



Agenda: Workforce Innovation Board Youth Committee

Wednesday, September 9th, 2026; 11:00 – 12:00 pm

Location: 1 N. Dearborn, Rooftop Conference Room, Chicago, IL, 60602

Quorum: 33% or 4 out of 12 committee members must be physically present in the room. Once quorum is met, additional members or proxies can vote or participate virtually. **(must be in person / proxies allowed)**

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 11:00 – 11:01 | Welcome and Roll Call; Confirmation of Quorum
Nicole Cajacob, Board Secretary |
| 11:01 – 11:05 | Minutes of June Meeting *
Adam Hecktman, Chair |
| 11:05 – 11:15 | Chairman's Remarks |
| 11:15 – 11:40 | Program Budgets & Guidelines
Amy Santacaterina, Director of Program Budgets & Guidelines <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policy Letter: Youth Post Exit Follow-up Service*• IWDS 2.0 Updates• Sector Center Youth Funding Extension/Recommendations*<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Equus Workforce Solutions, Pyramid Partnership |
| 11:40 – 11:55 | Program Performance Updates
Pilar Trejo, Director of Program Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local Plan Modification*• MOU Updates• Continuous Improvement Plan Update: Pyramid Work Wise Alliance*• PY 25 Youth Outcomes• Performance Negotiations |
| 11:55 – 12:00 | Public Comment & Adjournment |

Read only: Program Performance Evaluation Procedure, Procurement Policy

***Denotes items requiring a committee vote to recommend action to the WIB**



Minutes of The Youth Committee of The WIB

Tuesday, June 2nd, 2026; 9:00 – 10:00 am

Quorum: 33% or 4 out of 12 committee members must be physically present in the room. Once quorum is met, additional members or proxies can vote or participate virtually. (must be in person / proxies allowed)

Voting Board members in attendance: Adam Hecktman, Antoinette Golden, Angela Morrison, Miriam Martinez, Mark Sanders II, John Kasper, William Otter, Sean McGinnis, Sandra Arechar (Proxy for Thomas Debetta), Sibyl Nash (Virtual attendance)

Voting Board members not in attendance: Dara Munson, Lysandra Barnett

Call to Order

A Youth Committee meeting of The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership's Workforce Innovation Board was held on June 2nd at 1 N Dearborn, Chicago, IL, 60602. It began at 9:00 am and was presided over by Chairman Adam Hecktman with Nicole Shaw as Board Secretary. Nicole Shaw confirmed quorum was met and took attendance.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Adam Hecktman called for a motion to approve the minutes of the March 2026 meeting. This motion was moved by William Otter and seconded by Adam Hecktman. The motion to approve the minutes of the March 2026 meeting carried in unanimous favor by a verbal ballot vote.

Staff reports

The draft Youth budget for PY27 was presented by Jim Kobylinski, Interim Director of Finance.

Main Motions

Chairman Adam Hecktman called for a motion to approve the Youth Out-of-School funding recommendations. This motion was moved by William Otter and seconded by John Kasper. Sean McGinnis abstained. The motion to approve the Youth Out-of-School funding recommendation is carried in unanimous favor by a verbal ballot vote.

Chairman Adam Hecktman called for a motion to approve the Youth In-School funding recommendations. This motion was moved by William Otter and seconded by John Kasper. The motion to approve the Youth In-School funding recommendations is carried in unanimous favor by a verbal ballot vote.

Chairman Adam Hecktman called for a motion to approve the Youth Out-of-School Continuous Improvement Plan recommendations. This motion was moved by William Otter and seconded by John Kasper. Sean McGinnis abstained. The motion to approve the Youth Out-of-School Continuous Improvement Plans recommendations is carried in unanimous favor by a verbal ballot vote.



Chairman Adam Hecktman called for a motion to approve the Youth In-School Continuous Improvement Plans recommendations. This motion was moved by William Otter and seconded by John Kasper. The motion to approve the Youth In-School Continuous Improvement Plan recommendations is carried in unanimous favor by a verbal ballot vote.

CEO's Remarks

George Wright, CEO of The Partnership gave his remarks. George expressed excitement about the rollout of the new IWDS 2.0 system. This new free State system will allow us to save money as we will no longer need to pay for the Career Connect system. George advised that the Chicago workforce system receives 47% of the State's WIOA budget. We have a large responsibility to ensure the dollars are well spent. These new Continuous Improvement Plans ensure that we are rewarding high performing agencies. Continuous Improvement Plans should not be punitive. These Continuous Improvement Plans should be a support as we want to help agencies succeed. As we carry the States performance, want to not just meet but exceed all metrics. George advised that although the focus of the Service Delivery Committee, the Youth Committee and the Workforce Innovation Board is WIOA, he wanted to mention that the Hospitality Hires Chicago event in May was a hit that set records. We had over 3,000 people registered for this event and over 15,000 people on a waitlist after the registration was cut off.

There was no public comment at this time.

Adjournment

Chairman Adam Hecktman called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion to adjourn was moved by John Kasper and seconded by Mark Sanders II. This meeting was adjourned at 9:50 am.

Date of Approval:



Workforce Innovation Board Youth Committee

Wednesday, September 9th, 2026; 11:00 – 12:00 pm
Location: 1 N Dearborn, Rooftop Conference Room, Chicago, IL, 60602

Quorum to meet: 33% or 4 out of 12 Committee members must be physically present in the room. Once quorum is met, additional members or proxies can vote or participate virtually. ***(Must be in person/proxies allowed)***

11:00 – 11:01 Welcome and Roll Call; Confirmation of Quorum

Nicole Cajacob, Board Secretary

11:01 – 11:02 Minutes of June Meeting *

Adam Hecktman, Chair

11:02 – 11:15 Chairman's Remarks

Adam Hecktman, Chair

11:15 – 11:40 Program Budgets and Guidelines

Amy Santacaterina, Director of Program Guidelines and Budgets

- Policy Letter: Youth Post Exit Follow-up Service*
- IWDS 2.0 Updates
- Sector Center Youth Funding Extension/Recommendations*
- Equus Workforce Solutions, Pyramid Partnership

11:40 – 11:55 Program Performance Updates

Pilar Trejo, Director of Program Performance

- Local Plan Modification*
- MOU Updates
- Continuous Improvement Plan Update: Pyramid Work Wise Alliance*
- PY 25 Youth Outcomes
- Performance Negotiations

11:55 – 12:00 Public Comment & Adjournment

***Denotes items requiring a committee vote to recommend action to the WIB**

Chairman's Remarks



Adam Hecktman

Budget And Guidelines Update



Amy Santacaterina, Program Director of Budgets and Guidelines

Policy Letter*



Youth Post Exit Follow-up Service

Policy Letter: Youth Post Exit Follow-Up Service*

Background:

- DCEO updated many policy letters to conform to IWDS 2.0
- The Partnership required to update our policy letters by December 31, 2026.

Youth Follow Up Services Policy:

- Policy letter incorporates new language and IWDS 2.0 procedures
- Includes suggested questions to ask youth during follow up
- No significant changes for youth providers

IWDS 2.0 System Updates



Illinois Workforce Development System (IWDS)

IWDS 2.0 Challenges

- Significant Glitches with the conversion to the new system:
 - Migration errors
 - ITA issues
 - Case Assignment Issues
 - Eligible Training Provider List
 - Reporting and Outcome Data
- **Impacting ability to serve customers and bring on new providers**
- DCEO, Southern Illinois University, and the Partnership providing extensive technical assistance and trouble shooting but more work is needed
- Plans for help desk ticketing system , future training and reporting feature roll out

Sector Center Youth Funding Extension/Recommendations*



Youth Sector Funding Recommendations

10/1/26-3/31/27

Agency	Out-of-School Award	Rationale
Equus Workforce Solutions	\$25,000	6-months time extension
Pyramid Partnership	\$38,150	6 -month time extension
TOTAL	\$63,150	

Youth Committee Program Performance Updates



WIOA MOU and Local Plan Modification

MOU & LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

Key Updates at a Glance —

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

- New Program Year 2026 MOU has commenced, with a 3-year term through June 2029
- State review letter will identify required updates.
- MOU and budget approved, pending required technical revisions.
- Revised documents due October 2, 2026.

Local Plan Modification*

- Revisions requested from DCEO and submitted 07/31/26
- Board approval pending September 2026 meeting
- To be posted for public review

Continuous Improvement Plan Update



Update to June 2026 Board Meeting

Continuous Improvement Plan Update: Pyramid Workwise Alliance*

June Board presentation →

Placement Concern Identified→

CIP Initiated →

Internal Review Identified Validation Gap→

Placement Outcomes Confirmed→

Center was removed from the CIP→

Internal validation
procedures
reinforced

PY25 Actual vs. Planned Outcomes



July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026

PY25 Actual vs. Planned Outcomes

Metric	% of Plan	Actual	Planned
Total Served	101%	2921	2900
ITAs	96%	625	650
Work Experience/Internships	110%	704	640
OJTs	116%	29	25
Pre-Apprenticeship/Apprenticeship	300%	45	15
Supportive Services	108%	1352	1250

Performance Negotiations

Submission of Proposed Goals



DEADLINE

September 4, 2026

Submission to DCEO/Office of Employment & Training



WHAT

15 proposed goals across the five WIOA indicators.



HOW

SAM, LWIA 7 current/historical performance, participant characteristics, and local labor-market conditions.



WHY NOW

Changing participant needs, SNAP-related pressures, and IWDS 2.0 transition.



WIB TAKEAWAY

Goals are evidence-based, locally appropriate, and maintain accountability and continuous improvement.



LOCAL NEGOTIATION DATES

08/25/26 – 09/25/26



Our proposed goals reflect the realities of our workforce and position LWIA 7 for success in PY26 and PY27.

**STRONGER
TOGETHER.
BUILDING FUTURES.**





Thank You

Questions & Public Comment



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1 North Dearborn Street | Suite 750 | Chicago, IL 60602

Local Workforce Innovation And Opportunity (WIOA) Policy No. 2026-PL-Change-01

To: All Delegate Agencies, American Job Centers and Sector Centers

From: _____
Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership (The Partnership)

Subject: Follow-up Policy for WIOA Youth Participants

Date: August 27, 2026

Purpose:

The purpose of this communication is to establish policy and provide guidance to delegate agencies on the implementation and management of their follow-up systems as required under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

References:

WIOA section 680.150 – Youth

Background:

WIOA section 680.150 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) states that **follow-up services must be made available for a minimum of twelve (12) months unless the participant declines to receive follow-up services or the participant cannot be located or contacted.**

POLICY:

1. Follow-up is an important responsibility of a Career Planner because it supports customer success and helps meet workforce program performance goals. Follow-up services provided after employment or education placement help improve retention, address challenges, and support long-term success. These services are a required part of the program and do not change a customer's exit date or trigger re-enrollment.
2. Career Planners must set expectations for follow-up at enrollment and work with customers to determine appropriate services based on customer needs. Follow-up services may vary in type, intensity, and duration and should be based on an evaluation of what the customer needs to remain successful.
3. Career Planners should reference the WIOA Title I Services Matrix to identify allowable follow-up activities and differentiate follow-up activities from other types of program services.
4. All follow-up activities must be accurately documented in the Illinois Workforce Development System (IWDS) 2.0, which supports enhanced follow-up reporting and
5. allows Career Planners to clearly record the services provided to the customer

6. Follow-up services are defined as two-way exchanges between the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I service provider and the customer (or the customer's advocate or employer) and are designed to provide support and guidance to ensure sustained employment, earning of post-secondary credentials, wage increases, and advancement of career goals.
7. These services go above and beyond the act of contacting customers for securing performance reporting documentation and verifying information. Ensuring a customer is still employed, collecting credentials or other documentation, is not considered follow-up.
8. The availability of follow-up services should be discussed with the customer at the beginning of a customer's interaction with the Career Planner to set the expectation for seamless communication throughout their participation in the program.
9. An evaluation to determine the need and level of intensity for follow-up services to meet the needs of the customer should be ongoing during participation and the follow-up period.
 - For Youth, these services must be made available and are critical to ensuring they are successful in a job or postsecondary education and training.
10. Follow-up should be as often as necessary throughout the required twelve (12) months.
 - At a minimum, it should occur at least every thirty (30) calendar days for the first three (3) months, and then it must occur once a quarter for the remainder of the twelve (12)-month period.
 - Career Planners should not plan only to contact someone within these timeframes. They should contact the customer as often as is needed for them specifically, but no more than every thirty (30) days. This should not become a practice of simply reaching out every thirty (30) days.
 - Documentation of contact attempts and successful contact must be entered in Illinois Workforce Development System (IWDS) 2.0 each time throughout the twelve (12) month follow-up period on the Occurrence or Activity tab of the Follow-Up Section of the Customer's Profile page.

- Documentation of all follow-up activities provided to the customer must also be entered in IWDS 2.0 on the Occurrence or Activity tab of the Follow-Up Section of the Customer's Profile page.
11. Follow-up services may occur by telephone conversation, in person, or via email (or other social media).
 - While sending a letter or leaving voicemail might be communication, they are not considered follow-up if no interaction or benefit to the customer/provision of service took place.
 12. Follow-up services do not delay program exit.
 - Follow-up services must be made available to all Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth for a minimum of twelve (12) months beginning from the date of program exit.
 - The date of program exit:
 - a. Cannot be determined until ninety (90) consecutive calendar days have lapsed since the last qualifying customer-level service;
 - b. Is set retroactively back to the date of the last enrolling/qualifying service; and
 - c. Is further outlined in program exit and follow-up guidance.

Follow-up services do not change, or delay exit, as they can only occur after program exit in the Title I Youth program.
 13. The goal of follow-up services for Youth is to enable customers to continue life-long learning and achieve a level of self-sufficiency to ensure job retention, wage gains, and postsecondary education and training progress after program exit. Therefore, all Youth will have a follow-up goal automatically added in the Illinois Workforce Development System (IWDS) 2.0 when the Universal Career Plan (UCP) is being developed. Follow-up must include more than contact or attempted contact, and follow-up activities must be provided.
 14. Follow-up services for Youth may include, but are not limited to, the following program elements:
 - Supportive services, if funding is available;
 - Mentoring;
 - Financial literacy education;

- Services that provide labor market and employment information (LMI) about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services;
 - Activities that help Youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training; and
 - Other services necessary to ensure the success of the Youth in employment and/or postsecondary education.
15. The type and need for follow-up services provided must be documented on the Add Follow-Up Activity screen in IWDS 2.0 using checkboxes and case notes.
16. However, the Final Regulations at Section 681.580 allow for Youth to decline follow-up services altogether.
- There are two (2) options for Youth who are not responsive to attempted contacts for follow-up and those Youth who cannot be located, making it impossible to provide follow-up services during the twelve (12)-month follow-up period.
 - **Unable to Locate (Youth Only)**. The Career Planner has determined that in the event a Youth customer cannot be located, the case notes should record all efforts that were taken to locate the customer. These same methods must be periodically utilized through at least the first quarter following exit.
 - **Opting Out (Youth Only)**. Youth in the twelve (12)-month follow-up period may request to opt out of follow-up services at any time. The request to opt out or discontinue follow-up services must be clearly documented in the case notes. Career Planners should not encourage Youth to opt out of these services.
 - In instances where there are well-documented case notes that the Youth has opted out or was not responsive to follow-up, Career Planners may wish to reach out to employers to confirm employment and wages. It is especially important for those customers who work for an employer who does not pay into unemployment insurance benefits through the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES).
 - If the Youth is participating in post-exit education or training, the Career Planner may wish to contact the educational institution.
 - Any outreach activities to employers or educational institutions to obtain confirmation for employment, wages, or enrollment when a customer has opted out or can't be located are not allowable follow-up activities, but they will provide meaningful information for the

Youth program and could assist in identifying a positive performance outcome and must be documented in a general case note in IWDS 2.0

17. Contacting an exited Youth to secure documentation for reporting a performance outcome is not an allowable follow-up activity.
 - Although contacting a customer to secure documentation to report a performance outcome does not constitute a follow-up service, it can be used in conjunction with other follow-up activities.
18. Upon completing all follow-up services, the activity must be closed, and the end date populated in IWDS 2.0.

ATTACHMENT
Suggested Questions to Ask During Follow-Up

Youth Program

Reminder: Follow-up services must be made available to all Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) youth for a minimum of twelve (12) months from the date of program exit.

Follow-up services for youth may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Supportive Services, if funding is available and the need for supportive services are supported in the Individual Service Strategy (ISS);**
 - 1) Are there any resources that will assist you in meeting your basic needs? Such as housing, transportation to work, and putting food on the table for your family.
- **Mentoring;**
 - 1) Are you interested in hearing from an adult mentor about their employment/post-secondary experiences and what support helped them succeed?
- **Financial Literacy education;**
 - 1) Are there any resources you need to assist you in meeting your financial goals (budgeting, opening a bank account)?
- **Services that provide labor market and employment information (LMI) about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the Local Area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services;**
 - 1) Do you wish to move further in your career? If so, we can provide you with information about additional educational opportunities and career pathways (Labor Market Information).
 - 2) Do you think you might benefit from attending group workshops on obtaining referral letters, updating your resume, or job clubs?
- **Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training;**
 - 1) Do you have everything that is needed for your education/training?
 - 2) Would you like any information about additional educational or employment opportunities?
 - 3) Do you know anyone that may benefit from our services?
- **Other services necessary to ensure the success of the youth in employment and/or postsecondary education.**
 - 1) How are things going at work/school? Are you excited or happy to come to work/school/job?
 - 2) What is your favorite part of work/school/job? What about your work/school/job do you find most challenging?
 - 3) Is there any aspect of your job that you feel you may need to improve upon? What are skills you would like to develop to help you perform better at work?
 - 4) Are there any issues that may jeopardize your continued work/school/job?

2024-2028

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

Local Plan Modification

Illinois Local Workforce Innovation Area 7

Prepared by:



Submitted the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity on
March 19, 2026

LWIA 7 Local Plan Components

Table of Contents

Regional Components:

Chapters 1-3: See Regional Plan for Illinois Economic Development Region 4

Local Components:

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Attachments:

A – LWIA 7 WIOA Memorandum of Understanding PY25 Updates

B – LWIA 7 Service Integration Self-Assessments and Plans

C – LWIA 7 WIOA Policy Letters and Agreements as required in Chapter 4, Section B.

D – Public Comments to the Local Plan Modification

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.	Implementation
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; and with the lens of Responsiveness, Inclusivity, and Accessibility (RIA).	The Partnership is currently reviewing all leases and location at its American Job Centers and other facilities. Factors being considered in the review include annual rental costs, Security, total square footage, participant usage, physical accessibility, accessibility to public transportation, proximity to other providers, equity and inclusion, partners present , and lease dates.
LWIA 7 faced an ongoing set of challenges in facilitating and tracking referrals among partners, due to lack of a common tool, different methods per organization , and lack of follow up.	A new collaborative software system, AirTable@, is being used to improve 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 as well as see opportunities to expand its use, i.e. support for immigrants and migrants (a population The Partnership refers to as New Arrivals in LWIA 7's local plan).

LWIA 7’s Spanish-speaking job seekers—particularly recent immigrants, mixed-status families, and individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP)—often underutilize WIOA-funded services due to fear, misinformation, and distrust of government-affiliated systems.	LWIA 7 has a robust network of trusted community-based organizations (CBOs), faith-based institutions, worker centers, and Spanish-language media outlets. LWIA 7 can leverage these trusted intermediaries to increase equitable access, strengthen employer connections to bilingual talent, and advance inclusive economic mobility.	LWIA 7 recognizes that access barriers for Spanish-speaking job seekers are not solely linguistic but structural and trust-based. Addressing this issue requires system-level interventions that align with WIOA’s priority of service, equity commitments, and regional talent development strategies. LWIA 7 is addressing this challenge through the following approaches: Language Access Compliance and Enhancement- Ensuring full compliance with WIOA Section 188 nondiscrimination provisions and meaningful language access requirements. Data-Informed Outreach Community-Based Outreach Strategy - Strengthening formal referral partnerships with trusted Spanish-serving CBOs. Staff Training and Cultural Competency Career Pathway Alignment -Ensuring Spanish-speaking job seekers have equitable access to high-demand training programs beyond entry-level sectors.

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SNAP Work Requirements: Many SNAP recipients risk losing food assistance if they do not meet reinstated work, training or volunteer requirements. This policy shift creates a significant opportunity for LWIA 7 to engage SNAP participants earlier or more intentionally, align SNAP E&T activities with WIOA services, and use workforce participation as a stabilizing intervention that supports both compliance and long-term employment outcomes.	Utilize One-Stop delivery infrastructure, employer relationships, and experience serving individuals with multiple barriers to employment. LWIA 7 will consider the following in addressing this: early identification and engagement with SNAP recipients nearing their benefit limits; alignment of SNAP E&T with WIOA services; reducing barriers as a retention strategy; and cross-system coordination with IDHS and community partners to reduce duplication and ensure clarity and streamlined access to services.	Develop targeted outreach and engagement across LWIA 7 explaining SNAP work requirements, exemptions, and workforce options. Coordinate this with IDHS and include multilingual and accessible formats. Integrate SNAP E&T-eligible activities with One-Stop services such as rapid job search and placement, work-based learning, and training aligned with in-demand occupations. LWIA 7 will leverage WIOA for supportive services and to coordinate referrals.
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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 11 American Job Centers (including 4 Comprehensive centers), 4 Sector Centers, 23 Delegate Agencies, and 25 Youth Providers. LWIA 7's American Job Center (AJC) 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.

Also, LWIA 7 and its workforce partners review referrals on an ongoing basis to ensure appropriate follow-up, document referral outcomes whenever possible, and identify opportunities to improve service coordination. Information gathered through the standardized referral process, Airtable referral system, and regular partner meetings is used to strengthen responsiveness, inclusivity, and accessibility (RIA), reduce duplication of services, and support continuous improvement across the one-stop delivery system.

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 Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (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); Updated Training Provider Eligibility Certification 2025 is attached
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)).

LWIA 7 strives to build technology systems that allow for seamless use by customers – job seekers and businesses – and interoperability across programs such that a customer need not know which program a given service is coming through and so providers can use the same systems for the WIOA program and other grants and programs being delivered locally. LWIA 7 will continue to strive for better technological integration and also support for inclusion of non-WIOA into the systems. The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership (known herein as The 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.

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 is high and LWIA 7 is working with DCEO to upgrade the IWDS system with

a new system, Illinois Workforce Development System (IWDS) 2.0.

IWDS 2.0 is DCEO's modernized case management and performance reporting system used to administer WIOA and other workforce programs. IWDS 2.0 functions as the core system of record for participant data, service tracking, compliance documentation, and federal performance accountability. LWIA 7 staff have been involved with informing the system buildout, projected to go live July 2026. . The State of Illinois will commence a Train-the-Trainer model for IWDS 2.0 in Spring of 2025 designed to build internal subject matter expertise . LWIA 7 intends to transition to IWDS 2.0 once the system is fully operational, migrating its data and case management functions to improve cost efficiency and streamline administrative processes. Until IWDS 2.0 is implemented, Career Connect will remain fully operational and supported. The Partnership will continue to generate comprehensive reporting, performance tracking, and data analysis necessary to meet the needs of the workforce area, its partners, Delegate Agencies, and other service providers.

LWIA 7 will monitor system usage trends, error rates, and performance data to identify additional training needs. Training effectiveness will be evaluated through reductions in data corrections, improved timeliness of entry, and strengthened performance outcomes.

Through structured training and oversight, LWIA 7 will ensure IWDS 2.0 functions not only as a compliance tool but as a performance management and continuous improvement system supporting equitable and high-quality workforce service delivery in Cook County. In 2023, LWIA 7 launched the Airtable© cloud application for referrals among partners and to supplement the case management systems. Airtable© is a collaborative, form-collection database that will allow the One Stop Operator (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 human/customer-centered, minimizes bureaucratic language and jargon, is in line with our lens of Responsiveness, Inclusivity, and Accessibility 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 AJCs that provides a standard overview of available services across the mandated partners. 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 eleven 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 six 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 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 delivers a range of online tools, software and resources including:

- ▶ Illinois workNet, managed by 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.
- ▶ LWIA 7 administers an online AJC customer satisfaction survey and shares the results

with all AJC 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 AJCs 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.
- ▶ LWIA 7 continues to provide virtual digital literacy classes, open to the public, to help people transition to virtual learning and remote work.

- ▶ LWIA 7 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 job seekers and businesses can quickly fill out an interest form with their information and select which AJC location 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: Coordinated Demand-Driven Strategic Planning

LWIA 7 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 focused on responsiveness, inclusivity, and accessibility (RIA)
- ▶ Workforce Innovation Board Operations and Committees

In pursuing these priorities, in particular innovative program design, LWIA 7 will work to leverage both WIOA funding and other programs that can maximize flexibility and services across the City and County. When reviewing program design whether for WIOA and/or non-WIOA initiatives, the RIA principles of responsiveness, inclusivity, and accessibility will be embedded. This includes not only the formal WIOA Partner programs but also other initiatives underway by partner entities including other divisions of City and County government.

Strategy 2: Support Employer-Driven Regional Sector Initiatives

LWIA 7 has institutionalized a demand-driven workforce ecosystem that directly operationalizes the City of Chicago's We Will Chicago framework and the Cook County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2025–2029, also known as Uplift Cook. By utilizing the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) framework, LWIA 7 aligns workforce strategies with employer-defined skill requirements to ensure that regional human capital—a core pillar of the CEDS—is positioned for high-growth sectors

Through its Business Relations and Economic Development (BRED) Team, LWIA 7 facilitates structured employer collaboratives that bridge the gap between regional economic priorities and resident talent. These partnerships include anchor institutions such as the University of Chicago, Northwestern Medicine, and the Chicago Healthcare Collaborative, as well as industrial leaders like Abt Electronics and the Chicago Transit Authority. In alignment with the CEDS 2025–2029 goal of "future-proofing" the regional economy, LWIA 7 has expanded its focus to emerging industries, including the Midwest Quantum Ecosystem and Green Infrastructure. These efforts

ensure that the regional talent pipeline is prepared for the next decade of technological shifts in construction, healthcare, information technology, manufacturing, and transportation, distribution, and logistics (TD&L).

LWIA 7's activities are intentionally mapped to the Economic Development and Lifelong Learning pillars of *We Will Chicago*, focusing on reducing systemic inequities. By coordinating with the Cook County Bureau of Economic Development (BED) under the *Uplift Cook* initiative, LWIA 7 ensures that WIOA-funded activities prioritize geographic equity. This specifically targets the Southern and Western Cook County communities identified in CEDS data as areas of high disinvestment where racial and geographic disparities in access to services and economic opportunities persist.

Consistent with the equity and resilience themes of the CEDS, LWIA 7 integrates sector partnerships with deep-rooted community engagement to advance the principles of Responsiveness, Inclusivity, and Accessibility. This is achieved through the expansion of career pathways by collaborating with K-12 systems, City Colleges of Chicago, and the Illinois Department of Rehabilitation Services to ensure universal access to the workforce system. Furthermore, LWIA 7 is strengthening local capacity in manufacturing, education, and childcare through Registered Apprenticeships in partnership with Midwest Urban Strategies and Rooted in Dignity. To address the compounding challenges faced by residents in disadvantaged communities, LWIA 7 integrates wraparound economic support, including financial capability services and digital equity initiatives that align with the connectivity goals of both the County's Digital Equity Plan and the *We Will Chicago* framework.

To support the long-term goals of the 2025–2029 CEDS, LWIA 7 has repositioned its Sector Centers as regional hubs for apprenticeship development. Staff capacity has been bolstered through intensive training, ensuring that the BRED Team can provide the technical assistance

required by employers to register and sustain programs. Furthermore, through the Workforce Partners of Metropolitan Chicago (WPMC), LWIA 7 leads cross-jurisdictional coordination across ten counties, ensuring that workforce strategies remain consistent with the EDR 4 Regional Plan and the broader regional economic development trajectory.

These actions demonstrate that LWIA 7 has moved beyond traditional service delivery to become a primary architect of a coordinated, equitable, and resilient regional workforce system. This infrastructure is essential for fulfilling the promises of the *Uplift Cook* and *We Will Chicago* plans by bridging the gap between employer demand and the untapped talent in Cook County's priority communities.

Strategy 3: Advance Responsiveness, Inclusivity, and Accessibility (RIA): Provide Economic Advancement for All Populations through Career Pathways

These efforts are guided by City of Chicago and Cook County commitments to equity and targeting services for the under-served, including the 2023 Cook County Equity Task Force Progress Report, the 2021 Equity Fund Report which promotes “good jobs” principles, and prioritizes services for historically marginalized populations. 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), LWIA 7p launched the TPM Academy (Talent Pipeline Management). The project aims to train business, workforce development leaders on the Talent Pipeline Management (TPM). The strategy is to create real career pathways for students and workers that are 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, LWIA 7 perennially awards providers serving specific special populations including

parenting youth, youth with disabilities, foster youth, and others. Using leveraged or braided resources, LWIA 7 is also able to design and scale pilot initiatives that specifically target additional populations, including opportunity youth, older workers, public housing residents, and individuals returning to their communities from incarceration.

LWIA 7's Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) Workforce Hubs (West and West/South-West) began providing services to the Chicago and Cook County area in 2024 focusing on creating a qualified, diverse pipeline of workers prepared for careers in clean energy. The target population for enrollment into this program are people from environmental justice communities, R3 (Restore, Reinvest, Renew) Communities, returning residents, foster care system members or graduates, and displaced energy workers. The training program is based on the Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework and consists of a bridge program, focused on clean energy basics and essential employability skills, as well as job specific training options such as solar photovoltaic installers, electric vehicle technicians, electric vehicle charging station installers, and HVAC technicians. The program prepares participants to receive industry-recognized certifications as well as allows the potential to earn college credits toward a degree. Barrier-reduction, wraparound services, student support services, and transition services are provided to program participants to reduce barriers to participation, completion of training program, and job placement. The CEJA Workforce Hubs partner with Title II Adult Education and Chicago City Colleges to offer skill building, tutoring, testing support, and other academic counseling to participants. By June 30, 2026, LWIA 7 aims to place at least 150 people into clean energy jobs through the CEJA Workforce Hubs training program. In addition to the CEJA Workforce Hubs, LWIA 7 was also awarded a CEJA Returning Residents grant in 2025 which focuses on preparing people in the custody of the Illinois Department of Corrections for entry-level clean energy jobs. LWIA 7 will

be delivering services to the women at the Decatur Correctional Center with the support of Lewis University's Institute for Workforce Education and Giving Others Dreams. LWIA 7 plans to start enrollment into this program in Spring 2026.

Strategy 4: Expand Service Integration

In 2021 LWIA 7 issued two requests for proposals: Delegate Agencies and Career Pathway/Bridge Training Programs. Both RFPs were designed to expand our outreach and access to historically underserved populations and communities. Through these initiatives, The Partnership funded 21 agencies that currently as of PY 2026 provide 13 Adult and Dislocated Worker, 10 Career Pathway Training and 2 Bridge WIOA Programs. LWIA 7 service delivery and integration is focused on human-centric design through the lens of RIA – responsiveness, inclusivity, and accessibility.

As part of LWIA 7's ongoing efforts aimed at service integration, the four comprehensive AJCs have begun discussion on service delivery alignment and integration and cost sharing under the PY 26 3-year Memorandum of Understanding. . Additionally, staff at each comprehensive AJC 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.

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

Strategy 6: Advance Public-Private Data Infrastructure

Data is at the center of LWIA 7's effort to create smarter solutions to economic challenges faced by residents of Chicago and Cook County. LWIA 7'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 in July 2026 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 analysis of which sectors are being served by the system at any given time, allowing for a clear picture of how the WIOA system addresses 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, LWIA 7 produces regular labor market reports for use by service providers, job seekers, employers, and key stakeholders. The “Where are the Jobs” report was previously created using the Labor Insight tool from Lightcast; however, as of December 2025, LWIA 7 now uses Jobs EQ which is a labor market analytics platform that provides up-to-date, defensible labor market data -- including employment, wages, skills demand, industry trends, and job postings -- to help LWIA 7 make strategic decisions and analyze workforce trends.^[OBJ] This data helps LWIA 7 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 LWIA 7 to create its current policy focusing Individual Training Account resources toward a limited number of growth occupations. 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, job seekers 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.

LWIA 7 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.

A significant portion of Cook County's adult population lacks a secondary credential and/or has limited English proficiency. Traditional sequential models—where participants complete Adult Education prior to occupational training—extend time-to-credential and reduce persistence. These barriers disproportionately impact priority populations, including LEP individuals, low-income adults, and communities of color. LWIA 7 can formalize Title I–Title II Alignment by expanding formal referral and co-enrollment protocols between Title I case managers and Title II Adult Education providers, develop shared intake and assessment strategies to reduce duplication and improve participant navigation and aligning Individual Employment Plans (IEPs) and Adult Education learning plans to support concurrent academic and occupational progress.

Also, sector-aligned IET pathways will help focus on high-demand sectors identified through regional labor market analysis, including Healthcare, Transportation & Logistics, Manufacturing, Construction & Skilled Trades, Information Technology. These programs can integrate:

- Basic skills instruction (math, reading, digital literacy)
- English language acquisition (ELA)
- Workforce preparation activities
- Occupational training leading to industry-recognized credentials

Participants can work toward both a secondary credential (if needed) and an industry credential within a structured career pathway. One example of this is through collaboration with City Colleges of Chicago and LWIA 7's CEJA Hubs program

Also, LWIA 7 will continue explore ways to braid funding streams to support IET scale-up through the City Colleges of Chicago. Lastly, LWIA 7 will collaborate with sector partnerships and employers to:

- Validate occupational curriculum alignment
- Identify stackable credentials
- Support work-based learning components
- Ensure training leads to employment opportunities with wage progression potential

Employer engagement ensures IET models are demand-driven rather than supply-driven.

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

LWIA 7 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.

LWIA 7 takes an industry-centered, demand-driven approach to workforce development and promotes innovative strategies in employer engagement, and our work is rooted in seven high-growth, high-demand sectors. Since 2012, LWIA 7 formed the Business Relations and Economic Development (BRED) Unit. BRED team members' 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 LWIA 7's program strategies align with latest industry demand and standards, and to create immediate and future job opportunities for our job-seeking customers. LWIA 7's 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, LWIA 7 created four industry Sector Centers, which are managed by the BRED Team members. The Sector Centers are the following:

Sector Center*	Location
Healthcare Sector Center	910 W Van Buren St, Chicago, IL 60607
Hospitality and Tourism Sector Center	218 South Wabash Avenue, Chicago, IL 60604
Information Technology Sector Center	567 West Lake Street, Chicago, IL 60661
Transportation, Distribution and Logistics	1 North LaSalle Street, Chicago, Illinois 60602

*As noted previously, The Partnership has updated center nomenclature systemwide. For example, Sector Centers are referred to as Specialized Center. This terminology is currently being socialized across providers, partners, and stakeholders to ensure consistent usage in contracts, policies, performance reporting, and public communications. More information is available at <https://chicookworks.org/career-seeker-services/find-your-agency/>

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.

LWIA 7'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 agencies, local, State, and Federal departments, trade associations, CBOs, training providers, educational institutions, and labor unions.

LWIA 7 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: Hospitality Hires Chicago (HHC) is a Partnership Annual Hiring Event -a hiring initiative matching employers and career pathways, empowering candidates with employment. HHC is supported by a broad coalition of Partnership agencies and sponsors, including:

- Choose Chicago
- Illinois Hospitality and Lodging Association
- Chicago Loop Alliance
- City of Chicago
- Cook County
- Illinois Restaurant Association
- The Magnificent Mile Association
- Near South Planning Board
- Origami Works Foundation
- The Partnership

The continued growth of Hospitality Hires Chicago reflects the strength and reach of the Partnership's collective network. HHC connects employers and job seekers across hospitality as well as other high-demand industries, including clean energy, construction, healthcare,

manufacturing, logistics, and more—highlighting the transferability of skills across sectors.

In April 2025, more than 60 employers and hundreds of career seekers participated in the 8th Annual Hospitality Hires Chicago, hosted at the historic Palmer House Hotel by The Partnership and event sponsors. Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, and other community leaders were in attendance, underscoring the importance of workforce development and inclusive hiring strategies.

With more than 2,500 career seekers pre-registered, employers conducted on-the-spot interviews with more than 820 attendees, extending conditional offers to over one-third of participants. Employers represented a diverse range of industries. The next event is scheduled for May 20, 2026, at the Palmer House Hotel.

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 consisted of holding hiring events at suburban Cook County sites within LWIA 7's network and promoting a more inclusive and equitable economy as Cook County emerged from the pandemic. These efforts were designed to connect residents to quality jobs while connecting employers to a skilled and diverse talent pool. The program included two main types of events: large-scale signature regional events led by LWIA 7's five suburban Cook County AJCs and smaller hyper-local events, some of which targeted certain populations or industry sectors. A dedicated website was used for job seekers to register for events and employers to request assistance. More than 1000 job seekers and over 100 employers attended the two Career Connector events held in the summer and fall of 2025 in south and west suburban Cook County. The program ended in Fall 2025 and was funded through Cook County's Bureau of Economic Development via the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

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

LWIA7 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; social media; e-mail blasts; e-newsletters; fliers and digital images, graphics; texting; press release and earned media; Hire Frequency podcast; The Partnership Show on WVON AM radio; press conferences; videos; and paid/purchased media.

Media accounts followers have seen marked follower growth over the past 3 years. LWIA 7 is committed to sharing information about the 70 plus WIOA and non-WIOA organizations in our regional workforce development network in Chicago and suburban Cook County.

In late 2024, we surveyed stakeholders and partners to identify how we could improve our digital

identity, voice, website, and branding. This resulted in the launch of a new logo and refreshed website and voice in 2025. The communications department continues to support the programs and our network, and in 2025 Hospitality Hires Chicago had the largest attendance on record. The communications department continues to support the non-profit's WIOA funded CBOs and programs as well as programs funded by private and other governmental entities, such as ConstructionWorks and CEJA. In addition, the communications unit offered support as several of The Partnership's AJCs or Career Centers moved onto a City Colleges campus, for proximity to students and faculty.

In 2025, LWIA 7 partnered with a new creative agency called MHarris and Co. The new partnership focuses on social media and other communications priorities. The Partnership continues to offer LevelUpAJC.org as a one-stop online portal for career seekers and employers to reach our network. As of January 20, 2026, the site has received more than 89,000 views and more than 35,000 new users. It has connected more than 5,600 career seekers and 72 employers to our network. We continue to utilize "public service announcement" capacity on Chicago's digital billboards promoting LevelUp and have now embedded the form on our website as well.

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.

LWIA 7 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, LWIA 7 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 LWIA 7'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 in 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)).

LWIA 7 currently funds career pathway training programs in the manufacturing, IT, healthcare, culinary, business and professional, 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. Also, LWIA 7 plans to release its next Delegate Agency for Career Pathways RFP in 2026.

LWIA 7 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.

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)).

LWIA 7 will begin aligning local workforce and education strategies with Illinois' emerging Workforce Pell framework to support career pathway development, short-term credential attainment, and co-enrollment across WIOA core programs. Building on existing adult education partnerships, LWIA 7 will expand co-enrollment of Adult Education participants into WIOA Title I services to braid funding and accelerate transitions from foundational skills instruction to occupational training. Through bridge programming models, Adult

Education partners support initial instruction focused on basic skills and contextualized learning, while LWIA 7 supports subsequent occupational training through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs), leading to industry-recognized credentials such as Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA). LWIA 7 and its education partners will continue to review and refine joint programming to improve outcomes and ensure readiness to leverage Workforce Pell opportunities as guidance becomes available.

LWIA 7 is committed to expanding equitable access to activities that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials, including industry-recognized certificates and certifications that are portable, stackable, and aligned with high-demand occupations in Cook County's regional economy.

Recognized credentials include:

- Postsecondary degrees (associate and bachelor's)
- Industry-recognized certifications
- State-issued occupational licenses
- Registered Apprenticeship credentials
- Stackable credentials embedded within career pathways

LWIA 7 will continue to strengthen Integrated Education and Training (IET) and career pathway opportunities by coordinating Title I resources with the full network of ICCB-funded Title II Adult Education providers serving Chicago and suburban Cook County. In addition to the City Colleges of Chicago, LWIA 7 will collaborate with other Title II providers, including Harper College, Oakton College, Triton College, Morton College, Moraine Valley Community College, Prairie State College, South Suburban College, Township High School District 211, Township High School District 214, and other ICCB-funded Adult Education providers serving the local

workforce area. These partnerships support adult learners in obtaining a high school credential, improving English language proficiency, building foundational skills, and transitioning into occupational training aligned with regional workforce needs.

LWIA 7 will also continue to partner with community-based ICCB-funded Adult Education providers operating within the local area, including organizations such as Instituto del Progreso Latino, Greater West Town Community Development Project, Literacy Chicago, Pui Tak Center, PODER, St. Augustine College, Universidad Popular, A Safe Haven, and other eligible Title II providers that deliver Adult Education, English Language Acquisition, Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE), and bridge programming. Through coordinated referrals, co-enrollment, shared case management, and braided funding strategies, LWIA 7 will expand access to Integrated Education and Training (IET) models that enable participants to earn secondary and industry-recognized credentials while preparing for employment in high-demand sectors

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:

LWIA 7 coordinates its local workforce strategies with state, regional, and local partners to ensure alignment with the Illinois Unified State Plan, enhance service delivery, and avoid duplication of activities. This coordination is embedded in governance structures, formal partnerships, and ongoing interagency collaboration.

LWIA 7 actively aligns its service strategies, sector priorities, and performance goals with the Illinois Unified State Plan. Regular participation in Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity monthly meetings ensures:

- Timely integration of state policy guidance
- Alignment with statewide performance negotiations and accountability standards
- Coordination around initiatives such as career pathways, Integrated Education and Training (IET), and system modernization efforts (e.g., IWDS 2.0)
- Consistent interpretation of WIOA regulations and administrative requirements

This structure ensures that local implementation supports statewide objectives while reflecting Cook County's labor market conditions. As part of the Chicago metropolitan workforce region, LWIA 7 collaborates with peer LWIAs and regional intermediaries to coordinate sector strategies, employer engagement efforts, and labor market intelligence. Here are some to name a few:

- Midwest Urban Strategies – to share best practices across major urban workforce systems, strengthen equity-focused strategies, and leverage federal advocacy and policy alignment.
- Chicago Jobs Council – to collaborate on workforce policy analysis, system improvement, and reducing service fragmentation across Cook County.
- The Chicago Community Trust – to align workforce investments with broader regional economic mobility strategies, philanthropic initiatives, and cross-sector partnerships that advance equitable access to quality jobs and career pathways.

Through these partnerships, LWIA 7 strengthens cross-system communication, leverages public and philanthropic resources, and reduces redundant programming by aligning workforce investments with shared regional priorities

Also, as part of local governance, LWIA 7 maintains regular coordination with Chief Elected Officials (CEOs) through structured meetings and governance processes. These meetings ensure:

- Fiscal and policy alignment across jurisdictions
- Clear delineation of roles between the Chicago Cook Workforce Innovation Board (WIB), CEOs, and administrative entity
- Coordinated oversight of contracts, performance outcomes, and system design

CEO engagement ensures that workforce investments align with broader economic development and community priorities throughout Cook County.

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

LWIA 7 delivers Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth employment and training activities under WIOA Title I through an integrated, performance-driven service delivery system designed to maximize impact across funding streams and program models. Title I activities are aligned with state guidance and regional workforce priorities through ongoing coordination with the DCEO, regular engagement of the Chicago Cook WIB, and active participation of Titles II, III, and IV representatives on the Board and its committees.

To ensure consistency and reduce duplication across the one-stop system over the course of the prior Local Plan 2024 - 2028 period, LWIA 7 procured a One-Stop Operator (OSO) with scaleLIT (formerly the Chicago Citywide Literacy Coalition), to oversee coordination across all AJCs. The OSO standardizes operational procedures, convenes monthly center-level partner meetings, and facilitates quarterly systemwide coordination to strengthen alignment across Title I and core partner programs. Through Project Working Groups and structured collaboration, the network utilizes a standardized WIOA Orientation, a coordinated universal referral system, a unified Customer Satisfaction Survey, and a shared AJC Manual to promote service consistency and continuous improvement.

For Program Year 2026, LWIA 7 will further strengthen its Title I delivery system by issuing a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) for AJC WIOA Title I service delivery. This procurement reinforces a customer-centered, sector-aligned model grounded in RIA principles and strengthens accountability for performance outcomes, employer engagement, and service integration across the 11 AJCs. The competitive process ensures high-quality Title I services that respond to evolving labor market demand and community needs. (More information can be found on The Partnership's website <https://chicookworks.org/request-for-proposals-for-american-job-center-wioa-title-i-services/>).

Consistent with Illinois' emerging Workforce Pell framework, LWIA 7 will collaborate with DCEO, the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), City Colleges of Chicago, and other regional postsecondary institutions to collaborate on short-term, high-quality credential programs eligible under Workforce Pell guidance. Through co-enrollment strategies, bridge programming, and career pathway models, LWIA 7 can support the integration of Title I Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) with Pell-eligible programs to accelerate credential attainment and improve access to stackable, industry-recognized credentials in high-demand sectors. This alignment strengthens Title I's role in advancing equitable access to postsecondary opportunities while supporting employer-driven sector strategies.

Regionally, LWIA 7 participates in the Workforce Partners of Metropolitan (WPMC) Chicago, a long-standing coalition of local workforce boards that supports coordinated planning, shared employer engagement strategies, and joint grant development across jurisdictions. This collaboration enhances regional alignment and reduces duplication of services.

- 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)).**

Locally, LWIA 7 convenes its network of Title I agencies to share best practices and advance continuous improvement. Title I business services are coordinated through monthly meetings of Sector Centers and partner organizations, utilizing a shared-placement model to streamline employer engagement and strengthen job placement outcomes for adults, dislocated workers, and youth.

The 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 regularly meet to identify opportunities for aligning strategies, implementing new initiatives, and sharing data/ best practices. Among other ideas, 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.

Many of the workforce agencies 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 upcoming 3-year WIOA Memorandum of Understanding at all comprehensive AJC 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 continue to be active participants 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.

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 AJCs in the provision of veterans' services, Rapid Response activities, and business services. The Partnership coordinates business and employer outreach at the AJCs with the Illinois Department of Employment Security. Wagner-Peyser services are physically collocated in the comprehensive AJCs, 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 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 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. LWIA 7 will explore other funding opportunities to continue this program as the ARPA-funded Navigator program ended November 2025.

As with other Titles, Title IV staff attend 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 Illinois Community College Board, and the Chancellor of City Colleges of Chicago, ensuring that higher education and adult learning perspectives are included in workforce planning and strategy

discussions for Cook County.

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 support for graduating seniors. Partnership efforts with CPS and suburban schools will further focus on expanding information access for students and expanding access and delivery of Career and Technical Education programs.

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 and similar processes are underway between suburban high school districts and suburban community colleges. The Partnership intends to continue supporting these and other regional secondary work by examining ways in which WIOA resources can augment for 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 21st 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)).

LWIA 7 shares the joint vision of the Illinois Community College Board and the Illinois State Board of Education, which oversees and implements 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 participated 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 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 Partnership is also exploring new and innovative models for the 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 support 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. In 2024, The Partnership was awarded two Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) Hub grants 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 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 service delivery models are focused on RIA principles of Responsiveness, Inclusivity, and Accessibility – models that are human-centered, employer responsive, and barrier reducing.

These include AJCs, Delegate Agencies, Career Pathway and Bridge Training Programs 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 AJCs 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 (AJCs): 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 11 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.

- Job search and placement assistance and individual career counseling as needed.
- 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:** AJCs 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 11 AJC locations.

American Job Center (AJC)	Location
American Job Center at Daley College	7500 S. Pulaski Rd., L104, Chicago, IL 60652
American Job Center at Malcolm X College West Campus	4624 West Madison St., Chicago, IL 60644
American Job Center in Pilsen	1700 West 18 th St., Chicago, IL 60608
American Job Center at Truman College	1145 W. Wilson Ave., Ste. 1917, Chicago, IL 60604
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 st 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
American Job Center at Kennedy-King College	747 W. 63 rd St., Room V219, Chicago, IL 60621

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 P program model features small to mid-sized agencies 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. LWIA 7 plans to release its next Delegate Agency RFP in 2026. The most recent

Delegate Agency RFP in 2021 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 91st, 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

Bridge Program Training: Additionally, The Partnership funds Bridge Programs, which are integrated education and training models designed to help individuals with academic skill gaps, limited English proficiency, or other foundational barriers transition successfully into postsecondary training and high-demand career pathways. Bridge programs combine contextualized basic skills instruction (e.g., reading, math, English language acquisition) with occupational training aligned to targeted industry sectors.

Within LWIA 7, Bridge programs serve as an entry point into career pathways in priority sectors such as healthcare, transportation and logistics, manufacturing, construction, and information technology.

Participants receive academic instruction embedded within industry-relevant content, workforce readiness training, and career navigation support. Programs may also incorporate industry-recognized credentials,

stackable certifications, and work-based learning opportunities to accelerate advancement.

Bridge programs are structured to:

- Increase measurable skill gains and credential attainment
- Support co-enrollment across WIOA core programs, including Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and Adult Education
- Reduce remediation time by integrating academic and technical instruction

Improve transition rates into postsecondary education, occupational training, apprenticeships, or unsubsidized employment. Currently The Partnership funds 10 Career Pathway Training models and 2 Bridge models in LWIA 7 with the agencies listed below. (As of October 2025, Chinese American Service League no longer provides culinary training under WIOA funding).

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
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

Updated System Nomenclature - The Partnership has updated systemwide nomenclature for AJCs, Delegate Agencies, Youth Programs, Career Pathway Programs, Bridge Programs, and Sector designations to better reflect service design, funding structures, and career pathway alignment. This includes clarifying distinctions among Comprehensive, Affiliate, Youth-Only, Specialized, and non-WIOA funded Career Centers within the network.

The revised terminology is currently being socialized across providers, partners, and stakeholders to ensure

consistent usage in contracts, policies, performance reporting, and public communications. Updated center descriptions and network information are available at <https://chicookworks.org/career-seeker-services/find-your-agency/>

National Dislocated Worker Programs: Periodically The Partnership receives special grant funding to serve dislocated workers through National Dislocated Worker Programs (NDWG).

NDWGs 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. NDWGs enable states and communities to respond to and recover from large, unexpected dislocation events.

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

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 skilled trades.

Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) Workforce Hub: LWIA 7 was awarded two Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) Workforce Hub grants for the South Chicago and West/Southwest Chicago geographic areas in 2024

. Workforce Hubs engage with potential employers, CBOs, 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. Since being awarded the grants, The Partnership along with City Colleges of Chicago, Elevate Energy and multiple community partners and trainers have rolled out this program and plans to have enrolled over 600 participants by June 2026.

Climate and Equitable Jobs Acts (CEJA) Returning Residents Program: In 2025, The Partnership was awarded a grant to deliver services to residents of the Decatur Correctional Center. The program will prepare people in custody of Illinois Department of Corrections for entry-level clean energy jobs. The training program follows the Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework used in the CEJA Workforce Hubs. The residents will be provided with bridge program training and job-specific training in Solar PV and prepare them to receive industry recognized credentials. The program will ensure participants experience a dignified and welcoming transition back into the community to promote their success in their career pathway. The Returning Residents Program will integrate with the CEJA Workforce Hubs.

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)).

LWIA 7 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. LWIA 7 is charged with assisting workers affected by layoffs, employers, local government officials, and other stakeholders by providing resources, technical assistance, and labor market information. The State RRU generally receives first notice of major dislocation events, through notifications provided under the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Act . The State RRU enlists LWIA 7 to respond to dislocation events. Using 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. Whenever possible, a local workforce center and/or labor organization is included in information sessions.

LWIA 7's American Job Centers, Delegate Agencies that serve Dislocated Workers , and/or Sector Centers representatives, are invited or assigned to participate on the Rapid Response (RR) Team, along with a Partnership BRED (Business Relations Economic Development) representative. Specialists also participate and provide a WIOA overview in the Rapid Response Pre-Layoff Workshops. These workshops are currently facilitated either onsite at company locations or virtually on Zoom. Workshop surveys are collected either on site (manually) or online (electronically) in the IL WorkNet System on the Company Event-Specific Page. Survey data can be retrieved through the Illinois Employment Business System (IEBS). RR Surveys that include job seeker requests for follow-up are then sent to the participating AJC or Dislocated Worker Agency (if manually collected) are also accessible in the IEBS system. The LWIA Rapid Response Coordinator may send surveys to all relevant agencies upon request for Dislocated Worker

services.

When formal notice is not filed in accordance with the WARN Act, but a local rapid response staff member or partner becomes aware of a WARN-level layoff or closure, LWIA 7 initiates the Rapid Response process and notifies the state coordinator to develop strategies for rapid response activities. When The Partnership or a local partner becomes aware of a layoff or closure that does not meet WARN threshold, Rapid Response is initiated according to the local operational plan.

Rapid Response assistance includes:

- ▶ Employer Consultation
 - Initial planning for Rapid Response workshops
 - Coordination to customize services to the needs of the 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 on workforce trends and opportunities for transitioning workers
 - Connections to local service providers, including Sector Centers as appropriate
 - Presentations from RRU representatives on how to access services
 - Distribution of collateral reference materials with instructions and service provider contact information

LWIA 7 continues to deliver all listed Rapid Response services both in person and virtually, based on company needs and situational requirements.

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 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. Local research finds exceptionally high jobless rates among Chicago youth (ages 16–24), much higher than national averages, especially for Black and Latino youth. For example, in 2023 over **78% of Black 16- to 19-year-olds in Chicago were jobless** — well above broader labor market averages. ¹ In Chicago and Cook County, there are over 82,000 16-24-year-olds who are out of work and not in school.²

¹ G Great Cities Institute, University of Illinois at Chicago, *Youth Joblessness in Chicago, 2025 Update, 2025*, <https://greatcities.uic.edu> (accessed February 11, 2026).² U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, 2024, Table S2301 (Employment Status) and Table B14005 (School Enrollment), custom tabulation for population ages 16–24 not enrolled in school and not employed, Chicago and Cook County (accessed February 11, 2026).

This trend has been exacerbated since the pandemic 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 continues.

LWIA 7 works to address this crisis through strategically deploying workforce resources and building partnerships that directly address the difficult realities confronting young adult job seekers. LWIA 7 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
- ▶ Are a 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. Programming and service models are focused on RIA principles of Responsiveness, Inclusivity, and Accessibility – models that are human-centered, employer responsive, and barrier reducing.

LWIA 7 envisions 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.

LWIA 7 funds a variety of successful workforce investment program models for youth that are implemented through a network of ten AJCs 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, LWIA 7 dedicates youth funding in several categories including Out-of-School Youth (OSY), In-School Youth (ISY), , and program enhancements funded by private or other public resources. Youth Service models will be focused on youth services and are accessible through all 11 AJCs within LWIA 7 as well

as 23 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 LWIA 7 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 OSY 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

LWIA 7 targets ISY 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, LWIA 7 dedicates the majority of WIOA ISY 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 with job shadowing services for the youth.

LWIA 7 funds seven agencies 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 of 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.

Additional Program Enhancements and Program Models

In addition to the above-referenced WIOA youth programs, LWIA 7 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:

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. A program dedicated to 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 connected them with businesses in high-growth, high-demand sectors and exposed the interns to careers they may not have considered in Manufacturing, Information Technology, Healthcare, Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics. The program graduated from over 2,000 interns and served over 3,000 young adults. The program funded the interns' wages, allowing employers to provide paid internships at no cost while connecting interns to career pathway opportunities. The Opportunity Works program ended in November 2025 at the conclusion of the ARPA grant.

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. LWIA 7 invests in programs that employ best practices and incorporate concepts and approaches (1) education and workforce strategies that are relevant to high-growth, high-demand business sectors; and (2) wrap-around services with particular focus on employment outcomes. Specifically, LWIA 7 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
- ▶ 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, helping 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.
- ▶ Organizations that incorporate the lens of RIA or responsiveness, inclusivity, and accessibility. LWIA 7 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, LWIA 7 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, LWIA 7 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, LWIA 7 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. LWIA 7 last conducted a youth services procurement in 2023. The next RFP for youth programs is planned for 2026. This procurement continues to align organizational strategy for youth workforce development activities with WIOA core partners' services, and LWIA 7'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. LWIA 7'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.

Despite strategic efforts across several public agencies, youth unemployment persists. For this reason, LWIA 7 will continue to award a minimum of 80% of its WIOA youth funding to agencies serving out-of-school youth – an expenditure rate above the statutory requirement – until demographics change. LWIA 7 typically awards 85%-90% of its youth funds to out-of-school youth programs.

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 these elements.

WIOA Youth program and currently 25 entities serve as Youth providers. Each provider must deliver or partner to provide all 14 WIOA Youth elements available to youth. Language from our WIOA Youth Request for Proposals that follows outlines LWIA 7's expectations and guidance for how these elements are delivered. Each provider can customize and specialize in 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 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 are 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 benefit 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 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 LWIA 7 serves in adult programs are individuals with barriers to employment as outlined in the Unified State Plan. In PY 2024 over 90% of WIOA enrolled adults served had at least one significant barrier to employment. In the same program year, over 73% of WIOA enrolled adults served were low income, nearly 60% were food stamp recipients, and over 50% were basic skills deficient.

In PY 2017, LWIA 7 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, AJCs, 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 are 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, LWIA 7, 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. .. Though ARPA funding has ended for The Road Home program as of November 2025, LWIA 7's efforts to support this population continue through our large network of partnerships with community leaders and organizations. LWIA 7 continues to expand services for returning residents utilizing new grants such as the CEJA Workforce Hubs and CEJA Returning Residents Program as mentioned previously. With the long-term goal of creating a coordinated reentry system for Cook County, LWIA 7 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. LWIA 7 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 of Community Safety to coordinate efforts to support 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.

LWIA 7 also contracts with several workforce agencies that provide specialized services to specific populations that face language 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. In 2024, The Partnership supported New Arrivals from Ukraine, Haiti, Afghanistan, Venezuela, and other countries with basic career services in their native languages and made 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 migrant populations and sharing best practices with the AJC Network in Chicago and Cook County.

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

LWIA 7 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. Also, LWIA 7 has received substantial funding to open the doors for additional dislocated workers facing barriers, such as long-term unemployed and marginalized communities. These additional grants allow greater numbers of people to access individualized training accounts, on-the-job-training, and disaster relief employment opportunities.

Additionally, s, LWIA 7 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 helps provide additional supportive services to customers enrolled in WIOA. Lastly, CEJA barrier reduction funding is available and more inclusive than WIOA because it provides flexible, needs-based supports without needing to meet federal eligibility standards, allowing programs to serve individuals with complex or non-linear pathways to employment. Barrier reduction services are available to CEJA participants before, during, and after training, including up to one-year post-completion.

Where appropriate, LWIA 7 will incorporate state waiver flexibilities into local policy and program design while maintaining compliance with federal and state guidance. Implementation will be accompanied by clear internal procedures, staff training, and performance monitoring to ensure that waiver utilization advances equitable access, improves participant outcomes, and strengthens overall system effectiveness. Through this approach, The Partnership will use available state policy flexibilities strategically to expand opportunity and reduce structural barriers within Cook County's workforce system.

- 3. Describe how the local workforce areas will ensure an RIA perspective 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.**

LWIA 7 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 Chicago Cook WIB and its committees as well as with the Chief Elected Officials and their designees. The principles of RIA: responsiveness, inclusivity, and accessibility are 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 integrating an RIA 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, PY24, in which over 9600 clients enrolled in Title I services.

Figure 1: WIOA Title I Participants by Gender, July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025

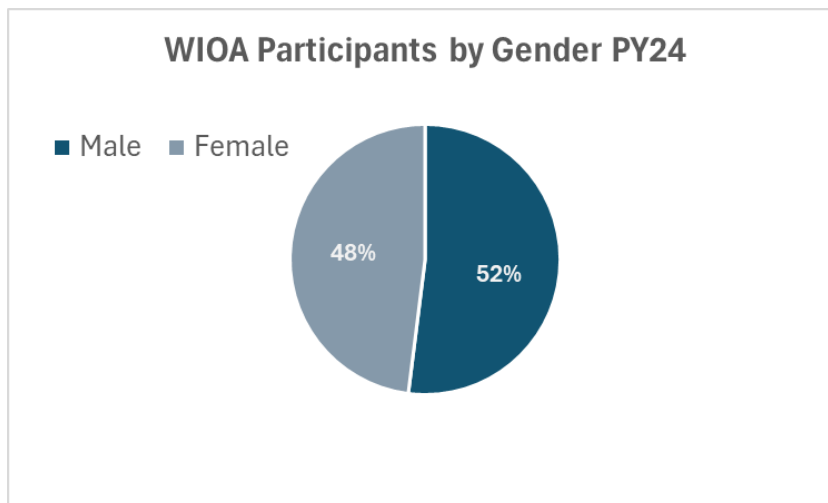
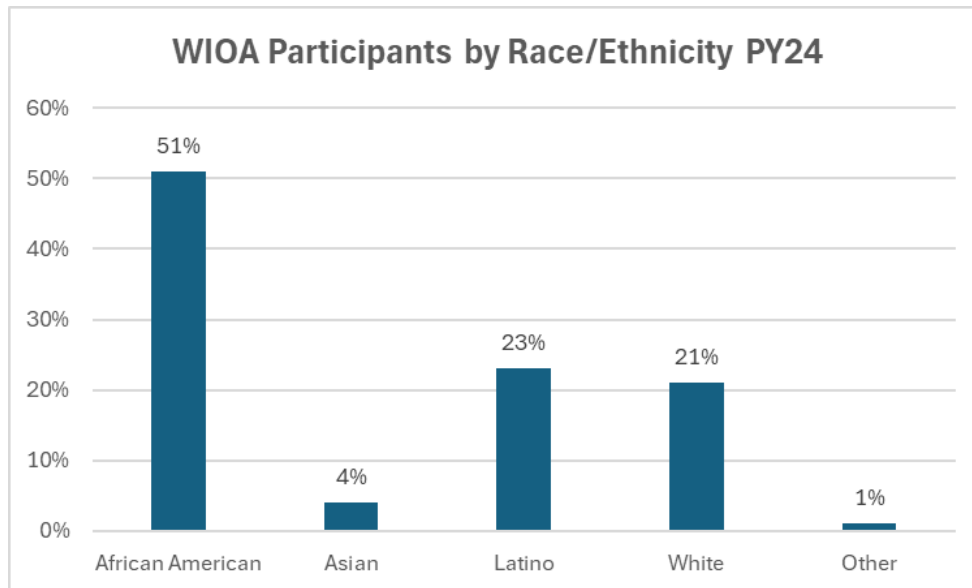


Figure 2: WIOA Title I Participants by Race/Ethnicity July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025



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.

LWIA 7 remains committed to using data analysis to strengthen and inform our work. In addition, to the demographic and employment data we regularly capture, we have a goal of implementing pre- and post-program assessments to measure the changes in participants' skills, career progression and ongoing needs to retain employment. Analyzing the outcomes data can provide valuable insights into the program's effectiveness and difficult to measure outcomes. LWIA 7 will also enhance our use of data visualization tools, such as dashboards and reports, to present program data in a visually engaging and informative manner.

LWIA 7 works closely with the One Stop Operator (OSO) to collect feedback from participants, partner organizations, and stakeholders involved in the program referral process. Analyzing this data can identify areas for improvement, successful referral pathways, and opportunities to enhance collaboration with local entities for better program outcomes. We have a long-term goal of implementing a longitudinal tracking system to monitor participants' progress over time, including their employment status, wage growth, and career advancement opportunities. We are in discussions with partner organizations and higher education groups to determine the best approach for such tracking.

We have increased the use of success stories as a tool for marketing, recruiting, and program effectiveness. Our communications teams regularly showcase real-life examples of individual program participants who have overcome challenges, achieved their goals, and found success in their careers. Creating a personal connection and relatability can inspire participants by demonstrating that success is achievable, regardless of their circumstances. Testimonials and

endorsements can build credibility, instill confidence, and inspire participants and employers by showcasing the tangible outcomes and benefits of the program.

LWIA 7 is seeking to further work on prioritizing and understanding a range of targeted populations by conducting data analysis on its high-need and targeted populations to better understand unique needs of individual groups and LWIA 7 programs' effectiveness in delivering services for them.

LWIA 7 implements its RIA lens and focus by funding a variety of jobseeker service models. AJCs are higher volume centers that are either collocated with or connected to all five WIOA Titles. Currently, The Partnership supports 11 AJCs throughout Cook County. Delegate Agencies are CBOs 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 AJC Network in LWIA 7, and to use that data to implement our RIA goals in conjunction with a wide variety of partners.

LWIA 7 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, LWIA 7 intends to refine training policies and work with the ITA-certified training partners to form technical assistance plans that address any resultant gaps.

The staff conducts our analysis of training-related outcomes annually. This includes analyzing program and outcomes data by race and gender as well as by special populations. As a result of this analysis, we have implemented several best practices including customized RIA-focused outreach along with additional support services and mentorship: Our communications team has

developed targeted recruitment, The Partnership sits on several local and regional committees which allow us to collaborate on outreach efforts, recruitment strategies, and support services to impact positive training outcomes.

LWIA 7 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, LWIA 7 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.

LWIA 7 recognizes that women and youth of color remain underrepresented in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) occupations despite strong regional demand and wage growth in these fields. Increasing equitable access to STEM exposure is essential to advancing economic mobility and addressing talent shortages across Cook County's innovation-driven sectors. Cook County is a major regional hub for STEM employment, anchored by strong demand in IT, Healthcare and Life Sciences, Advanced Manufacturing, TDL, and Clean Energy.

LWIA 7 currently funds Sector Centers to engage businesses in high-growth industries and to educate the LWIA's network of AJCs and Delegate Agencies about career opportunities in these sectors. In 2025, LWIA 7 provided supplemental support to 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. The events were held at union facilities and featured interactive displays that provide hands-on exposure of the many high-quality jobs in the trades and engineering field.

In addition, Daley College, through its Manufacturing Technology Engineering Center and collaborations with CBOs and workforce initiatives, hosts events and outreach that bring regional youth into manufacturing career conversations. This includes summer and short-term programming that complements WIOA pathways by making training accessible and engaging for youth interested in tech-focused trades. LWIA 7 has an AJC conveniently located at Daley College which allows the college to easily refer STEM-focused students to WIOA Title I career and training services.

As noted above, LWIA 7 is home to two CEJA Workforce Hubs dedicated to preparing jobseekers—including youth—for careers in the clean energy sector. These hubs offer industry recognized, jobs specific training in high-demand occupations such as electric vehicle (EV) technicians, EV charging station installers, solar photovoltaic technicians, and HVAC technicians. Together, these training pathways support the region's clean energy workforce needs while providing residents with access to emerging, family sustaining career opportunities.

LWIA 7's goal is to expand exposure to STEM careers for high school students, with a targeted focus on young women and youth of color who remain underrepresented in these fields. Through WIOA Youth programming and partner collaboration, LWIA 7 can increase access to STEM-aligned work experiences, employer site visits, and industry-led career awareness activities in high-demand sectors such as information technology, advanced manufacturing, and healthcare technology. Also, in partnership with regional education institutions, including the City Colleges of Chicago, LWIA 7 can promote dual credit, bridge programming, and stackable credential pathways. Participation and outcomes will be monitored by race and gender to ensure equitable

access and progress toward diversifying the regional STEM talent pipeline.

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 focus on youth populations. LWIA 7 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 hosted business, as Keats Manufacturing Company, have assigned supportive supervisors to mentor interns on the jobsite, accelerating assimilation into their workforce and giving enhanced and valuable work experience to the young adult participants. Building on proven practices, the local area implemented and expanded adult peer mentorship and counseling models, particularly in response to mass layoffs and sectoral disruptions. Through targeted funding, including the WIOA Title I National Dislocated Worker Grant (1E), the local area employed dislocated workers as Peer Counselors who are trained in WIOA policies, workforce system navigation, and career coaching. These individuals provided outreach, mentorship, and ongoing support to fellow dislocated workers, leveraging shared experience to increase trust, participation, and service uptake.

d. Providing training to workforce program staff on data-driven approaches to address RIA: responsiveness, inclusivity, and accessibility gaps.

LWIA 7 strengthens staff capacity to address responsiveness, inclusivity, and accessibility gaps by investing in data-driven training models, fellowships, and systemwide tools that equip workforce program staff with practical strategies to improve outcomes for jobseekers and employers.

LWIA 7 staff participate in the Job Quality Fellowship with Results for America and the Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) Fellowship, both of which emphasize the use of data to improve workforce system performance, equity, and employer responsiveness.

Through these fellowships, staff are trained to:

- Use quantitative and qualitative data to assess job quality, career pathway access, and employer practices;
- Apply employer level and system-level data to identify where workforce programs may unintentionally reinforce inequities; and
- Translate labor market and employer demand data into actionable strategies that improve access to quality jobs for priority populations.

As part of this training, LWIA 7 is developing a shared suite of job quality and employer engagement tools for business engagement staff across the Cook County WIOA network. Staff are trained to administer a data-driven online job quality assessment with employers and to use the results to guide improvement strategies.

Key indicators collected and analyzed include:

- Percentage of frontline workers earning a living wage;
- Employee eligibility for health insurance and benefits;
- Schedule stability, including advance notice of schedule changes;
- Internal promotion rates; and
- First-year and 90-day turnover rates.

Workforce staff are trained to analyze this data and develop customized action plans with employers who want to improve outcomes in one or more areas. This approach ensures that

employer engagement is responsive to labor market realities, while also advancing inclusive access to quality jobs for job seekers.

To ensure staff can effectively apply these tools, LWIA 7 provides ongoing training focused on both data literacy and equitable service delivery, including:

- Training in targeted outreach and recruitment, trauma-informed care, and culturally responsive programming to improve accessibility for populations with barriers to employment;
- Instruction on how to collect, analyze, and interpret disaggregated program data to identify disparities in employment, wage, and retention outcomes across demographic groups;
- Guidance on using data findings to adjust program design, supportive services, and employer strategies to close identified gaps; and
- Training on delivering tailored support services that respond to the specific needs identified through data and participant assessments.

The TPM Fellowship trains staff to organize employers into collaboratives and generate granular demand data related to hiring needs, skills requirements, and talent pipeline performance. This data is paired with insights from Illinois Employment and Business Systems (IEBS), which provides real-time labor market and economic intelligence.

Together, these tools allow staff to:

- Validate employer demand using labor market data;
- Target sectors and occupations with strong growth and advancement potential;
- Design sector strategies and career pathways that are both employer-responsive and equitable; and
- Improve accessibility to high-quality jobs and apprenticeships for underrepresented

populations.

Finally, staff are encouraged and supported to build partnerships with:

- Community-based organizations serving populations with significant barriers to employment; and
- Employers are committed to improving job quality, accessibility, and inclusive hiring practices.

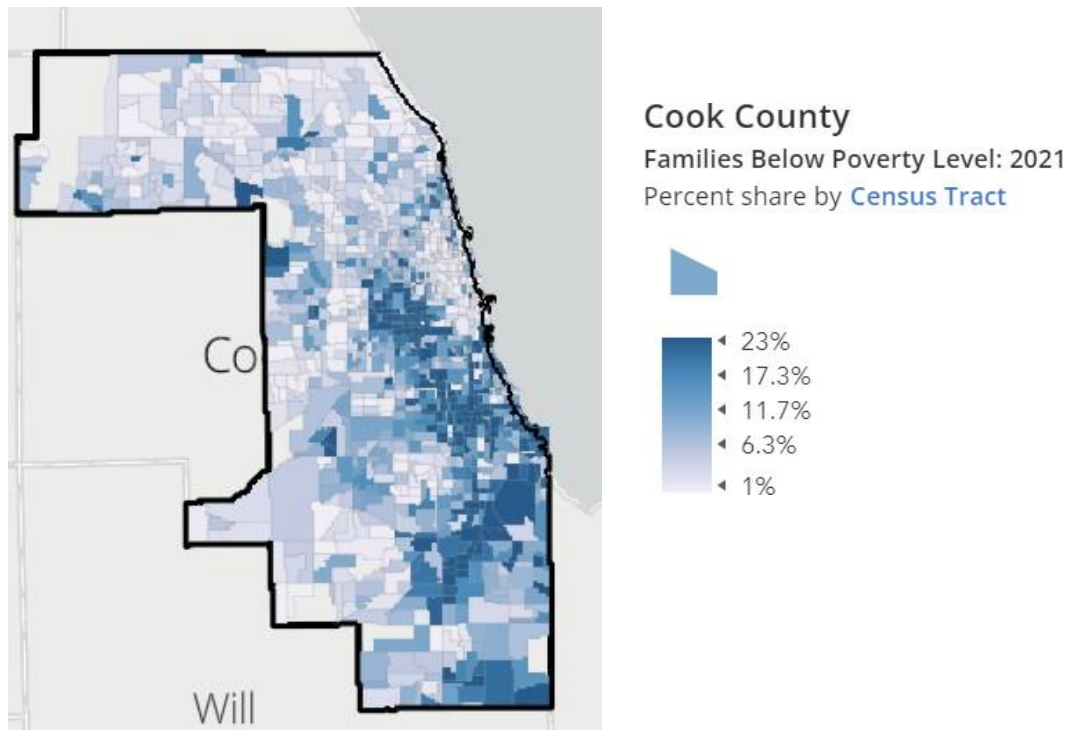
This combined approach ensures that workforce program staff are not only trained in data-driven methods but are also equipped to apply data in ways that improve responsiveness, inclusivity, and accessibility across the local workforce system.

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 fast on the south and west sides of Chicago and in south suburban Cook County. These 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 Illinois Department of Employment Security 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.

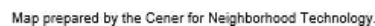
Over the summer of 2023, the Office of the Mayor of Chicago identified key locations in Chicago for investment. This team used the Chicago Environmental Justice Index (Chicago EJ Index) and Map that identifies Environmental Justice neighborhoods – Chicago communities most burdened by pollution and

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 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 are prioritizing investments in community and economic development. (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Cook County Priority Communities

Lansing
Lynwood
Markham
Matteson
Merrionette Park
Olympia Fields
Park Forest
Phoenix
Posen
Richton Park
Riverdale
Robbins
Sauk Village
South Chicago Heights
South Holland
Steger
Thornton



- ▶ 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

- ▶ 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 Partnership targets eligible participants from historically marginalized communities, especially communities with elevated levels of unemployment, poverty and underserved populations, such as in Chicago: Bronzeville, Douglas, Garfield, Greater Englewood, Kenwood, Oakland, Pullman, Robbins, Roseland, and Uptown, and in the suburban Cook County area: Maywood and Harvey.

Additionally, amid the huge international displacement of millions of Ukrainians, LWIA 7's AJC in Wheeling, AJC at Truman College, AJC in Maywood and Polish American Association provided 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. Also, LWIA 7 assisted our migrant population, by providing them with basic career services, workforce resources and hiring events in 2024. Also, referrals to Title II's Adult education ESL courses are offered at any City College. These activities continue to be the focus of delivery service for the migrant population. Career and training services 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.

4. Describe any efforts in the local area to support immigrants and migrants through appropriate and allowable workforce services.

a. This addition aligns local planning efforts with language and efforts included in Illinois WIOA Unified Plan.

LWIA 7 supports immigrants and migrants through a coordinated set of allowable workforce services that align with WIOA requirements and the priorities outlined in the Illinois Unified State Plan, implemented through the lens of Responsiveness, Inclusivity, and Accessibility (RIA). The local area provides universal WIOA career services—including job search assistance, labor market

information, career coaching, basic skills and digital literacy workshops, and referrals—through its network of AJCs and Delegate Agencies, ensuring access for all residents regardless of immigration status. For individuals who obtain valid work authorization, LWIA 7 offers WIOA-funded training services such as occupational skills training, work-based learning, apprenticeships, and Individual Training Accounts that lead to industry-recognized credentials and improved employment outcomes. LWIA 7 further leverages Title II Adult Education programs, which do not require work authorization, to expand access to ESL, adult basic education, integrated education and training models, and other foundational skill-building opportunities critical for newly arrived migrants and immigrant residents. These efforts are strengthened through partnerships with Illinois Welcoming Centers, the Immigrant Family Resource Program, and CBOs that provide culturally and linguistically responsive navigation, legal and benefits assistance, and wrap-around supports. Collectively, these strategies allow LWIA 7 to deliver a comprehensive, compliant, and human-centered set of workforce services that support immigrant and migrant populations in accessing career pathways and achieving economic mobility.

5. Describe efforts in the local area to support SNAP program recipients.

a. This addition is in response to the new work requirements for SNAP recipients and will align local plans with the modification to Illinois' 2024 WIOA Unified Plan.

Changes have been made to the federal SNAP benefit program which are effective starting May 2, 2026, many SNAP recipient benefits, become contingent on work participation it will be required for some recipients to engage with the LWIA 7 workforce system via the AJCs and other network organizations and programs to support these individuals through potential employment and training to help them mitigate hardship and contribute to their overall economic stability.

Initial strategies identified to be implemented include:

- Assess SNAP recipient population regionally as a priority and conduct targeted

outreach with specific messaging as well as throughout the entire LWIA service region, i.e. City of Chicago and suburban Cook County. Utilize all communication formats.

- Utilize the Level Up platform for public awareness and referral management and tracking.
- Partner with the State of IL DHS and other social service agencies to determine educational initiatives by means of flyers, workshops, and other presentation vehicles as well as to integrate employment guidance with benefit counseling.
- American Job Centers and Affiliates to host/offer specialty informational webinars and workshops regarding WIOA employment and training resources, programs, and opportunities. SNAP recipients may also expect rapid job search and employment placement assistance by way of individual job matching, resume support, interview preparation, and referrals to employers with entry-level openings.
- LWIA 7 Business Service Team members will amplify employer engagement activity for rapid employment placement as well as offer work-based learning opportunities.
- Affected SNAP recipients may also be eligible for WIOA supportive services, i.e. transportation support, childcare referral, digital and literacy

6. Describe plans in the local area to coordinate services with recipients of Workforce Pell Grants beginning with the 2026-2027 academic year.

a. This addition is in response to the new Workforce Pell grants and will align local plans with the modification to Illinois' 2024 WIOA Unified Plan. While final rules regarding those grants will not be available when local workforce areas are drafting their modifications, local areas should describe how they are planning to coordinate with recipients of the Workforce Pell Grants.

The following details are initial plans and strategy for the implementation of Workforce Pell Grants in LWIA 7 for PY2026 through PY2027:

- Governance and overall State alignment will include a coordination plan with all related Pell Grant partners: Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) and Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE).
- Program and Credential readiness must ensure that training aligns to LWIA 7 Labor market demands and an inventory of short-term (150-600 hour) credential programs that are currently funded by:
 - WIOA ITAs
 - SNAP E&T (if applicable)
 - State or other funding dollars, i.e. philanthropic
- Assess training programs against Illinois and LWIA 7 high-demand occupations
- Identify which programs are strong '*Workforce Pell candidates*'.
- Identify gaps where a redesign is needed in potential programs.
- Service Delivery must include a Pell eligibility screening and referral
And should allow for co-enrollment, Pell for enrollment and WIOA for support.
- Employer/Sector alignment - Workforce Pell programs may/should align to sector partnerships and/or TPM collaboratives and credentials should meet employers' skills-based needs. Through the TPM collaborative model employers may customize hiring preferences based on credentials as well as provide curriculum input, made aware and encouraged to engage with WIOA work-based learning incentives and tools: OJT, apprenticeships and internships.

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 (OSO) supports and coordinates a human-centered design approach throughout the AJCs, 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 11 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 team will conduct the next round of the Service Integration Self-Assessment at the 4 comprehensive AJCs in the last quarter of the current fiscal year (April 2026-June 2026).

The OSO hosts monthly partner meetings at all 4 of the comprehensive 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. 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.

At the core of LWIA 7's commitment to a human-centered approach is the promotion of a system where the customer (job seeker or business) sees "no wrong door" and is not limited in services based on funding stream, agency or program. A seamless approach will continue to be pursued and will include close collaboration among all of the WIOA system partners, other nonprofit organizations, education, human service, and economic development entities and for business customers, other business-serving entities like city and county economic development agencies, small business development centers, Chambers and others.

- 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).

Five of LWIA 7's AJCs are located on a Community College campus, and an 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. Also, two AJC are co-located at the IDES Office in Harvey and Wheeling.

LWIA 7'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 CBOs 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 Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity planned to begin utilizing workNet (IWDS 2.0) as a statewide option 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 this plan modification, Title I, Title II, Title III, and Title IV were all using Airtable© to refer customers to each other.

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 AJCs, 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, LWIA 7 has invested about 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 AJCs and Delegate Agencies have been encouraged to develop more OJT's and other work-based learning activities. Funding from special grants is also 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. LWIA 7 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. LWIA 7 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. The Partnership will support 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, LWIA 7 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, LWIA 7 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 support.

2. How local areas will provide training and professional development opportunities to staff regarding the RIA principles in service delivery of responsiveness, inclusivity, and accessibility , access, trauma-informed care, and other topics concerning a customer-centered approach to service delivery.

3. LWIA 7 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). boosts 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 the year for 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, LWIA 7 continues to promote 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, DCEO 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, LWIA 7 encourages staff to obtain the Certified Workforce Development Professional (CWDP) national workforce credential, obtainable through NAWDP. Lastly, LWIA 7 supports a culture of safety and empowerment and understands this is imperative in serving and supporting young people.

- 4. 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, has been updated and is attached. WIA 7 contracts with a new third-party entity, referred to as the International Scholarship & Tuition Services (ISTS) system to process ITAs. ISTS compares the financial statement received from the Career Coach to the program costs as listed in Illinois workNet before training

is approved. 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. Customers are required to research different training providers and conduct site visits, as well as check outcomes for the training provider on Illinois workNet. 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.

5. How will the Local Board 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.

LWIA 7 ensures continuous improvement of eligible training providers and alignment with the employment needs of local employers, workers, and jobseekers through a performance-driven, demand-aligned ITA and ETPL oversight framework. While Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) prioritize customer choice, the Board actively manages the system to ensure the menu of approved training programs reflects local labor market demand and career pathway opportunities. The Partnership focuses on 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.

Ongoing analysis has identified concentration of ITA investments in a limited set of occupations; in response, LWIA 7 is working to diversify training investments toward a broader range of high-demand, high-growth occupations aligned with City of Chicago and Cook County economic and community development priorities.

LWIA 7 regularly reviews the ITA system to ensure training offerings meet employer demand, and that participant assessment and training selection processes support strong matches between customer skills, interests, and program outcomes. Business Relations and Economic Development (BRED) staff work directly with employers and training providers to align training with workforce needs, including the use of ITAs, Apprenticeships, On-the-Job Training, and Incumbent Worker Training where appropriate.

Eligible training providers are subject to rigorous certification and re-certification requirements. The Training Provider Eligibility and Certification Policy Letter was updated on September 16, 2025, strengthening standards for provider oversight, credential alignment, and performance accountability. Providers must be re-evaluated every two years and demonstrate continued compliance with eligibility requirements, including delivery of industry-recognized credentials. Performance reports are generated for each program, measuring completion, placement, and training-related placement outcomes. Programs must meet or exceed 75 percent of required benchmarks (with a defined tolerance range), based on a minimum of ten program exiters, or they are removed from the Eligible Training Provider List.

Measure	Goal	Meeting Range
WIOA Training-Related Entered Employment Rate ²	75%	67.5% - 75%
Successful Training Completion Rate ³	75%	67.5% - 75%
Credential Attainment Rate ⁴	75%	67.5% - 75%

The Local Board reviews the ETPL quarterly to assess provider performance, renewals, and new program inclusion. Both training providers and WIOA enrolling entities share accountability for participant outcomes and are required to document progress, credentials, and employment results. Continuous refinement of the ETPL—including sector prioritization, occupational focus, and tuition caps—is guided by labor market information and Board approval to ensure training investments support high-growth sectors, family-sustaining wages, and evolving employer demand. LWIA 7 continues 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. In July 2026, the State will revamp recertification process for training providers.

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

LWIA 7 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 online for our system. Additionally, the One-Stop Operator installed 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 AJC has 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).

LWIA 7 maintains flexibility to strategically allocate workforce resources in response to changing economic conditions, participant demand, employer needs, and regional labor market priorities. Through its annual budget development process, the Chicago Cook Workforce Innovation Board reviews all Title I funding allocations and determines whether transfers or reservations are necessary to maximize service delivery and performance outcomes. The Workforce Innovation Board authorizes transfers of up to 100 percent between the Adult and Dislocated Worker funding streams, consistent with WIOA statutory authority and Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity guidance. The Board also authorizes the reservation of up to 20 percent of Adult and Dislocated Worker formula allocations for Incumbent Worker Training activities, as permitted under WIOA. Recommendations for transfers or Incumbent Worker Training reservations are developed based on analysis of expenditure trends, participant enrollment, labor

market information, employer demand, and program performance. Any transfer or reservation must be approved by the Workforce Innovation Board through its budget approval process or subsequent Board action before implementation. This approach provides LWIA 7 with the flexibility to respond to local workforce needs while ensuring fiscal accountability and compliance with federal and State requirements.

L. Describe how workforce incorporates RIA: responsiveness, inclusivity, and accessibility and/or how it will be incorporated in the operating systems and policies as part of the Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIAs)

The Partnership incorporates Responsiveness, Inclusivity, and Accessibility (RIA) into its operations and policies through system design, performance management, partner requirements, and continuous improvement practices.

Responsiveness is embedded through labor market-driven planning and adaptive service delivery. The Partnership regularly reviews labor market information, employer input, and performance data to guide sector priorities, Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) decisions, ITA investments, and service strategies. Business engagement, sector partnerships, and feedback loops with employers inform the design of training, work-based learning, and career pathway initiatives. Policies governing ITAs, training provider certification, and service mix are routinely reviewed and updated to ensure alignment with evolving regional economic needs.

Inclusivity is operationalized through equity-centered policies, performance expectations, and partner accountability. The Partnership requires service providers to prioritize populations with barriers to employment and to implement assessment, referral, and service strategies that reduce disparities in access and outcomes. Equity considerations are integrated into procurement, program design, performance analysis, and continuous improvement processes. Providers are held

accountable for serving priority populations and documenting progress toward equitable outcomes across race, ethnicity, disability status, income, and other barrier indicators.

Accessibility is ensured through systemwide standards for physical, programmatic, and informational access. Policies require compliance with WIOA equal opportunity and ADA requirements, including reasonable accommodations, auxiliary aids, and accessible communication. Services are delivered through a network of AJCs and community-based partners to improve geographic reach and community-level access. Clear expectations for documentation, communication, and customer support help ensure individuals can navigate services regardless of language, disability, or background.

Collectively, these operational practices ensure that the Partnership's values are translated into actionable policies and day-to-day decision-making, supporting a workforce system that is responsive to labor market demand, inclusive of priority populations, and accessible to all jobseekers and employers. The LWIA 7 agency network led by The Partnership continues to examine its policies and engages in its commitment to RIA principles in the workforce. The Partnership incorporates a workforce RIA lens into all of its work and initiatives. Some examples are outlined below:

A key part of the LWIA 7 workforce system are our smaller, neighborhood-based organizations called "Delegate Agencies." These providers are often deeply embedded in under-served, disadvantaged and often minority communities, which enhances the local system's ability to serve people of color and other diverse populations.

RFPs to be released in 2026 to select service providers for AJCs, Delegate Agencies and Youth Providers will specifically ask respondents to address the adoption and/or demonstration of RIA in both 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.

LWIA 7 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 during local WIB and committee meetings to help identify any inequities. We also use this data internally to measure how well services are reaching target populations and communities.

LWIA 7 will continue to focus on supporting employers in their own RIA efforts by prioritizing those offering good jobs and career pathways to a broad spectrum of the potential workforce and providing training and technical assistance to employer customers on issues such as career pathways, reducing barriers to hiring (degree requirements, background checks, driver's license requirements, etc.) that disproportionately shut out certain populations from job opportunities.

The Partnership is also conducting a compensation analysis of its own positions. This process is ongoing, but The Partnership uses G&A's national database, Economic Research Institute (ERC), to benchmark job titles and descriptions, years of experience, metropolitan location and annual operating budget to create market specific salary range recommendations void of consideration for age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or any other protected class. Questions around RIA principles are now part of our hiring process.

The Partnership Leadership team participated in the Chicago Workforce Funder Alliance and Chicago Jobs Council (CJC) Learning Community series. The goal of the series was 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
- Reimagined a workforce system that is equitable

- Anti-Racist Workforce Development System framework
- Career readiness system framework
- Using Asset based language

Lastly, LWIA 7 promoted 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 also promoted the use of CJC's Career Readiness Curriculum, which is a free curriculum based on existing curricula and field expertise. Handouts, slide deck, facilitator guides, talking points, and coaching questions were 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

In Program Year 2024, the last year with complete data, The Partnership 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 goals with the state in 2026. As occurs yearly, the Partnership reports its performance each year and any new or changed goals to the Chicago Cook WIB during regular meetings. (See WIOA Performance Table below.)

Title I – Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs performance outcomes for PY 2024:

WIOA Performance Measure	Adult	Dislocated	Youth
Employment in 2 nd Qtr. after Exit	73.7% (1547/2099) Exceed	79.54% (1030/1295) Exceed	76.64% (902/1177) Exceed
Median Qtr. 2 Earnings	\$10,570 Exceed	\$11,786 Exceed	\$6,400 Exceed
Employment in 4 th Qtr. after Exit	71.53% (1563/2185) Exceed	79.4% (1029/1296) Exceed	74.6% (984/1319) Exceed
Credential Rate	74.32% (1207/1624) Exceed	74.56% (636/853) Exceed	74.45% (641/861) Exceed
Measurable Skills Gain	67.52% (1480/2192) Exceed	68.39% (924/1351) Exceed	73.67% (901/1223) Exceed

The Title I -LWIA 7 Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs for PY2025 have been set as follows:

WIOA Performance Measure	Adult	Dislocated	Youth
Employment in 2 nd Qtr. after Exit	71%	77%	73%
Median Qtr. 2 Earnings	\$8,300	\$10,900	\$5,500
Employment in 4 th Qtr. after Exit	70%	75%	72%

Credential Rate	73%	73%	70%
Measurable Skills Gain	63%	63%	63%

LWIA 7 will propose a similar level of measures in its negotiations with the State for PY2026 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 PY24 Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs presented to the Workforce Innovation Board showed the following information:

WIOA Funded Adult	WIOA Funded Dislocated Worker	WIOA Funded Youth
4202 Registrants 2352 New Enrollments 1984 Exitters 3339 Training	2486 Registrants 1272 New Enrollments 1216 Exitters 1860 Training	2892 Registrants 1386 New Enrollments 1386 Exitters
46.5% Female 53.3% Male	43.6% Female 56.2% Male	53.9% Female 45.6% Male
59.3% Black 22.5% White 21.8% Hispanic 4.8% Asian <i>People may select more than 1 race</i>	47.8% Black 31.4% White 28.2% Hispanic 4.3% Asian <i>People may select more than 1 race</i>	62.2% Black 17.7% White 28.4% Hispanic 2.7% Asian <i>People may select more than 1 race</i>
73.5% Low-income (59% on food stamps) 52.7% Basic Skills Deficient 11.5% Report Prior Offenses 8.6% Report Long-term Unemployment 2% Veterans 4.5% Single Parents	62.6% Receiving Unemployment Insurance 31.9% Exhausted U.I. Benefits 43.1% Low-income (21% on food stamps) 35.8% Basic Skills Deficient 4% Veterans 5.4% Report Prior Offenses 16.2% Report Long-term Unemployment	42.8% Low-income (26% on food stamps) 48.9% Living in a Poverty Area 14.8% Report Having a Disabling Condition 9.8% Experiencing Homelessness 11.7% Pregnant/parenting 63% Basic Skills Deficient 2.8% Report Prior Offenses
5.6% Did Not Graduate from High School 53.7% High School Graduate 7.7% Post High School Attendee 17% College Graduate	4.1% Did Not Graduate from High School 43.1% High School Graduate 6.4% Post High School 34.9% College Graduate	14.4% In-school Youth 85.5% Out-of-school Youth 62.7% High School Diploma 13.1% Drop Out 2.7% Post High School Attendee 2.9% College Graduate
1273 (64% of exitters) Exited with Employment \$24.47/hour Average Wage at Placement	905 (74% of exitters) Exited with Employment \$26.19/hour Average Wage at Placement	823 (61% of exitters) Exited with Employment \$19.23/hour 146 (11% of exitters) Exited With Post-secondary Education

2. Additional State Performance Measures

Performance measures for WIOA Titles II (Adult Education and Family Literacy), III (Wagner-Peyser Employment Services), and IV (Vocational Rehabilitation) are negotiated at the state level between the State of Illinois and the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education. As a result, local performance goals for Titles II, III, and IV align with the state's negotiated performance levels and are incorporated into the Local Plan as outlined below.

Title II - Adult Education have been set as follows:

Metric	PY 26	PY 27
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit	23.6%	23.7%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit	24.0%	24.1%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit	\$6,250	\$6,350

Title III – Wagner Peyser have been set as follows:

Metric	PY 26	PY 27
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit	65.0%	65.0%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit	66.0%	66.0%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit	\$8,500	\$8,500

Title IV – Voc Rehab have been set as follows:

Metric	PY 26	PY 27
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit	57.3%	57.8%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit	50.5%	50.5%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit	\$4,550	\$4,600

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?

LWIA 7 continues to analyze and evaluate our program to identify service strategies that yield the most promising return on investment. Going forward LWIA 7 is committed to assessing impact over outputs in our overall programming. LWIA 7 will continue to analyze facility and operating costs and look for more efficient and effective ways to serve job seekers and employers. Such may include the following calibration activities:

- ▶ 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 AJCs, Delegate Agencies, and Career Pathway programs as job seeker-facing service models
 - Comparison of service, training, credential, employment, and wage outcomes across AJC, 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 (AJCs, 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.

LWIA 7 will at relevant times provide information on planned evaluation activities to the local board at quarterly board meetings. LWIA 7 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 curtail 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 CBOs to support wrap-around and supportive services needed by job seekers and workers to support retention and successful outcomes. The Partnerships includes organizations and other entities with expertise and services related to housing/homelessness, legal assistance, health and behavioral health and a range of other issues and barriers. This will also include focused effort to expand access to supports that all workers need such as improved and expanded childcare services; transportation access (including directly dedicating increased funding to transit passes and expanding partnerships and advocacy to expand transportation from where targeted populations live to where the jobs are).
- ▶ 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 AJCs 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.

The Partnership secured \$10,000 from Western Governors University (WGU) to support expanded research on return on investment (ROI) in the public workforce system. These resources will be used to strengthen how LWIA 7 defines, measures, and communicates ROI, moving beyond participant wage gains to incorporate a broader set of impacts. This work will elevate an inclusive ROI narrative that reflects not only individual earnings impacts, but also social and economic benefits for employers, communities, and the local economy overall.

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

Disproportionate ITA spending in a small number of occupations—without corresponding wage growth or advancement opportunities—can limit system impact. Continued funding of high-volume, low-mobility training pathways may be reduced in favor of diversified, higher-return options. LWIA 7 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 LWIA 7 will explore ways to better distribute and space out the ITA usage to meet labor demand and ensure the best return on investment. We plan to further analyze data on success rates of training outcomes by sector and training provider. Layering this data with wages earned associated with job attainment and high-growth, high demand sectors, this analysis can inform which career pathways to focus more heavily on as an LWIA to provide a better return on investment. These are part of overall efforts to continuously improve the ITA system as noted in the section on ITA training above.

In addition, certain activities (e.g., repeated resume workshops, generic job readiness classes, or

prolonged case management without advancement milestones) may show limited marginal benefit when not tied to IEPs or measurable skill gains. This may lead us to redesign workshops to tiered models (basic, advanced, sector-specific). Also, we may require employer input and involvement in advanced workshops.

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?

LWIA 7 will use a combination of return on investment (ROI) measures and qualitative outcome data to identify barriers to enrollment in education and training programs. Program effectiveness will be assessed using employment placement rates, job retention, wage at placement, wage progression, and attainment of industry-recognized credentials for participants served through LWIA 7. These outcomes will be reviewed in relation to program cost, time to completion, and alignment with employer demand in priority sectors such as healthcare, manufacturing, transportation and logistics, information technology, and professional services.

To better understand enrollment barriers, LWIA 7 will analyze enrollment pipeline data, including referral-to-enrollment conversion rates, time between referral and program start, and points of disengagement during intake, training, or credential attainment. Referral tracking tools used by The Partnership and its One-Stop Operator, including cross-partner referral and outcome tracking systems, will support analysis of administrative, scheduling, eligibility, and access-related barriers that may delay or prevent enrollment.

Supply-and-demand alignment data, including job posting analytics through Jobs EQ and training completion data, will be used to identify occupations with strong employer demand but limited

participant enrollment or completion. Where gaps exist, the local area will examine whether barriers such as program length, prerequisite requirements, limited training schedules, or insufficient supportive services are contributing factors.

Qualitative outcome data will supplement quantitative analysis. Feedback gathered through career coaching, delegate agency service delivery, employer engagement, sector partnerships, and regional business services activities will be used to contextualize performance data and identify barriers that are not captured through administrative reporting. Particular attention will be given to insights from participants with barriers to employment, including individuals with disabilities, returning citizens, English language learners, youth, and individuals experiencing housing instability, to ensure enrollment strategies remain aligned with RIA principles.

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

LWIA 7 will prioritize cost-effective strategies that reduce barriers to enrollment and completion while maximizing participant outcomes and employer value. Work-based learning models—including on-the-job training, paid work experience, apprenticeships, and incumbent worker training—will continue to be emphasized as high-return strategies. These approaches reduce public training costs through employer co-investment, shorten time to employment, and allow participants to earn wages while building skills aligned with real-world job requirements.

The local area will continue to expand access to short-term, stackable credential pathways, including Bridge Programs and integrated education and training models delivered in partnership with community colleges and CBOs. These approaches reduce opportunity costs for participants

who cannot engage in long-term training and support incremental credential attainment with immediate labor market value, while maintaining pathways to higher-wage employment.

Service integration and coordinated referrals across LWIA 7 will be used to minimize administrative barriers and improve access to training and supportive services. LWIA 7's use of navigators and Delegate Agencies to provide warm handoffs between workforce, education, and human service partners will reduce delays and confusion during enrollment, particularly for individuals with multiple barriers.

Targeted supportive services will be deployed strategically to address enrollment and persistence barriers identified through data analysis. These include transportation assistance, referrals to childcare and housing resources, and coordination with public benefits and community-based supports. By focusing supportive services where they have the greatest impact on enrollment and completion, Cook County will maximize outcomes while managing costs.

Finally, LWIA 7 will strengthen front-end career navigation by integrating real-time labor market information into intake and career coaching. Improved alignment between participant goals, readiness, and regional demand will reduce training mismatches, lower non-completion rates, and improve overall return on investment for both participants and public workforce funding.

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

. With respect to analyzing performance goals and implementing evaluation activities, LWIA 7 is planning to examine its WIOA performance data in even more detail than current standard practices. For example, LWIA 7 will move beyond an analysis of how many people of color its network serves, but also how well the network is serving them. LWIA 7 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 of LWIA 7's target, high-growth sectors. Based on the data analysis LWIA 7 will develop strategies to advance the RIA agenda in order to improve outcomes in our services for people of color. With the upgrade to the new state case management and performance system, IWDS 2.0, LWIA 7 plans to be able to further examine and analyze WIOA performance data by race, ethnicity, gender and geographic distribution on a quarterly basis and provide this data to the local Workforce Investment Board.

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 AJCs 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 AJCs 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 AJC 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 ADAAA 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 ADAAA 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 AJCs, 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 AJCs 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 AJCs. 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 AJC 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. Comprehensive AJCs 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. Comprehensive AJCs 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 AJCs 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 AJCs are educated on the WIOA 2014, Title 29 Part 38, Section 188 Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity regulations. The AJCs 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. Comprehensive AJCs 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 AJCs 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 AJC staff ability to address, in accordance with the "direct linkage" requirement under WIOA, the Comprehensive AJC 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 in 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:

Challenge or Opportunity	Analysis: How LWIA 7 is addressing or will address this challenge or opportunity.
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The Partnership sees an opportunity to provide up to date program material and items used to inform LWIA 7 agencies of their physical and programmatic responsibilities to provide accessible services.	The opportunity to provide up-to-date 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.
The Partnership looks for ways to expedite the enrollment process and fast-track.	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. 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, agency staff 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

	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)).

The Partnership held internal staff dialogues on key aspects of the modification of the Local Plan and consulted the One-Stop Operator and Delegate Agencies for input on key activities and service strategies. In March 2026, the Partnership will convene Board members and City and County leadership representing the Chief Elected Officials to secure additional input. All of these activities will lead to additions and improvements to the narrative descriptions in the Plan.

During and after the public comment period, The Partnership will review all submitted comments and consider them in relation to the overall strategy of the State Plan and Chicago Cook WIB. Comments that align with or enhance organizational strategy will be incorporated into not only the body of the WIOA Local Plan Modification, but into ongoing practice through the local WIOA system.

To encourage public comment, The Partnership promoted the Local and Regional Plan (The Northeast Economic Development Region (NEEDR) Regional Plan Modifications for public comment through e-newsletters, social media and emails to the public, our network and stakeholders.

On February 18, 2026, members of the public were invited to comment on our proposed 2024-2028 Local Plan Modification.

“Comments are accepted through 5:00 PM on March 9, 2026. Lastly, the request for comment 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.).

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.

The proposed Local Plan Modification will be made available for public review and comment in accordance with WIOA Section 108(d). The document will be posted on The Partnership’s website for a minimum 30-day public comment period. Notification will be distributed to Workforce Innovation Board members, required one-stop partners, CBOs, education partners, labor representatives, and other stakeholders.

Public Comments:

All comments received will be reviewed and considered prior to final submission to the Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO). A summary of comments and any resulting revisions will be included in the final Local Plan Modification. No public comments were submitted or received by LWIA 7 by the March 9, 2026, deadline.

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

Incorporating a workforce RIA lens is a fundamental aspect of our approach to meeting the administrative requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs. By applying an RIA 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 AJCs, we conduct outreach and recruitment efforts to reach these specific populations. We also collaborate with CBOs and agencies that serve these populations to ensure that our programs are accessible to those who face barriers to employment.

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. The Partnership has been implementing an RIA lens in its procurement process for Title I services. During procurement processes, respondents have been required

to address responsiveness, inclusivity, and accessibility 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 those higher demonstrated RIA 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 RIA 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 RIA lens into our administrative requirements, we are committed to addressing disparities, promoting responsiveness, inclusivity, accessibility and providing adequate 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.



Program Performance Evaluation Procedure

Document Control

Document Type	Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)
Department	Program Performance
Owner	Director of Program Performance
Approved By	Chief Executive Officer
Effective Date	3/17/2026
Version	1.0
Review Cycle	Semi Annually

Purpose

To establish a standardized process for evaluating The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership (The Partnership)- funded agencies and determining appropriate actions, including implementation of a Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP), reductions in funding, or defunding, based on performance, compliance, and strategic priorities. The Partnership uses the CIP as a strategic tool for growth and excellence.

The Partnership views the CIP process as a structured corrective mechanism designed to strengthen service delivery, improve outcomes, and protect the integrity of public investment. An intentionally structured CIP can enhance program quality, support Agency staff and leadership growth, improve outcomes, strengthen partnerships, and celebrate progress and innovation

Scope

This procedure applies to all Agencies under funding oversight of The Partnership.

Authority & Regulatory Basis

This procedure is adopted pursuant to The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership's authority as the designated Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

In accordance with WIOA, applicable federal regulations (including 20 CFR Parts 683 and 684), the approved Local Workforce Plan, and executed grant agreements, The Partnership is responsible for oversight of program performance, fiscal integrity, and compliance of funded Agencies. This oversight authority includes the ability to require corrective action, implement Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs), adjust funding levels, and terminate contracts when performance or compliance standards are not met.



Definitions

Benchmark	A measurable performance indicator or compliance standard used to evaluate an Agency's effectiveness, fiscal integrity, and adherence to program requirements.
Consecutive Years	Two uninterrupted program years in which an Agency meets specified performance or compliance conditions without a break in funding.
Disallowed Costs	Expenditures determined to be unallowable under WIOA, federal regulations, grant agreements, or approved budgets.
Fail	A rating indicating that a benchmark or requirement was not met and reflects critical underperformance or noncompliance requiring corrective action.
First Year Provider	An Agency that is in its initial program year of funding under an executed grant agreement with The Partnership.
Fiscal Compliance Score	The score assigned to an Agency based on fiscal controls, GAAP compliance, reimbursement accuracy, budget adherence, and monitoring findings.
Funding Reduction	A discretionary decrease in an Agency's awarded funding amount approved through established governance processes.
Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP)	standardized set of accounting rules, principles, and procedures used in the United States to ensure financial reporting is accurate, consistent, and transparent across organizations. GAAP provides guidance on how financial transactions should be recorded, reported, and disclosed, helping ensure accountability and proper stewardship of funds.
High-Risk Status	A designation assigned to an Agency demonstrating sustained performance or compliance deficiencies that require enhanced monitoring and oversight.
Medium	A rating indicating that minimum standards were met but performance or compliance improvements are needed to achieve full alignment with expectations.
New Provider	An Agency that has not previously received funding from The Partnership prior to the current program year.
Overall Score	The weighted composite score calculated on a 100-point scale based on Program Compliance, Fiscal Capacity, and Performance Metrics.
Program Compliance Score	The score assigned to an Agency based on adherence to programmatic requirements, monitoring findings, documentation standards, and regulatory compliance.
Repeat Findings	Monitoring or audit deficiencies that recur in a subsequent review period after previously identified corrective actions were required.
Serious Issues	Material performance, fiscal, compliance, or operational deficiencies that pose significant risk to public funds, participant services, or workforce system integrity.
Strong	A rating indicating that performance or compliance standards were consistently met or exceeded with no material deficiencies identified.
Weak	A rating assigned to a benchmark or category score indicating significant performance gaps, material compliance deficiencies, or failure to meet established standards.



Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Program Performance Team	Responsible for calculating evaluation scores, analyzing performance and compliance data, preparing formal performance reports, and recommending appropriate performance categories or corrective actions to Leadership.
Program Relationship Manager	Serves as the primary liaison to funded Agencies; communicates evaluation outcomes; facilitates development, monitoring, and closure of Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs); and documents ongoing oversight activities.
Agency	Responsible for meeting established performance, fiscal, and compliance standards; responding to evaluation findings; implementing corrective actions when required; and providing timely documentation to support performance monitoring.
Partnership Leadership Team	Reviews evaluation results and recommendations; determines appropriate corrective or funding actions; approves escalation decisions; and ensures alignment with strategic workforce priorities and governance standards.
Workforce Investment Board (WIB)	Provides oversight and approval, where required, for funding adjustments, contract terminations, and other material performance-related determinations in accordance with WIOA and local governance authority.
Partnership Contracts Team	Responsible for issuing formal contract amendments, funding adjustments, notices of termination, and ensuring all contractual actions align with approved determinations and regulatory requirements.
Budgets and Guidelines Team	Responsible for budget and plan updates when agency is recommended for defunding.

1. Evaluation Framework

Responsible Team Member(s)				
Program Performance Team	Finance Unit	Program Relationship Managers	Partnership Leadership Team	

This section defines the structured methodology for evaluating funded agencies. It establishes the three core evaluation dimensions, Program Compliance, Fiscal Capacity, and Performance Metrics, and outlines how each dimension is scored within a standardized 100-point framework.

It must clearly explain the category weighting, the score calculation methodology, the benchmark rating **criteria (Fail, Weak, Medium, Strong)**, and the internal validation process. This framework ensures evaluations are objective, transparent, consistent, and defensible, and it forms the basis for all subsequent funding and performance determinations.



1.1 Evaluation Metrics

Dimension	Description	Purpose
Program Compliance	Assessment of adherence to programmatic requirements, monitoring findings, documentation standards, and regulatory alignment.	Ensures services are delivered in accordance with grant agreements and local policy.
Fiscal Capacity	Review of fiscal controls, GAAP compliance, reimbursement accuracy, monitoring findings, and financial risk indicators.	Ensures financial integrity and proper stewardship of public funds.
Performance Metrics	Measurement of program outcomes, including enrollment, placement, credential attainment, retention, and other established benchmarks.	Evaluates the effectiveness and impact of services delivered.

1.2 Scoring Methodology

Component	Requirement	Description
Total Score	100-point scale	Agencies receive a composite score based on all three evaluation dimensions.
Category Weighting	Defined percentage allocation per dimension	Each dimension must have a predetermined weight contributing to the total score.
Benchmark Scoring	Standardized point ranges	Individual benchmarks are scored within defined ranges (e.g., 0 = Fail, 5 = Weak, 7 = Medium, 10 = Strong).
Calculation Formula	Weighted Aggregation	Final score = Sum of Dimension Scores
Score Validation	Internal review prior to finalization	Scores must be reviewed and validated by the designated leadership (e.g., the Program Performance Director) before a formal recommendation.



1.3 Benchmark Rating Criteria

Rating Level	Point Range	General Definition	Typical Characteristics
Strong	10 points	Exceeds or consistently meets established benchmarks	No material findings: outcomes meet or exceed targets; proactive management practices evident
Medium	7 points	Meets minimum standards but with minor areas for improvement	Isolated findings: minor corrective actions required; performance near benchmark
Weak	5 points	Does not meet established standards or benchmarks	Slightly below performance targets; performance gaps are moderate and potentially recoverable; corrective action required
Fail	0 points	Substantially below required performance standards	Demonstrates systemic issues; falls significantly below established benchmarks; corrective action required



2. Continue Funding

Responsible Team Member(s)				
Program Performance Team	Program Relationship Manager	Partnership Leadership Team	Workforce Investment Board (WIB) (as required)	Budgets & Guidelines Team

Agencies that meet or exceed established performance and compliance standards will continue to receive level funding for the subsequent program year. This category recognizes agencies demonstrating consistent performance, fiscal responsibility, and programmatic compliance. High-performing agencies may be considered for funding increases at The Partnership's discretion, subject to available funding.

2.1 Criteria for Continued Funding Status

Please see below for the criteria for Continue Funding Status

An Agency will qualify for Continue Funding status when all of the following conditions are met:

1. **Overall Composite Score** - The Agency receives a total score between 70 and 100 points on the annual evaluation.
2. **Benchmark Performance Threshold** - The Agency has no more than one (0–1) benchmark scoring in the 0–5 point range (Weak or Fail).
3. **Program Compliance Rating** - The Agency receives a score within the 7–10 point range (Medium to Strong) for Program Compliance.
4. **Fiscal Capacity Rating** - The Agency receives a score within the 7–10 point range (Medium to Strong) for Fiscal Capacity.

When an Agency meets the Continue Funding criteria:

- The Partnership will recommend level funding for the subsequent program year.
- No Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) will be issued.
- The Agency will continue under standard monitoring protocols.



3. Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP)

Responsible Team Member(s)				
Program Performance Team	Program Relationship Manager	Program Compliance Team	Fiscal Compliance Team	Partnership Leadership Team

A Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) is a structured corrective action process issued to Agencies that demonstrate performance, compliance, or fiscal deficiencies requiring formal intervention. The CIP establishes measurable corrective actions, defined timelines, and monitoring requirements to support improvement while protecting public funds and program integrity. Placement on a CIP does not automatically result in funding reduction but signals elevated oversight and risk monitoring.

3.1 Criteria for Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP)

An Agency may be placed on a CIP when any one or more of the following conditions are met:

A. Performance-Based Triggers

1. Overall Score ≥ 70 , but two or more benchmarks score within the 0–5 point range (Weak or Fail).
2. Overall Score < 70 for first-year or new providers only.

B. Compliance-Based Triggers

3. Program Compliance Score = Weak (0–5 range).
4. Fiscal Compliance Score = Weak (0–5 range).

3.2 Fiscal – Specific Circumstances Triggering A CIP

Following completion of a fiscal risk assessment or monitoring review, a fiscal-related CIP may be issued when any of the following conditions are identified:

- Accounting practices not compliant with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).
- Reimbursement vouchers containing costs outside the approved budget and/or unallowable under WIOA regulations.
- Repeat fiscal monitoring findings from the previous year.
- Disallowed costs identified during the most recent fiscal monitoring review.
- Repeat findings where previously required corrective actions were not implemented.



3.3 Required Actions – CIP Process

Step 1 – Internal Review & Recommendation

- The Program Performance Team analyzes performance data and prepares a performance report.
- The report is presented to Leadership for internal review and determination of whether a CIP is warranted.
- Special consideration may be given to program types with seasonal performance cycles (e.g., In-School Youth Programs).
- Special consideration may be given to individuals from populations facing barriers to service, including justice-involved individuals, refugees, and persons experiencing homelessness.

Step 2 – Agency Notification

- The Program Relationship Associate Director informs the Agency that a CIP is being recommended.
- If applicable, recommendations are presented to the Workforce Investment Board (WIB).

Step 3 – CIP Development

- The Program Compliance Specialist and Fiscal Compliance Monitor document identified deficiencies on the official CIP Form.
- Required improvement areas and preliminary goals are entered.
- The CIP Form is provided to the Program Relationship Manager (PRM).
- The PRM convenes an internal agency review meeting to add and finalize required corrective actions into the Action Plan section of the form. During this process, POD team members are identified to assist agencies with specific corrective actions.
- The PRM schedules an initial CIP meeting with the Agency.

Step 4 – Initial CIP Meeting

During the initial meeting:

- Areas requiring improvement are reviewed.
- Required corrective actions are discussed.
- The Agency is instructed to review and add any necessary action steps into the Action Plan section of the CIP. This process is intended to emphasize agency accountability, encourage active contribution to the Action Plan, and demonstrate understanding of the CIP.
- The Agency must return the complete Action Plan within one week of the initial meeting.
- Fiscal scores are provided to all agencies issued a CIP, regardless of whether the CIP is related to a fiscal finding.

Step 5 – Action Plan Meeting



At the follow-up meeting, the PRM reviews the Agency's submitted Action Plan and confirms:

- Specific corrective actions.
- Measurable performance indicators.
- Required documentation or evidence.
- Support to be provided by The Partnership.
- Due dates for each corrective goal.
- Scheduled final review meeting date.

Formal signatures from the PRM and the authorized Agency representative are secured to issue the CIP. The CIP period shall not exceed 180 calendar days, including any approved extensions.

Step 6 – Monitoring During CIP Period

- The PRM conducts monthly progress reviews during monthly meetings with the Agency.
- Agency members provide input and oversight.
- Status updates are documented in the designated internal tracking system [CIP Tracking Template REVISED May 2026.xlsx](#) and discussed internally by Partnership staff.
- The PRM and Program Performance Team provide regular CIP status updates to their managers. It is critical at this time that issues are escalated if it appears that the agency is not improving
- Managers share CIP status updates with Performance Leadership.
- Updates may be provided to the WIB as needed and when funding implications are tied to the CIP.

Step 7 – CIP Completion Review

At the conclusion of the CIP period:

- The Partnership evaluates whether corrective actions were successfully implemented by the Agency and whether goals were met as discussed for each performance indicator outlined in the CIP.
- If successful, the CIP is formally closed. If unsuccessful, the PRM escalates recommendations (extension, funding reduction, or defunding) to the PRM Manager and Performance Manager no less than two weeks prior to the final meeting date with the Agency.
- Leadership makes final determinations when funding or termination actions are recommended.
- Managers communicate all CIP outcomes to Program Performance Leadership. Scheduled consensus meetings planned for January (July) and April (October).
- The initial CIP period is 90 calendar days and shall not exceed 180 calendar days, including any approved extensions. Extensions are determined and approved by POD consensus and may be warranted due to staff turnover, the need to train new staff, or demonstrated agency progress toward benchmark goals that requires additional time to achieve full compliance.



Consequences of Unsuccessful CIP

If corrective actions are not satisfactorily completed:

- The Agency may be placed on High-Risk Status.
- Funding reduction or defunding may be recommended in the subsequent program year.
- Increased monitoring protocols may be implemented.

Final Determination & Documentation

- The PRM conducts a final review meeting with the Agency.
- The final determination is communicated in writing.
- The PRM signs the CIP Form on behalf of The Partnership.
- The completed form is transmitted to the Agency for signature.
- Final CIP documentation is stored in the designated SharePoint CIP folder.
- CIP outcomes are considered during annual funding recommendations to the WIB.

4. Decreased Funding with Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP)

Responsible Team Member(s)					
Program Performance Team	Program Relationship Manager	Partnership Leadership Team	Workforce Investment Board (WIB)	Budgets & Guidelines Team	Finance Team

Agencies demonstrating significant performance deficiencies may be subject to both a Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) and a reduction in funding. This category reflects material performance gaps that warrant corrective intervention and strategic reallocation of resources. Funding reductions are implemented to protect public investment and align funding with performance outcomes and workforce priorities.

4.1 Criteria for Decreased Funding with Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP)

An Agency may be subject to Decreased Funding with CIP when all of the following conditions are met:

1. **Overall Composite Score:** - The Agency receives a total score of less than 70 points, excluding first-year or new providers.
2. **Benchmark Performance Threshold** - Two or more benchmarks score within the 0–5 point range (Weak or Fail).

4.2 Strategic Funding Consideration

The Partnership reserves the right to reallocate resources when performance does not meet expectations in order to:



- Support higher-performing programs.
- Address emerging industry needs.
- Align investments with labor market demand.
- Protect the integrity of public funding.

4.3 Required Actions

Step 1 – Internal Review

- The Program Performance Team analyzes performance data and prepares a performance report.
- Leadership reviews findings and determines whether funding reduction with CIP is recommended.

Step 2 – Agency Notification

- The Program Relationship Associate Director informs the Agency that a CIP with funding reduction is recommended.
- Recommendations are presented to the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) for approval, as required.

Step 3 – Budget Adjustment

- Upon WIB approval, the Guidelines and Budgets Team adjusts the Agency's budget accordingly.
- Funding reductions are implemented in alignment with the approved fiscal schedule.

Step 4 – CIP Issuance

- The Agency is issued a Performance Improvement Plan following the full CIP process outlined in Section 3.3.
- The CIP period shall not exceed 180 calendar days.
- Fiscal scores are provided to all agencies issued CIPs.



5. Defunding

Responsible Team Member(s)						
Program Relationship Manager	Program Performance Team	Program Compliance Team	Fiscal Compliance Monitor	Partnership Leadership Team	Risk Team	Finance Team

- 5.1 The most serious performance action is reserved for Agencies demonstrating severe, sustained, or material noncompliance, performance failure, or risk to public funds. Defunding decisions prioritize protection of participants, fiscal integrity, and workforce system performance.

5.2 Criteria for Defunding

An Agency may be recommended for defunding when **any** of the following conditions are met:

1. **Overall Composite Score $\leq$ 50**, excluding first-year or new providers.
2. **2–3 Consecutive Years on a CIP.**
3. **Two Consecutive Years of Weak Program and/or Fiscal Compliance.**
4. **Serious Issues**, including but not limited to:
 - Fraud or misuse of funds.
 - Voluntary program closure.
 - Sustained zero placements.
 - Outdated curriculum.
 - Demonstrated market misalignment.
 - Failure to implement required corrective actions.

Required Actions

Step 1 – Internal Review

- The Program Performance Team analyzes performance data.
- Leadership reviews findings and determines whether defunding is warranted.

Step 2 – Agency Notification

- The Program Relationship Associate Director informs the Agency that defunding is being recommended.
- Recommendations are presented to the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) for approval, as applicable.

Step 3 – Contract Termination



- Upon approval, the Risk / Contracts Department issues a formal Notice of Termination in accordance with contract provisions.

Step 4 – Exit & Transition Planning

- The Program Relationship Manager initiates exit planning to protect active career seeker and business service files.
- A continuity plan is developed to minimize participant disruption.
- Alternate providers may be engaged as needed.

Step 5 – Closeout Review

- The Partnership conducts a formal closeout review consistent with internal fiscal and compliance procedures.

6. Documentation

Responsible Team Member(s)				
Program Relationship Manager	Program Performance Team	Program Compliance Team	Fiscal Compliance Monitor	

All CIP actions, funding adjustments, and defunding determinations must be formally documented to ensure transparency, audit readiness, and governance integrity.

Requirements:

- CIP Forms must document identified deficiencies, action plans, and required signatures.
- Monthly CIP updates must be recorded in the CBO All Grants Dashboard.
- Final CIP determinations must be stored in the designated SharePoint folder.
- Documentation must align with internal record retention policies.



7. Appeal Process

Responsible Team Member(s)				
Partnership Leadership Team	Workforce Investment Board (WIB)	Program Performance Team	Program Relationship Manager	Contracts Team (if applicable)

Agencies subject to CIP with funding reduction or defunding may request a formal review to ensure fairness and due process.

Appeals Requirements:

- Appeals must be submitted in writing within 15 business days of formal notice.
- Appeals must state specific grounds and include supporting documentation.
- A review panel may include WIB leadership and/or external evaluators.
- The review panel will issue a written determination.
- Funding actions remain in effect unless otherwise determined by Leadership.
- The review panel's determination shall be final.

8. Monitoring & Follow Up

Responsible Team Member(s)				
Program Relationship Manager	Program Performance Team	Partnership Leadership Team		

Performance oversight continues throughout and beyond CIP periods to ensure sustained compliance and improvement.

Monitoring Requirements:

- Monthly progress updates are documented in the CBO All Grants Dashboard.
- Successful CIP completion may allow reinstatement of funding, subject to available funding and Leadership approval.
- Persistent underperformance may result in escalation to funding reduction or defunding.



Procedure Revision Tracking

Revision Number	Date of Change	Change Description	Revised By
1	2/24/2026	Initial Process Creation	Carly Bykerk, Associate Director, Program Performance
2	3/3/2026	Governance & Structural Refinement	Eric B. Horn, Operational Training & Development Lead
3	5/28/26	Procedural Steps	Carole Ko, Manager of Program Compliance

WIOA Plan vs Actual Summary

Report Date: 07/23/2026
Report Time: 7:32:51AM
Report Num: CISGP004

LWA: 07-The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership

From: 07/01/2025

To: 06/30/2026

Title: 1 (1A, 1Y, 1D, 1DC)

Program Year: 2025

Quarter: 4

Grant Number: 25681007

	<u>Plan</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>% of Plan</u>
Adult Registrants			
Qtr 1	2,500	2,522	100.88%
Qtr 4	4,300	4,315	100.35%
1. Prior Year Registrants	2,000	1,947	97.35%
2. Individual Career Services	4,300	5,944	138.23%
Work Experience/Internships	10	10	100.00%
3. Training Services	2,400	2,339	97.46%
Occupational Training - ITAs	2,000	1,911	95.55%
Occupational Training - Non-ITAs	375	402	107.20%
Remedial/Prevocational Training	25	34	136.00%
4. Work Based Training	200	214	107.00%
On-the-Job Training	200	214	107.00%
Customized Training	0	0	0.00%
Transitional Jobs	0	0	0.00%
5. Supportive Services	1,450	1,287	88.76%
Dislocated Worker Registrants			
Qtr 1	1,600	1,513	94.56%
Qtr 4	2,600	2,458	94.54%
1. Prior Year Registrants	1,300	1,159	89.15%
2. Individual Career Services	2,600	3,521	135.42%
Work Experience/Internships	10	12	120.00%
3. Training Services	1,300	1,206	92.77%
Occupational Training - ITAs	1,190	1,033	86.81%
Occupational Training - Non-ITAs	100	161	161.00%
Remedial/Prevocational Training	10	15	150.00%

WIOA Plan vs Actual Summary

Report Date: 07/23/2026
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Title: 1 (1A, 1Y, 1D, 1DC)

Program Year: 2025

Quarter: 4

Grant Number: 25681007

	<u>Plan</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>% of Plan</u>
4. Work Based Training	100	83	83.00%
On-the-Job Training	100	83	83.00%
Customized Training	0	0	0.00%
Transitional Jobs	0	0	0.00%
5. Supportive Services	800	610	76.25%
Youth Registrants			
Qtr 1	1,800	1,956	108.67%
Qtr 4	2,900	2,921	100.72%
1. Prior Year Registrants	1,400	1,486	106.14%
2. Academic Learning Services	1,025	1,034	100.88%
Occupational Training - ITAs	650	625	96.15%
Occupational Training - Non-ITAs	100	168	168.00%
Remedial/Prevocational Training	300	249	83.00%
Other	0	0	0.00%
3. Work Related Services	680	770	113.24%
Work Experience/Internships	640	704	110.00%
On-the-Job Training	25	29	116.00%
Pre-Apprenticeship/Apprenticeship	15	45	300.00%
Other	0	0	0.00%
4. Supportive Services	1,250	1,352	108.16%

Selection Criteria:

Grant Number: 25681007

Title: 1 (1A, 1Y, 1D, 1DC)

Program Year: 2025

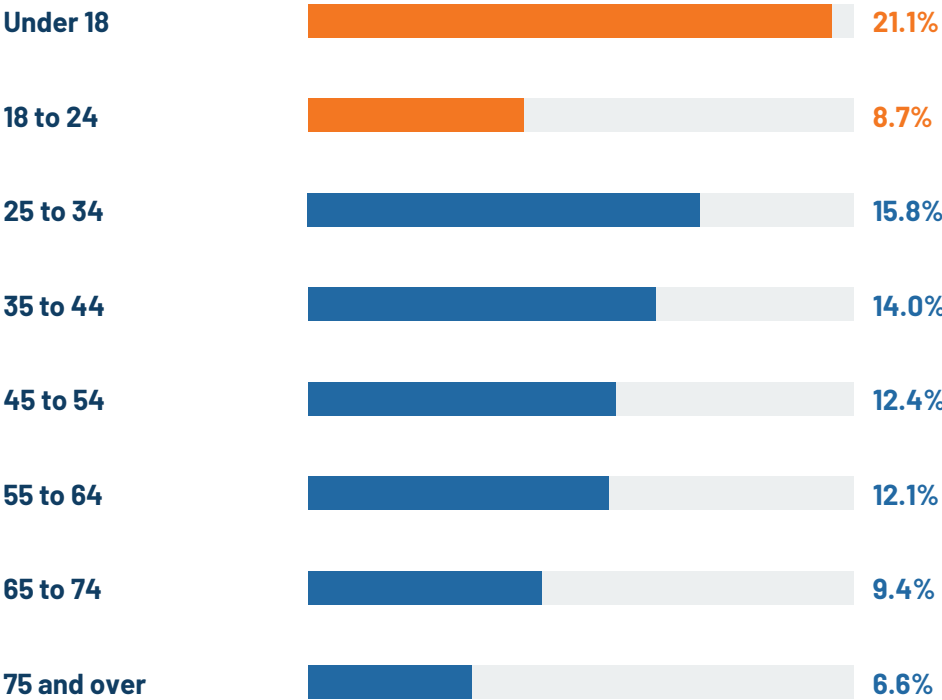
Quarter: 4

LWA: 07-The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership

Cook County Demographic Profile

POPULATION BY AGE

Share of 5.18M residents



1.54M residents are under 25 – 30% of the county and the pipeline our Youth program draws from.

5,182,090

Total population

38.0

Median age

-0.1%

Annual population growth

26.8%

Hispanic or Latino

21.7%

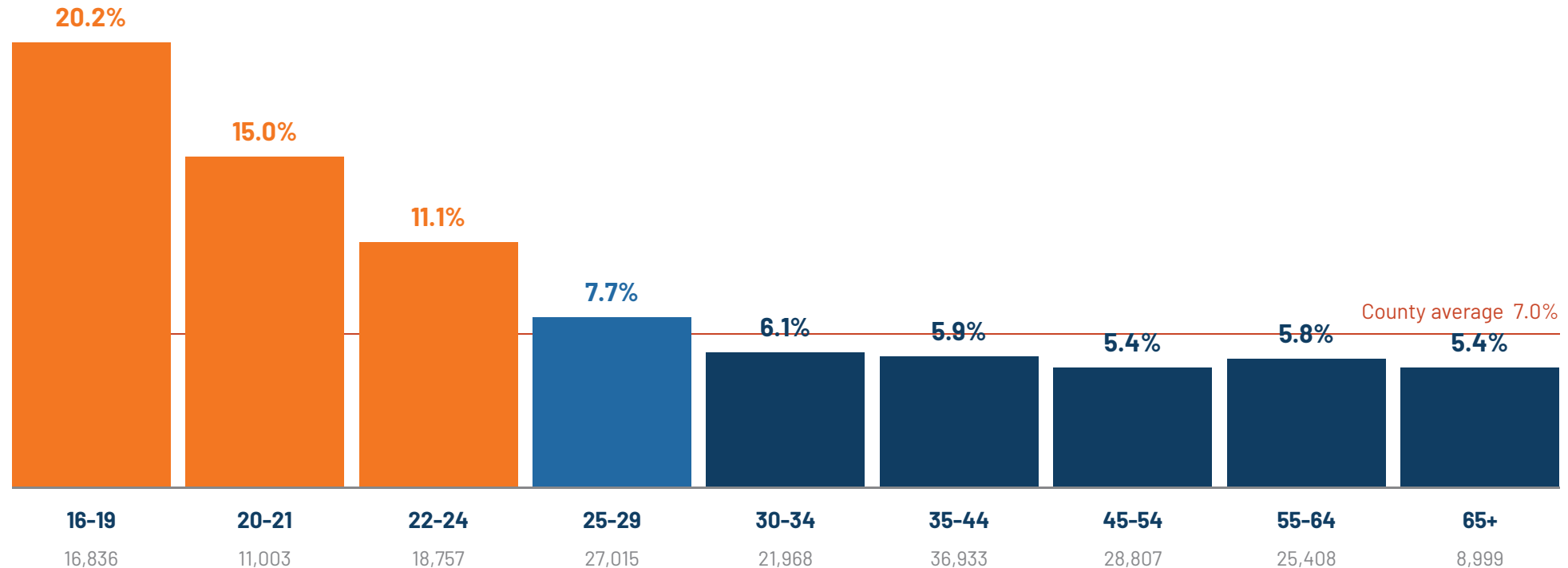
Foreign born

\$83,498

Median household income

Youth Face the Highest Unemployment

Unemployment rate by age, Cook County – county-wide rate is 7.0%



2.9x

16-19 year olds are unemployed at nearly three times the county rate

46,596

Unemployed residents age 16-24 – our core WIOA Youth eligibility window

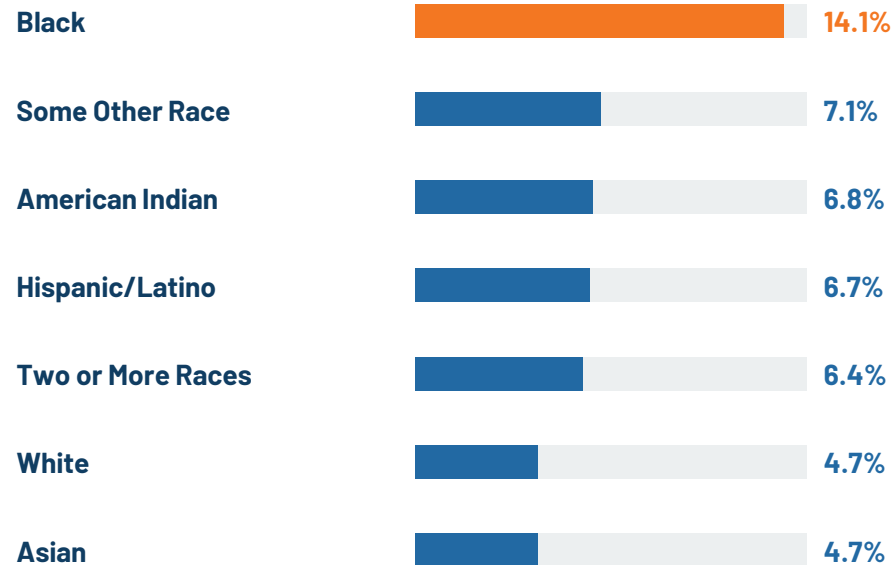
6,421

Disconnected youth, age 16-19: not in school, no diploma, not working

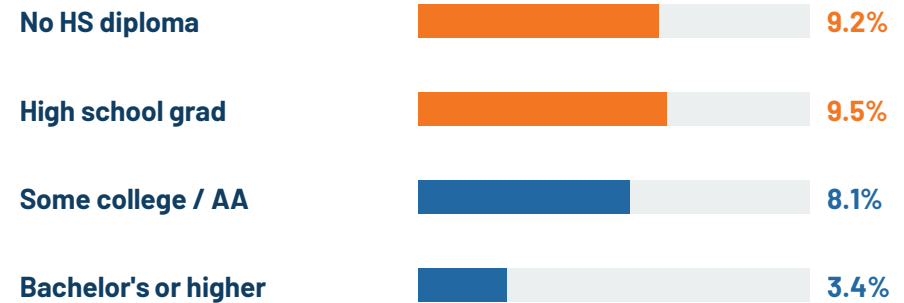
Who Is Affected: Equity and Education

Unemployment rate, age 16-64 — the gaps our Youth program is built to close

BY RACE AND ETHNICITY



BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, AGE 25-64



A bachelor's degree cuts the unemployment rate by nearly two-thirds — but a high school diploma alone barely moves it. Credentials, not just completion, are what change outcomes.

Black residents face unemployment at three times the rate of White and Asian residents. 10.1% of working-age adults have no high school diploma and 14.0% speak English less than very well — barriers that show up in our Youth caseload every day.

Cook County Industry Snapshot

Projected 5-year total demand (annual openings incl. exits & transfers), Cook County

Each panel scaled to its own maximum

HIGHEST DEMAND ▲

Health Care & Social Assistance 210,518

Accommodation & Food Services 195,937

Retail Trade 131,774

Administrative & Support Services 99,087

Educational Services 98,742

Transportation & Warehousing 96,396

LOWEST DEMAND ▼

Real Estate & Rental/Leasing 22,901

Information 21,340

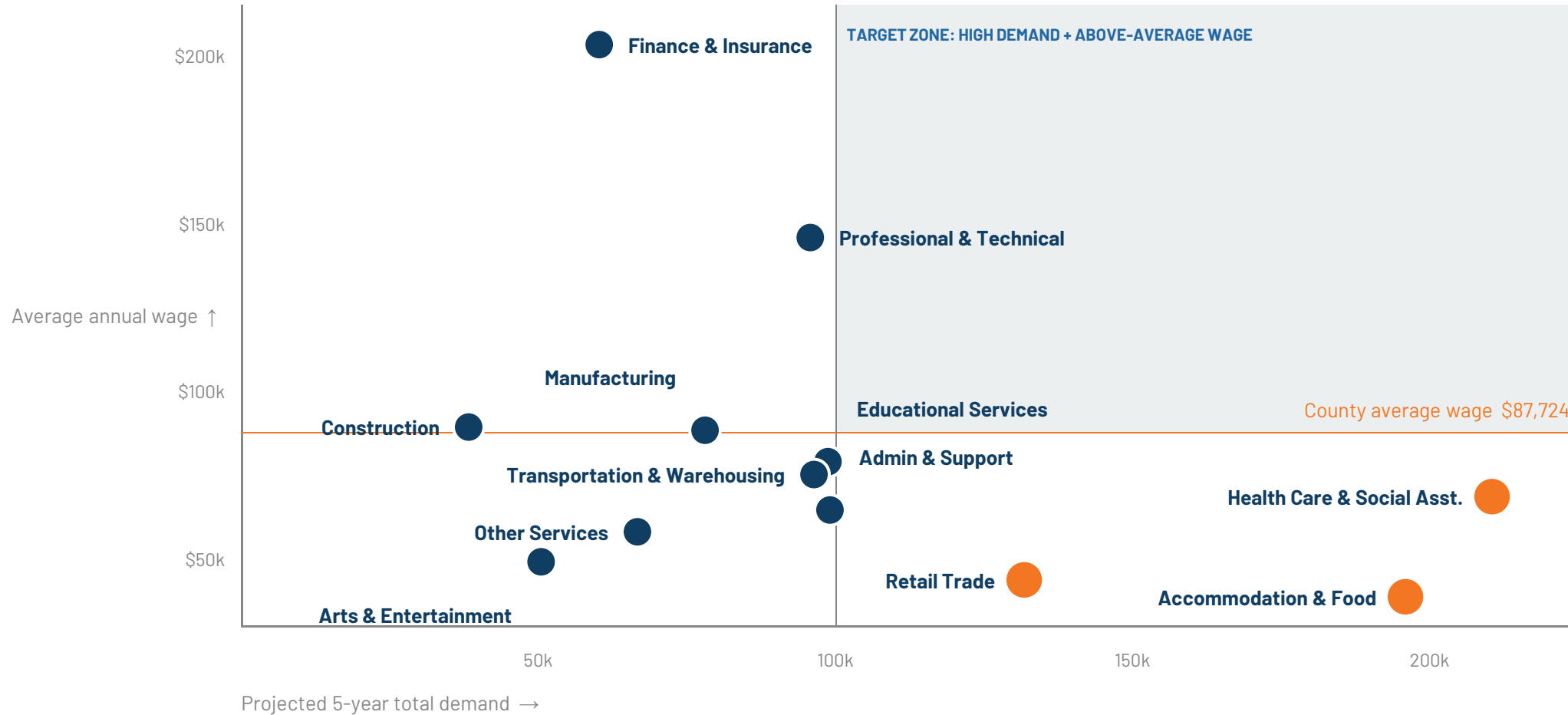
Management of Companies 10,540

Utilities 3,117

Agriculture & Forestry 557

Mining & Extraction 152

Wage vs. Demand



Cook County, Illinois, 2026Q1¹

NAICS	Industry	Current			5-Year History		5-Year Forecast				
		Empl	Avg Ann Wages	LQ	Empl Change	Ann %	Total Demand	Exits	Transfers	Empl Growth	Ann % Growth
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	432,759	\$68,407	1.00	55,403	2.8%	210,518	106,339	106,495	-2,315	-0.1%
72	Accommodation and Food Services	238,403	\$38,531	0.99	86,420	9.4%	195,937	90,273	112,890	-7,227	-0.6%
44	Retail Trade	220,964	\$43,562	0.83	4,398	0.4%	131,774	65,806	78,604	-12,636	-1.2%
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	197,456	\$64,413	1.19	3,866	0.4%	99,087	46,684	61,078	-8,674	-0.9%
61	Educational Services	245,381	\$78,829	1.09	33,964	3.0%	98,742	54,305	57,989	-13,552	-1.1%
48	Transportation and Warehousing	195,570	\$74,993	1.39	19,329	2.1%	96,396	45,384	56,723	-5,712	-0.6%
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	257,458	\$145,690	1.29	9,856	0.8%	95,772	40,232	59,966	-4,426	-0.3%
31	Manufacturing	183,186	\$88,203	0.86	7,233	0.8%	78,061	35,434	52,404	-9,777	-1.1%
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	127,818	\$57,910	1.09	9,398	1.5%	66,683	31,153	39,379	-3,848	-0.6%
52	Finance and Insurance	164,927	\$203,238	1.52	2,430	0.3%	60,252	27,419	37,740	-4,908	-0.6%
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	72,958	\$48,958	1.23	30,347	11.4%	50,470	22,061	29,798	-1,389	-0.4%
42	Wholesale Trade	97,611	\$114,357	0.96	116	0.0%	43,470	19,095	27,548	-3,173	-0.7%
23	Construction	99,968	\$89,153	0.60	6,762	1.4%	38,281	16,320	24,331	-2,369	-0.5%
92	Public Administration	94,355	\$104,618	0.73	3,494	0.8%	37,413	17,875	23,885	-4,347	-0.9%
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	52,571	\$101,122	1.09	1,934	0.8%	22,901	11,740	12,862	-1,702	-0.7%
51	Information	53,283	\$168,196	1.03	-1,846	-0.7%	21,340	8,505	13,438	-602	-0.2%
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	28,232	\$172,291	0.65	-4,190	-2.7%	10,540	4,571	6,712	-743	-0.5%
22	Utilities	7,124	\$132,905	0.49	695	2.1%	3,117	1,207	1,864	46	0.1%
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	1,045	\$46,911	0.03	-145	-2.6%	557	314	294	-51	-1.0%
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	364	\$113,278	0.04	-180	-7.7%	152	60	101	-8	-0.5%
99	Unclassified	211	\$56,004	0.06	-20	-1.8%	107	50	64	-7	-0.6%
Total - All Industries		2,771,645	\$87,724	1.00	269,266	2.1%	1,369,523	648,498	808,020	-86,995	-0.6%

Source: [JobsEQ®](#)

Data as of 2026Q1

Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding.

1. All data based upon a four-quarter moving average

Exits and transfers are approximate estimates based upon occupation separation rates.

Summary¹

	Percent Cook County, Illinois	Value Cook County, Illinois
Demographics		
Population (ACS)	—	5,182,090
Male	48.8%	2,528,888
Female	51.2%	2,653,202
Median Age ²	—	38.0
Under 18 Years	21.1%	1,092,202
18 to 24 Years	8.7%	448,354
25 to 34 Years	15.8%	820,910
35 to 44 Years	14.0%	724,225
45 to 54 Years	12.4%	640,957
55 to 64 Years	12.1%	628,286
65 to 74 Years	9.4%	487,190
75 Years and Over	6.6%	339,966
Race: White	43.6%	2,257,930
Race: Black or African American	22.2%	1,148,066
Race: American Indian and Alaska Native	0.9%	47,333
Race: Asian	7.9%	411,778
Race: Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	2,389
Race: Some Other Race	12.4%	642,144
Race: Two or More Races	13.0%	672,450
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	26.8%	1,387,163
Population Growth		
Population (Pop Estimates) ⁴	—	5,194,625
Population Annual Average Growth ⁴	-0.1%	-4,875
People per Square Mile ⁴	—	5,497.4
Economic		
Labor Force Participation Rate and Size (civilian population 16 years and over)	66.2%	2,792,888
Prime-Age Labor Force Participation Rate and Size (civilian population 25-54)	85.4%	1,866,722
Work from Home	18.9%	480,070
Armed Forces Labor Force	0.0%	1,658
Veterans, Age 18-64	1.9%	61,435
Veterans Labor Force Participation Rate and Size, Age 18-64	79.2%	48,642
Median Household Income ²	—	\$83,498
Per Capita Income	—	\$49,329
Mean Commute Time (minutes)	—	31.5
Commute via Public Transportation	11.8%	300,955
Educational Attainment, Age 25-64		
No High School Diploma	10.1%	283,387
High School Graduate	20.7%	583,789
Some College, No Degree	16.7%	471,268

Summary¹

	Percent Cook County, Illinois	Value Cook County, Illinois
Associate's Degree	6.9%	193,383
Bachelor's Degree	26.9%	757,210
Postgraduate Degree	18.7%	525,341
Housing		
Total Housing Units	—	2,276,493
Median House Value (of owner-occupied units) ^{2,5}	—	\$324,500
Homeowner Vacancy	1.1%	13,963
Rental Vacancy	4.5%	42,264
Renter-Occupied Housing Units (% of Occupied Units)	42.3%	887,660
Owner-Occupied Housing Units (% of Occupied Units)	57.7%	1,212,570
Occupied Housing Units with No Vehicle Available (% of Occupied Units)	18.0%	378,260
Social		
Poverty Level (of all people)	13.5%	687,508
Households Receiving Food Stamps/SNAP	15.7%	329,128
Enrolled in Grade 12 (% of total population)	1.4%	73,042
Disconnected Youth ³	2.5%	6,421
Children in Single Parent Families (% of all children)	38.1%	397,799
Uninsured	8.9%	454,597
With a Disability, Age 18-64	8.9%	287,681
With a Disability, Age 18-64, Labor Force Participation Rate and Size	51.9%	149,395
Foreign Born	21.7%	1,127,068
Speak English Less Than Very Well (population 5 yrs and over)	14.0%	688,614

Source: [JobsEQ®](#)

1. American Community Survey 2020-2024, unless noted otherwise

2. Median values for certain aggregate regions (such as MSAs) may be estimated as the weighted averages of the median values from the composing counties.

3. Disconnected Youth are 16-19 year olds who are (1) not in school, (2) not high school graduates, and (3) either unemployed or not in the labor force.

4. Census Population Estimate for 2025, annual average growth rate since 2015.

5. The Census's method for calculating median house values changed with the 2022 data set, so pre-2022 values are not directly comparable with later data.

Unemployed¹

	Percent Cook County, Illinois	Value Cook County, Illinois
Unemployed		
Total	7.0%	195,726
Age		
16 to 19 years	20.2%	16,836
20 to 21 years	15.0%	11,003
22 to 24 years	11.1%	18,757
25 to 29 years	7.7%	27,015
30 to 34 years	6.1%	21,968
35 to 44 years	5.9%	36,933
45 to 54 years	5.4%	28,807
55 to 59 years	6.0%	14,435
60 to 61 years	6.1%	5,490
62 to 64 years	5.3%	5,483
65 to 69 years	5.4%	5,398
70 to 74 years	5.6%	2,345
75 year and over	5.1%	1,256
Gender, 16 to 64 Years		
Male	7.1%	96,719
Female	7.1%	90,008
Race and Ethnicity, 16 to 64 Years		
White	4.7%	55,503
Black or African American	14.1%	74,616
American Indian and Alaska Native	6.8%	1,738
Asian	4.7%	10,469
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	2.3%	30
Some Other Race	7.1%	23,427
Two or More Races	6.4%	20,944
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	6.7%	46,909
Veterans, Age 18 to 64 Years		
Total	7.2%	3,491
Educational Attainment, Age 25 to 64 Years		
No High School Diploma	9.2%	16,717
High School Graduate	9.5%	40,252
Some College or Associate's Degree	8.1%	43,920
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	3.4%	39,242

Source: [JobsEQ®](#)

1. American Community Survey 2020-2024

Household Income¹

	Percent Cook County, Illinois	Value Cook County, Illinois
Total Households	—	2,100,230
Less than \$10,000	6.1%	128,491
\$10,000 to \$14,999	3.7%	77,092
\$15,000 to \$24,999	6.0%	126,817
\$25,000 to \$34,999	6.3%	131,455
\$35,000 to \$49,999	9.4%	198,312
\$50,000 to \$74,999	14.0%	293,762
\$75,000 to \$99,999	12.2%	255,847
\$100,000 to \$149,999	17.2%	362,019
\$150,000 to \$199,999	9.8%	206,327
\$200,000 or more	15.2%	320,108
Median Income (dollars) ²	—	\$83,498
Mean Income (dollars)	—	\$120,717

Source: [JobsEQ®](#)

1. American Community Survey 2020-2024

2. Median values for certain aggregate regions (such as MSAs) may be estimated as the weighted averages of the median values from the composing counties.

Summary of changes to procurement policy

Due to revisions to 2 CFR § 200.320, The Partnership updated its procurement policy to align with the current federal procurement requirements.

The most significant changes to the procurement rules at 2 CFR § 200.320 include: (1) restructuring the procurement methods; and (2) revising the micro-purchase and simplified acquisition thresholds.

The revised rule reorganized the procurement framework by reducing the number of primary procurement methods from five to three.

Under the prior structure, the five procurement methods were:

Previous Procurement Methods

- Micro-purchase
- Small purchase
- Sealed Bids
- Competitive proposals
- Noncompetitive proposals

The revised rule now identifies three procurement methods, with subcategories under the informal and formal methods:

Revised Procurement Methods and Subcategories

- Informal procurement methods for small purchases
 - Micro-purchases
 - Simplified acquisitions
- Formal procurement methods
 - Sealed bids
 - Proposals
- Noncompetitive procurement

Threshold Changes

The micro-purchase threshold increased from \$3,000 in the aggregate to \$15,000 in the aggregate.

The simplified acquisition threshold increased from \$150,000 to \$250,000.



Local Workforce Innovation And Opportunity Act (WIOA) Policy No. 2017-PL-01-Change 1

To: All LWIA 7 Board Members
All Delegate Agency, One-Stop and Sector Center Staff
All Partnership Staff

From: _____
The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership

Subject: PROCUREMENT POLICY

Date: March 30, 2017 (Revised September 9, 2026)

Purpose: To provide guidance to staff and service providers on the competitive purchase of goods and services from vendors. Procurement rules are prescriptive and include situational methods based on dollar thresholds and can be applied to the award of grants and sub-grants to and by service providers.

References:

OMB Uniform Guidance 2 CFR 200

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, Sec. 184 (a)(3)(A)

Background:

The OMB Uniform Guidance consolidates eight (8) previous OMB Circulars (e.g. previous OMB Circular A110) into one Uniform Guidance document that was published as a final rule 2 CFR 200. On October 1, 2024, Uniform Guidance (2 CFR Part 200) was amended. These amendments modernized procurement terminology and increased flexibility for recipients while maintaining the federal requirements for ethical conduct, full and open competition, proper documentation, and stewardship of federal funds.

It is DOL ETA policy to act consistently with OMB Uniform Guidance provisions as standards for use by recipients in establishing procedures for the procurement of supplies and other expendable property, equipment, real property and other services with Federal funds. These standards insure that such materials and services are obtained in an effective manner and in compliance with the provisions of applicable Federal statutes.

WIOA Sec. 184(a)(3)(A) requires each State (including the Governor of the State), local area (including the chief elected official(s) for the area), and provider receiving funds under this title to



comply with the appropriate uniform administrative requirements for grants and agreements applicable for the type of entity receiving the funds, as promulgated in circulars or rules of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

POLICY:

This Procurement Policy applies to the procurement of all goods and services purchased by Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership and The Chicago Cook Workforce Board has and been created to provide guidelines to staff and sub-recipients for:

- Determining the appropriate method of procurement to use, as well as the specific procedures to follow in different procurement situations in order to be in compliance with all Federal and State laws, rules and regulations.
- Ensuring that unnecessary or duplicative items or services are not purchased, to ensure that conflicts of interest have been avoided, and to ensure that positive efforts have been made to utilize small business and minority-owned business sources for procurement.

LWIA 7's Conflict of Interest Policy provides standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the actions of its employees engaged in the selection, award and administration of contracts. No employee, officer, or agent may participate in the selection, award, or administration of a contract supported by a Federal award if he or she has a real, perceived or potential conflict of interest. Conflicts of interest must be disclosed in writing when known in advance or announced to the voting body. The party must excuse themselves from any further discussion and/or vote on the matter in question. Violations of such standards are subject to disciplinary actions provided in LWIA 7 's Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy.

This Policy and implementing procedures dictate that in LWIA 7, subject to exceptions as defined below, WIOA subrecipients are selected on a competitive basis, and as such follow the procurement rules at 2 CFR 200.318-326. Uniform Guidance does not prohibit (although does not require) the use of a competitive process to select subrecipients and DOL ETA encourages the use of a competitive process to select subrecipients.

LWIA 7 follows the OMB Uniform Guidance for the selection of subrecipients when a competitive process is not required (i.e., leveraged, privately funded and other time sensitive subawards). In these instances, LWIA 7 will be guided by:

- Service Provider's track record

- Past record of performance
 - Cost principles: reasonable costs
 - Past record of compliance
 - Audit and monitoring results
- Internal Control System –
 - Written procedures
 - Conflict of interest provisions

As a Pass-through entity, LWIA 7 is as accountable for the subaward as if it was providing the services itself and thus will structure award to incorporate instruments to promote performance and conduct vigorous oversight and monitoring.

LWIA 7 will award contracts only to responsible contractors possessing the ability to perform successfully under the terms and conditions of a proposed procurement. Consideration will be given to such matters as:

- Contractor integrity
- Compliance with public policy
- Record of past performance
- Financial and technical resources

LWIA 7 will also maintain records sufficient to detail the history of procurement. These records will include, but are not limited to:

- Rationale for the method of procurement
- Selection of contract type
- Basis for contractor selection or rejection
- Basis for the contract price

Sample forms and documents used in the procurement process are included as attachments to this document and should be used by staff and sub-recipients during the procurement process.

Responsibility for Procurement Activities

It is the responsibility of the Director of Risk to procure, and/or delegate procurement, of all supplies and other expendable property, and equipment. The responsibility includes assigning procurement-related duties to staff persons, assuring that all procedures established in this document are followed, and that all procurement activities are performed in compliance with applicable Federal and State laws, rules and regulations.

Key Terms:

Non-Federal entity –

- Any entity receiving Federal funds.
- Includes for-profits and foreign entities per DOL exceptions at 2900.2

Pass-Through entity –

- Any non-Federal entity that provides a subaward to a subrecipient to carry out part of a Federal program
- Key distinction: pass-through subaward (subrecipient) vs. procurement action (contractor)

Subaward –

- Award provided by a pass-through entity to a subrecipient to carry out part of a Federal award received by the pass-through entity
- Does not include payments to contractor or to an individual as beneficiary of Federal program

Subrecipient –

- Non-Federal entity that receives a subaward from a pass-through entity to carry out part of a Federal program

Contract –

- Does not include subawards
- Often the purchase of goods and services for the non-Federal entity's own use
- Legal instrument used to purchase property or services to carry out the project or program
- Is competed

Contractor –

- Entity that receives a contract
- Replaces the term “vendor”

Procurement “actions” – As distinguished from a **pass through subaward** to carry out part of a Federal program, a procurement action is needed for the purchase of a specific product or service that is ancillary to the Federal program, e.g.:

- Equipment and supplies
- Audit services
- Consulting services
- Leases
- Training
- Purchase of goods and services for the non-Federal entity's own use

All non-Federal entities are pass-through entities when making subawards to subrecipients to carry out part of a Federal program (including Partner and Cooperative Agreements). **These subawards are not procurement actions, but they will follow the procurement rules when:**

- Required by statute (e.g. WIOA Operators and Youth subawards)
- Required by own policies and procedures

- Awarded on competitive basis and/or when required by the Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) and/or grant terms and conditions

Subrecipient and Contractor Determinations (2 CFR 200.330)

LWIA 7 will make a case-by-case determination whether each agreement it makes for the disbursement of Federal program funds casts the party receiving the funds in the role of a subrecipient or a contractor (see Subrecipient and Contractor in the Definitions section of this policy). In determining whether an agreement between LWIA 7 and another non-Federal entity casts the latter as a subrecipient or a contractor, the substance of the relationship is more important than the form of agreement. LWIA 7 will use judgment in classifying each agreement as a subaward or a procurement contract. In compliance with 2 CFR 200.330, LWIA 7 will classify eligible providers of WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth services as subrecipients.

Profit considerations—

2 CFR 200.400 (g) & 200.323 (b) of the Uniform Guidance Requirements on profit provide that a Non-Federal entity may not earn or keep profit unless expressly authorized by the Federal award. However, WIOA does authorize profit for nonprofits and for-profits under certain circumstances:

- Non-profits: Treated as program income
- Prohibited for Governmental entities
- Negotiate as a separate element from price
 - When there is no price competition
 - In all cases where cost analysis is performed
 - Exceeds simplified acquisition threshold

Other considerations regarding Profit –

- Risk borne by the subrecipient
- FAR suggests that it be less than 10%
- Quality of past performance
- Industry profit rate in surrounding area for similar work

Procurement Methods

Methods of Procurement to be followed per 2 CFR 200.320:

There are three types of procurement methods described in this section: informal procurement methods (for micro-purchases and simplified acquisitions); formal procurement methods (through sealed bids or proposals); and noncompetitive procurement methods. For any of these methods, the recipient or subrecipient must maintain and use documented procurement procedures, consistent with the standards of this section and [§§ 200.317](#), [200.318](#), and [200.319](#).

(a) **Informal procurement methods for small purchases.** These procurement methods expedite the completion of transactions, minimize administrative burdens, and reduce costs. Informal procurement methods may be used when the value of the procurement transaction under the Federal award does not exceed the simplified acquisition threshold as defined in [§ 200.1](#). Recipients and subrecipients may also establish a lower threshold. Informal procurement methods include:

(1) **Micro-purchases** —

(i) **Distribution.** The aggregate amount of the procurement transaction does not exceed the micro-purchase threshold defined in [§ 200.1](#). To the extent practicable, the recipient or subrecipient should distribute micro-purchases equitably among qualified suppliers.

(ii) **Micro-purchase awards.** Micro-purchases may be awarded without soliciting competitive price or rate quotations if the recipient or subrecipient considers the price reasonable based on research, experience, purchase history, or other information; and maintains documents to support its conclusion. Purchase cards may be used as a method of payment for micro-purchases.

(iii) **Micro-purchase thresholds.** The recipient or subrecipient is responsible for determining and documenting an appropriate micro-purchase threshold based on internal controls, an evaluation of risk, and its documented procurement procedures. The micro-purchase threshold used by the recipient or subrecipient must be authorized or not prohibited under State, local, or tribal laws or regulations. The recipient or subrecipient may establish a threshold higher than the Federal threshold established in the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) in accordance with [paragraphs \(a\)\(1\)\(iv\)](#) and [\(v\)](#) of this section.

(iv) **Recipient or subrecipient increase to the micro-purchase threshold up to \$50,000.** The recipient or subrecipient may establish a threshold higher than the micro-purchase threshold identified in the FAR in accordance with the requirements of this section. The recipient or subrecipient may self-certify a threshold up to \$50,000 on an annual basis and must maintain documentation to be made available to the Federal agency or pass-through entity and auditors in accordance with [§ 200.334](#). The self-certification must include a justification, clear identification of the threshold, and supporting documentation of any of the following:

(A) A qualification as a low-risk auditee, in accordance with the criteria in [§ 200.520](#) for the most recent audit;

(B) An annual internal institutional risk assessment to identify, mitigate, and manage financial risks; or,

(C) For public institutions, a higher threshold is consistent with State law.

(v) ***Recipient or subrecipient increase to the micro-purchase threshold over \$50,000.*** Micro-purchase thresholds higher than \$50,000 must be approved by the cognizant agency for indirect costs. The recipient or subrecipient must submit a request that includes the requirements in [paragraph \(a\)\(1\)\(iv\)](#) of this section. The increased threshold is valid until any factor that was relied on in the establishment and rationale of the threshold changes.

(2) ***Simplified acquisitions*** —

(i) ***Simplified acquisition procedures.*** The aggregate dollar amount of the procurement transaction is higher than the micro-purchase threshold but does not exceed the simplified acquisition threshold. If simplified acquisition procedures are used, price or rate quotations must be obtained from an adequate number of qualified sources. Unless specified by the Federal agency, the recipient or subrecipient may exercise judgment in determining what number is adequate.

(ii) ***Simplified acquisition thresholds.*** The recipient or subrecipient is responsible for determining an appropriate simplified acquisition threshold based on internal controls, an evaluation of risk, and its documented procurement procedures, which may be lower than, but must not exceed, the threshold established in the FAR.

(b) ***Formal procurement methods.*** Formal procurement methods are required when the value of the procurement transaction under a Federal award exceeds the simplified acquisition threshold of the recipient or subrecipient. Formal procurement methods are competitive and require public notice. The following formal methods of procurement are used for procurement transactions above the simplified acquisition threshold determined by the recipient or subrecipient in accordance with [paragraph \(a\)\(2\)\(ii\)](#) of this section:

(1) ***Sealed bids.*** This is a procurement method in which bids are publicly solicited through an invitation and a firm fixed-price contract (lump sum or unit price) is awarded to the responsible bidder whose bid conforms with all the material terms and conditions of the invitation and is the lowest in price. The sealed bids procurement method is preferred for procuring construction services.

(i) For sealed bidding to be feasible, the following conditions should be present:

(A) A complete, adequate, and realistic specification or purchase description is available;

(B) Two or more responsible bidders have been identified as willing and able to compete effectively for the business; and

(C) The procurement lends itself to a firm-fixed-price contract, and the selection of the successful bidder can be made principally based on price.

(ii) If sealed bids are used, the following requirements apply:

(A) Bids must be solicited from an adequate number of qualified sources, providing them with sufficient response time prior to the date set for opening the bids. Unless specified by the Federal agency, the recipient or subrecipient may exercise judgment in determining what number is adequate. For local governments, the invitation for bids must be publicly advertised.

(B) The invitation for bids must define the items or services with specific information, including any required specifications, for the bidder to properly respond;

(C) All bids will be opened at the time and place prescribed in the invitation for bids. For local governments, the bids must be opened publicly.

(D) A firm-fixed-price contract is awarded in writing to the lowest responsive bid and responsible bidder. When specified in the invitation for bids, factors such as discounts, transportation cost, and life-cycle costs must be considered in determining which bid is the lowest. Payment discounts must only be used to determine the low bid when the recipient or subrecipient determines they are a valid factor based on prior experience.

(E) The recipient or subrecipient must document and provide a justification for all bids it rejects.

(2) **Proposals.** This is a procurement method used when conditions are not appropriate for using sealed bids. This procurement method may result in either a fixed-price or cost-reimbursement contract. They are awarded in accordance with the following requirements:

(i) Requests for proposals require public notice, and all evaluation factors and their relative importance must be identified. Proposals must be solicited from multiple qualified entities. To



the maximum extent practicable, any proposals submitted in response to the public notice must be considered.

(ii) The recipient or subrecipient must have written procedures for conducting technical evaluations and making selections.

(iii) Contracts must be awarded to the responsible offeror whose proposal is most advantageous to the recipient or subrecipient considering price and other factors; and

(iv) The recipient or subrecipient may use competitive proposal procedures for qualifications-based procurement of architectural/engineering (A/E) professional services whereby the offeror's qualifications are evaluated, and the most qualified offeror is selected, subject to negotiation of fair and reasonable compensation. The method, where the price is not used as a selection factor, can only be used to procure architectural/engineering (A/E) professional services. The method may not be used to purchase other services provided by A/E firms that are a potential source to perform the proposed effort.

(c) ***Noncompetitive procurement.*** There are specific circumstances in which the recipient or subrecipient may use a noncompetitive procurement method. The noncompetitive procurement method may only be used if one of the following circumstances applies:

(1) The aggregate amount of the procurement transaction does not exceed the micro-purchase threshold (see [paragraph \(a\)\(1\)](#) of this section);

(2) The procurement transaction can only be fulfilled by a single source;

(3) The public exigency or emergency for the requirement will not permit a delay resulting from providing public notice of a competitive solicitation;

(4) The recipient or subrecipient requests in writing to use a noncompetitive procurement method, and the Federal agency or pass-through entity provides written approval; or

(5) After soliciting several sources, competition is determined inadequate.

Contracting with Small, Minority, Women's, Labor Surplus Area Businesses 2 CFR 200.321

LWIA 7 shall take all necessary affirmative steps to assure that small, minority, women's, and labor surplus area firms are used whenever possible, to include:

- Placing qualified businesses on solicitation lists
- Soliciting them whenever they are potential sources
- Dividing total requirements into smaller tasks or quantities when economically feasible
- Establishing delivery schedules to encourage participation
- Using services of SBA and MBDA of Dept. of Commerce
- Requiring prime contractors to take these same steps

Conclusion:

It is the subrecipient's responsibility as a non-Federal pass through entity to ensure that the appropriate procurement mechanism is used in its own procurements. It is important to note that the procurement methods outlined in this policy letter are to be understood as the minimum requirements as determined by The Partnership. In addition, this letter should not be understood to limit any additional required procedures as stated by the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) or the State of Illinois. If either USDOL or the State adds any required procurement requirements, those additional requirements will be understood to be added to The Partnership's minimum requirements.

Action Required:

This information should be disseminated to subrecipient staff with signature authority.

Inquiries:

All inquiries should be directed to the assigned Director of Relationship Management.

Effective Date: Immediately.