-one Career Coaching and Job Training Grants
- Eligibility requirements for Individualized Career Services
- Examples of how a customer’s career search journey may look

**3. How the Local Board will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system through the use of technology and other means, such as online meeting software and mobile workforce centers. (§ 679.560(b)(5)(ii)).**

The State of Illinois currently provides multiple platforms for customers to access services through technology. LWIA 7 works successfully in utilizing these platforms and is delivering a range of online tools, software and resources including:

- Illinois workNet, managed by the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), is a client-facing web portal that includes listings of all WIOA Title I providers including approved ITA training providers and programs. The site also includes links to the websites of state agencies that administer or provide services under the other WIOA titles.
- Illinois JobLink, managed by the Department of Employment Security (DES), serves as the state’s labor exchange site. Employers post job openings and search for candidates. Jobseekers post resumes, search for and apply for the posted jobs. Unemployment Insurance recipients are required to post a resume on JobLink to maintain their benefits. JobLink also includes links to the websites of the other WIOA titles and partners.

- The Department of Human Services' (DHS) website includes an online web referral for Title IV Rehabilitation Services. The simple form feeds directly into the Rehabilitation Service's case management data system and is assigned to a vocational rehabilitation case manager based on zip code.
- The Partnership administers an online American Job Center customer satisfaction survey and shares the results with all American Job Center operators to better coordinate service delivery.
- The Partnership opened a job-seeker self-service portal on its Career Connect platform to enable remote, virtual WIOA Title I eligibility. Through the portal, jobseekers provide initial eligibility information and upload eligibility documents. Staff then review the information and documents and certify WIOA eligibility.
- LWIA 7 partners developed a virtual orientation for our American Job Centers that provides a standard overview of available services across the mandated partners. The universal orientation is available online for customers to view remotely or for staff to show in the centers. All customers regardless of where they are viewing the orientation receive the same information.
- LWIA 7 core and required partners at each AJC meet monthly in a hybrid meeting format where participants can attend in-person or virtually. These hybrid meetings are successful because of the use of a technology solution called a Meeting Owl (<https://owllabs.com/products/meeting-owl-3>). The Owl is a camera and microphone that pivots automatically to find the speaker in the room so that virtual participants can always see and hear who is speaking. The Owl also handles the audio from virtual participants so that everyone in the room can hear clearly when someone online or on the phone speaks.

- The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Development and Southern Illinois University developed the Illinois workNet Virtual Job Fair platform. Employers can meet with job seekers looking for employment, host informational sessions, and recruit potential candidates for job openings.
- The Partnership continues to provide virtual digital literacy classes, open to the public, to help people transition to virtual learning and remote work.
- Through a National Dislocated Worker Grant, the Partnership purchased technology upgrades for American Job Center resource rooms that increased their capacity to set up virtual interviews between WIOA participants.
- The Partnership maintains flexibility to use various online meeting software as needed and as selected by each AJC or Delegate site.
- LWIA 7 launched the new Airtable© cloud software platform for intake and referrals across WIOA partners.
- LWIA 7 launched a new LevelUpAJC.org webpage where customers can quickly fill out an interest form with their information and select which AJC and which services, they are interested in receiving a call back from staff within 3 business days.

**D. Describe how the Local Board will support the strategies identified in the Unified State Plan and work with entities carrying out core programs, including a description of the following, (§679.560(b)(1)(ii)):**

- 1. Expanding access to employment, training, education and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment (§ 679.560(b)(2)(i)).**

The Chicago Cook Workforce Innovation Board (WIB) is a business-led board that sees, as part of its core mission, the importance of serving individuals with barriers to employment, and approaches this work using the six strategic methods outlined in the Unified State Plan.

*Strategy 1: Coordinate Demand-Driven Strategic Planning*

The Partnership has identified six key strategic themes and priorities which are reflected throughout this plan:

- Programmatic Geography and Special Populations
- Business Engagement and Sector Strategies
- Innovative Program Design
- Distribution of Training Funds
- Service Integration
- Workforce Innovation Board Operations and Committees

*Strategy 2: Support Employer-Driven Regional Sector Initiatives*

To ensure alignment between the regional talent pipeline and drivers of economic expansion, The Partnership works cooperatively with the Chicago Cook WIB and other stakeholders, including elected officials. The Partnership supports local and regional economic development efforts, such as Mayor Brandon Johnson’s priority communities on the south and west side of Chicago, *Economy 2030*, and the *South Suburban Economic Growth Initiative*. With *Economy 2030*, The City of Chicago is committed to reducing inequities across its neighborhoods, starting with economic and community development, through city-wide planning. The plan will guide investments that support inclusive growth and the reduction of racial inequity, and is focused on four key sectors (TDL, Technology, Healthcare, and Hospitality) that look to drive growth in the next decade.

Similarly, Cook County’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy aims to address economic and racial inequity by aligning resources and targeting investments towards infrastructure, growing businesses, and human capital. Key industry sectors identified by the County include fabricated metals, food processing and packaging, transportation and logistics, and healthcare. These efforts pursue policies and programs that create an environment for economic growth and have an intentional focus on reducing inequities in areas that have historically experienced disinvestment in infrastructure, unjust housing policies, and a loss of jobs and economic opportunity.

The Partnership will continue to scale alignment with regional business-facing employment and training programs. In addition to substantial resources invested in employer-facing tools such as on-the-job training and incumbent worker training, The Partnership is directly involved in apprenticeship projects and recently was awarded a grant from DCEO to grow and expand the number of registered apprenticeships throughout Cook County. The Partnership will continue to work with the Cook County Bureau of Economic Development for opportunities to grow apprenticeships within the manufacturing in southern and western Cook County. In August of 2023, members of The Partnership’s Business Relations and Economic Development team along with Sector Center staff participated in an Apprenticeship Boot Camp to learn the apprenticeship process. The Partnership plans to reposition the Sector Centers as the hubs for apprenticeship development in the future.

In August 2022, the Partnership received a \$18.5M Economic Development Administration Good Jobs Challenge grant, which we continue to use to create durable and resilient career pathways into intermediate and mid-level jobs in industries essential to Chicagoland’s economic recovery: healthcare; information technology (IT or “tech”); manufacturing; and transportation, distribution,

and logistics (TDL). Each sector's effort is led by a hub organization driving a multi-partner sector initiative. The Good Jobs Challenge goal is to train 2,000 and placed 1,800 in employment. In collaboration with the Workforce Partners of Metropolitan Chicago, The Partnership created a Regional Business Services Team to address demand from business that have a regional or national footprint. This gathering of local business services representatives from ten counties is organized to strengthen regional integration of WIOA activities. The local business services representatives meet alternate months during a calendar year to discuss current grant activities, regional incumbent worker training projects, share best practices and business services strategies. Most recently, members of the business relations and economic development team participated in a talent pipeline management academy and an apprenticeship boot camp. This team also reviews and discusses sector focused regional activities and impacts.

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

The Partnership seeks to provide economic advancement for all jobseekers by designing innovative, cross-system initiatives to address expanded access for special populations such as those identified in the Unified State Plan. In conjunction with DCEO and the US Chamber of Commerce (Foundation), the Partnership launched the TPM Academy (Talent Pipeline Management). The project aims to train business, workforce development leaders on the Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) approach to demand-driven strategy to create real career pathways for students and workers with talent future projected high demand career pathways aligned to dynamic business needs. This project is employer lead and driven to include business leaders, decision makers and community partners. Using WIOA formula funds, The Partnership perennially awards providers serving specific special populations including parenting youth, youth with disabilities, foster youth, and others. Using leveraged or braided resources, The Partnership

is also able to design and scale pilot initiatives that specifically target additional populations, including opportunity youth, older workers, public housing residents, individuals affected by the opioid crisis, and individuals returning to their communities from incarceration.

The Partnership's Opportunity Works initiative is a blended funding model that exposes suburban youth (ages 16 and 24) who are disconnected from school and/or the workforce to high growth careers, teaching foundational skills while youth participate in a paid internship. The program has attracted more than \$5 million in funding since inception and continues to attract funders and businesses.

The Partnership continues to expand capacity throughout the WIOA Youth service system to better serve young adults exposed to violence in their communities. Supportive Workforce Access for Youth began in 2018 as a community of practice in which WIOA Title I providers, with the assistance of Illinois Collaboration on Youth (ICOY), explored the causes and effects of violence in Chicago, and designed strategies to use Trauma-Informed Care practices in serving youth. ICOY, in collaboration with Chicago Jobs Council, has turned these findings into a curriculum design specifically to teach trauma informed practices to front line WIOA staff. The Partnership continues to require youth delegate agency staff to participate in trauma-informed care training.

Additionally, our recent National Dislocated Worker Quality Jobs, Equity, Strategy and Training QUEST grant program outlined below in Section H.3.(e) is enhancing our ability to target a broader pool of most disadvantaged low-income residents with access to quality employment and training opportunities.

#### *Strategy 4: Expand Service Integration*

In 2021 The Partnership issued two requests for proposals: Delegate Agencies and Career Pathway Training Programs. Both RFPS were designed to expand our outreach and access to historically

underserved populations and communities. Through these initiatives, The Partnership funded 13 Career Pathway Training programs including two bridge programs and 14 delegate agencies.

As part of The Partnership's ongoing efforts aimed at service integration, the four comprehensive American Job Centers have begun formal service integration planning intended to deepen alignment in 2024 and beyond. Staff at each comprehensive American Job Center engaged in an individual planning process to set initial goals for the next year. Initial goals include a commitment to cross training for front line staff from all titles of WIOA, increased center level coordination and communication, and a shared customer database. The Partnership intends to roll out service integration planning to all American Job Centers and secure the engagement of the state agencies that administer the other titles of WIOA.

*Strategy 5: Promote Improved Data-Driven Decision Making; and*

*Strategy 6: Advance Public-Private Data Infrastructure*

Data is at the center of The Partnership's effort to create smarter solutions to economic challenges faced by residents of Chicago and Cook County. The Partnership's current case management and data system, Career Connect, has a range of features that allow us to analyze and adjust service provision to optimize customer outcomes. As noted above, LWIA 7 will join the State's new case management system when it is launched within the next few years and expects our online systems to match or exceed the functionality and capability for staff and participants of our current Career Connect system. The business service functions of our system allow for rapid analysis of which sectors are being served by the system at any given time, allowing for a clear picture of how the WIOA system is addressing the needs of growth industries in the region. Job orders are posted directly to the system, allowing for better sharing of opportunities among the WIOA network of businesses who need workers. Business analysis can be run at the center level, putting new and



dynamic tools in the hands of front-line service providers. Other reporting mechanisms of our system allow for geocoding, which gives new insight into how WIOA services and outcomes break down across geographies. Reporting by community area, municipality, or elected official district can give a unique picture for service providers and other stakeholders to use not only in analysis of current needs, but in ways to adjust service provision or align additional resources for better business and jobseeker outcomes in the future.

To promote informed decision making, The Partnership produces regular labor market reports for use by service providers, job seekers, employers, and key stakeholders. The “Where are the Jobs” report is created using the Labor Insight tool from Lightcast to analyze hundreds of thousands of recent postings pulled from internet job boards. This data helps The Partnership understand current job demand and employer needs in Cook County and its 130+ municipalities. This report is published quarterly, posted on The Partnership’s website, and required for use by case managers/career coaches with job seekers when assisting them in developing individualized employment plans. The Partnership also uses this tool with business customers to improve their understanding of the local market as well.

Understanding real-time talent demand led The Partnership to create its current policy focusing Individual Training Account resources toward a limited number of growth occupations. On The Partnership’s website, each of the initial list of 40 occupations has a corresponding “Target Occupation Profile” (TOPs), a professionally designed printable brochure for use by providers and jobseekers. TOPs give an easy-to-understand picture of an occupation, from daily responsibilities to salary trends, to types of preferred and available training for prospective jobseekers.

ITA training and training provider data is housed in Illinois workNet, an online portal which houses resources for use by Illinois workforce development practitioners and jobseekers. There,

jobseekers interested in pursuing training in the course of WIOA services can find data on every training program approved for ITA funding, including cost, credentials, and aggregate consumer outcomes.

The Partnership continually explores new data partnerships and affiliations to learn more about the WIOA system's customers, gain insights to pursue operational efficacy, and to decode the needs of the region's dynamic business community.

**2. Scaling up the use of Integrated Education and Training models to help adults get their State of Illinois High School Diploma and work on other basic skills and English language acquisition while earning credentials and industry-recognized credentials that lead to in-demand occupations.**

The Partnership is working closely with the City Colleges of Chicago's leadership as they seek to implement innovative Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs across six colleges in order to increase the number of Bridge students obtaining an industry-recognized credential while preparing for the high school equivalency and/or strengthening English language skills. The Partnership is currently expanding support for and alignment with City Colleges of Chicago's (CCC) Bridge Programs. This tuition-free model helps students improve their reading, writing, math, and English skills while earning an industry certificate that can lead to entry-level job opportunities. The Partnership intends to work closely with CCC and explore ways to braid funding between Title 1 and Title II to grow the program and provide more comprehensive career pathway training and supportive services. As the program evolves, The Partnership intends to explore potential expansion of this support to the additional six sectors within the City Colleges Career Bridge Program, as well as consider the potential connection between these programs and successful systemic improvements. In 2020 The Partnership launched a Title II Navigator pilot

program at the Near West American Job Center to connect individuals with basic skills deficiencies to workforce services and job seekers to adult education and ESL services. Through multiple funding sources including an ARPA grant from Cook County Bureau of Economic Development, ScaleLit employs 8 navigators at our various American Job Centers to assist individuals in obtaining services from the various WIOA partners. Navigators assist community residents in accessing career pathway tools, job training and education, and employment through outreach events, orientations, and a regular presence in American Job Center high traffic areas.

**3. How the core programs in the local area will leverage their business services to provide more holistic support to employers.**

The Partnership contends that the best path for economically distressed communities is to ensure individuals are prepared for and connect to good jobs while working with employers holistically. The Partnership takes an industry-centered, demand-driven approach to workforce development and it is rooted in seven high-growth, high-demand sectors. Since 2012, The Partnership formed the Business Relations and Economic Development (BRED) Unit. BRED team member's work has been aligned with the region's high-demand sectors: Business and Professional Services, Manufacturing, Healthcare, Transportation, Distribution and Logistics, Information Technology, Construction/ Skilled Trades and Retail, Culinary and Hospitality & Tourism. In each of these sectors, a dedicated Business Relations Specialist engages with employers to ensure that The Partnership's program strategies align with latest industry demand and standards, and to create immediate and future job opportunities for our job-seeking customers. The Partnerships' BRED team has engaged thousands of employers and raised the private sector's awareness of the region's public workforce system as a pipeline for its talent demands. In the fall of 2023, three members of the BRED team participated in the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation' Talent Pipeline

Management (TPM) Academy. The eight-session course was designed to train business service team members on the TPM playbook for creating local and regional business sector partnerships and how to use the web tools for data collection and analysis.

To further support the region's employers, The Partnership created four industry Sector Centers, which are managed by the BRED Team members. The sectors include Healthcare, Hospitality and Tourism, Information Technology and Transportation, and Distribution and Logistics.

The Sector Centers deliver recruitment and retention services to employers. These services include but are not limited to:

- Coordinating recruitment events for large or small hiring needs.
- Providing applicant pre-screening services to ensure a business is presented with a qualified talent pool from which to choose potential employees.
- Promoting work-based learning, such as Department of Labor apprenticeship programs that provide new skills to entry-level employees to increase employee retention.
- Implementing train-to-hire initiatives to create a pipeline of pre-trained new hires who are ready to “hit the ground running” and enhance employer services.
- Working with employers and educational institutions/partners, such as City Colleges and the suburban college system, to coordinate Integrated Education and Training of adult education activities with other WIOA core programs and develop innovative programs for current employees and new hires.
- Connecting employers to tax incentives and training reimbursement grants to create cost savings that can be reinvested in a business
- Promoting business services offered by partners, such as Illinois Department of Employment Security services employer tax information, unemployment reporting, and hiring solutions, like Illinois Job Link and Work Share.

The Partnership's BRED Team and Sector Centers develop productive, working relationships with employers, partners and industry associations which lead to career advancement opportunities for employees and new hires. They work with the region's mandated partners to provide businesses

with workforce system and economic development resources but not limited to internships, paid work experience, on-the-job training (OJT), apprenticeship, customized training, and incumbent worker training. These services will be informed by local business needs and will include human resource analysis, training assessments, curriculum development, career ladder development, job matching/interviewing and job placement. Within the industry, a business may express a need to attract new workers, onboard new hires, train its existing workers or require Rapid Response re-employment services. The overall goal is to improve the competitiveness of the regional industry, increase access to the number of quality jobs within the industry sector and develop a pipeline of skilled workers that meet the labor needs of local employers in the targeted sector. Ultimately, Sector Centers are expected to act as a convener to bring together and educate key partners and the workforce system and to develop innovative solutions to business needs. These partners may include businesses, WIOA and non-WIOA workforce delegate agencies, local, State, and Federal departments, trade associations, community-based organizations, training providers, educational institutions, and labor unions.

The Partnership and our Sector Centers, AJCs and delegate agency network support our business through various hiring events and recruiting and screening events. While these activities occur regularly throughout the network several large-scale initiatives are highlighted below:

*Hospitality Hires Chicago:* This signature event began as a collaboration between Choose Chicago and the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership as a way to bring together high demand hospitality industry professionals with the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership. Each year a high number of job vacancies go unfilled due to the limited access to qualified candidates. Choose Chicago felt the Partnership offered services to both employers and job seekers to help high-growth high-demand industries get the access they need to connect them to pre-screened job seekers, making

the hiring process more efficient. As a result, the Illinois Hotel and Lodging Association, the Illinois Restaurant Association, and The Magnificent Mile Association decided to coordinate their hiring efforts with The Partnership and Hospitality Hire Chicago was born. Hospitality Hires Chicago is an annual hiring event built around the demand for talented employees in Chicago's hospitality, tourism and retail sectors. The Partnership coordinates candidate pre-screening and prepares employers to make conditional employment offers on-site at the hiring event. In April of 2024 the Partnership will host its 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Hospitality Hires Chicago at the Palmer House Hotel with the following sponsors: Choose Chicago, Chicago Loop Alliance, The Magnificent Mile Association, Illinois Hotel and Lodging Association, Illinois Restaurant Association, the Near South Planning Board, Cook County and the City of Chicago.

Career Connector Events: In May of 2022, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle announced the launch of The Cook County Career Connector Program. The Program consists of holding hiring events at suburban Cook County sites within The Partnership's network and promoting a more inclusive and equitable economy as Cook County emerges from the pandemic. These efforts are designed to connect residents to quality jobs while connecting employers to a skilled and diverse talent pool. The Program includes two main types of events large-scale signature regional events led by The Partnership's five suburban Cook County American Job Centers (AJCs) and smaller hyper-local events, some of which targeted certain populations or industry sectors. A dedicated website is used for job seekers to register for events and employers to request assistance. More than 950 job seekers and nearly 135 employers attended a ½ dozen Career Connector events in the summer and fall of 2023 in suburban Cook County in suburban Cook County.

The Good Jobs Chicago project is an employer-led, community driven initiative to promote

economic resiliency and growth for Chicago and Cook County. Through this grant, The Partnership will coordinate employer sector teams in healthcare, information technology, manufacturing and transportation logistics. This new grant will help The Partnership identify sector champions for Cook County and strengthen our sector strategies as recommended by the IWIB Business engagement committee.

**4. Increasing the awareness of the services the workforce development system offers to both individuals and employers in the local area.**

The Partnership uses a plethora of communications tools to inform regional residents (career seekers) and employers (career providers) about the tools and services the regional workforce development network provides. They include website; e-mail blasts; e-newsletters; fliers and digital images; texting; press release and earned media; Hire Frequency podcast; The Partnership Show on WVON AM radio; press conferences; videos; and paid/purchased media. Social media followers have seen marked growth over the past 3 years, from September 2020 to September 2023 with the following increases: X (formerly Twitter) growing 28% to 1,496; Instagram growing 105% to 1,009; LinkedIn growing 202% to 2,725; and Facebook growing 162% to 2,702. We have also created web pages and Formsites and provided support for the organization's programs, events and initiatives aimed at specific populations, such as Road Home, Opportunity Works, Hospitality Hires; Hire Chicago and Cook County Career Connector events and more.

The Partnership is committed to sharing information about the 90 plus organizations in our regional workforce development network in Chicago and suburban Cook County. In late 2022, we undertook plans to create an awareness campaign focused on attracting more career seekers and career providers (employers) to the ten regional American Job Center (AJCs). Over the previous years, during the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person attendance at the AJCs had declined.

In addition, the country as a whole had experienced a workforce shortage, while employer demand and inflation rates rose. Though nationally unemployment was quite low, in Chicago and suburban Cook County there were multiple neighborhoods continuing to experience unemployment above a rate of 20%. Throughout Illinois, racial disparities in unemployment persisted with Black and Hispanic workers were more than twice as likely to be unemployed as White workers. Over program year 2021 (July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022):

- Nearly 62% of Partnership adult customers identified as African American and nearly 19% identified as Hispanic.
- 43% of Partnership adult customers who had lost their jobs identified as African American and nearly 25 % identified as Hispanic.
- Currently, nearly 60% of Partnership youth/young adults (16-24) customers identify as African American and nearly 30% identify as Hispanic.

In 2023, the Partnership partnered with a creative agency called The Lemon Ad Stand to work with The Partnership’s small internal communications team (currently two people) to achieve this goal and to contribute to reimagining our AJCs in a post-pandemic economy. This work was not done in a vacuum. We worked closely with leadership and staff at the delegate agencies who operate the AJCs and partners; our one stop operator (ScaleLit); Partnership staff and ensured key stakeholders (DCEO, Cook County and The City of Chicago) were aware of the creation of this campaign. The collaboration resulted in LevelUpAJC.org, a website that speaks directly to career seekers and providers. We also utilized “public service announcement” capacity on Chicago’s digital billboards, distributed a press release and provided a digital toolkit with social media posts and copy for their own use; of course, we regularly post this information on our own social media platforms as well. We have also received earned media coverage of the campaign. The page launched the first week of October 2023 and as of early January 2024, more than 5,000 residents had visited the page and nearly 500 (approximately 10% of visitors) had used the page to reach out to an AJC and we feel sure that others have used this tool for awareness and have contacted an



AJC in a different way, which includes a toll-free number. Another element of public outreach regarding this campaign and bringing awareness to the ten AJCs is re-naming the AJCs themselves and providing new, upgraded signage reflecting those names. Some of the AJC's names were not intuitive, i.e.: Mid-South AJC (in Chicago at the King Center) or North Cook AJC (in the suburb of Wheeling.) We re-named these and others; we asked that the majority of the name change, and new signage be in place and complete by January 31, 2024, and ensured they are on our website and used correctly in materials.

**5. Determining the most effective marketing methods and messages for informing college and university students about Prior Learning Assessments.**

“Articulated Credit For Prior Learning”, a policy of City Colleges of Chicago, allows prospective students who completed career pathway courses of study in high school to reap between 3 and 12 college credits for classes leading to Basic Certificates, Advanced Certificates, or Associate Degrees at a City College. In order to receive articulated credit students must be Chicago Public School alumni who are no more than two years removed from graduation and submit both their transcripts and articulated Career and Technical Education award.

Suburban Cook County Community Colleges offer similar options for students. Moraine Valley's policy, “Achieved Prior Learning” requires that students are enrolled and have completed some work in their course of study. Harper College's Proficiency Exams and “College Level Examination Program” award credit in certain topics based both on secondary experience, and in some cases through an examination of extensive work/life experience in a course area.

In coordination with post-secondary partners, the Chicago Cook Workforce Innovation Board will explore strategies for marketing these and other tools for the acceleration of post-secondary completion to youth and young adults pursuing WIOA training in regional community colleges.

**6. How targeted marketing will be used to reach segments of the labor force, such as mature workers and the underemployed, who may not require extensive education or training to qualify for jobs in high demand occupations, as well as younger jobseekers that do not yet have a plan for a post high school career.**

The Partnership has been successful in engaging specific populations such as mature workers and the underemployed. The Partnership has become an integral part of the “BACK TO Work 50+” network, supported by AARP Foundation. This program targets the portion of the seasoned workforce that was hit hardest by the pandemic. The Partnership’s Back to Work 50+ program, funded by AARP, was designed to help people age 50+ gain confidence and skills while exploring opportunities to compete and succeed in today’s workforce.

The Program serves AARP members and non-members alike to equip older workers with the resources, know-how, and training needed to unlock economic mobility and build financial wellness. Members of this population can be especially susceptible to healthcare issues and were very reluctant to return to the workforce during, or even after, the pandemic.

Leveraging WIOA to provide additional wrap around services, The Partnership has successfully engaged this population with targeted marketing in the form of BACK TO WORK 50+ in 7 Steps Guide for 50+ Jobseekers, coaching sessions, and a yearly symposium held to explore the unique challenges of older workers and attract businesses to the cause. The Partnership will continue to address these needs of our most vulnerable population and continue to support the work of BACK TO WORK50+ for Cook County and the Chicagoland Area. The Partnership also takes great pride in the connection it has fostered with underserved communities. LWIA 7 has a network of over 50 public workforce service providers delivering a variety of programs in over 60 locations, procured strategically to meet the needs of communities facing high rates of unemployment. In

many ways, the geographic coverage of the network is the best form of targeted marketing, putting services at the doorstep of individuals who need them most.

To this end, The Partnership continues to utilize a strategic communications plan to establish a framework for targeting specific audiences of the labor force, such as mature workers and the underemployed. Using a wealth of resources listed earlier in this document (such as texting platforms, social media, digital marketing tools, street marketing, media, billboard, radio, public service announcements, paid and free promotional ads,). The Partnership is able to provide a diverse strategy and reach throughout the Cook County region.

The Partnership aims to garner attention and generate awareness through attending community events and working in cohesion with community partners, local and national influencers, elected officials, and key stakeholders to generate awareness about public workforce programs.

To date, The Partnership has generated support on a local and national level allowing the organization to amplify its support of a diversity of populations that are otherwise underserved and less likely to access workforce development resources. Some examples of The Partnership's outreach efforts include:

- **Media:** The Partnership invites media to attend program launch events, hiring events, and lifts up individual participant success stories. The Partnership uses media coverage to garner regional and possible national awareness around innovative efforts and initiatives. This helps contribute to the narrative about the positive efforts enhancing the quality of resources available to underserved communities and to showcase the success of the public workforce system in Chicago and Cook County, in turn exposing potential customers to an opportunity to seek services.
- **General Public:** The Partnership's network seeks to engage community members and

general audience through inviting them to participate hiring events, job fairs, information sessions and more. Ideally hosted at workforce service providers like American Job Centers, community-based events can make Chicago and Cook County residents feel connected to accessible resources. The aim is to create a space where the public can share their input, interact with service providers, and get education about the workforce system. Further, The Partnership uses e-newsletters and mass messaging (usually via email) alerts for sharing events, success stories and information related to workforce development programming, while also soliciting feedback to be used for continuous improvement. In this way, audiences can feel connected to the workforce development system through regular communications about program efforts and highlights.

**7. Facilitating the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs (§ 679.560(b)(2)(ii)).**

The Partnership currently funds career pathway training programs in the manufacturing, healthcare, culinary, banking, construction and transportation, distribution logistics sectors. These programs feature combined career coaching, basic skills training, technical training and supportive services. The Partnership periodically evaluates the effectiveness of these models and adjusts offerings accordingly.

The Partnership supports scaling of innovative career pathway models such as the Jane Addams Resource Corporation's *CNC and Welding Fast Tracks* programs for entry level employment in manufacturing. The curriculum stresses baseline skills in shop math, print reading and precision metrology. This bridge program is for learners with initial test scores between 5th and 8th grade in math and reading.

City Colleges of Chicago's Adult Education program plays a crucial role in supporting the regional

economy and developing neighborhoods through providing opportunities for Adult Education students to transition into the workforce and career pathways. There are over 310,000 Chicagoans without a high school diploma and 615,000 people whose primary language is not English. Over the next several years, The Partnership looks to scale current efforts to co-enroll students from City Colleges' Bridge Program into WIOA Title I services for purposes of braiding funding. City Colleges support the first semester of the bridge program, concentrated on basic skills remediation for success in the field. The Partnership will support the second semester of training via ITAs for the certified nursing assistant credential. The Partnership and City Colleges will continue to review and improve on our efforts for joint programming.

**8. Improving access to activities leading to a recognized post-secondary credential (including a credential that is an industry-recognized certificate or certification, portable, and stackable) (§ 679.560(b)(2)(iii)).**

The Partnership is committed to improving access to industry recognized certificates and credentials, predominantly through Individual Training Accounts and Career Pathway training models. The Partnership's training provider eligibility and certification policy requires that ITA-eligible programs result in a recognized credential and requires that programs meet performance criteria of 70% successful completion rate and training-related entered employment rate and 60% credential attainment rate. Further, The Partnership continually examines the geography of workforce service provision to ensure that the network is serving areas of need, as well as aligning with other workforce and economic development plans.

**E. Describe how local strategies will be coordinated with state (including the Unified State Plan), regional and local partners to enhance services and avoid duplication of**

**activities:**

Chicago and Cook County leadership continue to provide critical high-level guidance on the goals and strategies of the local workforce system. Because Chicago has recently undergone a mayoral transition, the Partnership and local system partners are re-invigorating our efforts with support from local leadership. Mayor Brandon Johnson’s administration is currently reviewing the City of Chicago’s expansive workforce development investments and services for strategic alignment and the development of a comprehensive workforce agenda. Leadership from The Partnership are involved in these strategic planning sessions and committed to aligning, implementing, and leveraging services where possible to achieve the goals in the plan. Also, the Partnership will continue its productive working relationship with President Preckwinkle and the Cook County Bureau of Economic Development, working aligned to service and inform Cook County businesses of available federally funded no cost business services. The Partnership continues to facilitate federal ARPA funds to provide hiring events for suburban Cook County residents.

**1. Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth employment and training activities under WIOA Title I (§ 679.560(b)(6)).**

The Partnership is committed to service alignment across funding streams and program models that will ensure the maximum programmatic impact. Coordination with state partners is a continual process and happens both in the context of regular meetings between organizational leadership and that of Title I administrative agency, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and in the context of regular Workforce Innovation Board engagement. Representatives from Titles II, III, and IV of WIOA sit on the local workforce board and its

committees, actively supporting and providing direction for the local workforce system.

Over the course of the prior Local Plan period, The Partnership procured a new One-Stop Operator (OSO), ScaleLIT (formerly The Chicago Citywide Literacy Coalition), to serve as the OSO for all ten American Job Centers. The OSO has standardized a number of procedures across all AJCs to enhance services and reduce duplication. The OSO convenes all Core and Required Partners, including Title I for each AJC on a monthly basis. The OSO also convenes all partners systemwide (from all 10 AJCs) on a quarterly basis to ensure all partners are informed about each other's services and activities and able to identify any opportunities to collaborate and reduce duplication of work.

The OSO also regularly engages all partners, including Title I, in Project Working Groups to create solutions for all partners. All partners are now able to use the same standardized WIOA Orientation, one coordinated universal referral system, use one standard Customer Satisfaction Survey and review the Survey data together at monthly partner meetings, and rely on one universal "AJC Manual" for onboarding new staff.

The Workforce Partners of Metropolitan Chicago is a coalition of Local Workforce Boards (of the counties surrounding Chicago), developed over 15 years ago to serve as a platform for regional workforce investment and economic development coordination. This collaboration has expanded under WIOA to include Title I Administrators from each local workforce investment area and to provide a forum for periodic coordinated planning with core partners. The Workforce Partners of Metropolitan Chicago fundraises for jointly administered regional grants, committing to project coordination and information sharing.

Local coordination of services has also been extensive under WIOA. The Partnership convenes its network of 65 WIOA Title I service providers, gathering best practices and input for continuous

systemic improvement. In addition to jobseeker services, The Partnership also leads coordination of Title I providers' business-facing efforts, meeting monthly with business service representatives from area Sector Centers and other Title I organizations to streamline business engagement and participate in an innovative shared-placement model that incentivizes collaboration between service providers.

**2. Adult education and literacy activities under WIOA Title II. This description must include how the Local 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 (§ 679.560(b)(12)).**

The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership coordinates with the WIOA Title II system administered by the Illinois Community College Board in a variety of ways. The leadership team at The Partnership, City Colleges of Chicago and the Chicago Mayor's Office recently participated in a day summit to identify opportunities for aligning strategies, implementing new initiatives, and sharing data/ best practices. Among other ideas plans both entities saw an opportunity for more coordination of bridge programming. The Partnership and City Colleges will continue to explore additional opportunities to leverage Title I and Title II funds in innovative ways.

Staff from The Partnership 's OSO regularly attend meetings of the Title II Area Planning Council, a network of Title II providers outside of the traditional community college system. As noted elsewhere in this plan, innovative Title II coordination has been successfully demonstrated in an award-winning pilot project in the Near West American Job Center, located in Chicago's Pilsen community. ScaleLIT, formerly known as Chicago Citywide Literacy Coalition, created a Title II Navigator, a model that resulted in increased efficiency and streamlined provision of adult education services within the community of Adult Basic Education providers that are members of



the Title II Area Planning Council, as well as solutions for tracking and referral of participants that benefit all of the organizations serving the community. The model gained national recognition with a 2020 award from National Skills Coalition and has grown to 8 Navigators covering 10 American Job Centers to support jobseekers.

Many of the workforce organizations in Chicago and Cook County have WIOA Title II programs collocated in their offices and other Title II organizations connect to workforce locations by technology for the seamless referral of WIOA customers when Adult Education services are needed. The WIOA Title II organizations in Chicago and Cook County are also partners in the development and approval of the annual WIOA Memorandum of Understanding at all comprehensive One Stop locations.

In addition to coordination at the WIB level, Title II staff attend the OSO's monthly partner meetings at each AJC, and the quarterly systemwide partner meetings referenced above. Title II staff have also been active participants in the Project Working Groups referenced elsewhere in this plan that have led to improved service coordination and reduction in duplication including the Universal WIOA Orientation, the new universal referral system in Airtable©, the standardized Customer Satisfaction Survey used by all partners, and the AJC Manual.

All Title II providers in Chicago belong to the Area Planning Council 508 and meet quarterly. The Partnership will be invited to participate in this meeting to improve coordination of services.

### **3. Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 49 et seq.) services (§ 679.560(b)(11)).**

In addition to representation on the Chicago Cook WIB, the local WIOA Title III administrator, the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), is actively engaged in ongoing planning and service delivery. Coordinated service provision is common throughout the American Job Centers in the provision of veterans' services, Rapid Response activities, and business services.

The Partnership coordinates business and employer outreach at the American Job Centers with the Illinois Department of Employment Security. Wagner-Peyser services are physically collocated in the comprehensive American Job Centers, which facilitates the collaboration and coordination of employer engagement. The Partnership works with IDES on all aspects of business engagement including streamlined referral processes, hiring events and specialized projects for the benefit of employers.

The Partnership maximizes coordination of job seeker-services and avoids duplication of Wagner-Peyser Act services through a variety of strategies. Collaborative efforts include connecting pre-screened job ready candidates including any registered unemployment insurance claimants and individuals served by WIOA to job openings at engaged businesses. Staff share job postings between Wagner-Peyser and Title I through both Career Connect and Illinois JobLink. In addition, Title I staff participate in Rapid Response activities including attendance at initial meetings and participation at workshops for affected employees. Job-seeker workshops and job clubs are open to participants of both programs and email blasts and phone notifications are targeted to participants of both programs.

Title III staff attend the OSO's monthly partner meetings at each AJC, and the quarterly systemwide partner meetings referenced above. Title III staff have also been active participants in the Project Working Groups referenced elsewhere in this plan that have led to improved service coordination and reduction in duplication including the Universal WIOA Orientation, the new universal referral system in Airtable©, the standardized Customer Satisfaction Survey used by all partners, and the AJC Manual.

#### **4. Vocational rehabilitation service activities under WIOA Title IV (§ 679.560(b)(13)).**

The Partnership is taking concrete steps to expand coordinated activities with Title IV Vocational

Rehabilitation entities. At the center level, The Partnership works to provide access to assistive technology and other accommodations in partnership with Illinois Division of Rehabilitation Services to ensure ADA compliance (see Chapter 6B, below) and fully integrate jobseekers with disabilities into the WIOA service structure. In 2022, The Partnership secured a portion of Cook County’s American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to create Disability Navigator positions within the five Suburban Cook County AJCs based on the successful Title II Navigators referenced elsewhere in this Plan.

As with other Titles, Title IV staff attend the OSO’s monthly partner meetings at each AJC, and the quarterly systemwide partner meetings referenced above. Title IV staff have also been active participants in the Project Working Groups referenced elsewhere in this plan that have led to improved service coordination and reduction in duplication including the Universal WIOA Orientation, the new universal referral system in Airtable©, the standardized Customer Satisfaction Survey used by all partners, and the AJC Manual.

**5. Relevant secondary and post-secondary education programs and activities with education and workforce investment activities (§ 679.560(b)(9)).**

The Partnership ensures coordination with education providers in the county through a variety of strategies. On the Chicago Cook WIB, post-secondary interests are represented by the Deputy Executive Director for Adult Education and Family Literacy at the Illinois Community College Board, and the Chancellor of City Colleges of Chicago.

The Partnership funds a variety of secondary education entities, including school Districts 214 and 207, and various alternative high schools in Chicago. Under the CPS initiative “Learn. Plan. Succeed.” every graduating senior is required to have a post-secondary plan for their education and career pathway. Building familiarity with the WIOA system is critical in order to provide a

full array of post-secondary career pathways and supports for graduating seniors.

As discussed elsewhere in this plan, entities like CPS and District 214 have set ambitious goals for incorporation of work-based learning experiences in the provision of Career and Technical Education programming. The Partnership intends continued support these and other regional secondary work by examining ways in which WIOA resources can augment or directly support work experiences that lay a foundation for growth careers even before graduation.

**6. How the Local Board will support the state strategies identified under § 676.105 and work with the entities carrying out core programs and other workforce development programs, including programs of study and career pathway programs under the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.) to support service alignment and needs identified in regional or local level assessments including the Perkins Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (§ 679.560(b)(1)(ii)).**

The Partnership shares the joint vision of the Illinois Community College Board and the Illinois State Board of Education, which oversee and implement Perkins V programming. Perkins V is designed to enhance and codify coordination between education and workforce systems in part through expanding the focus on industry-recognized credentials and incorporating the use of work-based learning in curriculum, while expanding access to low-income learners and special populations. These shared goals are represented in this plan. In addition to the commitment to participate in local needs assessments, The Partnership sits on the advisory council for Career Launch Chicago, a grant-funded initiative to develop goals that align with Perkins V, creating an apprenticeship system that aligns Chicago Public Schools, City Colleges of Chicago, the

workforce system and the private sector, while expanding dual credit opportunities to speed completion of education and accelerate students' entry to and advancement in the workforce.

Staff representing Perkins V Career and Technical Education services also attend the OSO's monthly partner meetings at each AJC, and the quarterly systemwide partner meetings referenced above. Perkins V staff have also been active participants in the Project Working Groups referenced elsewhere in this plan that have led to improved service coordination and reduction in duplication including the Universal WIOA Orientation, the new universal referral system in Airtable©, the standardized Customer Satisfaction Survey used by all partners, and the AJC Manual.

**7. Provide a copy of the local supportive service policies and describe how the Local Board will coordinate the provision of transportation and other appropriate supportive services in the local area (§ 679.560(b)(10)) and include information on the supportive services by each local program as appropriate.**

A copy of the local Supportive Service Policy is attached along with all LWIA 7 Policies as required in Section B. Through approval of this policy, the Chicago Cook WIB endorses the provision of allowable support services to WIOA customers at the provider level. Transportation (such as public transit passes or gas cards) and other services are documented both in participant files and at the point of fiscal reimbursement. The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership is also exploring new and innovative models for provision of support services. In 2022, The Partnership received foundation support for barrier reduction services. The Partnership's Construction Works program includes a barrier reduction and supportive services component. The Partnership has been able to expand access to supports for new tradespeople in the form of required tools, boots, personal safety equipment, and stipends to assist individuals during the start of unpaid apprenticeship training. The Partnership's Good Jobs Challenge Grant also includes a barrier

reduction program. In 2024, The Partnership was named a finalist in two Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) Hub applications for the South Chicago and West/Southwest Chicago geographic areas. Each Hub includes plans for approximately \$2 million in barrier reduction funds for participants. The Partnership will continue to evaluate how best to deploy barrier reduction funding, the impact of these leveraged resources and explore additional fundraising and enhancements where appropriate.

**F. Describe how the local area will provide adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities including:**

**1. A description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area (§ 679.560(b)(6)).**

The workforce development system in Cook County includes for service delivery models that work together to provide employment and training to the region's adult and dislocated workers. (Note that youth programs are available to young adults ages 18-24 and will be addressed in the youth section) These include American Job Centers, Delegate Agencies, Career Pathway Training Program and Sector Centers. Training activities include provision of Individual Training Accounts, Internships/Paid Work Experience, Pre-Apprentice Training, On-the-Job Training, Customized Training, Incumbent Worker Training and Classroom Training including bridge programs.

This broad range of training and service models allows the residents of Chicago and Cook County to seek out options that best fit their needs/circumstances. These programs and activities are generally accessible across Chicago and Cook County through The Partnership's network of American Job Centers and Delegate Agencies. The location of each program type is ultimately determined by the procurement process – i.e., which entities respond and how their proposals rate

through the selection process.

**American Job Centers:** The Partnership administers a comprehensive workforce development system with multiple entry points where job seekers and businesses can access the full range of WIOA services and benefits. The backbone of this system is our 10 American Job Centers (AJCs) located throughout Chicago and suburban Cook County of which four are designated as comprehensive Centers. These are high-capacity program sites serving the general job-seeking population as well as businesses and have active participation from the Core WIOA Partners. At the AJCs job seekers and members of the public can access basic career services including:

- Outreach, intake (including worker profiling), and orientation to information and other services available through the entire workforce delivery system.
- Determination of whether the individual can receive assistance from the adult, dislocated worker, or youth programs.
- Initial assessment of skill levels including literacy, numeracy, and English language proficiency.
- Labor exchange services through Illinois Job Link including
- Job search and placement assistance; and individual career counseling as needed,
- Appropriate recruitment and other business services on behalf of employers including information and referrals to specialized business services
- Provision of referrals to and coordination of activities with other programs and services
- Provision of workforce and labor market employment statistics information,
- Provision of information on eligible training providers, performance data and costs
- Provision of information relating to the availability of supportive services or assistance and appropriate referrals to those services

- Assistance in establishing eligibility for programs of financial aid assistance for training and or education programs not provided under WIOA.
- Provision of information regarding filing claims under UI programs
- Resource Rooms: American Job Centers maintain a publicly accessible resource area (including access for disabled persons) as part of their WIOA services. This public space includes computers with hi-speed internet access, printers, copy paper, fax machines, a telephone, job postings, information on Unemployment Insurance eligibility, services, and financial aid. Staff should be able to provide tutorials for career exploration, job searching and resume writing.
- **Workshops:** AJCs provide a wide range of informational workshops to job seekers as part of its career services offerings. These workshops focus on job search and readiness skills, such as: interviewing techniques, resume preparation, effective networking techniques, effective communications skills, conflict resolution, financial literacy and computer literacy, workforce trends, high demand industries, labor market information, workers' rights and navigating virtual hiring events.

Individualized Career Services: Eligible Adults and dislocated workers may also enroll in WIOA Title I to receive individualized career services where they will be assigned to a Career coach The career coach will assist the job seeker in preparing and implementing a detailed employment plan that delineates the steps and supports needed to secure the desired employment. Access to occupational training via an Individual Training Account and or On-the-Job Training through an employer may be part of the employment plan and individualized placement assistance. The Partnership currently has 10 AJC locations.

American Job Center	Location
American Job Center at Daley College	7500 S. Pulaski Rd., Chicago, IL 60652



American Job Center in East Garfield Park	605 S. Albany Ave., Chicago, IL 60612
American Job Center in Pilsen	1700 West 18 <sup>th</sup> St., Chicago, IL 60608
American Job Center at Truman College	1145 W. Wilson Ave., Ste. 1917, Chicago, IL 606040
American Job Center at the King Center	4314 S. Cottage Grove Ave., Room 209, Chicago, IL 60653
American Job Center in Wheeling	1400 S. Wolf Rd., Wheeling, IL 60090
American Job Center in Maywood	1701 S. 1 <sup>st</sup> Ave., Suite 10, Maywood, IL 60153
American Job Center in North Riverside	7222 W. Cermak Rd., Ste. 301, North Riverside, IL 60546
American Job Center at Prairie State College	202 S. Halsted St., ATOC Building, Ste. 148, Chicago Heights, IL 60411
American Job Center in Harvey	16845 S. Halsted St., Harvey, IL 60426

**Delegate Agency:** Adult and Dislocated workers can receive the above listed basic and individualized career services with access to training at numerous delegate agency sites throughout Cook County. The delegate agency program model features small to mid-sized organizations serving job seekers from a distinct geography and/or special population. They also serve business customers and develop employer relationships and job leads for the network’s job seeker population. The 2021 Delegate Agency RFP targeted the following communities and populations:

*Chicago Communities:* Auburn Gresham, Austin, Bronzeville, Calumet Heights, Chatham , Garfield Park (East & West), Greater Englewood, Greater Grand Crossing, Humboldt Park, Little Village, Marquette Park, New City, Near and Lower West Side, North Lawndale, Roseland, West Lawn, Woodlawn, South Chicago, South Shore

*Suburban Cook Municipalities:* Bellwood, Berwyn, Blue Island, Calumet City, Chicago Heights, Cicero, Country Club Hills, Dixmoor, Dolton, Harvey, Lansing, Maywood, Park Forest, Phoenix, Riverdale, South Holland.

In addition to high poverty areas, The Partnership is prioritizing delegate agencies that serve individuals from the following populations:

- Returning residents (formerly incarcerated)

- Persons with disabling conditions
- Individuals who are experiencing homelessness
- Residents of public housing
- Persons with limited English proficiency

Currently The Partnership funds 13 delegate agencies serving adult and/or dislocated workers:

Agency Name	Address	Targeted Geography or Population
Metropolitan Family Services	3062 East 91 <sup>st</sup> , Chicago, IL 60617	Returning Citizens and Limited English Proficiency
Proviso Leyden Council for Community Action, Inc.	411 Madison Street, Maywood, IL 60153	Maywood and Austin Community
YWCA Metropolitan Chicago	839 W. 115th Street, Chicago, IL 60643	Far South side of Chicago
Calumet Area Industrial Commission	1000 E. 111th Street, Chicago, IL 60628	Roseland community
Central States Ser	948 W 26th St, Chicago, IL 60623	Little Village community
Chicago Federation of Labor-Worker's Assistance	130 E. Randolph, Chicago, IL 60601 and 9930 Derby Lane Westchester, IL 60154	Dislocated workers and connections with trades and unions
DESI (Washington Heights Workforce Center)	10325 S. Halsted, Chicago, IL 60628	Washington Heights
Moraine Valley Community College	9000 W. College Parkway, Palos Hills, IL 60456	South suburban and leverage relationship with Community College
National Able Network @ Evanston Library and Oakton Community College	1703 Orrington, Evanston, IL 60201	Evanston leverage relationship with Public Library and Oakton Community College
Polish American Association	3819 N. Cicero, Chicago, IL 60641	Limited English Proficiency
Safer Foundation (Chicago and South Holland)	571 W. Jackson, Chicago, IL 60661 and 249 W. 162nd St., South Holland, IL 60473	Returning Citizens
South Suburban College	15800 S. State, South Holland, IL 60473	South suburban and leverage relationship with Community College
St Sabina Employment Resource Center	1210 West 78th Place Chicago, IL 60620	Auburn Gresham Community

**Career Pathway Training:** The Partnership also funds specific Career Pathway Training programs available to adult and dislocated workers. The Career Pathway Training Program model

features occupational skills training programs that are demand driven, within The Partnership’s focus sectors, and connect eligible job seekers to employment. The Career Pathway Training program serves two job seeker groups: low-income adults and dislocated workers. Career Pathway programs offer advanced vocational training instruction to job seekers and eliminate the need to issue Individual Training Account (ITAs) vouchers to participants. This holistic model combines career coaching, job readiness, supportive services with technical skills training in one of the following high demand industries:

- Business & Professional Services
- Healthcare
- Information Technology
- Manufacturing
- Retail, Culinary & Hospitality
- Transportation, Distribution and Logistics
- Construction

Currently The Partnership funds the following Organizations through the Career Pathway

Training Model:

Agency Name	Career Pathway Training Industry
Association House of Chicago	Business and Professional Services-Banking
OAI, Inc.	Health Care
Revolution Workshop	Construction
St. Paul Church of God	Construction
Food Hero L3C	Culinary
National Able Network	Information Technology
Chinese American Service League	Culinary
Greater West Town Development Project	Manufacturing
Greater West Town Development Project	Shipping & Receiving
Jane Addams Resource Center	Manufacturing
Symbol Institute	Manufacturing
Jane Addams Resource Center	Manufacturing Bridge
Calumet Area Industrial Commission	Manufacturing Bridge

Periodically The Partnership receives special grant funding to serve dislocated workers through the U.S. Department of Labor Disaster Recovery- National Dislocated Worker Program (DWG).

DWGs are supplemental, time-limited funding assistance provided in response to major economic dislocations or other events that cause significant impact on states and local areas that exceed the capacity of existing formula funds and other relevant resources. DWGs enable states and communities to respond to and recover from large, unexpected dislocation events. Disaster Recovery DWGs provide temporary disaster relief employment, as well as employment and training activities, as appropriate, to minimize the employment and economic impact of declared disasters and emergency situations, in disaster-declared areas as defined in 20 CFR 687.110(b).

In 2022 and 2023, The Partnership received funding as part of Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Quality Jobs, Equity, Strategy, and Training (QUEST) Disaster Recovery National Dislocated Worker Grants. The goal of QUEST is to enable individuals who have been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the social and economic inequities that the pandemic exacerbated, to enter, return to, or advance in high-quality jobs in growth industries including infrastructure, environment and climate, the care economy, and other locally identified critical sectors. The activities of the QUEST DWG will yield improved individual and community resilience to the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The QUEST DWG initiative will support employment equity and individual, community, and industry resilience as the nation prioritizes economic and employment recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

These funds enhanced our workforce system's ongoing efforts to empower unemployed and underemployed workers through worker and business engagement, elevate equity, and connect jobseekers with high-quality job.

The Partnership offers other programs available to Adult and Dislocated Workers including the following:

*ConstructionWorks:* The Partnership manages multiple programs and relationships focused on connecting residents who have been historically underrepresented in the construction industry to family sustaining careers in skilled trades and construction management. One such program is ConstructionWorks Powered by the Illinois Tollway. The Partnership developed ConstructionWorks to connect people of color, women, and other groups to careers in the skilled trades. Accessible in locations throughout LWIA 7 and the entire Northeast Economic Development Region, Construction Initiatives programming provides participants with support services including access to a barrier reduction fund and training to prepare for employment and apprenticeship application processes. These initiatives provide access to lucrative career pathways for participants who are interested in the skilled trades.

*Good Jobs Challenge Grant:* The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership received a Good Jobs Challenge (GJC) grant from the US Department of Commerce. The Partnership together with partners-Chicago Workforce Funder Alliance, World Business Chicago, LISC and Women Employed will lead an employer-led, community driven initiative to promote equity, economic resiliency, and growth for Chicago and Cook County. GJC will create durable, resilient talent pipelines through to mid-level jobs, linking Chicago’s un/underemployed residents into jobs that pay family wealth-building wages.

The structure of GJC consists of four backbone organizations and several support agencies: Sector Backbones.

- Manufacturing: The Cook County Bureau of Economic Development (BED) and Co-Backbone: OAI
- Transportation/distribution/logistics: Olive-Harvey College (OHC) o Support Agency: YWCA

- Health: Health & Medicine Policy Research Group (HMPRG)
- Information Technology (IT): P33

Sector backbones will lead sector partnerships in their respective industries to determine the roles to target preferred training models and key learning outcomes. Backbones, training partners, and CBOs will work together to design training programs and identify barriers faced by trainees. They will focus on high-demand, high-growth occupations across the four target sectors. The training plans should also have an equity focus that includes integrated services that encourage employers to create equitable workplaces for the new hires to thrive.

*Climate Equity Jobs Act Workforce Hub:* The Partnership was recently named a finalist in two Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) Workforce Hub applications for the South Chicago and West/Southwest Chicago geographic areas. Workforce Hubs engage with potential employers, community-based organizations, educational institutions, and community-based and labor-based training providers to ensure program-eligible individuals across the County have dedicated and sustained support to enter and build clean energy careers. The main objective of the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program is to increase access to and opportunities for education, training, and support services to help program-eligible individuals succeed in the labor market generally and the clean energy sector specifically. Upon completion, participants will be prepared for entry-level clean energy jobs. The Partnership along with City Colleges of Chicago, Elevate Energy and multiple community partners and trainers plan to roll out this program in the coming year.

*Cook County Coordinated Reentry Council:* The Partnership continues its work with the Cook County Justice Advisory Council on our Road Home program to align systems and policies to more effectively support successful reentry. With ARPA funding from the Cook County Bureau of Economic Development, the program expanded to support 3 agencies: Phalanx, Safer

Foundation and SERCO. These agencies are tasked with connecting individuals exiting facilities with employment assistance and other resources. With the long-term goal of creating a coordinated reentry system for Cook County, The Partnership is aligning WIOA and other program resources to directly connect people to employment and training opportunities pre- and post-release from incarceration. These efforts will allow young adults returning home from incarceration to directly connect to career resources available from the public workforce system in Chicago and Cook County. The Partnership also continues to fund the Safer Foundation under its WIOA program which specializes in serving returning citizens. The Partnership works closely with the Chicago Mayor's office on Reentry Services and the welcoming centers in the City of Chicago.

**2. A description of how the Local Board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with statewide rapid response activities (§ 679.560(b)(7)).**

The Partnership coordinates and supports Rapid Response activities with the State Rapid Response Unit (RRU) within the Illinois Department of Commerce and the Illinois Department of Employment Security with assistance from the U.S. Department of Labor. The Partnership is charged with assisting workers impacted by layoffs, employers, local government officials, and other stakeholders by providing resources, technical assistance, and labor market information. Generally, the State RRU receives first notice of major dislocation events, via notices provided under the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Act petition notification. The State RRU enlists The Partnership to respond to dislocation events. From the initial information available, the State RRU works with the designated partners to determine the immediate needs of workers and employers and establishes an appropriate action plan for delivery of information and assistance to affected businesses and

workers. Whenever possible, a local workforce center and/or labor organization is featured in information sessions.

LWIA 7's American Job Center agencies, Dislocated Worker Agencies - where applicable, and/or Industry Sector Centers representatives, are invited/assigned to participate on the Rapid Response (RR) Team, along with a Partnership BRED (Business Relations Economic Development) Specialist and present a WIOA overview in the Rapid Response Pre-Layoff Workshops. The Pre-Layoff Workshops are currently facilitated on site at company locations OR virtually on Zoom. Workshop surveys are collected either on site 'manually' OR online 'electronically' in the ILworknet System off the Company Event Specific Page. Survey data by Company events can then be retrieved via the Illinois Employment Business System (IEBS). RR Surveys, which include requests to be contacted by the job seeker, are then sent to the participating AJC or Dislocated Worker Agency (if manually collected from job seekers) as well as are accessible in the IEBS system. The LWIA Rapid Response Coordinator may also send out as requested by any/all agencies for Dislocated Worker services.

When formal notice is not filed in accordance with the WARN Act, but a local rapid response staff or other local partner becomes aware of a WARN-level layoff or closure event, The Partnership initiates the Rapid Response process, notifying the state coordinator to formulate strategies for carrying out rapid response activities. When The Partnership or a local partner becomes aware of a layoff or closure event that does not meet the WARN threshold or is not TAA related, it will initiate rapid response per the local operational plan. Rapid Response assistance includes the following activities:

- Employer Consultation
  - Initial planning for Rapid Response workshops
  - Coordination to ensure customization of services to the specific needs of impacted worker group



- Consultation with labor representatives when workers are covered by a collective bargaining agreement.
- Services Delivered to Workers
  - Administration of needs assessment surveys
  - Labor market information conveying labor reduction trends, and opportunities for transitioning workers
  - Connections to local service providers, which may also include an appropriate sector center
  - Presentations from RRU representatives on how to engage their respective agencies
  - Delivery of collateral reference materials with instructions and service provider contact information

The Partnership has continued to provide the rapid response services listed above both in-person and virtually as needed for each given company and situation.

**G. Describe how the local area will provide youth activities including:**

- 1. A description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in the local area, including activities for youth who are individuals with disabilities, which must include an identification of successful models of such activities (§ 679.560(b)(8)).**

The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership strives to be an effective steward of limited public and private resources and to create the biggest impact possible for young adult job seekers in Chicago and suburban Cook County. The region is home to a diverse and steady economy that attracts companies and job seekers from across the globe, however Chicago and Cook County are also confronted with a history of community disinvestment, structural racism in the job market, and more currently, the suburbanization of poverty. Despite historically low national unemployment rates, certain demographics of young adults have persistently high rates of joblessness. For example, African American males age 16-19 in Chicago are more likely to be unemployed than

have a job.<sup>1</sup> In Chicago and Cook County, there are over 82,000 16-24-year-olds who are out of work and not in school.<sup>2</sup> This trend has been exacerbated in the past two years as we have seen that young adults who were disconnected before the pandemic are even more disconnected now, and employment rates among all ages within African American and Latinx communities has been slower to rebound as the economic recovery gets underway.

The Partnership works to address this crisis through strategically deploying workforce resources and building partnerships that directly address the difficult realities confronting young adult job seekers. The Partnership prioritizes funding programs that serve young adults who face intense challenges in establishing themselves in a family sustaining career. Specifically, youth who:

- Have a disability
- Have experienced homelessness
- Are involved with justice system
- Are not working and not in school
- Live in a community with high unemployment rates
- Are English language learners
- Pregnant or parenting
- Are in state care
- Resident of public housing

The Partnership provides ongoing training, technical assistance, and monitoring of all youth programs to ensure a high level of program quality and integrity.

The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership and Chicago Cook WIB envision a system where all young adults in the region can easily access a comprehensive and integrated set of education and training supports that increase the number of young adults productively engaged in the workforce, thereby increasing self-sufficiency, and reducing poverty. The Partnership funds a variety of

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<sup>1</sup> Out of School and Out of Work 16 to 19 and 20 to 24 Year Olds in Chicago and Cook County in 2017. Wilson, May 2019. Great Cities Institute, University of Illinois Chicago. [https://greatcities.uic.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/OutofSchoolOutofWorkData\\_May2019.pdf](https://greatcities.uic.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/OutofSchoolOutofWorkData_May2019.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

successful workforce investment program models for youth that are implemented through a network of ten American Job Centers and other service providers.

Through the provision of youth workforce development programs, The Partnership seeks to:

- Align youth-serving institutions in order to ease access, reduce duplication, close service gaps, and promote collaboration
- Connect young adults to the labor market, career pathways, education, and/or paid work experience
- Improve outcomes for young adults through placement in employment or education, attainment of industry-recognized degrees or certificates, and achievement of literacy and numeracy gains.
- Grounded in these guiding principles, The Partnership dedicates youth funding in several categories including Out-of-School Youth (OSY), In-School Youth (ISY), Youth Innovation Fund, and program enhancements funded by private or other public resources. Youth services are accessible through all 10 American Job Centers within LWIA 7 as well as 31 delegate agencies strategically located throughout Chicago and Cook County. The following overview of current activities highlights successful models and provides a contextualized description of the multiple strategies that the Chicago Cook WIB is engaging to address the employment needs of young adults and businesses in LWIA 7.

### ***Out-of-School Youth Activities***

LWIA 7 delivers a range of Out of School Youth services, including the following general types. *Reconnection to Education through Employment.* For OSY who do not have a high school diploma or GED, programs include access to multiple education reconnection options including linkages to public schools, credit recovery programs, options schools (non-traditional schools), and other

systems for attaining a secondary credential. Services include strong academic remediation curriculum to ensure skills gains in reading and math, as well as preparing young people to re-enter an academic setting. Programs offer supportive services such as transportation, work attire, and connections to other social services such as housing or court advocacy.

*Post-Secondary Education/Training and Employment.* Programs that focus on youth who already have a high school diploma or GED and are interested in continuing their career pathway through further education or advanced training. Services include academic assistance, and social support aimed at preparing youth for successful entry into, and progress through, post-secondary education and/or training. Program elements include strategies that help youth pursue, enroll, persist, and complete post-secondary education programs and then job placement and retention assistance.

*Sector Based and Career Pathway Training and Employment.* Aligned with wider Sector efforts, some providers and programs focus on business-focused projects linking youth to our targeted industry sectors. Career Coaches work closely with participants to develop a long-term career plan that involves securing immediate paid work (subsidized or unsubsidized), and/or training relevant to participant's career plan. Programs include occupational bridge programs, pre-apprenticeships, paid work experiences, and internships, and feature deep career exploration, job shadowing, academic and occupational skills training, job readiness, and high-quality work experience activities within a specific industry. Services focus on helping youth with attainment of industry-recognized credentials. and placement into employment or advanced education in the target industry.

### ***In-School Youth Activities***

The Partnership targets In-School Youth funding to serve youth who are currently enrolled in school and are at risk of dropping out, have a disability, or are English language learners. In-School

Youth programs emphasize activities designed to assist youth in completing their high school diploma and transitioning to post-secondary education/training, or into employment along a career path that will lead to economic security.

In-School Youth programs emphasize tutoring, study skills training, and dropout prevention strategies that lead to attaining a high school diploma. Programs demonstrate strong connections to public schools for youth outreach, recruitment, and program delivery; as well as a strong school to college/career framework. In-School Youth programs are required to provide early introduction and exposure to post-secondary education/careers and career exploration activities that motivate youth to establish career goals. Programs include career mentoring services designed to help young adults plan beyond completion of their high school diploma.

### ***Serving Youth with Disabilities***

Based on program impact analysis and organizational priorities, The Partnership dedicates the majority of WIOA In-School Youth funds to programs that exclusively serve youth with disabilities. Program models for youth with disabilities include intense job readiness skill development and placement. Several programs include paid work experiences to orient participants to workplace environments.

The Partnership funds seven organizations to provide WIOA ISY services through independent program models at multiple locations including:

- AERO Special Education works with four schools in southwest suburban Cook County and has developed successful job readiness training for students, as well as training for employers to prepare them to be supportive work environments for their students. This program has a broad diversity of employer relationships including a hospital, airport hotels, a university, and a massage therapist.

- LaGrange Area Department of Special Education works with multiple schools in west suburban Cook County to provide paid work experience, career coaching, intensive interview preparation, and other workforce activities specifically designed for people with disabilities.
- Manufacturing Renaissance provides industry focused training and work experiences for Chicago Public Schools students interested in manufacturing careers.

### ***Additional Program Enhancements and Program Models***

In addition to the above-referenced WIOA youth programs, The Partnership encourages Title I Providers to leverage WIOA activities and supplement core youth programming with additional resources. By providing programs and additional support simultaneously, the providers can more easily connect youth to education and employment; consequently, enhancing the impact of WIOA Youth funds. Furthermore, as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, The Partnership raises funds through charitable giving and public or private competitive grant processes to innovate and expand service delivery throughout Cook County. These diverse funds when braided with WIOA dollars foster enhanced WIOA Youth programs, build organizational capacity of The Partnership, and ultimately allow the public workforce system to serve more youth. Examples of these innovations include:

*Trauma Informed Care:* With funding from the J.P. Morgan Chase Foundation, The Partnership convened a community of practice to study trauma informed care and develop service strategies that support more effective youth engagement within workforce development programs. Fourteen Title I service providers participated in the community of practice, which included training from the Illinois Collaboration on Youth (ICOY), to learn and share their experiences.

Some additional custom programs are also available to adults and younger adults. They are

described here in detail and referenced in Chapter 4, Section G on Youth Activities, below.

*Trauma Informed Care.* Enhancement of staff training and capacity to deliver service strategies that include trauma-informed care. This work is focused on Youth and young adults, and the Partnership is currently delivering this training for all Title I Youth staff. The Partnership hopes to extend this training to all staff in the future.

*Opportunity Works:* Through funding and in cooperation with the Cook County Bureau of Economic Development, The Partnership created Opportunity Works, a paid internship program for Opportunity Youth (young adults not in school or connected to employment. This program was created with a focus on supporting Suburban Cook County and supplementing other youth-focused initiatives in the city of Chicago. The program connects them with businesses in high-growth, high-demand sectors and exposes the interns to careers they may not have considered in Manufacturing, Information Technology, Healthcare, Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics. The program graduated its 1,000th intern in 2020 and has served over 2,000 young adults. The program funds the interns' wages, allowing employers to provide paid internships at no cost while connecting interns to career pathway opportunities.

### ***Youth Workforce Development Funding Strategy***

Recognizing the difficult realities that confront many young adult residents of Chicago and suburban Cook County, the Chicago Cook WIB advances multiple strategies to ensure youth who face barriers to employment can access and succeed in the workforce activities provided by the public workforce system. The Partnership invests in programs that employ best practices and incorporate concepts and approaches of (1) youth development and trauma informed care that meets the psycho/social/emotional needs of young adult job seekers; (2) education and workforce strategies that are relevant to high-growth, high-demand business sectors; and (3) wrap-around

services with particular focus on employment outcomes. Specifically, The Partnership supports projects that:

- Demonstrate meaningful partnerships with accredited higher education institutions, employers in high growth industries, and other relevant organizations and service providers that support employment, internships, and educational opportunities for young adults
- Provide long term career development services, such as occupational training, that leads to unsubsidized family sustaining employment in high demand industries
- Demonstrate collaboration with broader young adult initiatives (e.g., One Summer Chicago, Chicago Roadmap, Chicago Youth Service Corps, My Chi My Future, or other youth serving programs)
- Include innovative post-secondary bridge programs designed to accelerate credentials and skill building, such as use of contextualized and integrated curriculum and instruction
- Use structured work-based learning, such as paid work experiences, pre-apprenticeship programs, and career exploration, while providing maximum opportunities for young adults to learn theoretical and practical skills relevant to their career interests
- Provide intensive career mentoring and support services, including financial literacy education, to help young adults overcome complex barriers, successfully complete programs, and secure/retain employment
- Demonstrate investment in long-term follow-up with participants upon program completion to ensure continued support and success in post-secondary education, training, or employment

The Partnership prioritizes funding for programs that serve youth with disabilities, justice-involved youth, and young adults who are out of work and out of school. To ensure these priorities are met,



The Partnership requires that a minimum of 80% of youth funding is dedicated to Out-of-School programs, and that the majority of In-School programs exclusively serve youth with disabilities who are nearing transition age. Further, The Partnership requires, and trains all service providers to make programs accessible to individuals with disabilities and young adults who have experienced trauma.

To select youth service providers, The Partnership assesses providers through a competitive procurement process and offers contract extensions to agencies that are successful in delivering workforce development services to young adults and employers. The Partnership last conducted a youth services procurement in 2023. This procurement continues to align organizational strategy for youth workforce development activities with WIOA core partners' services, and The Partnership's guiding principles for youth programming. The process identified providers that are effective at reaching target populations and geographies, delivering high-quality programming, as well as maintaining a significant volume of service activities proportional to the high number of young adults in Cook County who are disconnected from work and/or school. The Partnership's youth programs consistently meet or exceed all performance metrics.

**2. A description of how local areas will meet the minimum expenditure rate for out-of-school youth.**

According to "Measure of America" of the Social Science Research Council, in Cook County there are 75,000 out of school youth. This represents 12.9% of that population.<sup>3</sup> Despite strategic efforts across several public agencies the pandemic of youth unemployment persists. For this reason, The Partnership will continue to award a minimum of 80% of its WIOA youth funding to organizations

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<sup>3</sup> That data is taken from this site/map. <https://www.measureofamerica.org/DYinteractive/>

servicing out-of-school youth – an expenditure rate above the statutory requirement – until demographics change.

**3. The design framework for youth programs in the local area, including how the 14 program elements will be made available within that framework (§ 681.460).**

LWIA 7 has a well-developed system of WIOA Youth providers that successfully provide the 14 elements and related services. An RFP is regularly released to select providers that deliver the WIOA Youth program and currently 31 entities serve as Youth providers. Each provider must deliver or partner and refer to make all 14 WIOA Youth elements available to youth. Language from our WIOA Youth Request for Proposals that follows outlines the Partnership’s expectations and guidance for how these elements are delivered. Each provider can customize and specialize the method of delivering the elements or partnering to ensure they are delivered for Youth participants.

From the latest WIOA Youth RFP:

WIOA youth services will assist young people, ages 16-24, who face significant barriers to success in the labor market, by providing resources and support to overcome those barriers and prepare youth to be productive in the workforce. The WIOA services will provide workforce services to in-school and out-of-school youth. The Partnership has allocated 80% of its funding toward out-of-school youth.

The following is a list of fourteen (14) required services all local programs must, at a minimum, provide to youth per Section 129 (c) (2) of WIOA (Service Elements). Participation in any one of these activities should be included in the ISS. A provider can directly provide the service or have a linkage agreement to make referrals to appropriate providers of such services.

1. Tutoring, study skills training, and evidence-based dropout prevention strategies that lead to completion of secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent or for a recognized postsecondary credential. Strategies can include:
  - Individualized instruction
  - After school programming
  - Credit recovery services.
2. Alternative secondary school offerings such as:
  - basic education skills training, individualized academic instruction, and English as a Second Language training.
  - dropout recovery services, such as credit recovery, counseling to reengage in

- secondary school, and educational plan development, as appropriate.
3. Paid and unpaid work experiences that have academic and occupational education as a component of the work experience, which may include the following types of work experiences and may take place in the private for-profit sector, the non-profit sector, or the public sector:
    - Summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year
    - Pre-apprenticeship programs
    - Internships and job shadowing
    - On-the-job training
  4. Occupational skill training, which include priority consideration for training programs that lead to recognized credential that are aligned with in demand industry sectors or occupations.
  5. Leadership development opportunities, which include activities such as:
    - Exposure to postsecondary educational possibilities.
    - Community and service-learning projects.
    - Peer centered activities including peer mentoring and tutoring.
    - Training in decision making, including determining priorities and problem solving.
    - Citizenship training, life skills and work behavior training.
    - Civic engagement activities that promote the quality of life in a community.
    - Leadership activities that place youth in a leadership role.
  6. Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster can include career pathway training.
  7. Supportive services are offered to help the youth with his/her participation in a WIOA funded career service or training program or their retention of a job gained through WIOA participation. Reasonable support services can include:
    - Meals
    - Medical
    - Childcare
    - Transportation
    - Housing
    - Book/testing fees related to WIOA program participation activities.
  8. Adult mentoring for a duration of at least twelve (12) months, which may occur both during and after program participation. Mentoring can include workplace mentoring and have activities that offer guidance, support, and encouragement to develop the competence and character of the mentee.
  9. Follow-up services for a minimum 12-month period to ensure the youth is stable in their job or educational placement. Follow up services available to all youth are:
    - support services
    - adult mentoring
    - financial literacy education
    - Labor market and employment information, career counseling and career exploration.
    - Activities to help transition to postsecondary education or training.
    - Other services to ensure success in employment or post-secondary education.

- 10.** Comprehensive guidance and counseling, including drug and alcohol abuse counseling, mental health counseling, as well as referrals to counseling, as appropriate to the needs of the individual youth.
- 11.** Financial literacy education can include:
  - The ability of participants to create budgets, initiate checking and savings accounts at banks.
  - Support participants in learning how to effectively manage spending, credit, and debt, how to determine the accuracy of a credit report and how to correct inaccuracies.
  - Support a participant's ability to understand, evaluate, and compare financial products, services, and opportunities and to make informed financial decisions.
  - Educate participants about identity theft, ways to protect themselves from identify theft, and how to resolve cases of identity theft and in other ways understand their rights and protections related to personal identity and financial data.
  - Support activities that address the financial literacy needs of non-English speakers.
  - Support activities that address the financial literacy needs of youth with disabilities, including connecting them to benefits planning and work incentives counseling.
  - Provide financial education that is age appropriate, timely, and provides opportunities to put lessons into practice, such as by access to safe and affordable financial products that enable money management and saving.
  - Implement other approaches to help participants gain the knowledge, skills, and confidence to make informed financial decisions that enable them to attain greater financial health and stability by using high quality, age-appropriate, and relevant strategies, and channels, including, where possible, timely and customized information, guidance, tools, and instruction.
- 12.** Entrepreneurial skills training are different approaches to learn about running a business and can include the following:
  - Entrepreneurship education that provides and introduction to the values and basics of starting and running a business by developing business plans.
  - Enterprise development that provides support and services that incubate and help youth develop their own businesses. Learn how to apply for loans or grants needed to begin business operations.
  - Experiential programs that help youth experience in the day-to-day operation of a business.
- 13.** Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors and occupations can include:
  - Vocational exploration, identifying and exploring occupations.
  - Providing labor market information that includes education required for a certain occupation, starting salaries, and if they are a high growth industry.
  - Job clubs can provide resource materials that describe the skill sets required to successfully gain employment.
- 14.** Postsecondary preparation and transition activities can include:
  - Exploring post-secondary education options including technical training schools, community colleges, 4-year colleges and registered apprenticeship programs.
  - Preparing for SAT/ACT
  - Financial Aid applications and searching for scholarships.

- Assist with college applications and college tours.

**H. Provide a description of how the local area will provide services to individuals with barriers to employment as outlined in Illinois' WIOA State Plan:**

**1. How priority will be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals and individuals who are basic skills deficient consistent with WIOA Sec. 134(c)(3)(E) (§ 679.560(b)(21)).**

The majority of individuals The Partnership serves in adult programs are individuals with barriers to employment as outlined in the Unified State Plan. In PY 2022 over 95% of WIOA enrolled adults served had at least one significant barrier to employment. In the same program year, 75% of WIOA enrolled adults served were low income and nearly 50% were basic skills deficient.

In PY 2017, The Partnership established a priority of service protocol to ensure that priority is given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals and individuals who are basic skills deficient. This procedure is still currently in place and being followed. All WIOA Delegate Agencies, American Job Centers, and Sector Centers must follow the priority of service order, outlined below, when enrolling eligible WIOA Adults into individualized career services and/or training:

- First, veterans and eligible spouses who are also included in the groups given statutory priority for WIOA Adult Formula funding. This means that veterans and eligible spouses who are also recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient.
- Second, individuals who are included in the WIOA statutory priority groups such as a recipient of public assistance, other low-income individuals or an individual who is basic skills deficient but is not a veteran, nor a spouse of a veteran.

- Third, veterans and eligible spouses of veterans who are not included in the WIOA statutory priority group.
- Fourth, unemployed adults who are in need of WIOA services to obtain employment.
- Fifth, employed adults who are working but earning at or below the self-sufficiency level.

In addition to ensuring compliance with WIOA mandated statutory priority groups, The Partnership also funds strategic initiatives targeting these populations. As described above The Partnership, together with the Cook County Justice Advisory Council, received a grant to design a coordinated re-entry system for people returning to Chicago and Cook County from incarceration in Illinois Department of Corrections facilities and the Cook County Jail. The Partnership created a Coordinated Re-entry Council to generate system-wide policy recommendations for increasing the rate of successful community reentry and finalizing the design of a demonstration project from 2021 to 2023. With ARPA funding from the Cook County Bureau of Economic Development, the program expanded to support 3 agencies: Phalanx, Safer Foundation and SERCO. These agencies are tasked with connecting individuals' exiting facilities with employment assistance and other resources. With the long-term goal of creating a coordinated reentry system for Cook County, The Partnership is aligning WIOA and other program resources to directly connect people to employment and training opportunities pre- and post-release from incarceration. These efforts will allow adults returning home from incarceration to directly connect to career resources available from the public workforce system in Chicago and Cook County. The Partnership also continues to fund the Safer Foundation under its WIOA program which specializes in serving returning citizens. The Partnership works closely with the Chicago Mayor's office on Reentry Services and the welcoming centers in the City of Chicago. The demonstration project will provide appropriate pre- and post-release services to participants with the goal of reducing recidivism. The Partnership also

contracts with providers specializing in serving individuals with prior convictions via Title I services.

The Partnership contracts with several workforce agencies that provide specialized services to specific populations that face barriers to employment as identified by the state plan. For example, Delegate Agencies provide Title I services to English Language Learners from a variety of backgrounds including Spanish, Polish, Mandarin, and Ukrainian speakers, and members of other immigrant communities. Recently, The Partnership has been supporting New Arrivals from Ukraine, Haiti, Afghanistan, Venezuela, and other countries expected to arrive in 2024, with basic career services in their native languages and making referrals to ESL classes through our Title II providers. The Partnership will continue to work with these providers to ensure that they are effective in delivering WIOA services to target populations and sharing best practices with the AJC Network in Chicago and Cook County.

Through the provision of technical assistance, semi-monthly service provider meetings and monitoring quarterly status reports, The Partnership will ensure that a minimum of 80% of WIOA Adults served are within the statutory priority and/or veteran groups.

**2. Provide information on local programs, policies and procedures to address and mitigate barriers to employment and training.**

The Partnership updated its WIOA enrollment procedures to allow for greater use of self-attestations on certain eligibility documents related to prior income, barriers, and housing situation. This has helped to process individuals more quickly through the enrollment process. The Partnership has instituted a policy letter that identifies sectors that qualify as substantial layoffs. The qualifying sectors are Leisure and Hospitality, Manufacturing, Trade Transportation and Utilities, Retail Trade, and Accommodation and Food Services. This policy is currently waiting

for Board approval; however, it has been issued as draft to the LWIA. Also, LWIA 7 has received substantial funding to open the doors for additional dislocated workers facing barriers, such as long-term employed and marginalized communities, and COVID-related job loss, just to name a few. These additional grants allowed greater numbers of people to access individualized training accounts, on-the-job-training, and disaster relief employment opportunities. The expansion to 8 navigators within the American Job Centers also assists customers in navigating the enrollment process and connecting to job seekers to employment and training services.

Additionally, as described in other sections, the Partnership and its AJCs and Delegates have built an extensive network of partnerships with public agencies, local community-based organizations and nonprofits that deliver a range of human and social services targeted to address particular life challenges and barriers to employment, training, and retention.

As noted in other sections, our supportive service policy and new flexible funding will help us provide additional supportive services. Also, as WIOA will co-enroll some individuals in the new CEJA program, resources including the Barrier Reduction Fund are available to help address barriers. Additionally, non-WIOA programs that address barriers to employment and training are Opportunity Works, The Road Home, and Cook County Career Pathway Navigators.

- Opportunity Works connects low-income youth from Suburban Cook County to employment and apprenticeship training by partnering with local employers and unions.
- The Road Home is a re-entry program that connects formerly incarcerated individuals to vocational training and employment opportunities by providing resources, job readiness workshops, and paid work experience.
- Cook County Career Pathway Navigators refers individuals with special needs to appropriate resources for training and hiring events.



- 3. Describe how the local workforce areas will ensure equitable access to workforce and educational services through the following actions:**
  - a. Disaggregating data by race, gender and target population to reveal where disparities and inequities exist in policies and programs.**

The Partnership regularly reviews disaggregated WIOA Title I data by race, gender, and target population characteristics to assess equitable access to services. This information is routinely shared with the WIB and its committees as well as with the Chief Elected Officials and their designees. Equity is at the core of our organization's approach. We recognize that systemic barriers disproportionately affect certain individuals and communities, and we strive to address these disparities through our programming.

We also prioritize accessibility and inclusivity in our services, making sure that all individuals, regardless of their background, have equal opportunities to participate and benefit from our programs.

By applying an equity lens, we are able to deliver programming and services that are more effective, relevant, and impactful for the community we serve. Illustrated herein are examples of data collection for the most recently completed program year in which 9,390 clients enrolled in Title I services.

Figure 1: WIOA Title I Participants by Gender, July 1, 2022 – June 30 2023

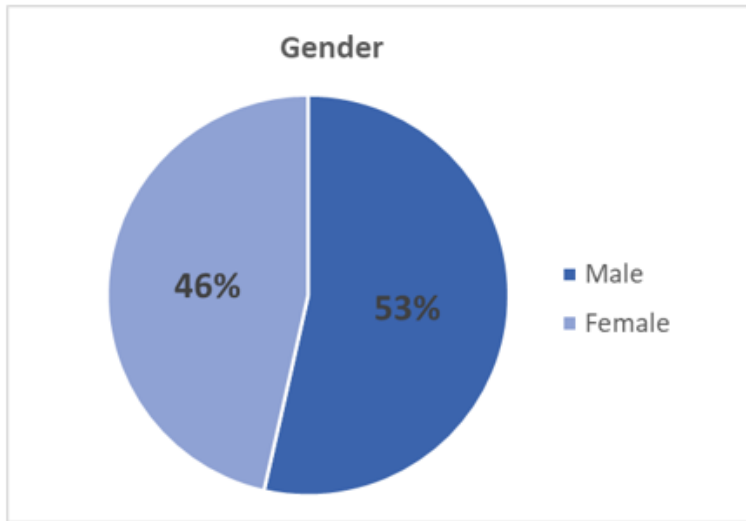
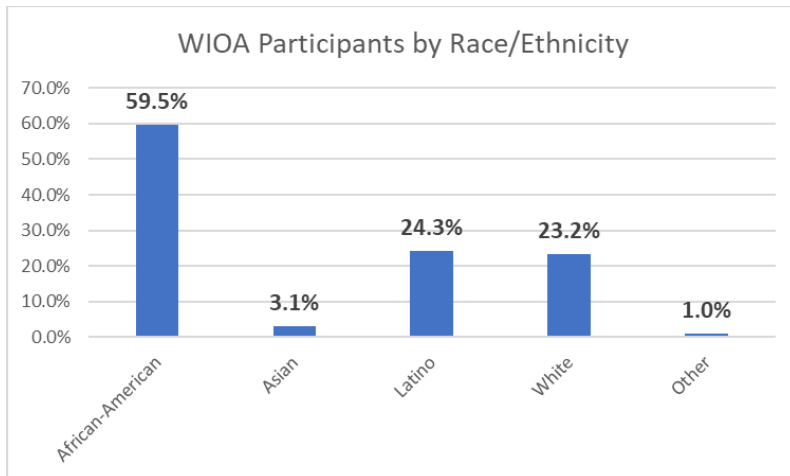


Figure 2: WIOA Title I Participants by Race/Ethnicity<sup>4</sup> July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023



As illustrated, over half of all enrollees were African American, and almost one-quarter identified as Latinx. The Partnership continues to focus efforts to ensure a diverse population on a range of characteristics.

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<sup>4</sup> Participants may identify as more than one race; therefore, the total exceeds 100%. “Other” includes American Indian, Alaskan Native, Hawaiian Native, and Pacific Islander.

Another way that The Partnership addresses equity is by funding a variety of jobseeker service models. American Job Centers are higher volume centers that are either collocated with or connected to all five WIOA Titles. Currently, The Partnership supports 10 American Job Centers throughout Cook County. Delegate Agencies are community-based organizations focusing on serving special populations or specific geographies. Career Pathways and Bridge programs provide basic skills training along with occupational training and certification.

The Chicago Cook WIB has several strategies to continue to better understand the demographic make-up and barriers of the job seekers served by the American Job Center Network in LWIA 7, and to use that data to implement equity goals in conjunction with a wide variety of partners.

The Partnership analyzes training industries and outcomes by race, ethnicity, and gender to assess concentrations in sectors or training programs by race and gender. Staff determine if training outcomes, including successful completion, credential attainment, and employment, vary by race and gender both across and within sectors. Based on the results of this analysis, The Partnership intends to refine training policies and work with the ITA-certified training partners to form technical assistance plans that address any resultant equity gaps.

The Partnership collaborates with state and local partners to attain a fuller picture of who the network serves. WIOA requires documented verification of any barriers used in determining eligibility but does not require all barriers to be identified in order to deem an individual eligible for services. As a result, providers often do not record all job seeker barriers in the program data system, nor do participants disclose all barriers. Additionally, individuals may see a stigma in disclosing some barriers such as disability, or justice involvement at the time of application. In order to more accurately assess how well providers are serving participants in targeted populations, and align services accordingly, The Partnership is exploring data analysis projects with other major

human service stakeholders.

**b. Exposing more high school students, particularly young women, and minorities, to careers in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields.**

The Partnership currently funds several Sector Centers to engage businesses in growth industries and to educate the LWIA's network of American Job Centers and Delegate Agencies about career opportunities in these sectors. These include STEM fields such as Information Technology and Health Care. As the Chicago Cook WIB refines the role of Sector Centers, they will determine how to better connect them with youth-serving organizations to provide younger clients with information about and access to these career pathways.

The Partnership supports Chicago Public Schools in delivering Career Launch Chicago, a grant-funded initiative to build a sustainable non-traditional apprenticeship pipeline between Chicago Public Schools (CPS), City Colleges of Chicago (CCC), and the public workforce system. Career Launch Chicago is a new public-private partnership that aims to build a robust youth apprenticeship system that connects education and workforce training, thereby launching students into high-demand careers. Through Career Launch, CPS and CCC will put in place the tools, processes, and technology to support the successful onboarding, implementation, graduation, and employment for students and employers.

The Partnership works with the Chicago Public Schools on the annual Skilled Trades Career Fair for thousands of CPS students to expose youth to careers in the construction industry and engineering fields. This 2-to-3-day event held at McCormick Place features interactive displays that provide hands on exposure of the many high-quality jobs in the trades and engineering field.

**c. Exploring how effective mentor programs can be expanded to adults, particularly those who are displaced and moving to a new career.**

Currently, WIOA Title I mentoring programs generally focused on youth populations. The Partnership has found success using mentoring in work-based learning environments such as those used in the Opportunity Works initiative. Under Opportunity Works, a youth internship initiative detailed in section 4F in this plan, host businesses, as Keats Manufacturing Company, have assigned supportive supervisors to mentor interns on the jobsite, accelerating assimilation into their workforce and giving an enhanced and valuable work experience to the young adult participants.

**d. Providing training to workforce program staff on data-driven approaches to address equity gaps.**

The Partnership has three employees who are participating in a Job Quality Fellowship with Results for America. Our goal is to provide a section of tools to business engagement staff across the Cook County WIOA network, while working with employers to assess opportunities to improve job quality. We will collect data through an online assessment and provide action plans for employers who want to improve scores in one or more areas. Some of what we will measure are; the percentage of frontline employees making a living annual wage, percentage of employees eligible for insurance, the number of weeks' notice for schedule changes, the number of employees promoted from within and first-year and/or 90-day turnover percentages. Systemwide, we will provide job quality education tools to frontline staff (specifically BSRs) and training to staff for educating employers and administering the job quality assessment.

To ensure that our workforce program staff are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to address equity gaps, we provide staff with the tools and strategies to promote a more inclusive and equitable workforce development system.

- Staff are trained in targeted outreach and recruitment, trauma informed care, culturally responsive programming.

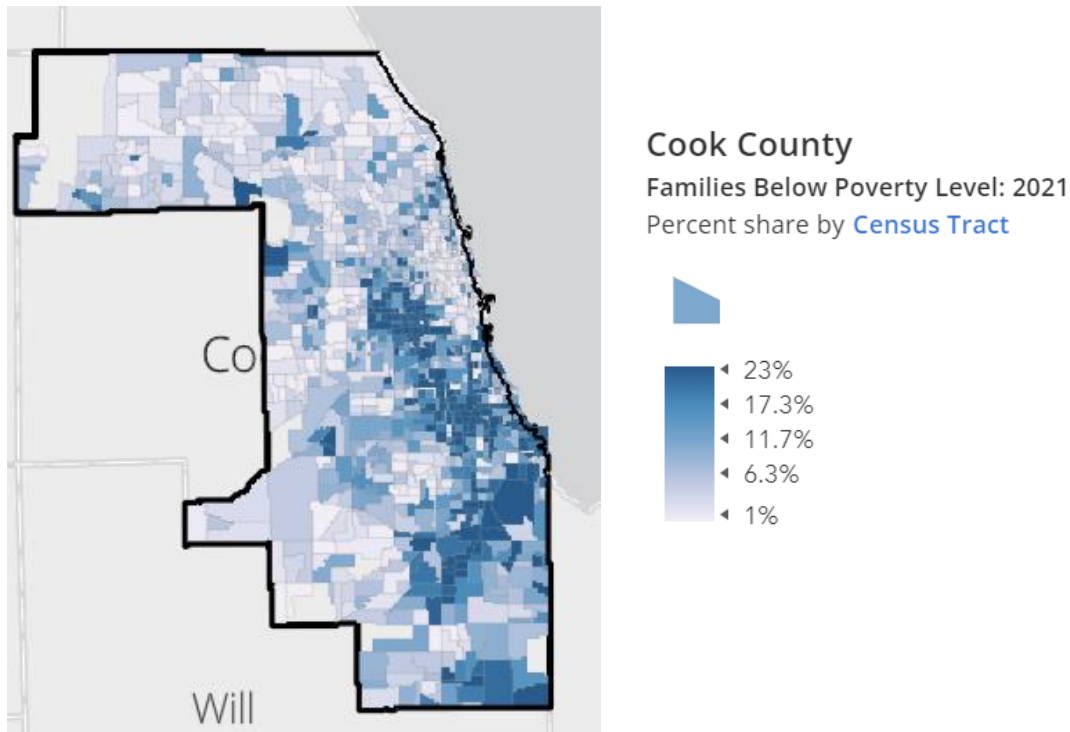
- Program staff collect, analyze, and interpret data to identify equity gaps within our programs. They learn to use data to identify disparities in outcomes, such as employment rates and wages among different demographic groups. This data-driven approach allows us to pinpoint areas where we need to shift programming to address inequities.
- Staff are trained in providing support services tailored to the specific needs of marginalized populations.
- Staff are encouraged to build partnerships with community organizations that serve populations with barriers to employment and employers committed to diversity and inclusion.

**e. Ensuring workforce services are strategically located in relation to the populations in most need.**

Poverty rates have grown throughout Cook County (Figure 5). However, poverty grew fastest on the south and west sides of Chicago and in south suburban Cook County. These areas are also home to large concentrations of African American and Latino residents.

Figure 5: Geography of Poverty Rates in Cook County (Source:

<https://maps.cookcountyil.gov/everyonecounts/>



Unemployment among people of color remains dramatically high, with a statewide rate of 10.9% in late 2023 compared to a rate among white residents of 3.4%. (Recent data similar from IDES data and other sources). While the Chicago metro area has an average unemployment rate of 4.5%, we have within Chicago’s 77 community areas, 37 – almost half – with unemployment rates over 10%. These areas are all on the South and West sides of the city and most have a majority African American and/or Latinx population. The unemployment rate in 2021 for Chicago’s Black population (16%) was triple that of Chicago’s white population (5%). Unemployment rates for Chicago’s Latinx (8%) and Native American (8%) populations were nearly double that of Chicago’s white population (5%). The unemployment rate for Chicago’s young adults, ages 18-39, was over 9%, the highest among all age groups.

Over the summer of 2023, Mayor Brandon Johnson and his transition team identified key locations

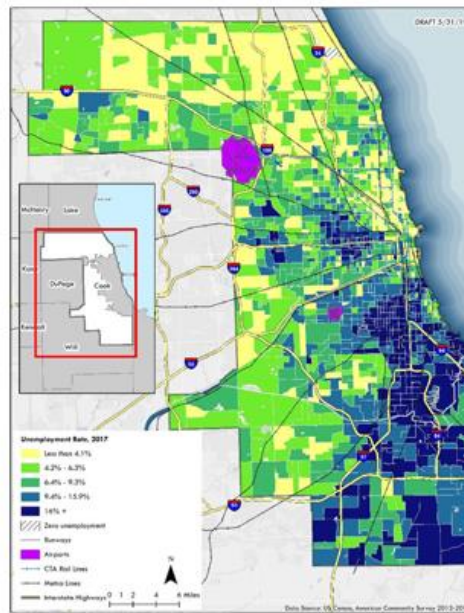
in Chicago for investment. This team used the Chicago Environmental Justice Index (Chicago EJ Index) and Map that identifies Environmental Justice neighborhoods – Chicago communities most burdened by pollution and most vulnerable to its effects based on environmental exposures and conditions, sensitive populations, and socioeconomic factors at the census tract level. These communities include Austin, East Garfield Park, Englewood, Humboldt Park, Lower West Side, McKinley Park, New City, North Lawndale, Roseland, South Deering, South Lawndale, West Englewood, and West Garfield Park. Currently the Mayor’s Office is reviewing the City of Chicago’s expansive workforce development investments and services for strategic alignment and the development of a comprehensive workforce agenda. Leadership from The Partnership are involved in these strategic planning sessions and committed to aligning, implementing, and leveraging services where possible to achieve the goals in the plan.

Through multiple regional planning efforts, Cook County developed a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy that aims to address economic and racial inequity by aligning resources and targeting investments towards infrastructure, growing businesses, and human capital. The Partnership works closely with the Cook County Bureau of Economic Development, Housing Authority of Cook County, and aligned initiatives like the South Suburban Economic Growth Initiative, and the Chicago Metro Metals Consortium to pursue policies and programs that create an environment for economic growth. These efforts have an intentional focus on reducing inequities in areas that have historically experienced disinvestment in infrastructure, unjust housing policies, and a loss of jobs and economic opportunity. Cook County has identified 34 suburban towns and municipalities that they are prioritizing for investments in community and economic development. (Figure 8).

*Figure 8: Cook County Priority Communities*



- |                    |                       |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Alsip              | Lansing               |
| Blue Island        | Lynwood               |
| Burnham            | Markham               |
| Calumet City       | Matteson              |
| Calumet Park       | Merrionette Park      |
| Chicago Heights    | Olympia Fields        |
| Country Club Hills | Park Forest           |
| Crestwood          | Phoenix               |
| <u>Dixmoor</u>     | Posen                 |
| Dolton             | Richton Park          |
| East Hazel Crest   | Riverdale             |
| Flossmoor          | Robbins               |
| Ford Heights       | Sauk Village          |
| Glenwood           | South Chicago Heights |
| Harvey             | South Holland         |
| Hazel Crest        | Steger                |
| Homewood           | Thornton              |



Map prepared by the Center for Neighborhood Technology.

Currently, LWIA 7 has ten American Job Centers, including five in the City of Chicago and five in suburban Cook County. These high-volume centers provide access to all WIOA Titles and are located to facilitate equal access throughout the service area. In addition, The Partnership also funds 42 Delegate Agencies to provide services in targeted geographies or to targeted populations such as returning citizens and youth with disabilities.

The Partnership plans to continually revisit the geographic locations of its American Job Centers and Delegate Agencies to ensure alignment with the City and County priority communities. The Chicago Cook WIB will explore several strategies to bring services into targeted areas that do not currently have service providers physically located in the community:

- Use the provider procurement process to establish services in targeted areas
- Implement innovative strategies to outreach and provide services in nearby communities that do not have physical workforce centers
- Collaborate with City and County officials to remove transportation and other barriers that prevent jobseekers from accessing current service locations

The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership's implementation of the 2023 QUEST program in Chicago and Cook County will further support the initiative's goals of impacting social, economic and workforce inequities of the region's post-COVID economic recovery by focusing on employers in key economic sectors and individuals who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. With the state's unemployment rate at a low 4.0 as per the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, the economy appears on paper to have rebounded. However, the reality is that the recovery has been disproportionate for individuals of color and underserved neighborhoods that show very high levels of unemployment and low levels of labor force participation. Through this initiative, The Partnership will recruit and provide training for underserved populations into careers in Manufacturing, Healthcare, Hospitality and Tourism, and the Transportation Distribution and Logistics (TDL), serving 100 individuals with a combination of career services, occupational training, work-based learning, and disaster relief employment.

The Partnership is targeting eligible participants from historically marginalized communities as well as, people and communities who have been particularly impacted by COVID-19. Serving people from historically marginalized populations is consistent with our local plan and The Partnership targeted the following communities which have elevated levels of unemployment, poverty and underserved populations. Chicago: Bronzeville, Douglas, Garfield, Greater Englewood Kenwood, Oakland, Pullman, Robbins, Roseland, and Uptown. Suburban Cook County: Maywood and Harvey. Additionally, amid the huge international displacement of millions of Ukrainians, The Partnership's North Suburban AJC, North Side AJC, Maywood AJC and Polish American Association plan to provide services to Ukrainian refugees. Staff at Polish American Association in particular are fluent in both Polish and Russian. Cook County is one of the largest counties that Ukrainians call home nationwide. Our agencies are working with Refugee One,

World Relief and Ukrainian churches to assist the unique population. Finding a job will be a critical step for refugees and their families. Also, this grant will assist the LWIA's migrant population, (known as New Arrivals) by providing them with basic career services, workforce resources and hiring events in 2024. Also, referrals to Title II's Adult education ESL courses will be offered at any City College. These activities are the focus of service delivery for the New Arrival customers while they wait for Work Authorization. Once the New Arrival receives work authorization, career and training workforce services can be provided.

Career and training services can help refugees gather documents needed for work, create resumes, search for jobs, prepare for interviews, and learn to use public transportation to get to their new jobs. Also, The Partnership is targeting laid off and current temporary workers in our Chicago Community Health Response Corps who are or were providing outreach and health information to communities hardest hit by COVID -19 and other health care inequities.

**I. Describe how the local area will utilize a customer-centered approach to its service delivery model, including the following:**

**1. How a customer-centered or human-centered approach will be used over the course of this plan to improve local service delivery methods.**

The local One-Stop Operator supports and coordinates a human-centered design approach throughout the American Job Centers, with a main resource for this work being the Service Integration Self-Assessment processes at each AJC. A commitment of the Service Integration Self-Assessment at AJCs is implementation of a customer satisfaction survey in all 10 AJCs. The survey gathers information and feedback on service delivery, gaps in service, and potential opportunities for program and site staff training or professional development. The surveys also solicit feedback

as success stories that can lead to replication of successful service strategies or actions. QR codes to access these surveys are posted throughout the AJCs so that customers can easily complete the survey on their phone. Staff are also trained to assist a customer without a smartphone to complete the survey on a Resource Room computer. Data from these surveys is shared with all partners to continually improve services.

The OSO hosts monthly partner meetings at all ten AJCs. These include cross-training sessions so staff across programs can be more knowledgeable about partner programs, improve capacity to refer customers to one another's' services, facilitate wrap-around services and otherwise improve service. Insights from customer surveys present starting points for dialogue and cross-training at partner meetings.

Each month the OSO administers an anonymous participant survey that partner staff can complete on their phones with a QR code. The survey allows the OSO to continually assess staff needs, including whether the content and format of the meeting was useful and engaging. The OSO plans to continue adjusting and evolving monthly partner meetings based on feedback from staff participants.

The OSO also applies a Human Centered Design approach to new projects by convening multi-partner project working groups. Project Working Groups identify problems based on data collected through surveys, generate ideas and explore options before selecting an approach to pilot in one or more of the AJCs. This is how LWIA 7 successfully implemented the new Airtable© universal referral system referenced below in response to question 4I(3). Over the course of this Plan, the OSO plans to implement a Business Services Working Group to gather data, identify pain points, and pilot new solutions for Employer Customers. Other virtual and technical tools LWIA 7 has brought and will bring online including virtual orientations, future resume matching, and other

innovations all also support customer centered design and improve accessibility and user experience. Any state case management system that reduces duplicate paperwork across WIOA partner programs will also improve customer experience by reducing administrative steps throughout the customer's service experience.

- 2. Any efforts to provide services to customers in the spaces where they commonly visit (i.e., using a bus or other mobile solution to provide services outside of the one-stop center or having a local workforce are representative available at a public library at set times).**

Three of LWIA 7's AJCs are located on a Community College campus, and a fourth AJC is located immediately next to a Community College Campus with College staff having an office at the AJC as well as on the College Campus.

The Partnership's network of Title I Delegate Agencies are strategically located throughout Chicago and Suburban Cook County neighborhoods in high need of services. These Delegate Agencies are often community-based organizations already deeply embedded in the community they serve.

LWIA 7 will continue to explore new methods of co-locating services with other institutional partners including public libraries, other public agency locations and other community-based organization sites where residents already go or are familiar.

- 3. Any efforts to review and update the referral process, including creating a universal referral process, utilizing an electronic referral management system, expansion of referral pathways, etc. If there are obstacles to updating the local area's referral process, describe them here.**

Throughout 2023, the OSO convened a Referrals Project Working Group to identify pain points,

generate ideas, and explore possible solutions for the challenges facing partners when it came to referrals. The Referrals Project Working Group quickly identified the need for a universal referral system for all partners. The Group further identified a list of must haves and “nice to haves” for any potential solution. The Group evaluated several different software options for processing and tracking referrals between partners, and ultimately selected Illinois workNet as the best potential option given a number of factors. After learning that DCEO planned to begin utilizing workNet as a statewide option in the near future, but would not be ready to launch in 2023, the Project Working Group began piloting a referrals software called Airtable©.

After an initial pilot with only 2 partners, the OSO began training and onboarding other partners to use Airtable©. At the time of writing, all of Title I and Title III were using Airtable© to refer customers to each other with plans for Titles II and IV to be onboarded in winter 2024. Throughout 2024 the OSO will continue training additional partners until all Core and Required partners can refer and track customers in Airtable©.

In addition to referrals between partner agencies, Airtable© also handles “self-referrals” from customers who fill out an interest form online. These customers enter their contact information to receive a call back from AJC staff within three business days. All referrals, whether between partners or self-referred from the website, can be tracked in Airtable© so a referring agency knows what happens to their customer after they’ve been referred to a partner and so all partners can see how long the customer journey takes and whether there are any areas needing improvement.

**J. Describe training activities in the local area, including the following:**

The Partnership budgets a minimum of 50% of WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker program funds for training. These activities include not only occupational training delivered through the

ITA program but also includes the use of On-the-Job Training, Work Based Learning, Incumbent Worker Training, Career Pathway and Bridge programs and working with employers to develop and implement DOL Registered Apprenticeship programs. The Chicago Cook WIB requires the public workforce network of American Job Centers, Delegate Agencies, and Sector Centers to make available various types of WIOA training tailored to the specific needs of jobseekers and employers. Staff from The Partnership regularly monitor and evaluate this activity to ensure total compliance therewith.

**1. How local areas will encourage the use of work-based learning strategies, including the local area goals for specific work-based learning activities and proposed outcomes related to these activities.**

In recent years, The Partnership has invested more than 75% of training expenditures in Individual Training Accounts. While the demand and use of ITA's makes up most of the training expenditures, work-based learning activities such as On-the-Job Training (OJT), Incumbent Worker Training (IWT), Apprenticeships, and Career Pathways trainings are a part of the training expenditures that we have been and will continue to expand upon. LWIA 7's base of American Job Centers and Delegate agencies have been encouraged to develop more OJT's and other work-based learning activities. Funding from special grants such as Governors Reserve funding are also being set aside for OJT's. Our business relations experts are also trained in relaying the benefits of OJTs to the business customers they engage as well. The Partnership will continue to set ambitious targets around the number or percent increases in OJT and IWT and will identify and strategically engage employers to facilitate this continued shift. The Partnership may consider developing specific competitive contracts for OJTs. Through our formula funding we have been using ITA's in combination of other training funds such as OJTs to fund a growing number of

Apprenticeship programs as well as working with companies to develop Apprenticeship and Incumbent Worker programs through additional funding from DCEO. We implemented train-the-trainer component to our four Sector Centers (Hospitality, Healthcare, Information Technology, and Transportation, Distribution and Logistics), and they are now subject matter experts in OJTs and Incumbent Worker Training and can provide support to agencies. In addition, we want to increase in the local area other business services solutions such as Customized Training, Paid Work Experience (PWE), and Apprenticeship. Our newly form Administration department will be responsible for providing quarterly trainings on all the above-mentioned business solutions to agencies, and staff, providing technical assistance and tracking the number of trained participants and agencies in the local area. The engagement strategy will continue to include outreach to the employer community through Chambers of Commerce, industry associations, the County’s Bureau of Economic Development and the Office of the Mayor of Chicago; and will result in the creation and marketing of a robust menu of WIOA services designed to support employer customers efforts to build a skilled workforce.

Supporting the efforts of WIOA core and mandated partners, The Partnership also engages actively in support of work-based learning strategies derived from other funding streams. Community Colleges, Secondary Districts, philanthropic and public/private partnerships have found that aligning with the WIOA system can bring the benefit of tangible leveraged supports for their participants. To that end, the Partnership has engaged in apprenticeship efforts, bridge programs, and other initiatives described elsewhere in this plan in order to encourage co-enrollment and the use of WIOA supports.

**2. How local areas will provide training and professional development opportunities to staff regarding equity, access, trauma-informed care, and other topics concerning a**



**customer-centered approach to service delivery.**

The Partnership believes that training and professional development can 1). increase staff and agency staff's individual skills in one or more areas of expertise, 2). increase motivation to perform the job thoughtfully and correctly, and 3). boost a stronger customer-centered approach in the region's workforce services. Internal and external resources are shared with the network and Partnership staff. For instance, the Partnership offers Microsoft Outlook and Google Workspace trainings and work-based learning trainings several times during year of Partnership staff and agency staff. (Note: Microsoft Outlook and Google training is open to customers as well.) In another example, professional development opportunities are shared through Chicago Jobs Council (CJC), a coalition of community-based training organizations, advocacy groups, businesses and individuals working toward ensuring access to employment and career advancement opportunities for people living in poverty. Aside from promoting training through CJC, The Partnership is sharing CJC's Career Readiness Curriculum with its aim to create a culture shift in how job seekers are served. Next, WorkforceGPS provides an online, technical assistance website offering webinars, evidence based- research and other training resources created to help build capacity. Additionally, Illinois Workforce Academy (IWA) is another highly shared resource for continuous improvement. Through their Workforce Wednesday Webinars, supported by Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support (ICSP) and other State of Illinois agencies, they provide workforce professionals with the knowledge, skills, and capacity to effectively serve customers. IWA is sponsored by the Employment and Training Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor. Next, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (IDCEO) also provides training specifically to Partnership staff geared to understanding and implementing Federal, State, and Local guidance around requirements for conducting and

recording WIOA services, especially when updates have occurred. Also, the Partnership promotes participation in National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP). NAWDP offers professional development webinars, annual conferences, and certification credibility. Subsequently, The Partnership encourages staff to obtain the Certified Workforce Development Professional (CWDP) national workforce credential, obtainable through NAWDP. Lastly, the Partnership supports a culture of safety and empowerment and understands this is imperative in serving and supporting young people. Therefore, all youth delegate agencies are required to attend and report on an agreed upon number of trauma-informed care training for staff per program year.

**3. How training services outlined in WIOA Sec. 134 will be provided through the use of individual training accounts, including, if contracts for training services will be used, how the use of such contracts will be coordinated with the use of individual training accounts under that chapter, and how the Local Board will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs regardless of how the training services are to be provided (§ 679.560(b)(18)).**

The Individual Training Account Policy Letter, dated September 2019, is attached (Attachment D). The American Job Centers facilitate each jobseeker's ITA application and training selection process. American Job Center Career Coaches assist job seekers with researching and selecting training programs that align with the job seeker's IEP. Jobseekers use their training vouchers with approved training programs / providers listed on the Illinois Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) which is published on Illinois workNet.

The Partnership contracts with a third-party entity, referred to as the Training Assessment and Referral Agency (or TARA) to process ITAs. The TARA also analyzes patterns and trends and

provides a system of checks and balances to ensure participants receive equitable services and to minimize conflicts of interest. Customers are required to research different training providers and conduct site visits, as well as check outcomes for the training provider on Illinois workNet. The TARA monitors the referral process and contacts clients to ensure they are exercising informed customer choice when appropriate.

Individual Training Accounts are by design a tool of customer choice, meaning that customers are free to choose from any approved training program for which they qualify. This framework has led to disproportionate spending in two categories of occupational training; nearly two-thirds of ITAs (by volume and by dollar amount) are invested in commercial driver's licenses and entry level healthcare certifications (certified nursing assistants, patient care technicians, phlebotomists, etc.). The Partnership is committed to exploring ways to diversify this investment across a greater variety of high demand occupational training while ensuring alignment with the economic and community development initiatives of the City of Chicago and Cook County

**4. How the Local Board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services through the system and that the providers will meet the employment needs of local employers, workers and jobseekers.**

The Partnership is very invested in the continuous improvement of the ITA process and selection of qualified training providers as well as other training programs which assist local employers, workers and jobseekers. The Business Relations and Economic Development staff works closely with the training provider staff to determine what type of training may best benefit an employer. Currently we have worked on several Apprenticeship programs which are funded by ITA's as well as OJT funds. If an employer reaches out to staff and finds they are not eligible to qualify as an ITA provider, then we will see if there are perhaps services such as OJT or Incumbent Worker

Training which they may be able to benefit from.

Additionally, Partnership staff is active in working with DCEO policy experts in moving toward new guidelines and practices which will enhance the state ETPL as well as the ITA provider application and renewal process. It is very important to ensure that providers are properly certified and connect a nationally recognized credential to their programs.

The Training Provider Eligibility and Certification Policy Letter (June 16, 2022) is attached in our attachment of Policy Letters and guidance. At the inception of the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership in 2012, staff reviewed the extensive list of eligible training providers from three local workforce investment areas and sought to pare it down to ensure job seekers would be pursuing training for jobs in high-growth, high-wage industries. The Partnership reduced the then list of more than 700 occupations to a considerably smaller 40 occupational clusters. The occupations are both high-growth and high-demand and provide at minimum family supporting wages as set forth by Cook County. Based upon the duration and complexity of training then assigned maximum tuition levels to each occupation. Finally, in accordance with labor market information The Chicago Cook WIB narrowed the workforce system's focus to seven high-growth sectors for the region – Healthcare, Transportation, Distribution and Logistics, Information Technology, Business and Professional Services, Manufacturing, Hospitality, Culinary and Retail. Construction was recently added as another target sector. The Partnership reviews the local Eligible Training Provider List on a quarterly basis to ensure it reflects the current local employment needs. The review covers existing program performance, and programs' continued eligibility is subject to renewal, as well as new programs. As a result, over the past eight years, the Chicago Cook WIB has continued to refine the list, adding new target sectors, such as construction, and new occupations, such as early childhood education and addiction counseling.

The Workforce Innovation Board reviews and approves all such changes.

**5. How the local area tracks non-enrolling basic services provided to reportable individuals.**

The Partnership collects data on non-enrolling basic services through a combination of sign in sheets within the resource rooms, workshops and orientations. Also, the Partnership's Career Connect System allows interested job seekers to complete an initial brief application on-line for our system. Additionally, the One-Stop Operator will be installing iPad kiosks in the AJCs to improve universal customer tracking and collection of customer satisfaction survey results from participants who do not have smart phones. Each American Job Center (AJC) will have a kiosk for customers to quickly input a minimal amount of information including basic contact information and the reason for their visit to the AJC to help staff accurately count the number of universal customers served at each AJC. Lastly The Partnership uses QR codes for pre-registering and attendance tracking at hiring events and resources fairs. The Partnership continues to explore efficient and reliable ways to collect data on non-enrolling services.

**K. Describe if the local workforce board will authorize the transfer of WIOA Title IB workforce funds, including the maximum dollar amount and/or percentage that is authorized to be transferred on an annual basis:**

- 1. To transfer funds between the adult and dislocated worker funding streams.**
- 2. To use funds for incumbent worker training as outlined in WIOA Sec. 134(d)(4)(A)(i).**
- 3. To use funds for transitional jobs as outlined in WIOA Sec. 134(d)(5).**
- 4. To use funds for pay for performance contracts as outlined in WIOA Sec.**

**133(b)(2-3).**

Each year The Partnership submits a planned annual WIOA program budget to the Chicago Cook Workforce Innovation Board. Any recommended plans for transfer of WIOA funds between Adult and Dislocated Worker funding streams are included in the budget as are any requests for incumbent worker training funds. Transfer of funds between Dislocated Worker and Adult streams along with the amount reserved for incumbent worker training are based on available dollars and local needs. The Partnership continuously evaluates the demand for funding. The Partnership may request modifications to the budget including transfer of funds and increases in incumbent worker funds during the program year as needed, to address issues and/or shortfalls. Recommendations for a budget modification are presented to the Board for approval and submitted to DCEO.

The Partnership does not currently plan to use transitional job models within WIOA. The Partnership is researching performance-based model contracts and reserves the right to pilot this model in the future.

**L. Describe how a workforce equity lens is or will be incorporated in the operating systems and policies as part of the Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIAs)**

Equity is a core value for LWIA 7 and the Chicago Workforce Innovation Board and the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership and the local WIOA system. The following Equity Value is part of its list of core organizational values.

*We intentionally acknowledge systems of oppression when providing the resources and supports people need to reach their full economic and human potential. We actively work to eliminate disparities people experience based on race/ethnicity, disability, background, gender, age, sexual orientation, or economic and educational status. We*

*partner with employers who share our belief and are committed to the idea that all residents of our region can achieve a meaningful career that provides family-sustaining income.*

The Partnership continues to examine its policies and deepened its commitment to racial equity in the workforce. The Partnership has begun incorporating a workforce equity lens into all of its work. In 2021, The Partnership joined the City of Chicago’s “Together We Heal” equity initiative. As part of The Partnership’s efforts to build a foundational understanding of equity among the staff, The Partnership led a Racial Equity Book Club where close to 30 staff members read and discussed the book *Caste: The Origin of our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson. The Partnership’s staff all attended implicit bias training online as part of their work, and in 2022 all remaining Partnership staff will complete implicit bias training to continue building the organization’s understanding of racial equity.

A key part of the Chicago-Cook workforce system are our smaller, neighborhood-based organizations called “delegate agencies.” These providers are often deeply embedded in underserved, disadvantaged and often minority communities, which enhances the local system’s ability to serve people of color and other diverse populations.

The RFPs released to select service providers for AJCs, Delegate Agencies and Youth providers specifically ask respondents to address access and equity both in jobseeker services and in employer engagement, and also to describe the diversity of their organizational and program staff and their capacity to deliver services to our targeted populations and communities. The delegate agency RFPs have targeted high need community areas and hard-to-serve populations.

The Partnership generates and analyzes quarterly WIOA Title I participant data by race, ethnicity, gender and geographic distribution throughout Cook County and provides this data to Chicago and

Cook County leadership to help identify any inequities. We also use this data internally to measure how well services are reaching target populations and communities.

The Partnership is also conducting a compensation analysis of its own staff. This process is ongoing, but The Partnership already uses ADP's national database to cross reference job description, years of experience, and level of education to create market specific salary range recommendations void of consideration for age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or any other protected class. Questions around equity are now part of our hiring process.

A member of The Partnership Leadership team participated in the Chicago Workforce Funder Alliance and Chicago Jobs Council (CJC) Learning Community series. The goal of the series is to improve the practice of workforce funding through an intentional learning community and facilitated peer-to-peer interaction. Topics included the following:

- Trust based Philanthropy
- Re-imagined a workforce system that is equitable
- Anti-Racist Workforce Development System framework
- Career readiness system framework
- Using Asset based language

Lastly, The Partnership will promote the work and usage of the Chicago Job's Council's "Anti-Racist Workforce Development: A Framework and Guide for Implementation" training and tool among The Partnership staff and within our network. We are also promoting the use of CJC's Career Readiness Curriculum, which is a free curriculum based upon existing curricula and field expertise. Handouts, slide deck, facilitator guides and talking points and coaching questions are provided. CJC's Career Readiness Curriculum aims to create a culture shift in workforce organization that transforms how job seekers are served.



## **Chapter 5: Performance Goals and Evaluation – Local Component**

**The plan must include information on the actions the Local Board will take toward becoming or remaining a high performing board, consistent with the factors developed by the State Board (WIOA Sec. 101(d)(6)) and (§ 679.560(b)(17)). LWIAs are required to provide information and analysis regarding the challenges and opportunities that are associated with performance goals and evaluation.**

**A. Provide information regarding the local levels of performance negotiated with the Governor and chief elected official consistent with WIOA Sec. 116(c), to be used to measure the performance of the local area and to be used by the Local Board for measuring the performance of the local fiscal agent (where appropriate), eligible providers under WIOA Title I Subtitle B and the one-stop delivery system (core and required partners as applicable) in the local area (§ 679.560(b)(16)).**

**1. WIOA Performance Measures**

**2. Additional State Performance Measures**

In Program Year 2022, the last year with complete data, The Partnership met or exceeded all the LWIA 7 WIOA performance measurement goals and the adjusted goals when applying the Statistical Adjust Model (SAM). As with all LWIAs, LWIA 7 will renegotiate performance during the same period this Plan is being drafted. As occurs yearly, the Partnership reports its performance each year and any new or changed goals to the WIB during regular WIB meetings. (See WIOA Performance Table below.)

**WIOA Performance Goals & Outcomes PY 2022**

WIOA Performance Measure	Adult	Dislocated	Youth
Employment in 2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. after Exit	67.33% (1255/1864) Meet	73% (1303/1785) Meet	74.42% (963/1294) Exceed
Median Qtr. 2 Earnings	\$9,496.75 Exceed	\$12,597.04 Exceed	\$5,718.75 Exceed
Employment in 4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr. after Exit	69.01% (1169/1694) Exceed	76.14% (1465/1924) Meet	74.42% (964/1286) Exceed
Credential Rate	70.92% (873/1231) Meet	72.76% (911/1252) Meet	69.72% (449/644) Exceed
Measurable Skills Gain	64.04% (1567/2447) Exceed	64.44% (908/1409) Exceed	62.49% (758/1213) Exceed

**The LWIA 7 WIOA performance goals for PY2023 have been set as follow:**

WIOA Performance Measure	Adult	Dislocated	Youth
Employment in 2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. after Exit	71%	78.5%	71%
Median Qtr. 2 Earnings	\$7,500	\$11,000	\$4,500
Employment in 4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr. after Exit	69%	77%	68.5%
Credential Rate	72%	73%	68.5%
Measurable Skills Gain	53%	56%	49%

LWIA 7 will propose a similar level of measures in its negotiations with the State for PY2024 and beyond.

By way of context regarding current circumstances, some additional data is regularly gathered and analyzed to show trends and project local performance toward WIOA and related performance goals. A recent snapshot of the Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs presented to the

Workforce Innovation Board showed the following information:

## WIOA PY 2022 Adult Snapshot



July 2022 – June 2023  
**4,157 Registrants Served**



4,157 Registrants  
 2,255 New Enrollments  
 1,319 Exiters  
 3,424 In Training

45% female • 54% male  
 63.6% Black • 19.6% Hispanic • 21.6% White  
 • 3.4% Asian



16.7% college graduates,  
 7.8% some college,  
 54.5% high school diploma,  
 5.4% high school dropout



74.7% Low-income (62.8% on food stamps)  
 49.8% basic skills deficient  
 2% veterans  
 9% report having a prior felony



3

## WIOA PY 2022 Dislocated Workers Snapshot



July 2022 – June 2023  
**2,919 Registrants Served**



2,455 Registrants Formula  
 464 National DW/IE Grant  
 1,222 New Enrollments  
 1,309 Exiters  
 1,947 In Training

39.1% female • 59.8% male  
 49.4% Black • 25.7% Hispanic • 31.7% White  
 • 4.4% Asian



29.1% college graduates  
 6.2% some college,  
 49.1% high school diploma  
 4.2% drop out



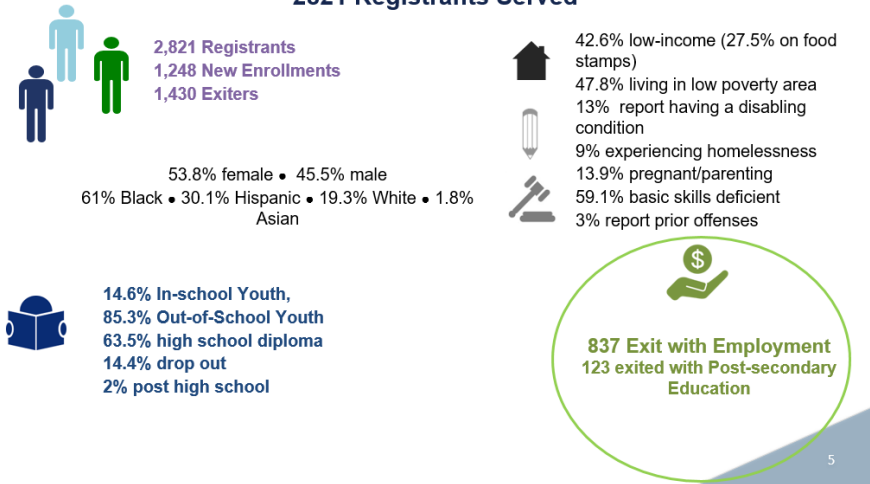
44.5% Low-income (19.8% on food stamps)  
 62.5% receiving benefits  
 35% exhausted unemployment  
 20.6% long-term unemployed  
 33.6% basic skills deficient  
 4.5% veterans



4

July 2022 – June 2023

2821 Registrants Served



**B. Describe the current and planned evaluation activities and how this information will be provided to the local board and program administrators as appropriate.**

**1. What existing service delivery strategies will be expanded based on promising return on investment?**

The Partnership continues to analyze and evaluate our program to identify service strategies that yield the most promising return on investment. Going forward The Partnership is committed to assessing impact over outputs in our overall programming. The Partnership will continue to analyze facility and operating costs and look for more efficient and effective ways to serve job seekers and employers. Such activities may include:

- Comparison of program costs and outcomes across existing service models and service providers:
  - Comparative cost analysis of Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker programs
  - Comparative cost analysis of American Job Centers, Delegate Agencies, and Career Pathway programs as job seeker-facing service models
  - Comparison of service, training, credential, employment, and wage outcomes across American Job Center, Delegate Agency, and Career Pathway, service

- models
  - Analysis of strengths and weaknesses of existing service delivery system with respect to cost-effectiveness and performance
- Assessment of geographic coverage of existing service delivery system:
  - Evaluation of existing service locations in consideration of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of communities throughout LWIA 7
  - Evaluation of existing service locations in consideration of transportation and other accessibility factors
  - Evaluation of existing service locations in consideration of economic development priorities of Cook County and the City of Chicago
  - Evaluation of existing service locations in consideration of cost efficiency
  - Evaluation of existing service locations in consideration of service integration with WIOA Core Partners
- Evaluation of existing service strategies for priority populations:
  - Analysis of existing service delivery system’s responsiveness to priority populations with high rates of unemployment
  - Evaluation of capacity within existing service provider network for effectively serving high-need priority populations in Chicago and Cook County, including veterans, formerly incarcerated persons, persons with disabilities, and persons with substance use disorders
  - Assessment of service strategies in consideration of City of Chicago and Cook County strategies for priority populations.
- Evaluation of existing business engagement strategies:
  - Analysis of business services in consideration of the size and projected growth of employment sectors in the region
  - Analysis of wages and projected growth of occupations in which Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker program participants are placed.
  - Comparison of service, sector-based employment, and wage outcomes across business-facing models (Sector Centers) and job seeker-facing models (American Job Centers, Delegate Agencies, Career Pathway programs)
- Evaluation of existing customer training strategies:
  - Comparative cost analysis of On-the-Job Training (OJT), Incumbent Worker Training (IWT), Career Pathway programs, and Individual Training Accounts (ITA) as current training strategies
  - Analysis of expenditure and performance outcomes of ITA “customer choice” model
  - Analysis of potential realignment of funds between IWT, OJT, Career Pathway, and ITA training models
- Evaluation of ongoing efforts to integrate service delivery with other WIOA Core Partners; Adult Education and Literacy (Title II), Illinois Department of Employment Security (Title III), Illinois Department of Human Resources Division of Rehabilitation Services (Title IV):
  - Analysis of current state of service integration with respect to physical collocation, utilization of technology for collaboration, Core Partner engagement, knowledge transfer between Core Partners, data sharing, customer experience, and employer experience

- Formulation of research plan for ongoing Service Integration Self-Assessment Process
- Existing level of sector-specific services within The Partnership’s seven high growth sectors including:
- Ways to collaborate and leverage resources to provide common platforms for The Partnership, Cook County, and other partners to engage employers
- Ways to collaborate with partners like the Chicago Jobs Council to provide training and clarity for Delegate Agencies on allowable braiding and blending of funding sources
- Current service integration strategies that can be expanded beyond WIOA Core Partners
- Ways to further leverage ongoing digital literacy efforts to expand access to jobseekers experiencing homelessness.

The Partnership will at relevant times provide information on planned evaluation activities to the local board at quarterly board meetings. The Partnership will inform and engage relevant program administrators on planned evaluation activities through ongoing program meetings.

Based on evaluation of return on investment and other factors through the processes outlined immediately above, The Partnership and LWIA 7 will continue to:

- Explore methods for expanding service delivery in geographies with the greatest need and curtailing service delivery in geographies with less need. This includes “right-sizing” the local system to have sufficient AJCs and Delegate Agencies to reach targeted populations and communities, while reducing duplication or excess capacity.
- Augment existing geographic analysis to foster alignment with other local economic development initiatives. By aligning organizational infrastructure to support economic policy imperatives outlined by both the City and the County, WIOA funding can have an outsized impact on accelerating economic growth in communities across Chicago and Cook County.
- Explore alternative models for expanding service delivery in high-need geographies that lack service providers with the capacity to operate WIOA programs, such as satellite service locations at public libraries and community colleges, mobile service delivery, and virtual service delivery.
- Expand targeted marketing and community outreach efforts to increase participation by job seekers from high-need populations and geographies.
- Expand partnerships with community-based organizations to support wrap-around and supportive services needed by job seekers and workers to support retention and successful outcomes. Partnerships include organizations with expertise and services related to housing/homelessness, legal assistance, health and behavioral health and a range of other issues and barriers
- Align sector strategies with those of Cook County and the City of Chicago and continue to consider sector-based strategies and possible expanded Sector Centers.
- Expand incentives and requirements for American Job Centers and Delegate Agencies to collaborate with Sector Centers.

- Expand existing/develop new efforts to educate employers on WIOA business services and labor market conditions.
- Expand workers' rights trainings that have been brought on in response to recommendations from partners and advocates.
- Expand employer-based training services (Apprenticeship, On-the-Job Training, Incumbent Worker Training, Customized Training).
- Identify efficiencies and avoid duplication of services.

**2. What existing service delivery strategies will be curtailed or eliminated based on minimal return on investment?**

The Partnership is currently reviewing the volume and employment outcomes of Individual Training Accounts used for Commercial Driving License and may curtail the number of ITAs issued for CDL training or other high-volume ITAs each year. The number of ITA requests can exceed the budget available for WIOA adults and youth, so The Partnership will explore ways to better distribute and space out the ITA usage to meet labor demand and ensure the best return on investment.

**3. What new service strategies will be used to address regional educational and training needs based on promising return on investment?**

**a. What return on investment and qualitative outcome data for various education and training programs will be collected to identify barriers to enrollment?**

**b. What are the most cost-effective approaches to taking down those barriers or helping residents overcome them?**

As outlined in Section 4.H, The Partnership invests a required minimum of 50% of Adult and Dislocated Worker program dollars in workforce training. More than three-quarters of those training dollars are invested in Individual Training Accounts, a customer-choice model that allows jobseekers to spend a training voucher on approved programs. The Partnership has increased the use of On-the Job Training (OJT) and the use of work-based learning in its programming. The

OJT model has shown a higher placement rate than the traditional ITA model. The Partnership will continue with its move to direct funds and programs directly with employer involvement such as OJT, apprenticeship, customized training and incumbent worker training.

**C. Describe how a workforce equity lens is or will be incorporated in the analysis of performance goals and implementation of evaluation activities.**

For more detail on how The Partnership is incorporating an equity lens into all of its work please see the response to Chapter 4, Section K above. With respect to analyzing performance goals and implementing evaluation activities, The Partnership is planning to examine its WIOA performance data in even more detail than current standard practices. The Partnership will move beyond an analysis of how many people of color its network serves, but also how well the network is serving them. The Partnership plans to analyze ITA training program participation and outcomes by race and ethnicity to help identify any patterns and ensure people of color have access to career training in all The Partnership's target, high-growth sectors. Based on the data analysis The Partnership will develop strategies to increase equity and improve outcomes in our services for people of color. As mentioned above in 4.K. above, The Partnership examines WIOA performance data by race, ethnicity, gender and geographic distribution on a quarterly basis and provides this data to Chicago and Cook County leadership.



## **Chapter 6: Technical Requirements and Assurances – Local Component**

**This chapter includes the technical requirements and assurances that are required by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA Sec. 121 (c)(2)(iv)). LWIAs are required to provide information and analysis regarding the challenges and opportunities that are associated with meeting the administrative requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs.**

### **A. Fiscal Management**

- 1. Identify the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds described in WIOA Sec. 107(d)(12)(B)(i)(III) as determined by the chief elected official or the Governor under WIOA Sec. 107(d)(12)(B)(i) (§ 679.560(b)(14)).**

The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership is the designated administrative entity responsible for the disbursement of WIOA funds in Chicago and Cook County (LWIA 7).

- 2. Provide a copy of the local procurement policies and procedures and describe the competitive procurement process that will be used to award the subgrants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities (§ 679.560(b)(15)).**

The Partnership utilizes a request-for-proposals process to competitively procure American Job Centers and other Title I service providers, the One Stop Operator role, and other services. Please see attached Procurement Policy Letter, dated March 30, 2017 (Attachment F).

### **B. Physical and Programmatic Accessibility**

- 1. Describe how entities within the one-stop delivery system, including one-stop operators and the one-stop partners, will comply with WIOA Sec. 188, if applicable, and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C.**

**12101 et seq.) regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities (§ 679.560(b)(5)(iii)).**

The Comprehensive American Job Centers will maintain a culture of inclusiveness in compliance with Section 188 of WIOA 29 CFR 38, the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA), and all other applicable statutory and regulatory requirements. The WIOA Partners shall not unlawfully discriminate, harass, or allow harassment against any employee, or applicant for employment or services due to gender, race, color, ancestry, religion, national origin, veteran status, physical disability, mental disability, medical condition(s), age, sexual orientation or marital status. Partners will assure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and its amendments, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability, as well as other applicable regulations and guidelines issued pursuant to the ADAAA. Additionally, partners agree to fully comply with the provisions of WIOA Title I, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title VII of the Civil Rights act of 1964, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, WIOA Title IB, 29 CFR Part 38 and all other regulations implementing the aforementioned laws.

In partnership and cooperation with the WIOA partners and Equal Opportunity (EO) staff of The Partnership, the LWIA 7 Comprehensive American Job Center have at least one fully accessible workstation with staff trained on the operations of the adaptive equipment and programs. The WIOA Title I partners also commit to offering priority for services to veterans, recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals or individuals who are basic skills deficient when providing individualized career services and training services with WIOA adult funds.

Additionally, the physical characteristics of the facilities, both indoor and outdoor, meet compliance with 29 CFR Part 38, or most recent ADA standards for Accessible Design and the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards. In some cases, the facilities are leased by neither The Partnership nor its service providers (e.g., IDES CMS or the City of Chicago). In this case, organizational leadership is in active, urgent and ongoing negotiations with the parties to continue ADA compliance.

Services are available in a convenient, high traffic and accessible location taking into account reasonable distance from public transportation and adequate parking (including parking clearly marked for individuals with disabilities). Indoor space is/will be designed in an “equal and meaningful” manner providing access for individuals with disabilities.

Additionally, in terms of programmatic accessibility, all WIOA partners agree that they will not discriminate in their employment practices or services on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth and related medical conditions, sex stereotyping, transgender status and gender identity) national origin (including limited English proficiency), age, disability, or political affiliation or belief, veteran’s status, or on the basis of any other classification protected under state or federal law. The Partnership and WIOA partners have policies and procedures to address these issues, and those policies and procedures have been disseminated to staff/employees and otherwise posted as required by law. The Partnership and WIOA partners further assure that all are currently in compliance with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations regarding these issues.

All WIOA partners will cooperate with compliance monitoring that is conducted at the local level to ensure that all Comprehensive American Job Centers, programs, services, technology, and materials are accessible and available to all. The LWIA 7 Equal Opportunity Officer has over 15

years of EO experience, and her network of internal EO designees at each Center, continually and expeditiously resolve any problems or complaints that might arise.

The Partnership has a combination of procedures and guidelines that enable the Comprehensive American Job Centers to successfully provide individuals with complete access to all services, such as Sign Language Interpreter Services and Language Services (PROPIO). In addition to PROPIO services, bilingual staff is available to assist and translate at most Comprehensive American Job Centers. Request for Reasonable Accommodation is in place to assist individuals upon request. If additional services are required, individuals are also referred to WIOA vocational rehabilitation partners, Illinois Department of Human Services-Division of Rehabilitation Services. Also, technology translation assistance is available through Google Translate.

These services will be provided “on demand” and in “real time” in the physical American Job Center in person or via technology consistent with the “direct linkage” requirement as defined in WIOA (WIOA Section 121(b)(1)(A) and Section 678.305(d) of the draft Notice of Proposed Rulemaking). Additionally, staff members will be trained to provide services to all, regardless of range of abilities, mobility, age, language, learning style and intelligence or education level. An interpreter will be provided “in real time” as provided by the vendor to any customer with a language barrier.

The Comprehensive American Job Centers refer individuals with barriers to employment to appropriate workshops such as reading and/or math literacy training, job readiness training, computer literacy training and/or vocational training if it has been determined that the training will lead to employment opportunity in that field of study. The Comprehensive American Job Centers are provided with other material, equipment, and software to assist and address the needs of the individual with barriers to employment, including individuals with disabilities. Individuals with

disabilities accessing services at the Comprehensive American Job Centers have access to the center's resources not limited to: TTY and/or TextNet (Internet TTY services), Sign language Interpretation Service, Computer, Printer, Phone, Assistive Technology (scanning/reading software, specialty ergonomic keyboard/mouse etc.). The American Job Centers are educated on the WIOA 2014, Title 29 Part 38, Section 188 Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity regulations. The American Job Centers adhere to and apply the EO policy and procedures to their daily operation as they assist and address the needs of individuals and individuals with disabilities. The Comprehensive American Job Centers have a selection of Assistive Technologies, listed below, available for individuals with disabilities. The assistive technology is available upon request and/or as needed for the following services: Orientation, Registration, Testing, Workshops, Job Fairs, Rapid Response and the Resource Room. In addition, the Comprehensive American Job Centers have access to TextNet Services (Online TTY) to assist individuals that are Deaf and/or Hearing Impaired and Language Services to assist individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). If an individual's needs are not within the Comprehensive American Job Center staff ability to address, in accordance with the "direct linkage" requirement under WIOA, the Comprehensive American Job Center will refer the individual to a WIOA partner (e.g., IDHS-DRS, IDES, Housing and Urban Development and others) that has the appropriate services and ability to assist the individual. This will be done within a reasonable time by phone or real-time.

Additionally, assistive devices, including but not limited to the following are currently available and being updated and distributed:

- TextNet
- ZoomText
- JAWS (a screen-reading software program)
- OpenBook
- Dragon (a speech-recognition software program)
- MS Office Professional (8 or higher)
- Wynn Wizard
- Computers
- Large Screen Monitors
- Intellikeys/Keyboard

- Enlarged Keyboard
- Adjustable Keyboard Trays
- Trackball Mouse
- Adaptive mouse and keyboard
- Large Print Labels (for keyboard)
- Scanners
- Magnifiers
- Headphones
- Audio Tape Players
- Adjustable Table/Chairs
- Pocket Talker (Assistive Listening System)
- Staff (Real Time) Reader
- Braille
- Large print material
- Audio Tapes
- Text transcripts
- Television w/ closed and open captions

The COVID-19 pandemic period led to expansions in our capacity to deliver services virtually, and many enhancements developed then have been continued as needed, including using supportive service resources to help participants with computer and internet access, delivering regular free virtual digital literacy courses to close the digital divide, and an online orientation standardized across the local system.

- 2. Provide copies of executed cooperative agreements (as applicable) which define how all local service providers, including additional providers, will carry out the requirements for integration of and access to the entire set of services available in the local one-stop system, with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities (§679.560(b)(13)). This may include cross training of staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers and other efforts at cooperation, collaboration and coordination.**

The Local Workforce Innovation Area 7 WIOA MOU is attached (Attachment A). Additionally, the Service Integration Self Assessments and Plans are attached. Partners at the AJCs receive significant cross-training in relation to service integration, information and updates on one another's programs, policies, procedures and priorities, assessment tools, training programs, data

and IT systems and other topics related to the activities and services at the AJCs and within the system. These occur at regular site team meetings and broader trainings delivered by The Partnership and other Partner agencies.

**Challenges and Opportunities associated with administrative requirements:**

<b>Challenge or Opportunity</b>	<b>Analysis: How LWIA 7 is addressing or will address this challenge or opportunity.</b>
<p>The Partnership sees an opportunity to provide up to date program material and items used to inform our agencies of their physical and programmatic responsibilities to provide accessible services.</p>	<p>The opportunity to provide up dated program material and other items used to inform our agencies of their physical and programmatic responsibilities to provide accessible services will be accomplished by using State provided resources, Partnership resources and through training our delegate agencies and Partnership staff.</p>
<p>The Partnership looks for ways to expedite the enrollment process and fast-track.</p>	<p>The Partnership continues to remind new frontline staff to use the State’s 5-year lookback period for more options to make a job seeker eligible as a dislocated worker eligibility. Also, the Basic Skills Deficiency tool is used to fast-track basic skills if a customer is not going for training. Although these are strategies that have been in use for a few years, there has been workforce staff turnover and refresher training is needed.</p> <p>Currently, as per guidance from DCEO, self-attestation can be used as a last resort to substantiate suitability when no other documentation is available, such as facility closure or substantial lay-off. Also, The Partnership’s Board recently approved a draft policy in November 2023, entitled <i>Sectors that Qualify as Substantial Layoffs</i> to assist with dislocated worker eligibility. This allows job seekers laid-off from the following sectors to have been part of a substantial layoff for purposes of dislocated worker eligibility: Leisure and Hospitality, Manufacturing, Trade, Transportation and Utilities, Retail Trade, and Accommodation and Food Service to be eligible for dislocated worker services. Lastly, agencies can expediate the enrollment process through group eligibility and virtual services when fast-tracking is needed. These are examples of how we simplify the intake process and allow job seekers to connect to the system quickly and efficiently and obtain the</p>

	appropriate mix of services to advance them along a pathway to economic mobility.
The State’s 50% training requirement creates challenges in managing WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker funding.	The Partnership will work with IWP and the State to advocate for the inclusion of more career coaching activities in the training definition

**C. Plan Development and Public Comment**

**1. Describe the process used by the Local Board, consistent with WIOA Sec. 108(d), to provide a 30-day public comment period prior to submission of the plan, including an opportunity to have input into the development of the local plan, particularly for representatives of businesses, education and labor organizations (§ 679.560(b)(19)).**

To encourage public comment, The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership promoted the Local Plan’s public comment period with a public notice ad and through e-newsletters, social media and emails to the public, our network and stakeholders. The Partnership published the following notice in the Chicago Sun-Times and Chicago Tribune on February 16, 2024, to invite members of the public to comment on our proposed 2020 local plan:

“Chicago/Cook County Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act 2024-2028 Local Plan is posted for public comment on 2/16/2024 at [www.chicookworks.org](http://www.chicookworks.org).”

Also, The Partnership posted the proposed WIOA Local Plan on The Partnership’s website on February 16, 2024, with instructions to submit public comment by email to [localplan2024@chicookworks.org](mailto:localplan2024@chicookworks.org) . Comments were accepted at this email address through 5:00 PM on March 17, 2024. Lastly, the request for comment and location of the Plan for review was distributed to a list of stakeholder entities (all Board and Committee members, AJCs, delegate agencies and other contracted/sub-grantee entities, key stakeholders, partners, business leaders, etc.).



Prior to the public comment period, the Partnership conducted other activities to engage stakeholder insights including a meeting of the WIOA system partners held February 5, 2024, a review of recent policies and guidance to ensure alignment, and dialogue with other workforce areas and partners to seek input on best models and practices.

During and after the public comment period, The Partnership will review all submitted comments and considered them in relation to the overall strategy of the Chicago Cook WIB. Comments that aligned with or enhanced organizational strategy will be incorporated into the body of the WIOA Local Plan. All comments submitted to The Partnership during the public comment period will be found in Attachment D.

**2. Provide a summary of the public comments received and how this information was addressed by the CEO, partners, and the Local Board in the final plan.**

**CONTENT PENDING DURING PROCESS**

**3. Provide information regarding the regional and local plan modification procedures.**

It is important to The Partnership that stakeholders and the public provide input on modifications to LWIA 7's 2024 WIOA Local Plan After the second year of the approved WIOA Local Plan, the modification period offers an opportunity to gain stakeholders and public views. First, the Partnership reviews the plan and makes relevant changes. Then, the plan is posted via a link for easy access along with an announcement via email, newspaper, The Partnership's website and/or other social media platform requesting public commentary for a 30-day period. A deadline date and time for public commentary is provided and an email or link is provided to provided commentary. Once input from the public is received The Partnership reviews the feedback and

produces the Modified LWIA 7 WIOA Local Plan which will include responses to all public comments.

**D. Describe how a workforce equity lens is or will be incorporated in with meeting the administrative requirement of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs**

Incorporating a workforce equity lens is a fundamental aspect of our approach to meeting the administrative requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs. We recognize the importance of addressing systemic barriers and disparities that disproportionately affect certain individuals and communities. By applying an equity lens, we aim to ensure that our programming and services are inclusive, accessible, and responsive to the needs of all participants.

To achieve this, we have implemented several strategies:

1. Targeted Outreach and Recruitment: We actively engage with populations with barriers to employment, including low-income individuals, people of color, returning citizens, individuals experiencing homelessness, individuals with basic skills deficiencies, and youth who are in foster care or have aged out of the foster care system, among other groups. Through our network of delegate agencies and high-volume American Job Centers (AJCs), we conduct outreach and recruitment efforts to reach these specific populations. We also collaborate with community-based organizations and agencies that serve these populations to ensure that our programs are accessible to those who face barriers to employment.

2. Comprehensive Support Services: We understand that participants may require additional support to overcome barriers to employment. Through our extensive experience in administering WIOA funding, we have developed expertise in efficiently delivering supportive services. Our

Career Coaches conduct needs assessments with every enrolled WIOA customer and connect to supportive services and other community-based organizations when appropriate, ensuring that participants receive the comprehensive support they need.

3. Cultural Competence and Racial Equity: We recognize the importance of cultural competence when addressing racial inequity. Our approach is informed by both the professional and lived experience of our staff, who are deeply committed to addressing racial disparities in the labor market. We serve a predominantly Black population, as Black residents face particularly stark racial inequity in our region's labor market. By analyzing individual-level information through our data management system, Career Connect, we can identify racial inequities and design more effective programs and services to address them.

4. Measuring Impact on Underserved and Barrired Populations: We rigorously collect participant data to measure the impact of our programs on underserved and barrired populations. This includes data on race/ethnicity, education level, job history, veteran status, disability status, and wages upon entry into the program. By tracking participants' wages in the second quarter after their exit from the program, we can assess the extent to which participants with specific barriers to employment have increased their wages after completing our training programs.

5. Partnerships with Community-Based Organizations: To ensure that our programming is rooted in the community and responsive to the needs of underserved populations, we have established contractual relationships with dozens of community-based organizations concentrated in high-need areas of Chicago and Cook County. These organizations provide comprehensive workforce development services alongside other support services, allowing us to target our resources to those with the highest need. By working through trusted institutions and members of the community, we can effectively reach and serve individuals who may face multiple barriers to employment.

6. Infusing equity values into competitive procurement process to award subgrants. Since before the last local plan, The Partnership has been implementing an equity lens in its procurement process for Title I services. During procurement processes, respondents have been required to address equity in both jobseeker services and employer engagement within their proposals. The responses provided by the respondents were then carefully evaluated and incorporated into the scoring process. This ensured that equity considerations were given significant weight in the decision-making process.

The Partnership uses a competitive procurement process to award subgrants, and as already mentioned above in Chapter 4, The Partnership incorporated an equity lens into its most recent procurement process for Title I services. Respondents' proposals had to address equity both in jobseeker services and in employer engagement and those responses were incorporated in the scoring.

By incorporating a workforce equity lens into our administrative requirements, we are committed to addressing disparities, promoting inclusivity, and providing equitable access to training and employment opportunities. We believe that by doing so, we can create a more just and equitable labor market for all residents of our region. For more detail on how The Partnership is incorporating an equity lens into all of its work, see the response to Chapter 4, Question L above.