

NEW JERSEY PYS 2026-2027 (MOD)

# CONTENTS

New Jersey PYS 2026-2027 (Mod) .....	1
Overview.....	4
Options for Submitting a State Plan .....	4
How State Plan Requirements Are Organized .....	5
I. WIOA State Plan Type and Executive Summary .....	6
a. WIOA State Plan Type.....	6
Combined Plan Partner Program(s) .....	7
b. Plan Introduction or Executive Summary.....	8
II. Strategic Elements.....	11
a. Economic, Workforce, and Workforce Development Activities Analysis .....	11
b. State Strategic Vision and Goals.....	30
c. State Strategy .....	35
III. Operational Planning Elements.....	41
a. State Strategy Implementation .....	41
b. State Operating Systems and Policies.....	98
IV. Coordination with State Plan Programs.....	168
V. Common Assurances (For All Core Programs) .....	168
VI. Program-Specific Requirements for Core Programs .....	170
Program-specific Requirements for Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities under Title I-B .....	170
Program-Specific Requirements for Wagner-Peyser Program (Employment Services) .....	215
Program-specific Requirements for Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Programs....	242
Program-Specific Requirements for State Vocational Rehabilitation (Combined or General).....	264
Program-Specific Requirements for State Vocational Rehabilitation (Blind) .....	329
VII. Program-Specific Requirements for Combined State Plan Partner Programs .....	394
Jobs for Veterans' State Grants.....	395
Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) .....	408
Performance Indicator Appendix.....	436
All WIOA Core Programs .....	436
Additional Indicators of Performance.....	444

Other Appendices.....445

## OVERVIEW

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Governor of each State must submit a Unified or Combined State Plan to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor that outlines a four-year strategy for the State's workforce development system. The publicly-funded workforce development system is a national network of Federal, State, regional, and local agencies and organizations that provide a range of employment, education, training, and related services and supports to help all job-seekers secure good jobs while providing businesses with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. States must have approved Unified or Combined State Plans in place to receive funding for core programs. WIOA reforms planning requirements, previously governed by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), to foster better alignment of Federal investments in job training, to integrate service delivery across programs and improve efficiency in service delivery, and to ensure that the workforce system is job-driven and matches employers with skilled individuals. One of WIOA's principal areas of reform is to require States to plan across core programs and include this planning process in the Unified or Combined State Plans. This reform promotes a shared understanding of the workforce needs within each State and fosters development of more comprehensive and integrated approaches, such as career pathways and sector strategies, for addressing the needs of businesses and workers. Successful implementation of many of these approaches called for within WIOA requires robust relationships across programs. WIOA requires States and local areas to enhance coordination and partnerships with local entities and supportive service agencies for strengthened service delivery, including through Unified or Combined State Plans.

## OPTIONS FOR SUBMITTING A STATE PLAN

A State has two options for submitting a State Plan— a Unified State Plan or a Combined State Plan. At a minimum, a State must submit a Unified State Plan that meets the requirements described in this document and outlines a four-year strategy for the core programs. The six core programs are—

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

Alternatively, a State may submit a Combined State Plan that meets the requirements described in this document and outlines a four-year strategy for WIOA's core programs plus one or more of the Combined State Plan partner programs. When a State includes a Combined State Plan partner program in its Combined State Plan, it need not submit a separate plan or application for that particular program. If included, Combined State Plan partner programs are subject to the "common planning elements" (Sections II-IV of this document) where specified, as well as

the program-specific requirements for that program where such planning requirements exist separately for the program. The Combined State Plan partner programs are—

- Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, as amended by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)
- Employment and Training programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4)))
- Work programs authorized under section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(o))
- Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers programs (Activities authorized under chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.))
- Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program (programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et seq.)
- Unemployment Insurance programs (programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws in accordance with applicable Federal law)
- Senior Community Service Employment program (programs authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.))
- Employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Community Services Block Grant (Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.))<sup>1</sup>

[1] States that elect to include employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.) under a Combined State Plan would submit all other required elements of a complete CSBG State Plan directly to the Federal agency that administers the program. Similarly, States that elect to include employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development that are included would submit all other required elements of a complete State Plan for those programs directly to the Federal agency that administers the program.

#### HOW STATE PLAN REQUIREMENTS ARE ORGANIZED

The major content areas of the Unified or Combined State Plan include strategic and operational planning elements. WIOA separates the strategic and operational elements to facilitate cross-program strategic planning.

- The **Strategic Planning Elements** section includes analyses of the State's economic conditions, workforce characteristics, and workforce development activities. These analyses drive the required vision and goals for the State's workforce development

system and alignment strategies for workforce development programs to support economic growth.

- The **Operational Planning Elements** section identifies the State's efforts to support the State's strategic vision and goals as identified in the Strategic Planning Elements section. This section ensures that the State has the necessary infrastructure, policies, and activities to meet its strategic goals, implement its alignment strategy, and support ongoing program development and coordination. Operational planning elements include:
  - State Strategy Implementation,
  - State Operating Systems and Policies,
  - Assurances,
  - Program-Specific Requirements for the Core Programs, and
  - Program-Specific Requirements for the Combined State Plan partner programs. (These requirements are available in a separate supplemental document, Supplement to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified and Combined State Plan Requirements. The Departments are not seeking comments on these particular requirements).

When responding to Unified or Combined State Plan requirements, States must identify specific strategies for coordinating programs and services for State-identified populations. Use of links to external websites and documents is permitted within the State Plan narrative submission if such links remain active and adhere to Section 508 accessibility requirements.

**Paperwork Reduction Act:** The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA) provides that an agency may not conduct, and no person is required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. Public reporting burden for this information collection is estimated to be 86 hours per state; including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Responding to this collection is required to obtain or retain the Federal grant benefit. In addition, responses to this information collection are public, and the agencies offer no assurances of confidentiality. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Workforce Investment, and reference OMB control number 1205-0522. Note: Please do not return the completed plan to this address.

## I. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### A. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE

**Unified or Combined State Plan.** Select whether the State is submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan. At a minimum, a State must submit a Unified State Plan that covers the six core programs.

**Unified State Plan.** This plan includes the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser Act, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, and Vocational Rehabilitation programs.

**Combined State Plan.** This plan includes the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser Act, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, and Vocational Rehabilitation programs, as well as one or more of the optional Combined State Plan partner programs identified below.

This is a combined plan

### COMBINED PLAN PARTNER PROGRAM(S)

Indicate which Combined Plan partner program(s) the state is electing to include in the plan.

Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, as amended by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)

No

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)

No

Employment and Training programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4)))

No

Work programs authorized under section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(o))

No

Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers programs (activities authorized under chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.))

No

Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program (programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et. seq.)

Yes

Unemployment Insurance programs (programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws in accordance with applicable Federal law)

No

Senior Community Service Employment program (programs authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.))

Yes

Employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development

No

Community Services Block Grant (Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.))

No

## B. PLAN INTRODUCTION OR EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Unified or Combined State Plan may include an introduction or executive summary. This element is optional.

### **Introduction: Vision and Goals**

Over the last six years, Governor Murphy and his administration have set a broad vision for New Jersey's economic and workforce partners to build a stronger and fairer economy in New Jersey. The original focus of these efforts was on continuing the recovery from the Great Recession, citing the continued impacts a decade later on median wages, employment growth, poverty rates, and affordability of basic needs. Two years into the Murphy administration, New Jersey sat at the epicenter of the Covid-19 pandemic, further calcifying trends but also leading to unprecedented disruptions, challenges, and opportunities in our labor market and workforce systems. This 2024-27 WIOA State Plan both seeks continuity of this vision and goals, and evolution, as we adapt to the significant events and lessons learned over the last four years.

As the pandemic has receded and our employers, jobseekers, workers, and public systems have regained footing, the core vision of the Murphy administration's inaugural report *The State of Innovation: Building a Stronger and Fairer Economy in New Jersey* continues to hold true:

"Our vision is to reestablish New Jersey as an economic and innovation leader, as a place where diverse talent, companies, and ideas flourish, where real pathways exist to the middle class, where all residents can prosper in the economy, without compromising on environmental stewardship, fiscal prudence, and high labor standards."

Aligned with this vision and subsequent reports from the Jobs and Economic Opportunity Council (JECO) and the Governor's Future of Work Task Force, this 2024-27 WIOA State Plan centers around three key goals:

1. Expand and develop pathways and services that open up access to career opportunities for all New Jerseyans, particularly for historically disadvantaged populations, including students, workers, and jobseekers. This goal will enhance equity in service delivery and increase access to quality jobs.
2. Align the systems and supports serving businesses and those supporting career-seekers, matching talent and supporting training to meet the skill and labor needs of employers, specifically those that are providing good jobs and career opportunities.
3. Strengthen our public infrastructure to both support and enforce high quality employment opportunities and practices ("good jobs"), including fostering protections for workers and supporting a competitive business climate, through the implementation of new technologies and streamlined processes; this includes investment in our state and local agencies and institutions to support this.

New Jersey is a state that is rich in workforce resources, including state- and federal-level investments, pro-worker and pro-business strategies, and a focus on both the core industries



that have historically driven New Jersey's economic success and the new innovations and sectors that will further support a stronger and fairer New Jersey economy.

This plan brings together and offers a vision for the full ecosystem of federal and state-level partners supporting workforce development in New Jersey and seeks to further build out capacity as a state to operate as a cohesive, unified workforce system.

As we move forward under a new administration, New Jersey will continue to work with our agency partners and stakeholders, employers and jobseekers to delivery high quality, flexible workforce development solutions that strive to support this strategic plan.

### **Economic and Workforce Development Overview**

The recovery of New Jersey's labor market from unprecedented drops in unemployment and labor force participation rates during the Covid-19 pandemic has been strong, with employment growth on pace with or outpacing peer states. The primary drivers of this growth have been the following industry sectors: Trade, Transportation, and Utilities; Professional and Business Services; and Education and Health Services sectors. However, two sectors, Government and Other Services (including automotive, laundromats, and salons) have not fully recovered jobs since the start of the pandemic. Additionally, while New Jersey's recovery has been steady, this has not been even across groups, with youth, individuals with disabilities, and low-income individuals experiencing higher unemployment rates.

### **Dual Focus: System Building and Service Delivery**

While our labor market data highlight a strong economy, we also recognize that many changes underline these numbers, changes in how people organize work in their lives, accelerations in technology that will continue to change job responsibilities, as well as shifts in behavior related to the rising cost of postsecondary education and debt. Within this context, we believe the strength of our public workforce system is more important than ever.

This plan seeks to set a vision for our work that can continue beyond this administration by focusing on building lasting capacity at both the system and service levels.

At the **system level** this plan focuses on three areas:

- ***Continuing to support and build the capacity of New Jersey's 17 Local Workforce Development Boards and stronger local governance functions.*** This includes supporting the separation of governance and service delivery activities at the local level, securing service delivery partners through competitive procurement, strengthening partner agreements, and supporting stronger budgeting and monitoring functions.
- ***Deepening investment in state-level infrastructure and systems to support on-the-ground service delivery.*** This includes efforts to modernize data systems, strengthen state-level monitoring, regulate and enforce high quality business practices, increase access through digital tools and technology, deepen state-level policy, and expand professional development opportunities for state and local-level staff.
- ***Expanding development of alternative career pathway opportunities, aligned with labor market demand.*** This centers around efforts to build Industry Partnerships that bring together multiple stakeholders - from industry, postsecondary institutions, K-12

districts, and community, economic, and workforce development organizations - to identify career pathway solutions that meet industry and sector needs.

At the **service level** this plan focuses on three additional areas:

- ***Increasing awareness among and of the full range of workforce partners and programs serving businesses, career-seekers, and workers in New Jersey.*** This includes strengthening knowledge among partners and with constituents about the full range of partners and programs serving and supporting education, employment, and training as part of the public workforce system, particularly for underserved populations.
- ***Strengthening service integration and co-enrollment across workforce programs.*** This includes supporting as seamless an experience as possible in our public workforce system(s) by aligning activities along a universal set of service delivery components, including intake, assessment, development of individualized plans, service engagement, and in transition from services to successful education and employment pathways.
- ***Expanding work-based learning opportunities, supportive services, and career coaching.*** This centers on the need for individualizing services to meet the specific needs and interests of career-seekers and employers.

### **Governance and Service Delivery Structure**

The strength of this plan rests on the many state and local workforce partners and personnel working to support career-seekers, workers, and employers in New Jersey. Across New Jersey, WIOA supports a network of 23 One Stop Career Centers that serve as the hubs of our public workforce system, integrating over 30 unique federal- and state-level workforce programs and funding streams.

The primary stakeholders supporting governance and service delivery across this system include:

- ***The State Employment and Training Commission (SETC):*** The SETC is the state workforce development board charged with strategic and continuous improvement of the delivery of workforce development activities for the State of New Jersey, with a high priority on performance measures and successful outcomes.
- ***The New Jersey Department of Labor (NJLDR):*** NJLDR is responsible for the operationalization of WIOA strategies in New Jersey and administers a majority of the workforce funding streams and programs that comprise One Stop Career Center services.
- ***New Jersey's 17 Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs):*** LWDBs play a critical role in shaping the landscape of workforce programs and delivery at the local level through New Jersey's One Stop Career Centers in partnership with One Stop Career Center providers and partners.

The SETC, NJLDR, and LWDBs will lead and support the efforts outlined in this plan, in partnership with the multitude of workforce programs invested and investing in New Jersey's workforce.

## **Program-Specific Plans**

In addition to common elements of this state plan, this plan also includes program-specific plans for Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities (Title I), Wagner-Peyser Act (Title III), Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program (Title II), Vocational Rehabilitation (General) (Title IV), Vocational Rehabilitation (Blind) (Title IV), Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program, and Senior Community Employment Programs. These plans include an overview of priorities, the status of new initiatives, and next steps moving forward as we continue to support workforce development activities in the State of New Jersey and fully realize the potential of the Workforce Innovation and Investment Act (WIOA).

## **II. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS**

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a Strategic Planning Elements section that analyzes the State's current economic environment and identifies the State's overall vision for its workforce development system. The required elements in this section allow the State to develop data-driven goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce and to identify successful strategies for aligning workforce development programs to support economic growth. Unless otherwise noted, all Strategic Planning Elements apply to Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan as well as to core programs. Where requirements identify the term "populations", these must include individuals with barriers to employment as defined at WIOA Section 3. This includes displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; farmworkers; individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed individuals. Additional populations include veterans, unemployed workers, and youth, and others that the State may identify.

### **A. ECONOMIC, WORKFORCE, AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS**

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the economic conditions, economic development strategies, and labor market in which the State's workforce system and programs will operate.

#### **1. ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS**

##### **A. ECONOMIC ANALYSIS**

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the economic conditions and trends in the State, including sub-State regions and any specific economic areas identified by the State. This must include—

##### **I. EXISTING DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS**

Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which there is existing demand.

## II. EMERGING DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS

Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which demand is emerging.

## III. EMPLOYERS' EMPLOYMENT NEEDS

With regard to the industry sectors and occupations identified in (A)(i) and (ii), provide an assessment of the employment needs of employers, including a description of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required, including credentials and licenses.

New Jersey's labor market has recovered strongly from the unprecedented disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to sharp increases in unemployment and declines in labor force participation. Since then, employment growth has kept pace with, or in some cases exceeded, that of peer states. The primary drivers of this growth have been the education and health services, leisure and hospitality, and trade, transportation, and utilities sectors.

Despite the overall strength of the recovery, gains have not been evenly distributed across all groups. Youth and individuals with disabilities continue to experience relatively higher unemployment rates compared with the broader labor force.

New Jersey's economy has reached record highs in total nonfarm employment, with 4.37 million jobs in 2024. Job growth has been particularly strong over the past decade. Between 2014 and 2024, New Jersey added 398,800 jobs, despite the sharp downturn in 2020. This expansion ranks New Jersey third among peer states in the region, behind only New York (741,400 jobs added) and Virginia (451,900 jobs added).

Despite being the fourth-smallest state in the country by land area, New Jersey ranks third in job growth among the nine states included in this analysis. The Garden State also has the densest employment base in the region, with approximately 500 jobs per square mile, compared with 352 jobs per square mile in Massachusetts, which ranks second.

The economy in New Jersey proved to be particularly resilient from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the state lost the third-most jobs in the region from 2019 to 2020 after New York and Pennsylvania, its recovery has been robust. The pre-pandemic high for employment was nearly 4.2 million jobs in 2019. There were 337,400 jobs lost the following year, however, an additional 504,400 were added over the next four years. The annual job growth in 2021 and 2022 (179,300 and 205,500, respectively) was the best on record since the early 1940s. As a result of this rapid increase in employment, New Jersey now has over 167,000 more workers than in 2019, ranking second among peer states.

[Economic Analysis Charts 2026.pdf](#)

See charts referenced below in link above, unable to upload charts to portal.

Table 1 presents employment levels for selected states in 2019, 2020, and 2024, along with employment changes over the periods 2019–2020, 2020–2024, and 2019–2024.

### **Table 1. Employment and Employment Change by State, 2019-2024**

*Source: Current Employment Statistics, 2019-2024 Annual Averages*

Employment losses between 2019 and 2020 were widespread, affecting every major industry sector in the state. The sectors most severely impacted were those in which in-person interaction is essential to daily operations. As a result, the leisure and hospitality industry experienced the largest decline, losing more than 110,000 jobs. The trade, transportation, and utilities sector and education and health services followed, with employment decreasing by 53,800 and 50,100 jobs, respectively.

Combined, these three sectors accounted for nearly two out of every three jobs lost in 2020. From the low point in 2020 through 2024, New Jersey's economy added 504,400 jobs. These same industries also accounted for approximately two-thirds of the jobs gained during the recovery period. Professional and business services also experienced notable growth, adding 59,000 jobs over this period, reflecting the sector's capacity to expand through advanced computing and communication technologies.

By 2024, nearly all industries had surpassed their pre-pandemic highs in employment with some significantly higher. The only sector that is still below their 2019 levels is government.

Table 2 includes employment levels by major industry sector in New Jersey for 2019, 2020, and 2024, along with employment changes over the periods 2019–2020, 2020–2024, and 2019–2024. It shows how employment shifted across both goods-producing and service-providing sectors during the pandemic and recovery period. For detailed employment levels and changes by industry, refer to the table.

### **Table 2. Employment by Sector in New Jersey, 2019-2024**

*Source: Current Employment Statistics, 2019-2024 Annual Averages*

Every two years, the Office of Research and Information develops and publishes long-term projections that cover a period of ten years. These estimates are created using regression analysis based on past trends combined with institutional knowledge of changes to the economy. The most recent projections use 2022 as the base year and are projected to 2032.

New Jersey is projected to add 216,100 jobs between 2022 and 2032, representing a 4.8 percent increase. By 2032, the state's economy is expected to support more than 4.7 million jobs. Employment gains are projected to be widespread, with government and information being the only sectors expected to experience declines.

The education and health services sector is projected to add the largest number of jobs and experience the fastest growth, increasing by 83,700 jobs (+8.2 percent). Trade, transportation, and utilities is projected to rank second, adding 44,500 jobs, while professional and business services is expected to rank third, with an increase of 33,100 jobs.

Table 3 presents employment levels by industry in New Jersey for 2022 (actual) and 2032 (projected), along with the projected number and percentage change in employment over the period. It provides an overview of expected employment growth across both goods-producing and service-providing sectors.

### **Table 3. Employment Projections by Sector in New Jersey: 2022-2032**

The New Jersey Department of Labor has identified nine key industry clusters compiled by related work activities and based on more focused detail of the North American Industry

Classification System (NAICS). Combined, these clusters account for 73.9 percent of all employment and 76.6 percent of total wages paid in the state. In total, there are 2.7 million people employed and more than 235 billion dollars in wages paid. The range of products and services from these clusters highlights the diversity of the New Jersey economy. The types of occupations in this workforce range from highly skilled and educated workers like scientists and information technology workers often found in the technology and biopharmaceuticals and life sciences sectors to those that require minimal experience and education more commonly found among retail trade and leisure and hospitality clusters. All contribute greatly to an economy that surpassed \$846 billion in Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2024.

Table 4 provides an overview of key industry sectors in New Jersey, including the number of business units, average annual employment, average annual wages, total wages, and each sector's share of private employment and total wages. It highlights the relative economic contribution of major industries within the state's private sector. For detailed statistics by industry sector, refer to the table.

**Table 4. Reported Number of Business Units, Employment, and Wages by Key Industry Sector in New Jersey, 2024 Annual Averages**

(Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2024)

Diving more deeply into New Jersey's high demand industries, NJDOL has conducted a deeper analysis of those sectors. An overview is below, and later in this section is information relating to the skills and certifications that are most in demand by employers in these sectors.

**Finance and Accounting**

- Despite a relatively small employment base (6.3% of New Jersey's total private sector employment), finance and accounting contributed more than \$54 billion (6%) to the state's Gross Domestic Product in 2024.
- New Jersey's finance sector employs nearly 233,000 workers in the state and has an annual average wage of over \$164,000.
- The finance sector relies heavily on information and technology. New Jersey has remained in the forefront of technological advancement by becoming a national leader in developing data centers to support the industry. Of the 110 data centers located in the state, more than a two-thirds are in Hudson County. (Source: datacentermap.com)
- In 2024, New Jersey's finance sector employers paid over \$38 billion in total wages.
- Hudson County has the greatest concentration of finance sector employment (18.3% of jobholding in finance).

**Construction and Utilities**

- The construction and utilities sector provides many employment opportunities for blue-collar workers to earn better than average salaries.
- In 2024, New Jersey's construction industry averaged 164,014 in total employment, an increase of 6,960 (+4.4%) jobs from 2021. The majority (65%) of construction workers are

classified as specialty trade contractors. The average annual wage for construction workers in 2024 was \$89,760.

- In 2024, there were 34,932 housing units authorized for construction in New Jersey, a decrease of 2,162 or 5.8 percent since 2021. The total value of units authorized to be built totaled nearly \$5.9 billion in 2024.
- New Jersey is home to more than 480 utility establishments; more than half of these organizations are classified as power generation and supply. The industry employed around 14,940 people in 2024.

### **Health Care**

- The health care cluster contributed over \$65.3 billion to New Jersey's Real Gross Domestic Product in 2024, nearly 8 percent of all output.
- From 1990 through 2024, the health care sector has added 258,900 new jobs, while all other private sector employment has had a net increase of 426,400 jobs.
- Health Care experienced a modest loss of 28,200 jobs in 2020 due to the COVID-19 shutdown, followed by a 66,600 job rebound from 2020 to 2024.
- The outlook for health care employment is bright. From 2022 through 2032, it is projected that 53,300 jobs will be added, an annual increase of 1.1 percent.
- Health care employers paid nearly \$40.2 billion in total wages in 2024, or about 13 percent of all wages paid in the private sector.
- The health care sector employment is comprised of three industry groups: ambulatory health care services (51%), hospitals (31%) and nursing and residential care facilities (18%).

### **Manufacturing**

- Manufacturing contributed \$70.9 billion to New Jersey's Real Gross Domestic Product in 2024, or 8 percent of all private sectors' output.
- In 2024, there were nearly 255,300 people employed in New Jersey in industries classified as manufacturing in New Jersey, nearly 7 percent of private employment.
- Chemical manufacturing, the industry's largest subsector, employed over 50,000 in 2024, nearly 20 percent of all manufacturing workers in New Jersey. The state's jobholding in chemical manufacturing represents nearly 6 percent of U.S. chemical manufacturing employment.
- The state's manufacturing establishments paid \$25.2 billion in total wages in 2024, or about 8 percent of total private sector wages.

### **Retail Trade**

- Retail trade jobholding averaged about 431,200 in 2024, or 11.5 percent of the state's private sector workers.
- New Jersey retailers paid over \$19.4 billion in wages during 2024, 6 percent of all wages paid. The average annual wage for the industry in 2024 was \$45,379.

- Nearly 3 of 10 jobs in the retail trade sector are located in three counties; Bergen, Middlesex and Monmouth.
- Retail trade includes a large number of seasonal and part-time jobs and typically employs workers who are younger than the average for all industries. Workers under age 25 accounted for a much larger share of employment in retail trade (22.1 percent) than in all industries combined (11.7 percent).

### **Leisure and Hospitality**

- Leisure and hospitality jobholding averaged about 405,400 in 2024, or 10.8 percent of the state's private sector workers.
- New Jersey's leisure and hospitality employers paid more than \$14.5 billion in wages in 2024, representing 4.7 percent of the statewide total. The industry's average annual wage in 2024 was \$36,097.

Leisure and hospitality employment is heavily concentrated in Bergen, Monmouth, and Atlantic counties. Together, these three counties account for three out of every ten jobs in this sector.

- Employment in leisure and hospitality are projected to grow by nearly 27,100 from 2022 to 2032. The rate of job growth is faster than that projected for the state overall (7.2% vs. 4.8% for all industries).

### **Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics (TDL)**

- In 2024, TDL employment totaled 457,700 workers in New Jersey; or 12 percent of the state's private sector workers, a higher percentage than for the nation (9.5%).
- The state's TDL employers paid nearly \$39.4 billion in total private sector wages in 2024.
- New Jersey's TDL contributed \$69 billion to the state's Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2024.
- New Jersey accounted for nearly 4 percent of the nation's GDP generated from TDL.
- New Jersey offers access to approximately 39,000 miles of public roadways and 1,087 miles of the nation's freight rail network and NJ Transit system (rail, light rail, bus, and paratransit services). The State is also home to many key transportation facilities necessary for a strong TDL industry cluster including several top-ranking seaports and two international airports.

### **Biopharmaceutical and Life Sciences**

- The sector is comprised of four primary employment components: pharmaceutical manufacturing (36 percent), soap and cleaning compound manufacturing (11 percent), medical device equipment manufacturing (12 percent), and scientific research and development (41 percent). In 2024, New Jersey accounted for 5 percent of total U.S. employment in the life sciences sector.
- New Jersey's biopharmaceutical and life sciences employers paid more than \$16 billion in wages in 2024, accounting for 5 percent of the state's total wages.



- New Jersey’s highly educated workforce is reflected in this sector, where nearly three-quarters of workers (74 percent) hold a bachelor’s degree or higher.

### **Technology**

- The annual average wage for the technology sector was \$165,475 in 2024 or nearly double the statewide average (\$83,695) for all industries.
- Technology sector employment can primarily be found within the following sectors: professional, scientific, and technical services (77%) and information (23%).

Within these nine key industry sectors and in the overall workforce, there are a wide range of occupational opportunities that require varying levels of education. While the typical way of thinking is “the more you learn, the more you earn”, there are prospects on both sides of the educational spectrum. Table 5 shows the top occupations in New Jersey that require a bachelor’s degree or higher, as designated by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics.

### **Table 5. Top Ten Occupations Requiring at Least a Bachelor’s Degree in New Jersey, 2024 Estimates**

*Source: Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics Survey, 2024 Estimates*

Registered nurses represent the most common occupation by employment and are typically found across a range of health care settings. Most of the remaining occupations on this list consist of teachers, who are primarily employed in educational services, or other professional occupations that are distributed across a broader set of industries.

Table 6 shows the highest paying occupations that require less than a bachelor’s degree. In place of higher levels of education, these job opportunities more commonly require a longer period of on-the-job experience. While some are typically found in sales or service industries, many are more commonly employed in either construction or utilities sectors.

### **Table 6. Highest Paying Occupations Requiring Less Than a Bachelor’s Degree in New Jersey, 2024 Estimates**

*Source: Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics Survey, 2024 Estimates*

New Jersey is projected to add 216,100 new jobs from 2022 to 2032. Table 7 shows the top ten occupations that are expected to add the most employment over this decade. Combined, these ten will add 95,700 jobs toward this growth, or 44.3 percent of each new opportunity. There are two occupations on this list that require more advanced education, while the others have lower barriers for entry.

### **Table 7. Occupations with the Most Projected Employment Growth in New Jersey, 2022-2032**

*(Source: Industry and Occupational Employment Projections, 2022-2032)*

Table 8 highlights that New Jersey has not only experienced strong employment growth from its pre-pandemic highs, but also increased in the real median wage (adjusted 2024 dollars), first among its Northeast peer states. It ranks fifth among this group in median wage in 2024.

### **Table 8. Median Wage by State in Inflation-Adjusted 2024 Dollars, 2019 & 2024 Estimates**

State	Median Wage		Change	
	2019	2024	Actual	Percent
<b>New Jersey</b>	<b>\$54,070</b>	<b>\$57,230</b>	<b>\$3,160</b>	<b>6%</b>
Maryland	\$55,230	58,050	\$2,820	5%
New York	\$56,090	\$58,560	\$2,470	4%
Virginia	\$50,730	\$53,020	\$2,290	5%
Massachusetts	\$60,310	\$62,270	\$1,960	3%
Delaware	\$49,140	\$51,030	\$1,890	4%
Pennsylvania	\$47,450	\$48,550	\$1,100	2%
Rhode Island	\$53,070	\$54,040	\$970	2%
Connecticut	\$58,310	\$58,400	\$90	0%
United States	\$48,620	\$49,500	\$880	2%

*(Source: Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics Survey, 2024 Estimates)*

Table 9 lists information taken directly from online job advertisements written by employers, broken out for each key industry cluster. The column on the left shows the top ten certifications or licenses most commonly in demand. The column on the right shows the top technical or physical skills required for the job.

**Table 9. Top Advertised Qualifications and Specialized Skills by Key Industry Sector**

*(Source: Lightcast)*

In addition to offering a diverse economic environment, New Jersey’s population is one of the most diverse in the country. 25 percent of New Jersey’s population of 9.5 million are foreign-born. New Jersey’s proximity to major metropolitan areas, along with a history of pioneering achievements in fields ranging from electronics and pharmaceuticals to biotechnology research, continues to expand workforce opportunities in the state.

New Jersey's dedication to investing, fostering collaboration, and nurturing talent contributes to the expansion of critical industry sectors pivotal for economic growth. The state offers an optimal setting for these sectors, boasting proximity to 30.8 percent of the U.S. population within a day's drive.

The Garden State is home to a highly educated, productive workforce characterized by a significant proportion of advanced degree holders and the presence of 52 colleges and universities. Furthermore, New Jersey stands out for its economic prosperity and educational achievements, ranking fourth in real median household income and fifth in the proportion of residents with at least a bachelor’s degree.

## B. WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the current workforce in the State and within various state regions, including for populations with barriers to employment described in the first paragraph of Section II. Analysis must include—

### I. EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Provide an analysis of current employment and unemployment data, including labor force participation rates, and trends in the State.

### II. LABOR MARKET TRENDS

Provide an analysis of key labor market trends, including across existing industries and occupations.

### III. EDUCATION AND SKILL LEVELS OF THE WORKFORCE

Provide an analysis of the educational and skill levels of the workforce.

### IV. COMPARISON OF ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYTICAL CONCLUSION. DESCRIBE AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR MEETING HIRING, EDUCATION, AND SKILLS NEEDS IDENTIFIED IN THE ECONOMY COMPARED TO THE ASSETS AVAILABLE IN THE LABOR FORCE IN THE STATE.

Describe areas of opportunity for meeting hiring, education, and skills needs identified in the economy compared to the assets available in the labor force in the state.

New Jersey and the United States experienced a sharp decline in employment in April 2020 at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the initial shock, employment in both New Jersey and the United States steadily recovered. By 2022, employment in both had returned to their pre-pandemic February 2020 levels, marking a full recovery from pandemic-related job losses. Since then, employment has continued to grow modestly, with New Jersey closely tracking national trends through 2024.

See charts referenced below in the following link, unable to load charts in the portal Workforce Analysis Charts 2026.docx



Charts.pdf

Figure 1 compares total nonfarm employment in New Jersey and the United States, indexed to January 2020 = 100, illustrating the labor market impact of the pandemic and the subsequent recovery. Both New Jersey and the nation experienced a sharp decline in employment in early 2020, though the drop was slightly more pronounced in New Jersey. At its lowest point, New Jersey lost approximately 15.9 percent of total nonfarm jobs, compared with a 13.2 percent decline nationally.

Figure 2 shows trends in New Jersey's labor force participation rate (LFPR) and employment-to-population ratio from January 2019 through December 2024. At the beginning of 2019, the

labor force participation rate was approximately 63.0 percent, while the employment-to-population ratio stood at 60.3 percent. Both indicators declined sharply in early 2020 due to the economic disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, with the employment-to-population ratio experiencing the more pronounced drop.

Following the initial shock, both measures gradually recovered as labor market conditions improved. By late 2024, the labor force participation rate had risen to approximately 63.9 percent, while the employment-to-population ratio increased to about 61.2 percent, suggesting relative stability in the state's labor market.

### **Current Overview of New Jersey's Workforce**

#### **Overall Employment and Unemployment Trends:**

According to 2024 estimates from the American Community Survey, New Jersey's workforce totaled approximately 5.1 million individuals. The labor force participation rate stood at 66.8 percent, and the unemployment rate was 5.4 percent.

#### **Overall Population and Labor Force Participation Rate Trends:**

According to 2024 estimates from the American Community Survey, New Jersey's population increased from approximately 8.9 million in 2019 to about 9.5 million in 2024. During the same period, the labor force participation rate remained relatively stable, rising slightly from 65.9 percent in 2019 and to 66.8 percent in 2024.

Table 1 presents selected demographic and labor market indicators for New Jersey based on the 2024 American Community Survey one-year estimates. Table 2 shows that New Jersey's population change from 2019 to 2024.

#### **Table 1: New Jersey Key Statistics**

Source: American Community Survey, 2024 1-year estimates

#### **Table 2: New Jersey Population and Labor Force Participation Rate**

Source: American Community Survey, 2019 and 2024 1-year estimates

**Specific Populations Trends:** Below we provide more details about the size, labor force participation rates, and unemployment rates of specific target populations based on American Community Survey, 2024 one-year estimates.

#### **Youth (Age 16-24)**

- Among New Jersey's 1.0 million residents aged 16 to 24, 599,244 individuals, or 57.2 percent, are participating in the labor force, accounting for 11.7 percent of the state's total labor force.
- The unemployment rate, a figure that is commonly higher than the state average due to the nature of the younger workforce segment, stood at 14.1 percent.
- The labor force participation rate was 57.2 percent, an increase from 56.4 percent.

#### **Seniors (55+) (Age 16 and Over)**

- Among the 2.9 million individuals in this age group, over 1.3 million are employed, accounting for 25.9 percent of the total workforce.
- The unemployment rate stood at 3.6 percent.
- The labor force participation rate was 45.1 percent, a slight increase from 44.8 percent.

#### Veterans

- New Jersey is home to 257,901 veterans.
- Of this total, 106,379 are part of the civilian labor force, of whom 102,577 are employed.
- The unemployment rate for veterans is 3.6 percent.
- The labor force participation rate was 43.1 percent, similar to the 2019 rate.

#### Individuals with Disabilities

- There are 1.07 million residents with disabilities living in New Jersey, representing 11.3 percent of the total population of 9.5 million (9,500,851).
- The population includes 1.0 individuals aged 16 and over.
- 307,966 individuals are active in the labor force, representing 6.0 percent of New Jersey's total labor force of 5.1 million.
- The unemployment rate was 11.4 percent.
- The labor force participation rate was 30.7 percent, an increase of 5.5 percentage points from 2019.

#### **Key improvements**

##### Individuals with Primary Language other than English

- Thirty-two percent, or approximately 3.0 million people age 5 and older, speak a language other than English at home.
- More than half of the 3 million residents speak Spanish.

**Additional Tables:** Table 3 and 4 show the unemployment Rate and Labor Force Participation Rate by Age Group.

Table 3 presents unemployment rates by age group for 2019 and 2024. The table lists the unemployment rate for each age group, ranging from ages 16–19 through 75 and over.

Table 4 presents labor force participation rates by age group for 2019 and 2024. The table reports the labor force participation rate for each age group from ages 16–19 through 75 and over.

#### **Labor Market Trends**

New Jersey's labor market has been stable and firm over the past couple of years. Table 5 presents total employment levels for New Jersey and selected states in 2019, 2020, and 2024, along with the corresponding changes over the periods 2019–2020, 2020–2024, and 2019–

2024. The table highlights the sharp employment declines that occurred between 2019 and 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by employment growth and recovery in the subsequent years. For detailed employment levels and changes across states, please refer to table 5.

**Table 5: Employment and Employment Change by State, 2024**

*Source: Current Employment Statistics, 2019-2024 Annual Averages*

Three industries have been the primary drivers of this growth: Education and Health Services, Leisure and Hospitality, and Trade, Transportation, and Utilities. The only sector that has not fully recovered its pre-pandemic employment levels is Government (see Table 6).

**Table 6. Employment by Sector in New Jersey, 2019 - 2024**

*Source: Current Employment Statistics, 2019-2024 Annual Averages*

The industries that are expected to experience the most growth include education and health services, professional and business services, and leisure and hospitality.

The outlook for education and health services employment is strong. From 2022 through 2032, the industry is projected to add 83,700 jobs, representing an annual increase of 0.8 percent.

Employment in leisure and hospitality is projected to grow by nearly 27,100 jobs between 2022 and 2032. The projected rate of job growth in this industry is faster than the overall rate for the state (7.2 percent compared with 4.8 percent for all industries). Within this sector, food services and drinking places are expected to create the second-highest number of new jobs in the state (26,800) from 2022 to 2032, with an annual growth rate of 1.0 percent.

Overall, New Jersey is projected to add 216,100 jobs between 2022 and 2032. The table below presents the top ten occupations expected to add the most employment over this decade. Combined, these occupations are projected to add 95,700 jobs, accounting for 44.2 percent of all projected job growth.

**Table 7. Occupations with the Most Projected Employment Growth in New Jersey, 2022-2032**

*Source: Industry and Occupational Employment Projections, 2022 – 2032 Estimates*

**Educational and Skill Levels of the Workforce**

New Jersey has a well-educated workforce. In 2024, 44.5 percent of New Jersey’s population age 25 and older held a bachelor’s degree or higher, while 54.4 percent had completed an associate degree or higher. 90.4 percent of the state’s population were high school graduates in 2024.

Educational attainment is uneven across race and ethnicity, as illustrated in the table below.

**Table 8: Overview of Educational Attainment by Race or Ethnicity**

Race or Ethnicity	Percent with High School Diploma/GED	Percent with College Degree or Higher
White	24.3	49.0

Race or Ethnicity	Percent with High School Diploma/GED	Percent with College Degree or Higher
Black	31.6	31.1
Asian	7.6	74.4
Another Race	32.2	17.2
Two or moreraces	28.4	33.8

Sources:

- *American Community Survey, one-year estimates*
- *Industry and Occupational Employment Projections*
- *Current Employment Statistics*

As New Jersey moves forward, the state’s economy is expected to remain stable and resilient. Continued economic growth and labor market stability will provide opportunities to strengthen workforce development efforts and support long-term economic competitiveness.

In addition, we recognize that while recovery from the pandemic has been strong, and further investments poise New Jersey for strong employment, the recovery from the pandemic has not been even for all groups of New Jerseyans. As highlighted in the table below, youth, individuals with disabilities, and low-income individuals continue to experience higher employment rates. These groups and other underserved populations are a priority in this WIOA 2024-27 State Plan.

## 2. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the workforce development activities, including education and training in the State, to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, as identified in (a)(1)(B)(iii) above, and the employment needs of employers, as identified in (a)(1)(A)(iii) above. This must include an analysis of—

### A. THE STATE’S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Provide an analysis of the State’s workforce development activities, including education and training activities of the core programs, Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan, and required <sup>6</sup> and optional one-stop delivery system partners.<sup>7</sup>

[6] Required one-stop partners: In addition to the core programs, the following partner programs are required to provide access through the one-stops: Career and Technical Education (Perkins), Community Services Block Grant, Indian and Native American programs, HUD Employment and Training programs, Job Corps, Local Veterans’ Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program, National Farmworker Jobs program, Senior Community Service Employment program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

(unless the Governor determines TANF will not be a required partner), Trade Adjustment Assistance programs, Unemployment Compensation programs, and YouthBuild.

[7] Workforce development activities may include a wide variety of programs and partners, including educational institutions, faith- and community-based organizations, and human services.

**B. THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES**

Provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce development activities identified in (A), directly above.

**C. STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY**

Provide an analysis of the capacity of State entities to provide the workforce development activities identified in (A), above.

As highlighted in this plan, New Jersey is a state that is rich in workforce programs and resources. Leveraging these resources to elevate the quality of our data and ensure that staff are in place to operationalize plans are key areas of focus integrated into this plan. More than 116,000 individuals came through our One Stop Career Centers in Program Year 2024. As we move forward, we seek to continue expanding service levels and also deepen service engagement for as many of these individuals as possible, particularly among our underserved populations.

**Overview of Participation and Services**

Drawing on information from New Jersey’s system of record, America’s One Stop Operating system (AOSOS), NJDOL compiled the following data offering an overview of service levels in New Jersey’s public workforce system.

In Program Year 2024, New Jersey’s state workforce system:

- Enrolled 116,012 participants
- Provided services to 126,780 participants
- Exited 90,881 participants

The tables below illustrate services provided across several of New Jersey’s federally-funded workforce programs.

**Table 1: Program Year 2024 Participation Levels – Federal Workforce Programs**

Program	Enrolled *	Served ***	Exited ***
Title I Adult	3,271	3,764	1,885
Title I DW	8,731	9,674	1,960
Title I Youth	1,525	2,013	1,338
Title II	15,411	15,564	12,088



Program	Enrolled *	Served ***	Exited ***
Title III Wagner Peyser	67,720	75,200	66,569
Title IV	18,087	17,451	4,592
JVSG	570	685	469
MSFW	34	34	29

\* AOSOS Production, LACES and AWARE systems

\*\* Source: AOSOS Production, based on specified SSTs and the PIRL PY24, and LACES and AWARE systems

\*\*\*Source: PIRL PY24, and LACES and AWARE systems

In addition, New Jersey supports many additional workforce programs as highlighted in subsequent sections in this plan. The table below provides additional information about two of these key programs, state-supported continuation of Pathways to Recovery, and GAINS (Growing Apprenticeship in Non-Traditional Sectors) as examples of the additional reach that state workforce investments offer in New Jersey.

**Table 2: Program Year 2022 Participation Levels – State Workforce Programs**

Program	Enrolled *	Served ***	Exited ***
Pathways to Recovery (State)*	497	688	450
GAINS	166	1,617	1,451

\* AOSOS Production and Intelligrants (IGX) system

\*\* Source: AOSOS Production based on specified SSTs and the PIRL PY24, and Intelligrants (IGX) system

\*\*\*Source: PIRL PY24 and Intelligrants (IGX) system

The table below shows the demographics of participants served across the above-mentioned federal and state programs.

**Table 3: Demographic Overview of Workforce Participants in PY24**

Demographic Characteristics		Percent
Sex	Female	48%
	Male	52%
Age	< 16	Less than 1%
	16 - 18	6%
	19 - 24	13%

Demographic Characteristics		Percent
25 - 44	44%	
45 - 54	17%	
55 - 59	8%	
60+	12%	
Ethnicity/Race	American Indian / Alaska Native	Less than 1%
Asian	5%	
Black / African American	28%	
Hispanic / Latino	27%	
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	Less than 1%	
White	38%	
More Than One Race	1%	

In addition to these demographics, a review of barriers to employment show that the most common barriers include the following:

- English Language Learners/low levels of literacy/cultural barriers (29% of those served)
- Low-income (27% of those served)
- Individuals with Disabilities, including youth (18% of those served)

### **Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities**

New Jersey's Title II and Title III programs serve a high number of individuals, however deeper individualized career service and training opportunities, particularly those available through Title I programs, serve many fewer individuals. This WIOA State Plan centers around the need to strengthen the connections across our programs and leverage the many resources we have in New Jersey to serve more people, more deeply. We seek to draw on the strength of our programs that open their doors widest to direct career-seekers and employers to programs that can tailor, individualize, and deepen opportunities for service engagement. We see two primary pathways that we can build on to achieve this: (1) strengthening data quality, and (2) increasing service engagement.

#### ***Strengthening Data Quality***

A key lesson and area of focus as we move forward with this state plan is strengthening the quality of data available within individual workforce programs, as well as across programs to support stronger service connections and referrals. We recognize that in many ways, antiquated and disconnected data systems have led to data quality issues, reinforced siloed

service delivery, and prevented the development of innovative workforce activities that leverage multiple funding streams.

In particular, the above data regarding Title I service levels stands out as an area where we seek to increase service levels - through more accurate data collection of Title I services and stronger connections to One Stop partner programs through shared data systems and protocols that better support shared services strategies. New Jersey's current system of record, AOSOS, often results in recorded levels of service that are lower than the levels of service actually taking place in our One Stop Career Centers, particularly among our Title I programs. Furthermore, we recognize that the numbers of specific participant characteristics are often not complete or captured in incorrect fields, leading to underreporting of barriers to employment.

Furthermore, we recognize that many of the numbers highlighted in the table above reflect siloed program services. NJDOL is committed to investing in deliberate strategies and resources that (1) strengthen the quality of data collection within individual programs, and (2) support the potential for leveraging services across programs and funding streams to maximize engagement of participants.

A major initiative highlighted through this plan, is NJDOL's Data Modernization project that will replace AOSOS as the system of record. In addition to easing data entry among programs that utilize this new platform as their system of record, this new system will also offer enhanced capacity for linking data to other systems, as well as more integrated data collection from self service activities. We expect that this new system will ease data entry for various stakeholders operating in our One Stop Career Centers, as well as offer new reporting features that can support access to information in real time.

### ***Increasing Service Engagement***

In addition to building data capacity, these numbers reflect an opportunity to increase service levels, in particular through stronger outreach efforts, as well as through service integration between programs. As we seek to increase workforce activities, particularly in our Title I programs, as well as, in smaller programs like JVSG and Pathways to Recovery that offer opportunities for deeper service engagement, this plan focuses on the following:

- **Expansion of entry points into public workforce services:** This includes expanding both digital and in-person connections to our One Stop Career Centers, for example through (1) New Jersey's new, interactive digital hub, My Career NJ, which offers centralized and personal career resources, (2) better alignment of workforce programs and knowledge across workforce programs, (3) increasing access points in the community through mobile services, local libraries, and other local institutions, and (4) increasing marketing and outreach efforts in alignment with Training and Employment Guidance Letter 03-23.
- **Expansion of high-quality services and supports through our public workforce systems:** As highlighted in this plan, NJDOL and the SETC seek to continue expanding the breadth and depth of services and supports available to participants – with a particular focus on career coaching, supportive services, and work-based learning. In addition, as part of this effort, we seek to increase the spread of Title I funds to support more participants and deepen services for individuals being served in other programs, particularly underserved populations. Additionally, NJDOL will continue investing in

activities and programs related to expanding Apprenticeship and work-based learning opportunities, as well as supporting Industry Partnerships that work with industry to identify high leverage points in our workforce system for integrating these investments. Additionally, this plan continues to elevate and support the role that individualized assessment, planning, and supports can offer in both attracting new participants and supporting their success.

- **Emphasis on role of LWDBs and One Stop Operators in supporting service integration:** This plan includes an emphasis on the functions and roles that support coordination across One Stop Career Center partners. In addition to delivering services, the LWDB supports connection and negotiation of service delivery with One Stop Career Center partners, and the One Stop Operator takes on day-to-day responsibilities and tasks related to this integration. The development and implementation of strategies includes supporting cross-training, strengthening referral functions, leveraging resources and conducting outreach among community and faith-based programs, and regularly assessing the effectiveness of services and the satisfaction of participants engaged.

Through higher quality data and data systems, as well as through strategies for expanding access to the vast array of programs and services available through our One Stop Career Center network, we believe we can better connect and elevate our public workforce system as a whole. Our goal is that when we develop our next WIOA State Plan four years from now, we will have a more complex understanding and higher numbers of (1) individuals served, (2) individuals served through multiple One Stop partner programs, and (3) individuals receiving deeper levels of service engagement.

### **State Workforce Development Capacity**

The Covid-19 pandemic offered an important inflection point for New Jersey's public workforce system, laying bare where capacity was strong in our system and areas where improvement is needed. This plan seeks to build on existing capacity and continue to build the state and local-level infrastructure that is needed to ensure that our public workforce systems can sustain high levels of support for New Jerseyans, even in the face of unprecedented events like the pandemic.

In particular, NJDOL and SETC recognize the critical importance of the staff and people in our systems. Like many businesses and state agencies, NJDOL, in particular, is facing a shortage of staff. NJDOL has worked diligently to set up new processes that accelerate filling staff vacancies. Continuing to staff up and maintain staffing levels to support this multi-faceted work will continue to be a focus of the department.

### ***Overview of NJDOL Capacity***

New Jersey's staff in the NJDOL's Workforce Development division, the area with primary responsibility for programs included in WIOA, includes 371 individuals. This includes staff working in NJDOL's central office in Trenton, and across the network of 23 One Stop Career Centers.

- **Career Services** staff (71%) make up the large majority of this team. The Career Services staff include interviewers, case managers, and employment counselors who

provide services related to Title III Wagner-Peyser, Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA), Jobs for Veterans State Grants, Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers, and Workforce Information Systems and Evaluation.

- **Business Engagement** staff (12%) is the unit which includes the Office of Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning, and Business Engagement and Sector Strategies teams – which supports Trade Adjustment Assistance, Rapid Response, and Title I Business Services. These staff support industry partnership and employer engagement as well as On-the-Job-Training programs.
- **Transitional Services** staff (8%) support state and federal workforce investments targeting underserved populations, including Senior Community Service Employment Programs, Title II, Youth Programs, and Work Force New Jersey Employment and Training Programs.
- **Additional staff in the Office of the Assistant Commissioner for Workforce Development** support the effective functioning of the core activities above. These units include Quality Improvement and Program Administration and Program Oversight and Development (including WIOA Policy, Program Monitoring, and provision of Technical Assistance).

The Division of Workforce Development works closely with other Department of Labor Divisions, including:

- **State Employment and Training Commission**, the State Workforce Development Board. NJDOL collaborates closely with the SETC on matters relating to WIOA oversight and local governance.
- **Office of Research and Information**, which includes Workforce Research and Analytics (data reporting and analysis and data validation); the Division of Economic and Demographic Research which provides and supports the use of Labor Market Information; and the Center for Occupational Employment Information, which supports and implements the Eligible Training Provider List.
- **Office of Employment Accessibility Services**, which houses teams administering, supporting, and implementing Title IV Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services.
- **Office of Finance and Accounting**, which oversees all fiscal reports and oversight of fund transfers to LWDBs, as well as fiscal reporting to state and federal agencies.
- **Office of Internal Audit**, which supports fiscal monitoring and oversight of WIOA funding and specifically the fiscal and administrative operations of LWDBs.

### ***Building Staff Capacity***

NJDOL is planning the following capacity-building investments to enhance the work of these staff and departments. These include:

- **Data modernization:** As highlighted above, in 2024-25, New Jersey plans procurement of a statewide Workforce Case Management solution to replace AOSOS and support integration of New Jersey's workforce programs, services, and activities into a centralized core system, that include self-service and referral functionality.

- **Training and support for staff:** NJDOL is seeking to increase access of state- and local-level workforce staff to professional development opportunities that support the operationalization of policy and promising practices. A primary tool for this training has been a strong and growing partnership with the state membership organization of our Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs), the Garden State Employment and Training Association (GSETA).
- **Investment in digital resources and services:** Access to new digital resources will help support staff/system capacity to provide services in both in-person and virtual settings more seamlessly, for example, through My Career NJ and SkillUp New Jersey.

All of these efforts are highlighted in more detail in the full 2024-27 WIOA State Plan that follows.

## B. STATE STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the State’s strategic vision and goals for developing its workforce and meeting employer needs in order to support economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. This must include—

### 1. VISION

Describe the State’s strategic vision for its workforce development system.

### 2. GOALS

Describe the goals for achieving this vision based on the analysis in (a) above of the State’s economic conditions, workforce, and workforce development activities. This must include—

(A) Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including preparing youth and individuals with barriers to employment<sup>8</sup> and other populations.<sup>9</sup>

(B) Goals for meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers.

[8] Individuals with barriers to employment include displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers (as defined at section 167(i) of WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 35-14); individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed individuals.

[9] Veterans, unemployed workers, and youth and any other populations identified by the State.

### 3. PERFORMANCE GOALS

Using the tables provided within each Core Program section, include the State's expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability measures based on primary

indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA. (This Strategic Planning element only applies to core programs.)

#### 4. ASSESSMENT

Describe how the State will assess the overall effectiveness of the workforce development system in the State in relation to the strategic vision and goals stated above in sections (b)(1), (2), and (3) and how it will use the results of this assessment, which may include evaluation findings, and other feedback to make continuous or quality improvements.

##### **Vision**

Over the last six years, Governor Phil Murphy and his administration have set a broad vision for New Jersey's economic and workforce partners to build a stronger and fairer economy in New Jersey. The original focus of these efforts was on continuing the recovery from the Great Recession, citing the continued impacts a decade later on median wages, employment growth, poverty rates, and affordability of basic needs. Two years into the Murphy administration, New Jersey sat at the epicenter of the Covid-19 pandemic, further calcifying trends but also leading to unprecedented disruptions, challenges, and opportunities in our labor market and workforce systems. This 2024-27 WIOA State Plan both seeks continuity of this vision and goals and evolution, as we adapt to the significant events and lessons learned over the last four years.

As the pandemic has receded and our employers, jobseekers, workers, and public systems have regained footing, the core vision of the Murphy administration's inaugural report *The State of Innovation: Building a Stronger and Fairer Economy in New Jersey* continues to hold true:

*"Our vision is to reestablish New Jersey as an economic and innovation leader, as a place where diverse talent, companies, and ideas flourish, where real pathways exist to the middle class, where all residents can prosper in the economy, without compromising on environmental stewardship, fiscal prudence, and high labor standards."*

As we continue to grow and evolve our economy and workforce systems, the key tenets of this vision will continue to guide us over the next four years. We will continue to focus on the development of:

- **Innovative Initiatives and Systems:** We seek to support innovation in our private and public sectors, driving new technologies and ideas that support a higher quality of life for our society, as well as ongoing modernization in our public systems to offer the highest quality of support for our New Jersey businesses and residents.
- **Multitudes of Career Pathways:** We seek to continue expanding the educational pathways available and open to our communities, bringing partners together to offer a diversity of more cost-effective and career-connected opportunities.
- **Diversity of Opportunities:** We seek to ensure that the innovative practices and growth in our economy and workforce systems touches all New Jerseyans, especially individuals who face the largest barriers to access and success in existing pathways.
- **High Labor Standards:** We seek to continue building infrastructure and supports that ensure that New Jersey residents work in places that are the safest and most equitable in the nation.

We seek to set a vision that can continue beyond this administration, by setting a path that centers on and invests in the success of our employers, jobseekers, and workers.

New Jersey remains committed to the priorities and goals laid out in this plan and we look forward to continuing to work with our partners and stakeholders to deliver upon these goals.

### **Goals**

The Murphy administration's inaugural report in 2018, *The State of Innovation: Building a Stronger and Fairer Economy*, set a vision for our economic and workforce systems and included five key goals by 2025 that continue to guide our work:

1. Driving faster job growth over this period than all Northeast peer states by fostering a better, more supportive business climate
2. Achieving faster median wage growth than all Northeast peer states
3. Creating the most diverse innovation ecosystem in the nation and doubling venture capital investment in the state
4. Closing the racial and gender wage and employment gaps
5. Encouraging thriving and inclusive New Jersey urban centers and downtowns, with a focus on reducing poverty

After the release of *The State of Innovation: Building a Stronger and Fairer Economy* report, Governor Murphy created a Jobs and Economic Opportunity Council (JEOC), comprised of cabinet members from across state agencies, to deliver on his vision for a stronger and fairer New Jersey. In 2021, JEOC released the JOBS NJ report outlining specific opportunities, strategies, aspirations, and initiatives for driving toward a stronger and fairer economy. The centerpiece of this report was a focus on two mutually supporting objectives:

- Ensure all career-seeking New Jerseyans have the education and training necessary to access high-quality employment.
- Ensure businesses and employers that are offering high-quality employment in New Jersey can quickly and efficiently fill their talent needs.

This dual focus on career-seekers (including jobseekers, workers, and students) and employers is a core focus of New Jersey's 2024-27 WIOA State Plan. In order for our economic and workforce development systems to continue to evolve and develop on pace with the change around us, we must continue to explore and develop strategies that invest in our business community and in New Jersey's career-seekers.

In addition, to these foundational reports, our WIOA state plan also draws on goals and strategies developed through the Future of Work Task Force, established by the Governor in 2018. The group's charge was to determine how technology would impact the state's workforce, who would be impacted, how technology could be leveraged to improve worker conditions and devise innovative and impactful strategies to prepare New Jersey for the future. In February 2022, this group released *The New Jersey State Future of Work Task Force: Roadmap and Recommendations*. These recommendations focused on three core areas, (1) Invest in Workers, (2) Empower Workers, and (3) Protect Workers. There is considerable



alignment between these goals for New Jersey and the state plan priorities outlined in USDOL's Training and Employment Guidance Letter 04-23.

Taken together these strategic documents offer three key goals that guide and focus this 2024-2027 WIOA State Plan. Over the next four years, New Jersey will continue to:

1. **Expand and develop pathways and services that open up access to career and employment opportunities for all New Jerseyans**, particularly for historically disadvantaged populations, including veterans, youth, low-income individuals, underemployed individuals, and jobseekers
2. **Align the systems and supports serving businesses and those supporting workers**, matching talent and supporting training to meet the skill and labor needs of employers, specifically those that are providing good jobs and career opportunities
3. **Strengthen our public infrastructure to both support and enforce high quality employment practices**, including fostering protections for workers and supporting a competitive business climate, through the implementation of new technologies and streamlined processes

### **Performance Goals**

JOBS NJ specifies a set of 2025 aspirations that will continue to guide our work as we seek to fulfill our promise of high-quality employment and talent in New Jersey.

#### **2025/2026 Career-Seeker Aspirations:**

- Ensure 250,000 additional Black, Latinx, and Native American individuals attain postsecondary credentials;
- Close the racial and gender wage and employment gaps by employing 42,000 more women and minorities and increasing wages by \$15,000-\$23,000;
- Raise the post-secondary credential attainment in all counties to at least 45 percent;
- Increase the number of post-secondary graduates employed in high-demand industries by 10 percent; and
- Ensure at least 25,000 additional adults enroll and graduate with a high-quality credential

#### **2025/2026 Employer Aspirations:**

- Complete Talent Action Roadmaps for at least 100 companies
- Celebrate 200 Governor Choice employers
- Annually publish materials on high-demand jobs and pathways

These goals align with and support United States Department of Labor (USDOL) goals around quality jobs, enhancing equity in service delivery, investing in youth, and developing strategic partnerships.

In addition, the performance goals for Core Programs can be found in Appendix 1 of this Combined Plan.

### **Assessment**

New Jersey's assessment strategy relies on a multitude of partners and data sources. We recognize that the next four years are critical to developing systems of assessment designed for our current times and the needs of our workforce systems today. Data-driven decision-making requires timely and trustworthy quantitative and qualitative data.

New Jersey Department of Labor (NJDOL), specifically, is prioritizing modernization of our data and information systems to meet these demands. This includes creating more accessibility to training information, including provider performance, and better systems for tracking the services and success of the populations our workforce systems support – both on the career-seeker and employer sides.

The State Employment and Training Commission (SETC), as the state's workforce development board, will continue to request and monitor data from New Jersey partners, including NJDOL. A core function of the SETC is to assess the quality, effectiveness, and improvement of our workforce investments and strategies, in alignment with the assessment and performance requirements outlined in section 116 of WIOA.

Core assessment strategies that we will continue to develop and invest in over the next four years include the following:

***System of record modernization:*** New Jersey is well into the process of releasing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the modernization of its workforce development system of record. As one of only two states still operating on AOSOS (America's One Stop Operating System) as its primary system of record, this initiative represents a pivotal and long-anticipated step toward modernizing the State's workforce infrastructure. This effort reflects the culmination of a deliberate, multi-year engagement with a broad coalition of stakeholders, including workforce professionals, program administrators, and partner agencies across the state, whose collective input has informed the vision and requirements driving this procurement. The forthcoming RFP will seek a to procure a modern system of record for New Jersey's WIOA-funded and state workforce investment programs. The new system is intended to modernize data management, significantly expand access to reporting, and generate actionable insights that will strengthen workforce investment decision-making statewide.

***Dashboard development:*** New Jersey continues to explore opportunities for developing and utilizing data dashboards that structure data from various sources around the questions driving our work – including formal performance goals and service delivery strategies. The Office of Research and Innovation (ORI) and Workforce Development (Workforce) at NJDOL, in collaboration with the SETC, continue to develop dashboards that can serve stakeholders monitoring this work at the highest levels, as well as those providing and supporting services directly on the ground. The data dashboards recently released by USDOL, the ETA Workforce Data Hub, ETA Workforce Data Hub | U.S. Department of Labor which allows you to review performance down to the individual board level, allows for further analysis, and a tool local boards can use to tell their story. Future Works is also a tool that we utilize that allows for exploration of performance and accountability / outcomes.

**Third party evaluations:** Annual evaluations required in WIOA offer an opportunity for us the SETC and NJDOL to deepen learning, supporting opportunities for additional quantitative and qualitative data collection, that supports a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges faced in our workforce systems. This type of information will continue to be invaluable, and we also foresee the need for a focus on rapid feedback that can fuel innovation as our economic and workforce systems continue to experience profound changes.

**Internal systems of monitoring and learning:** Building the capacity of our internal systems and coordinating functions between the SETC and NJDOL to support monitoring and learning will continue to be a key focus. The WDB Certification process driven every two years by the SETC, annual monitoring efforts conducted by NJDOL, and ongoing technical assistance activities offer a multi-pronged approach to holding our various workforce partners and programs accountable and supporting their success. There is a strong partnership and coordination between SETC and NJDOL Workforce/Monitoring, which allows for a strong support network for our local boards regarding technical assistance, monitoring and driving improvement and best practices at our One Stop Career Centers.

### C. STATE STRATEGY

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the State's strategies to achieve its strategic vision and goals. These strategies must take into account the State's economic, workforce, and workforce development, education and training activities and analysis provided in Section (a) above. Include discussion of specific strategies to address the needs of populations provided in Section (a).

1. DESCRIBE THE STRATEGIES THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT, INCLUDING INDUSTRY OR SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS RELATED TO IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS AND CAREER PATHWAYS, AS REQUIRED BY WIOA SECTION 101(D)(3)(B), (D). "CAREER PATHWAY" IS DEFINED AT WIOA SECTION 3(7) AND INCLUDES REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP. "IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTOR OR OCCUPATION" IS DEFINED AT WIOA SECTION 3(23)

2. DESCRIBE THE STRATEGIES THE STATE WILL USE TO ALIGN THE CORE PROGRAMS, ANY COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN, REQUIRED AND OPTIONAL ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS, AND ANY OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THE STATE TO ACHIEVE FULLY INTEGRATED CUSTOMER SERVICES CONSISTENT WITH THE STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS DESCRIBED ABOVE. ALSO DESCRIBE STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN REGARD TO WEAKNESSES IDENTIFIED IN SECTION II(A)(2)

New Jersey is a state is that rich in workforce resources, including state- and federal-level investments, pro-worker and pro-business strategies, and a focus on both the core industries that have historically driven New Jersey's economic success and the new innovations and sectors that will further support a stronger and fairer New Jersey economy.

As we highlighted above, building on the work of the Jobs and Economic Opportunity Council (JEOC) and the Future of Work Task Force, three broad goals guide and focus this 2024-2027 State Plan:

1. **Expand and develop pathways and services that open up access to career opportunities for all New Jerseyans**, particularly for historically disadvantaged populations, including students, workers, and jobseekers. This goal will enhance equity in service delivery and increase access to quality jobs.
2. **Align the systems and supports serving businesses and those supporting career-seekers**, matching talent and supporting training to meet the skill and labor needs of employers, specifically those that are providing good jobs and career opportunities
3. **Strengthen our public infrastructure to both support and enforce high quality employment opportunities and practices (“good jobs”)**, including fostering protections for workers and supporting a competitive business climate, through the implementation of new technologies and streamlined processes; this includes investment in our state and local agencies and institutions to support this

We highlight more about the specific strategies that are a focus of this plan over the next four years below.

### **Expand and Develop Pathways and Services for All New Jerseyans**

The last few years, through the pandemic and with accelerations in technology, have offered profound changes in how New Jersey residents view education and employment opportunities. The onset of remote work and learning opportunities, a greater respect and understanding of neurodiversities and unique life experiences, and the rising cost of educational opportunities and debt have shifted attitudes in ways that we will continue to unpack over the next several years. As technology continues to advance and economic systems continue to shift, our workforce systems must center on the needs of career-seekers and businesses rather individual programs. In particular, we recognize the need and opportunity for addressing the evolution of "gig work" and the perspectives of young New Jerseyans who are entering the workforce with different opportunities from the economy of our past.

#### ***Developing New Pathways***

The development of new pathways into careers is a core focus of this strategic plan. Over the next four years, New Jersey will continue to invest in, support, and operationalize new pathways into careers, through work-based learning opportunities, including specifically Pre-Apprenticeships, Apprenticeships, Transitional Jobs, and Internships. The opportunity to learn on the job and customize experiences that meet the skill development needs of employers and prospective and/or current employees is the future of educational opportunity expansion in New Jersey. In addition to supporting the use of more WIOA funding to support these types of opportunities, New Jersey is also making additional investments in these types of opportunities through programs like PACE (Pre-Apprenticeship in Career Education), GAINS (Growing Apprenticeship in Nontraditional Sectors), and NJ BUILD (Builders Utilization Initiative for Labor Diversity). A hallmark of New Jersey's work on these programs is the inclusion of women and people of color, populations historically underrepresented in trades and apprenticeship, into these career paths. We are continuing this work, most recently for Fiscal Year 26 issuing additional Notices of Grant Opportunity for Woman and Minorities in Construction Trades Program and Growing Apprenticeship in Nontraditional Sectors.

The development of these pathways requires the investment and involvement of many partners including our business community, community colleges, and public workforce systems. This plan lays out several different initiatives and efforts at the state and local levels, for expanding these opportunities for all populations and in all facets of our work, including NJDOL's Industry Partnership work.

In addition to developing these new pathways, we also recognize the importance of building awareness and strengthening outreach to unique populations about these opportunities. TEGL 03-23 offers new guidance highlighting the opportunities for outreach and building awareness regarding the multitude of opportunities our public workforce system offers. Building opportunities and greater awareness of these opportunities is an important aspect of this plan.

#### Expanding Access to Credential Pathways Through Workforce Pell

In addition to expanding work-based learning and apprenticeship pathways, New Jersey recognizes the importance of reducing financial barriers to education and training programs that lead to in-demand credentials and career advancement. Rising education costs and concerns about student debt continue to shape how many residents—particularly adults, career changers, and individuals from historically underserved communities—approach postsecondary education and training opportunities.

Workforce Pell offers a significant opportunity to expand access to high-quality, short-term credential programs that align with employer demand and clearly defined career pathways. Integrating Workforce Pell into New Jersey's workforce ecosystem will strengthen connections between the public workforce system and postsecondary education providers, enabling more residents to pursue training that leads to meaningful employment while minimizing financial burden.

This plan supports the use of Workforce Pell in coordination with, and not as a replacement for, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I investments. Aligning these funding sources will maximize access to education and training while ensuring individuals continue to receive the career services, case management, and guidance necessary for successful completion and transition into employment. Workforce Pell resources will be prioritized for programs aligned with state-identified priority industries, labor market demand, and opportunities for stackable credentials and continued skill development.

Through this approach, New Jersey aims to increase credential attainment, shorten pathways to employment, and strengthen the pipeline of skilled workers needed to meet the evolving demands of businesses across the State.

#### ***Developing Innovative Supports***

In addition to strengthening and opening up new career pathways, we know that many New Jersey residents face specific barriers to employment that make accessing these pathways difficult. This plan focuses on the importance of training, career services, job coaching/mentoring and supportive services in helping to guide individuals through plans that support their individual circumstances. A one-size-fits-all approach to career and training services misses the individual strengths and needs of both career-seekers and businesses.

New Jersey's launch of Lifelong Learning Accounts (LiLA) is a prime example of the types of innovative supports that we seek with this plan. This program empowers and supports career-

seekers in their own choices and decision-making, while also ensuring that they are not alone in their journeys. We seek to pursue strategies that offer access to the highest levels of support that individuals need.

New Jersey continues to expand resources to support a variety of barriers, especially for populations that have been most marginalized and disadvantaged in our labor markets. For example, New Jersey extended the Pathways to Recovery program that supports individuals impacted by the opioid epidemic with state funding after our federal National Dislocated Worker grant ended. In addition, NJDOL has expanded its commitment to ensuring all justice-involved populations are served through JOBS (Judicial Opportunities for Building Success). The main goal of this initiative is to help justice-involved individuals find employment that leads to self-sufficiency and ensure integration back into New Jersey's communities. An additional Notice of Grant Opportunity was issued for Fiscal Year 2026 for Pathways to Recovery, to continue this important work serving opioid affected communities, and the Job Opportunities for Building Success program.

In addition to expanding supports through state funding, we also seek to expand the use of WIOA resources to support a variety of barriers to employment that are outside of the specific education and training experiences in which an individual engages. In 2021, NJDOL released a Supportive Services technical assistance guide that specifically highlights the type of supportive services that WIOA Title I funds can support. This 2024-27 state plan focuses on increasing the breadth and depth of supportive services that our workforce systems provide, particularly through co-enrollment of One Stop partners, as well as, as mentioned above, building awareness that these are the types of supports that individuals can access in our system.

### **Align Systems and Services for Businesses and Career-Seekers**

New Jersey is rich with workforce investments – through WIOA and other federal investments like Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF), as well as a variety of state-level investments that support businesses and career-seekers. This constellation of supports and resources offers tremendous opportunity for our state and also a complexity of stakeholders that can be difficult to navigate and coordinate. Too often programs and investments operate in competition and disconnection rather than as a part of a coordinated system.

WIOA is clear; coordination and the connection of programs that strengthen our workforce system as a whole, is a core objective of federal workforce investments in our state. We are one system of state and local partners working together to strengthen the quality of services available to our businesses and career-seekers. The opportunities and challenges that our current and future economy offer will only be realized and addressed by working together, whether creating new career pathways and skills initiatives, blending funding to support the holistic needs of an individual, or ensuring that our businesses and career-seekers have access to seamless service flows.

WIOA mandates the engagement of 13 required One Stop Career Center partners, as well as names six optional partners. Recognizing that strategic partnering drives a successful, integrated system, New Jersey has identified a set of state-level workforce partners that are required and recommended to coordinate services in our One Stop Career Centers statewide. The figure below provides an overview of the partners and stakeholders we are seeking to align with this plan:

WIOA-Required One Stop partners	Additional State Workforce One Stop partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Services</li> <li>• Title II Adult Education and Literacy Services</li> <li>• Title III Employment Services</li> <li>• Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation Services (General and Blind)</li> <li>• Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker programs</li> <li>• Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) programs</li> <li>• Unemployment Insurance</li> <li>• WorkFirst New Jersey (WFNJ)*</li> <li>• Senior Community Service Employment program (SCSEP)</li> <li>• Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) activities</li> <li>• Job Corps</li> <li>• YouthBuild</li> <li>• Career and Technical Education (CTE) postsecondary programs</li> <li>• Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) employment and training activities</li> <li>• Housing Urban and Development (HUD) employment and training activities</li> <li>• Second Chance Act programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pathways to Recovery</li> <li>• Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) STEPS General Assistance (GA)</li> <li>• Judiciary Opportunities for Building Success (JOBS)</li> <li>• Workforce Learning Link</li> <li>• Community Libraries</li> <li>• New Jersey Youth Corps</li> <li>• Bridges to Employing Youth</li> <li>• Summer Youth Employment Program</li> <li>• State On-the-Job Training Programs</li> <li>• Opportunity Partnership Grants</li> <li>• Growing Apprenticeships in Nontraditional Sectors (GAINS)</li> <li>• Pre-Apprenticeship in Career Education (PACE)</li> <li>• NJBUILD (Builders Utilization Initiative for Labor Diversity)</li> <li>• Upskill Grants</li> <li>• Fellowship Grants</li> <li>• Industry Partnerships</li> <li>• New Jersey Pathways Leading Apprentices to a College Education (NJPLACE)</li> <li>• Youth Transitions to Work (YTTW)</li> <li>• <u>LILA</u> (Lifelong Learning Accounts)</li> </ul>

\*Work First New Jersey includes TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and General Assistance in New Jersey

### **Strengthen Our Public Infrastructure**

Covid-19 offered the opportunity for rapid changes in how our public workforce systems leveraged and utilized technology and also put a spotlight on many systems in need of modernization. Coming out of the pandemic, New Jersey continues to focus on opportunities for updating our systems and preparing for the significant technological shifts underway. The opportunities that technology offers for enhanced transparency, accountability, and ease of connection to services are immense. Through projects like My Career NJ, Unemployment Insurance modernization, and our push to modernize our state-wide WIOA data systems, we are strengthening information systems both to inform our work internally, and to support the flow of information between our public systems and external constituents. This effort will enhance the state’s capacity to engage in the data-driven decision-making that is a priority for WIOA planning and implementation.

In addition to investments in data and information systems, this plan also supports the modernization of policies, as well as the systems for supporting and enforcing policies. For example, New Jersey has passed laws to increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour and to expand the state’s Paid Family Leave program. Further, New Jersey has put into place several strategies to stop the practice of illegally classifying employees as independent contractors,

including through the development of a new Office of Strategic Enforcement at NJDOL. By addressing misclassification, NJDOL helps to ensure individuals have access to workplace benefits such as workers' compensation, unemployment benefits, and family and sick leave.

Additionally, NJDOL has continued to support the systems changes required by WIOA in our state and local systems, particularly around local governance and oversight. Starting with New Jersey's local governance policy that was put into place in 2021, NJDOL has continued to release additional policies that clarify roles, responsibilities, and structures of WIOA local governance. Continuing to build the capacity of our Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) to offer additional procurement, monitoring, and partnership development functions is a core focus of this plan. NJDOL and the SETC are committed to supporting our LWDBs and local stakeholders with clearer policies about the roles, responsibilities, and structures that local governance and oversight of WIOA funds require.

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In addition to these core strategies that serve as the foundation of this 2024-27 WIOA State Plan, the SETC and NJDOL also seek to support and connect this work to the other stakeholders and strategies state-wide that focus on New Jersey's economic and workforce development.

This includes coordinating with other state-level education and social service plans, including coordinating with:

- NJ Department of Education, to support its Perkins V plan, which addresses secondary and postsecondary Career and Technical Education programs and offers pathways for in-school youth to careers, as well as postsecondary entry-points for out-of-school youth.
- New Jersey Council of County Colleges, to support their forthcoming Vision 2028 plan which offers a vision and strategies for New Jersey's community college system, as well as their Future Ready States Initiative
- NJ Department of Human Services, to support the state-level strategies identified for Temporary Aid to Need Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) funding, inclusive of specific workforce development activities and supports

In addition to coordinating with other state planning processes, the SETC and NJDOL will ensure coordination with current historic federal investments that offer additional workforce development opportunities, including the following:

- Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Bipartisan Infrastructure Law)
- Creating Help Incentives to Produce Semiconductors (CHIPS) and Science Act
- Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)

We are excited about this moment in New Jersey's economic and workforce development and look forward to continuing to build the capacity of our systems and the opportunities available to our business community and career-seekers together over the next four years.



### III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an Operational Planning Elements section that supports the State's strategy and the system-wide vision described in Section II(c) above.

Unless otherwise noted, all Operational Planning Elements apply to Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan as well as to core programs. This section must include—

#### A. STATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include—

##### 1. STATE BOARD FUNCTIONS

Describe how the State board will implement its functions under section 101(d) of WIOA (i.e., provide a description of Board operational structures and decision making processes to ensure such functions are carried out).

The **State Employment and Training Commission (SETC)** serves as the State Workforce Development Board in New Jersey and is comprised of both private and public sector representatives. The SETC was established by state statute in 1989 and is governed by WIOA and state statute N.J.S.A. 34:15C.

The members of the SETC are appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate, except for the legislative members who are appointed directly by the Governor. Not more than half of the members appointed by the Governor may be of the same political party.

As highlighted in 20 CFR 679.100, the purpose of the SETC is to:

- Enhance the capacity and performance of the workforce development system
- Align and improve the outcomes and effectiveness of federal- and state-funded workforce programs and investments
- Through these efforts, promote economic growth
- Engage public workforce system representatives, including businesses, education providers, economic development, labor representatives, and other stakeholders to help the workforce development system achieve the purpose of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
- Assist to achieve the State's strategic and operational vision and goals as outlined in the State Plan

Below, we provide an overview of the key functions and structure of the SETC in supporting these goals.

#### **SETC Functions Outlined in WIOA**

WIOA regulations, included in 20 CFR 679.130, define 12 core functions that State Workforce Development Boards play, these include:

1. **State Plan development:** Development, implementation, and modification of the State plan
2. **Alignment of Workforce Development Programs:** Review of statewide policies, programs, and recommendations on state-level to align workforce development programs in a manner that supports a comprehensive and streamlined workforce development system state-wide
3. **Continuous improvement of the workforce development system:** Ongoing learning and development of strategies related to the removal of barriers to employment, development of career pathways, effective outreach strategies, employer engagement, regional and local area designations, effective service delivery and professional development strategies
4. **State performance accountability systems:** Development and updating of comprehensive State performance accountability measures, including State adjusted levels of performance, to assess the effectiveness of the core programs in the State as required under section 116(b)
5. **Identification of best practices:** Identification and dissemination of information related to the effective practices of (1) One Stop Career Centers, (2) LWDBs, and (3) career and training service delivery
6. **Coordination of service provision:** Development and review of statewide policies affecting the coordinated provision of services through the State's one-stop delivery system described in section 121(e), including criteria and procedures for LWDBs to assess One Stop Career Centers and guidance related to cost allocation of One Stop partners to support One Stop Career Center operation
7. **Technology use and strategies:** Development of strategies for technological improvements to facilitate access to, and improve the quality of, services and activities provided through the one-stop delivery system, including to support digital literacy, postsecondary credential attainment, professional development of workforce professionals, and accessibility to individuals with disabilities and living in rural areas
8. **Alignment of technology and data systems:** Development of strategies for aligning technology and data systems across one-stop partner programs to enhance service delivery and improve efficiencies in reporting on performance accountability measures
9. **Title I allocation formulas:** Development of allocation formulas for the distribution of funds for employment and training activities for adults, and youth workforce investment activities, to local areas as permitted under sections 128(b)(3) and 133(b)(3)
10. **Annual Reports:** The preparation of the annual reports described in paragraphs (1) and (2) of section 116(d)
11. **State-level workforce and LMI systems:** Development of the statewide workforce and labor market information system described in section 15(e) of the Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 491-2(e))

12. **Statewide policy oversight and development:** Development of other policies that promote statewide objectives for, and enhance the performance of, the workforce development system in the State

### **Additional SETC Duties Outlined in New Jersey State Statute**

In addition to the functions highlighted in WIOA, NJSA 34:15C-6 further details and articulates the duties of the SETC as including the following:

- **Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) oversight:** Ensure the full participation of LWDBs in the planning and supervision of local workforce systems; Oversee and develop appropriate standards to ensure LWDB compliance with state and federal law, the State Plan, and other relevant requirements regarding membership, staffing, meetings, and functions; Establish guidelines to be used by the LWDBs in performing the planning, policy guidance, and oversight functions required of them; Approve local plans that meet the criteria established for the establishment of New Jersey's One Stop Career Center network
- **Higher education partnerships:** Foster and coordinate initiatives of the Department of Education and the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education to enhance the contributions of public schools and institutions of higher education to the implementation of the state workforce plan and policies
- **Policy reviews:** Examine federal and state laws and regulations to assess whether those laws and regulations present barriers to achieving any of the goals of the SETC and public workforce system; As appropriate, issue reports to the Governor and Legislature on its findings, including recommendations for changes in state or federal laws or regulations concerning workforce programs or services, including, when appropriate, recommendations to merge other State advisory structures and functions into the SETC
- **Inter-Agency Agreements:** Have the authority to enter into agreements with the head of each state department or commission which administers or funds education, employment or training programs, including, but not limited to, the Departments of Labor and Workforce Development, Community Affairs, Education, and Human Services and Higher Education, the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, and the Juvenile Justice Commission, to align and support programs and activities within the public workforce system

### **SETC Board Requirements**

The SETC composition must meet the requirements set forth under WIOA at 20 CFR 679.110 and under state statute N.J.S.A. 34:15C, updated in 2019.

WIOA and state regulations require the inclusion of specific partners that are diverse and distinct in representation – including that members of the SETC shall represent diverse geographic areas of the State, including urban, rural, and suburban areas.

The SETC must include the following members (1) The Governor, (2) A member of each chamber of the State legislature (appointed by the presiding officers of each chamber), and (3) Members appointed by the governor that meet the following criteria:

**1. A majority shall be representatives of businesses in the State, who:**

- Are owners of businesses, chief executives or operating officers of businesses, or other business executives or employers with optimum policy-making or hiring authority, and who, in addition, May be members of a local board described in section 107(b)(2)(A)(i)
- Represent businesses (including small businesses), or organizations representing businesses described in this subclause, that provide employment opportunities that, at a minimum, include high-quality, work-relevant training and development in in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the State
- Are appointed from among individuals nominated by State business organizations and business trade associations
- At a minimum, one member representing small businesses as defined by the US Small Business Administration

**2. Not less than 20 percent shall be representatives of the workforce within the State, who:**

- Must include representatives of labor organizations, who have been nominated by State labor federations (a total of at least five members of the SETC must represent labor organizations)
- Must include a representative, who shall be a member of a labor organization or a training director, from a joint labor- management apprenticeship program, or if no such joint program exists in the State, such a representative of an apprenticeship program in the State
- May include at least three representatives of community-based organizations that have demonstrated experience and expertise in addressing the employment, training, or education needs of individuals with barriers to employment, including organizations that serve veterans or that provide or support competitive, integrated employment for individuals with disabilities
- May include representatives of organizations that have demonstrated experience and expertise in addressing the employment, training, or education needs of eligible youth, including representatives of organizations that serve out-of- school youth

**3. The balance of the members:**

- Must include representatives of state government, including the lead State officials with primary responsibility for the core programs – Title I, Title II, Title III, and Title IV
- Must include representative of local government, specifically two or more chief elected officials (collectively representing both cities and counties, where appropriate); and
- Must include other government representatives and officials the Governor designates, including specifically, the Commissioners of Labor and Workforce Development, Community Affairs, Education, and Human Services, the Secretary of Higher Education, and the CEO of the New Jersey Economic Development Authority

- May include State agency officials from agencies that support other One Stop partner programs
- May include officials responsible for education programs in the State, including chief executive officers of community colleges and other institutions of higher education.

SETC members who represent organizations, agencies or other entities described must be individuals who have optimum policy-making authority in the organization or for the core program that they represent. Furthermore, SETC members may represent only one of the following categories, business representative, workforce representative, government representative. All subcategories must have their own representatives, unless a single individual is responsible for multiple subcategories.

The SETC leadership works with the Office of the Governor, the Commissioner of the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development, partner agencies, and business, industry and organized labor groups to identify members for appointment, as needed.

### **SETC By-Laws**

The SETC has established by-laws to govern the SETC's membership that include the following:

- The nomination process used by the Governor to select the chair and members;
- The term limitations and how the term appointments will be staggered to ensure only a portion of membership expire in a given year;
- The process to notify the Governor of a WDB member vacancy to ensure a prompt nominee;
- The proxy and alternative designee process that will be used when a WDB member is unable to attend a meeting and assigns a designee as per the following requirements:
- If the alternative designee is a business representative, he or she must have optimum policy-making hiring authority.
- Other alternative designees must have demonstrated experience and expertise and optimum policy-making authority.
- The use of technology, such as phone and Web-based meetings, that must be used to promote WDB member participation;
- The process to ensure members actively participate in convening the workforce development system's stakeholders, brokering relationships with a diverse range of employers, and leveraging support for workforce development activities; and
- Other conditions governing appointment or membership on the State WDB as deemed appropriate by the Governor.

As we move forward with this 2024-27 state plan, the SETC will develop and establish new by-laws and guiding documents that govern board membership and structure.

### **SETC Leadership and Staff**

The SETC membership selects both a Chairperson and an Executive Director to facilitate and guide the work of the SETC. The Chairperson of the board is selected from among members of the board who are representatives of business.

The SETC-selected Executive Director reports to the chairperson of the SETC and is responsible for administering the daily operations of the commission. Up to four additional administrators may be appointed to support the work of the SETC. The Executive Director and the administrators serve in the State unclassified service. The commission may also hire and employ, pursuant to Title 11A, Civil Service, of the New Jersey Statutes, other professional, technical, and clerical staff as may be necessary to perform the functions assigned to the SETC. The SETC may call to its assistance and avail itself of the services of the employees of any other units of State government as it may require and as may be available to it for that purpose.

### **SETC Councils and Committees**

In addition to the SETC Chair and staff, several SETC Councils and Committees help to drive the work of the SETC, in alignment with this 2024-27 WIOA State Plan. These committees include the following:

***Disability Issues: State Rehabilitation Councils:*** The mission of both the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) and the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI) Rehabilitation Councils is to advocate for the increase in the number of people with disabilities in New Jersey's workforce. In order to achieve this goal, persons with disabilities must have improved access to New Jersey's workforce programs and services. The two State Rehabilitation Councils will develop policies and program strategies for recommendation to the SETC that focus on identifying the training needs, accommodations, and resources specific to people with disabilities. The integration of these specific policies will ensure that New Jersey's workforce system is equipped to address the diverse needs of the disability community.

***Council on Gender Parity in Labor and Education:*** The Council on Gender Parity in Labor and Education's mission is to insure and advocate for the execution of equitable gender and labor practices in educational programs and workforce training throughout New Jersey. The Gender Parity Task Force was first established by the SETC in 1993, and the Council was permanently established through legislation in 1999. The Council is legislated to consist of 16 members: six members are appointed by the SETC and six members are appointed by the Division on Women, with not more than half of these members shall be of the same political party. In addition, four members serve ex-officio and are appointed by the Commissioners of Children and Families, Education, Human Services, and the Secretary of Higher Education.

***Governance Committee:*** The SETC is responsible for the oversight of New Jersey's Local Workforce Development Boards. The SETC develops appropriate standards to ensure local WDBs are in compliance with state and federal law, the state plan and other relevant documents regarding membership and functions. A key role of this Committee is to establish standards and priorities, and to provide oversight and guidance for local Boards with the goal of enhancing and empowering local WDBs in carrying out their own planning and oversight responsibilities.

***Performance Committee:*** The Performance Committee supports New Jersey's commitment to system accountability and integrity, demonstrating success through performance standards, outcomes and data quality. The committee provides high-level performance oversight and recommends performance policy that drives program effectiveness and efficiency. It advises the

SETC on performance standards for the workforce system. This includes identifying quantifiable performance standards for use in evaluating the workforce investment system, and guidelines for procedures to encourage and enforce compliance with these standards, as required by N.J.S.A. 34:15C-8. The committee reviews outcomes for federally mandated performance measures for the State and local areas; reviews recommendations from NJDOL on additional performance measures; identifies promising practices and facilitates the replication of effective models and makes recommendations to the Commission on the appropriateness of additional measures and the standards and implementation of such measures.

***State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services:*** The State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services (SCALES) focuses on strengthening the adult literacy delivery system. It is a bipartisan body created within the State Employment and Training Commission by Statute in 1999 to facilitate state and local policy development, planning and oversight in consultation with stakeholders in the area of adult literacy education. In carrying out its role, the Council is responsible for developing a broad-based State Literacy Plan that focuses on appropriate system-wide performance standards, evaluates adult literacy services, and advocates for professional development and capacity building among practitioners and policy makers. Additional areas of focus of the SCALES committee include WIOA Title II updates regarding program planning, program performance, and service delivery. By law, SCALES members are appointed by the Assembly, Senate and the Governor's office.

***New Jersey Shared Youth Vision Council:*** The Shared Youth Vision Council recommends service, policy and program components that serve youth at the local level in the workforce system and recommends or assists in the programs and services that focus on youth workforce policy that best serve the needs of clients. With a focus on ensuring quality services for NJ's youth, we will define success by the creation of a highly skilled, motivated, and conscientious workforce to help strengthen New Jersey's economic future. The Shared Youth Vision Council was formed to assist New Jersey with the development of a comprehensive youth strategy around the development of workforce policies and program strategies focused on building capacity, fortifying career awareness efforts and highlighting innovative programs that create pathways to employment for youth. The Council connects state agencies, education, community organizations, workforce development programs and other youth related stakeholders around a singular shared youth vision: that is, providing and guiding youth to education, employment, retention of employment, and nationally recognized credentials.

***Apprenticeship Pathways Committee:*** The Apprenticeship Committee was created in 2019 to review and coordinate current policies and practices relating to registered apprenticeships. The Committee will develop, expand, support, validate and coordinate policies and practices that create a better understanding of registered apprenticeships to: Market the benefits of registered apprenticeship to all stakeholders; Ensure equitable access to registered apprenticeship opportunities for all NJ residents; Expand occupational offerings within "demand" industries; Engage with employers to develop & incentivize a realistic approach; Expand relationships with both Career and Technical Education (CTE) and comprehensive high schools; Ensure repeatable structure exists between industry sectors; Support career pathways that provide for growth on all levels for the individual (including financial); Strengthen partnerships with Higher Education to progress a model that include college credit for skills training acquired during apprenticeship, experiential learning based on past (formal) skills improvements, and stackable credentials that applies to county colleges and four-year schools.

***NJ Advanced Manufacturing Council:*** There is created in the New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission, established pursuant to 36 section 5 of P.L.1989, c.293 (C.34:15C-2), the New Jersey Advanced Manufacturing Council. The council shall consist of 11 members who are individuals with experience in the fields of labor, education, or workforce development or training.

The council shall:

1. convene and enable industry-led, private-public partnerships focused on engaging New Jersey institutions of higher education in manufacturing innovation;
2. design and implement an advanced manufacturing initiative to facilitate collaboration and information sharing across State departments and agencies;
3. assist private companies to enhance technological transfer in New Jersey manufacturing industries to help companies overcome technical obstacles to scaling up production of new technologies;
4. submit an annual report to the Governor, to the Legislature the State Employment and Training Commission, of its assessments and recommendations to enhance State policy related to the advanced manufacturing industry in New Jersey.

The council is authorized to:

1. hold public hearings;
2. employ staff, responsible to the Executive Director of the State Employment and Training Commission, to assist the council to implement the purposes of this act;
3. avail itself of the services of the employees and have access to the records of any instrumentality of the State, as necessary or useful to implement the purposes of this act.

“Manufacturing in Higher Education Act”; requires various State entities to promote manufacturing career pathways for students and provides assistance to manufacturing industry.

### **New Jersey Manufacturing Network**

The New Jersey Business Action Center (NJBAC) is a partner with the New Jersey Manufacturing Network, a collaboration of organizations and state agencies coming together to provide the best possible support for the manufacturing industry through training and education.

### **SETC Decision-Making Process**

The SETC receives recommendations and reports from its committees and councils, as outlined above. In addition, the members of the SETC may, from time to time, request the opportunity to present to the SETC any new initiatives and projects undertaken by their businesses, organizations and agencies, and may provide the SETC with reports on workforce issues.

The SETC takes formal votes on policy decisions, which are most often submitted as resolutions by the appropriate council or committee, for the full board’s consideration. The votes are taken at the regular meetings of the SETC, held at least quarterly, and are published in the minutes.



The minutes and any corresponding policy resolutions are posted on the SETC website, [www.njsetc.net](http://www.njsetc.net) and may be distributed via e-mail to appropriate stakeholders.

## 2. IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGY

Describe how the lead State agency with responsibility for the administration of each core program or a Combined Plan partner program included in this plan will implement the State's Strategies identified in Section II(c). above. This must include a description of—

### A. CORE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES TO IMPLEMENT THE STATE'S STRATEGY

Describe the activities the entities carrying out the respective core programs will fund to implement the State's strategies. Also, describe how such activities will be aligned across the core programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan and among the entities administering the programs, including using co-enrollment and other strategies, as appropriate.

As we continue to navigate the long tail of the Covid-19 pandemic, we recognize that our economic and workforce systems are grappling with a number of changes, including persistent labor market disparities, shifts in worker attitudes, an acceleration to automation, and new thinking about the role of our workforce systems as part of our "lifelong learning" infrastructure.

Overall, a key characteristic of our current workforce landscape is its dynamism. We do not fully understand what the impacts of the current shifts at play will be, however, we do know that our workforce systems and programs must develop and operationalize strategies that are more adaptive and flexible to meet the education and training needs of our workforce in 2024-2027.

While the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), in many ways, provides the space for this flexibility, the infrastructure and culture of our workforce systems is too often still grounded in past strategies that prioritized (1) quality implementation through a focus on siloed funding streams and (2) supporting access to traditional education and training opportunities. As we move forward with this 2024-27 WIOA State Plan we seek to fully leverage the opportunities of WIOA, specifically we seek to strengthen the connections and relationships across workforce funding streams and programs to offer holistic models of service to career-seekers and employers.

As we move forward, we have identified five key areas around which to focus our core program activities. These include:

- **Continuing to build a cohesive, unified workforce system in New Jersey:** Through functional alignment, an articulation of One Stop partners inclusive of federal and state funding streams, and connection to other local anchor institutions and education/workforce partners, we seek to support our Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) in serving as centers of workforce and educational strategies in their communities.

- Continuing to bring our systems into alignment with the requirements and opportunities that WIOA offers for our systems:** This plan continues to focus on recent efforts around supporting local governance. Our strategies focus on supporting the capacity development of our LWDBs, ensuring the competitive procurement of providers, developing monitoring and oversight capabilities at the local level, and supporting co-enrollment and service integration of different workforce programs and funds within New Jersey’s network of One Stop Career Centers.
- Strengthening the quality of service delivery by both increasing the breadth of opportunities available and the quality of those services delivered:** We seek to (1) expand work-based learning opportunities, emphasizing opportunities that offer quick connection to employers and employment, as well as, supportive service, (3) increase awareness and accountability of training services, and, (3) deepen career coaching and individualized support.
- Expanding our strategies and services to reach and meet the needs of underserved communities and populations, including individuals with disabilities, low literacy, and/or low income:** Continuing to deepen relationships across WIOA’s four core programs (Titles I, II, III, and IV), coordinate between local and state business service teams, and coordinate with other federal and state workforce investments, offer incredible opportunities for reaching and serving more individuals with unique barriers to employment.
- Leveraging policy, data, training and technology to support the strategies above:** We will continue our efforts to build a base of policies, training opportunities, digital and virtual tools, and data access to support both our state and local partners in developing stronger workforce systems and services.

**Building a Cohesive, Unified Workforce System in New Jersey**

WIOA reinforces the centrality of partnerships and coordinated strategies in driving and delivering a comprehensive set of services driven by multiple partners and programs to meet the needs of a diverse customer base through a variety of pathways and supports. The coordination of these elements is the foundation of a cohesive, unified workforce system:

Partners and Programs	Customers	Pathways and Supports
WIOA mandates the coordination of services across 13 unique federal programs. In addition, New Jersey has expanded this list of partners to include specific state workforce partners.	WIOA includes resources for supporting a diverse customer base, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jobseekers</li> <li>• Workers in need of upskilling</li> <li>• Employers</li> </ul> New Jersey’s One Stop Career Centers must be accessible and provide services to all.	Services and supports include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skill and interest assessments</li> <li>• Individualized career counseling and support</li> <li>• Basic skills training</li> <li>• Occupational skills training</li> <li>• Work-based learning <u>opportunities</u></li> <li>• Supportive services</li> <li>• Job search, placement, and retention supports</li> </ul>

The Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB), with the support of their competitively-procured One Stop Operator, plays a critical role in organizing and supporting the work of their

local workforce systems, and specifically the activities of local One Stop Career Centers, around core functions that leverage and support the full set of partners, customers, and services highlighted above.

**Required and Recommended One Stop Partners**

As highlighted in this plan, WIOA specifically funds workforce services through four unique Titles:

- Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Services
- Title II Adult Education and Literacy Services
- Title III Employment Services
- Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation Services (General and Blind)

Additionally, WIOA mandates the coordination of these services with other federally-funded workforce opportunities, including:

NJDOLE-Administered	Administered by Federal and Sister State Agencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker programs</li> <li>• Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) programs</li> <li>• Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment Grants (RESEA)</li> <li>• Unemployment Insurance</li> <li>• WorkFirst New Jersey (WFNJ)* / Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)</li> <li>• Senior Community Service Employment program (SCSEP)</li> <li>• Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) activities</li> <li>• Rapid Response</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job Corps</li> <li>• YouthBuild</li> <li>• Career and Technical Education (CTE) postsecondary programs</li> <li>• Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) employment and training activities</li> <li>• Housing Urban and Development (HUD) employment and training activities</li> <li>• Second Chance Act programs</li> </ul>

\*WFNJ Employment & Training services administered by NJDOLE.

In addition to the integration of these federally-required programs and services, the State of New Jersey provides additional funding and resources to further support opportunities for career-seekers and employers and requires or recommends their inclusion in One Stop Career Center operations, as highlighted in New Jersey’s One Stop Career Center Partner policy.

Career-Seeker-focused	Employer-focused
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Career-Seeker-focused	Employer-focused
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pathways to Recovery</li> <li>• SNAP and SNAP Steps to Success</li> <li>• Judiciary Opportunities for Building Success (JOBS)</li> <li>• Workforce Learning Link</li> <li>• Community Libraries</li> <li>• New Jersey Youth Corps</li> <li>• Bridges to Employing Youth</li> <li>• Summer Youth Employment Program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State On-the-Job Training Programs</li> <li>• Opportunity Partnership Grants</li> <li>• Growing Apprenticeships in Nontraditional Sectors (GAINS)</li> <li>• Pre-Apprenticeship in Career Education (PACE)</li> <li>• NJBUILD (Builders Utilization Initiative for Labor Diversity)</li> <li>• Upskill Grants</li> <li>• Fellowship Grants</li> <li>• Industry Partnerships</li> <li>• New Jersey Pathways Leading Apprentices to a College Education (NJPLACE)</li> <li>• Youth Transitions to Work (YTTW)</li> </ul>

While this Combined Plan does not outline program-specific activities for all of these programs, as part of Title I activities, Local Workforce Development Boards, supported by NJDOL, are expected to support coordination of all these programs as part of this WIOA 2024-27 State Plan. We are continuing to have local boards coordinate and work with grantees to ensure all participants have access to the full breadth of services at the American Job Center.

Together these programs and services offer tremendous opportunities for delivering high quality workforce services to career-seekers and employers across New Jersey.

### ***Functional Alignment***

To support LWDBs in coordinating systems, NJDOL released a Functional Alignment policy in September 2023 outlining the specific functions around which to coordinate partners and services. This Functional Alignment policy highlights the functional authority of the LWDBs in helping to implement agreements and facilitate the joint activities of multiple partners, programs, and funding streams.

As the functional leader, LWDBs have responsibility for coordinating teams with different formal supervision structures to engage day-to-day in shared service delivery efforts and workflows. Much of this day-to-day work occurs through the LWDB's One Stop Operator contract.

LWDBs, the One Stop Operator, and all One Stop partners are required to collaborate as a group to:

- Create staffing plans that provide adequate office and service coverage either in person or virtually at all times, during standard hours of operation. The staffing plans should

allow fair and equitable opportunity for time off, be consistent with an individual's formal benefits, and coordinate with any formal supervisory recommendations

- Ensure all staff members are adequately trained
- Identify and promote cross-training opportunities
- Facilitate co-enrollment of customers
- Participate in cross-training of staff
- Ensure that all staff members adhere to applicable LWDB policies and procedures
- In December 2025, NJDOL issued Triage Guidance Triage Guidance WD-PY25-9.pdf Triage staff serve as the initial point of contact for customers entering the One-Stop Centers and play a pivotal role in creating a welcoming environment that helps direct individuals to the appropriate services

In other words, One Stop partners are responsible for administration of their own programs, as well as the overall operation of the One Stop Career Center, including the coordination with other programs and services and the overall delivery of seamless experiences for career-seekers and employers. LWDBs and One Stop Operators help to facilitate and lead these efforts.

This state plan highlights the opportunity for state and local teams, representing the required and recommended One Stop partners, to work together to align and coordinate teams around several unique functions that align with One Stop service delivery and flow.

- **Welcome and Intake:** The Intake function ensures that all visitors to the One Stop are welcomed, receive appropriate orientation, and are directed to appropriate services and resources.
- **Comprehensive Assessment:** The Comprehensive Assessment Function involves academic testing and other assessments to ensure that educational, occupational, and supportive service needs and assets are identified. The WIOA Title I Assessment Technical Assistance Guide outlines appropriate testing instruments and strategies.
- **Career Planning and Coaching:** The Career Planning and Coaching function utilizes assessment results to develop and implement individualized service and employment plans with customers that can include multiple services and draw on multiple programs and funding streams.
- **Skills Development:** The Skills Development function includes coordination around a range of supports and activities that facilitate skills development, including occupational skills training, work-based learning, and job search and placement activities, as well as case management.
- **Transition Success:** The Transition Success function provides coordination around ongoing follow-up activities that help to support the success of individuals once they have moved onto next steps in their career development.

- ***Process and Recordkeeping:*** The Process and Recordkeeping function focuses on coordination around data and information that supports shared understanding of customers.

The development of local level Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) and Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFAs) are important processes and resources for documenting the contribution of different partners to these functions and the overall integration of services in One Stop Career Centers. This WIOA 2024-27 State Plan continues to emphasize the critical role that the One Stop Career Center MOU and IFA play in planning and implementing coordinated service strategies. Over the last couple years, NJDOL has updated and issued new guidance, templates, and detailed template guidelines to support LWDBs in guiding this work across all One Stop Career Center partners.

Through the collaboration of functional teams and coordinated planning and implementation, required and recommended One Stop partners, facilitated by LWDBs and One Stop Operators, have the opportunity to strengthen relationships across programs and develop shared strategies and service flows. These efforts are aimed at fostering a cohesive and unified workforce system.

#### ***Additional Anchor Institutions and Education Partners***

Our network of Career Centers leverages the strength of anchor institutions and organizations in our local communities, including community colleges, libraries, community and faith-based organizations, labor unions, and other educational institutions. By weaving together the supports, services, and funding that exist across these entities, we seek to ensure that jobseekers and students, at all levels, have access to high-quality career guidance, training opportunities, and job search and networking support.

#### **Aligning Our Workforce Systems with WIOA Requirements and Opportunities**

In New Jersey, we share the vision that WIOA offers. We recognize our system as one that must be locally-driven, inclusive of multiple partners and services, and data-driven, to best meet the needs of career-seekers and employers. WIOA offers a vision for a workforce system and set of systems that is responsive to the complexities of our environment.

- It is a vision that includes strong local leadership and guidance through our Local Workforce Development Boards.
- It sets the table for a wide range of partners at the federal, state, and local level to contribute resources, expertise, and services in connected and diverse ways.
- It includes a broad array of services to support employers, jobseekers, and workers, including basic and occupational skills development, employer-connected learning, and supportive services.
- It emphasizes the critical importance of data in guiding decisions at the system, program, and individual levels.

By focusing our work in these ways, we believe we will strengthen the capacity of our system to design individual approaches that meet our customers – our career-seekers and our businesses – where they are.

### ***Strengthening Capacity of LWDBs and Local Governance***

WIOA highlights a range of core functions for which our Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) are responsible. These responsibilities include activities related to the overall coordination of the local workforce development system, inclusive of all core WIOA Titles and the multitude of One Stop Career Center partners identified at the federal and state levels. LWDB responsibilities also extend to specific functions related to the administration of Title I funds, including budget development and approval, competitive procurement of the One Stop operator and career and youth service providers, and monitoring and oversight of these contracts.

NJDOL, worked in partnership with the SETC, and released a local governance policy in May 2022 highlighting the full set of responsibilities of our LWDBs, as highlighted in WIOA, including the following 14 functions:

<b>Core LWDB Functions</b>	
1. Local plan development	8. Development of technology strategies
2. Regional plan development	9. Oversight and monitoring of Title I services and providers
3. Labor market information and workforce research	10. Negotiation of local performance measures
4. Convening local workforce stakeholders	11. Competitive procurement of Title I providers
5. Employer engagement	12. Coordination with education and training providers
6. Coordination with secondary and postsecondary education programs	13. Annual assessment of One Stop Career Center accessibility
7. Identification and promotion of promising strategies	14. Certification of One Stop Career Centers

Source: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-20/chapter-V/part-679/subpart-C/section-679.370>

In addition, NJDOL worked in partnership with the Garden State Employment and Training Association (GSETA) to develop a local governance training series that offers a series of virtual trainings related to these governance functions. This WIOA 2024-27 State Plan continues to prioritize capacity building across our LWDBs to support and carry out these mandated functions and requirements. These system-building efforts at the local level are recognized by NJDOL and the SETC as critical to the health of our workforce system state-wide.

### ***Integration of State Workforce Programs in WIOA Strategies***

Because of the tremendous investment that New Jersey places in workforce development programs and strategies at the state level, as well as the investment of WIOA funds in state-administered programs through specifically Title III funding and Governor’s Reserve Funds, NJDOL plays a dual role in New Jersey’s workforce system. NJDOL guides and supports LWDBs in developing core local governance capacities as highlighted in WIOA, and also administers several workforce programs that are part of the services and programs that LWDBs are helping to coordinate and align as part of their local governance responsibilities.

In other words, our NJDOL state teams play a dual role in implementing workforce strategies - as programmatic actors in the workforce system governed by WIOA and as the administrator and overseer of WIOA funding and local governance activities. In the past, this complexity has led to a separation of “state workforce” and “local workforce” activities. As we embrace WIOA and its emphasis on a coordinated workforce system, a key goal of this 2024-27 plan is to

strengthen connections across workforce activities driven by state and local teams and strengthen NJDOL's role as a contributor to our coordinated workforce systems and in its administrative and oversight responsibilities of WIOA funds.

### ***Elevating Service Coordination and Integration***

As highlighted above, WIOA offers a vision of a coordinated service delivery system that leverages multiple funding streams and maximizes access and the quality of services provided to NJ career-seekers and businesses. WIOA calls for specific provisions that help to support and facilitate coordination and integration of services across the myriad of partners and resources supporting employment and training opportunities, including by highlighting:

- **Requirements that specific partners work together** to provide comprehensive and individualized workforce services
- **Opportunities for sharing customers and co-enrolling participants** to access services and supports through multiple workforce programs and funding streams
- **Specifying the role of LWDBs** in guiding and negotiating coordinating services across partners, including specifically through development of Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) and Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFAs)
- **Specifying the role of One Stop Operators** to developing, implementing, assessing, and supporting the integration of services across partners through continuous and ongoing processes

WIOA, specifically, encourages and supports co-enrollment as a strategy – serving participants with more than one grant-funded program – to support the full needs and interests of career-seekers and employers in New Jersey. Co-enrollment ensures that participants have seamless access to the full range of services available to them and for which they are eligible.

Furthermore, co-enrollment helps to support alignment and coordination of program teams to reduce duplication of processes and services and ensures that workforce programs and staff are taking shared responsibility for supporting customers and helping to support successful training and employment outcomes for all customers. By co-enrolling participants, services and outcomes for participants “count” towards multiple programs’ service delivery and performance metrics and incentivize programs to engage in joint career coaching and case management, as well as coordinated data collection and reporting efforts.

An important focus of this 2024-27 State Plan is leveraging the possibilities for co-enrollment and service integration that WIOA encourages. NJDOL is aiming to set annual targets for co-enrollment starting in PY24/FY25, in collaboration with the SETC and LWDBs. Unique targets will be set for Title III co-enrollment and Title I co-enrollment.

Co-enrollment is already required by USDOL for all Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) participants in Title I Dislocated Worker programs. NJDOL and LWDBs must coordinate and ensure co-enrollment for any existing and future TAA participants. In addition, based on alignment of eligibility requirements and complementarity of service offerings, this state plan prioritizes co-enrollment within and across the following programs.

- Title III and all other One Stop Career Center programs



- RESEA (Wagner Peyser) and Title I Dislocated Worker
- Work First New Jersey and Title I Adult
- Pathways to Recovery and Title I Adult
- JOBS and Title I Adult
- SNAP and Title I Adult
- Title II and Title I Adult
- Title IV and Title I Adult

Co-enrollment has benefits and impacts at every step of service flow and can drive coordination across partners from determining eligibility to supporting shared responsibility for performance.

NJDOL and the SETC will work with LWDBs and One Stop Career Center partners to develop the following shared strategies for supporting co-enrollment and service integration as part of this 2024-27 State plan:

- **Coordinated eligibility and intake processes** that assess for eligibility across One Stop partner programs and support enrollment and connection to the multiple programs for which an individual is eligible at the time of initial intake
- **Comprehensive assessments** that support understanding of academic, occupational, and supportive service needs and assets, performed by knowledgeable cross-trained staff
- **Individualized and Shared Service Plans** that consolidate the specific plan requirements of individual funding sources to form one service/employment plan that includes an array of services and draws on the range of One Stop partner programs for which an individual is eligible
- **Coordinated Service Delivery Support** in which One Stop partners share and coordinate case management to support the success of career-seekers at each step of their service engagement
- **Shared Responsibility for Performance** in which multiple core programs share support and credit for the success of co-enrolled participants

As our workforce systems continue to evolve, we seek to reach and serve more participants and support them with a higher quality of service, and in some cases, a longer term of service. Service integration and co-enrollment that engages across staff, programs, and funding sources is a key opportunity that WIOA offers for achieving these goals.

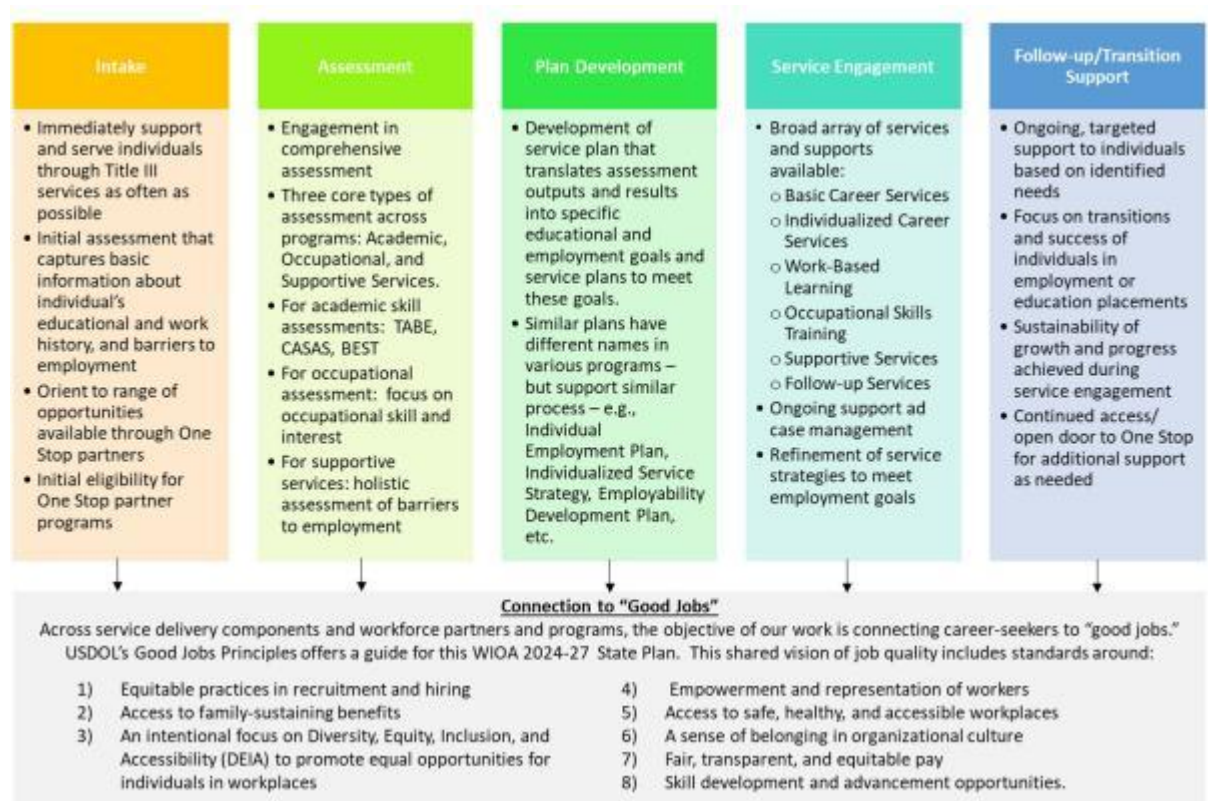
### **Strengthening Breadth and Quality of Services**

Across programs, a set of universal service delivery components help to ensure the ongoing individualization and customization of supports for career-seekers across One Stop Partner programs and services. These include: (1) Intake, (2) Assessment, (3) Plan Development, (4) Service Engagement, and (5) Follow-up/Transition Support.

These service delivery components are critical in serving individuals with unique skill needs, interests, and barriers, including individuals with disabilities, veterans, and youth. Through the delivery of these universal service delivery components, One Stop staff from across programs can ensure that service offerings for individual career-seekers best support their success, and ultimately help employers to meet their skill needs.

The figure below provides an overview of these elements. A full-page version of this figure is also available in the Appendix.

### Universal Service Delivery Components



Notes: A full page version of this graphic can be found here:

<https://www.nj.gov/labor/wioa/documents/resources/2024-27%20State%20Plan%20-%20Universal%20Service%20Delivery%20Components.pdf>. In addition, USDOL's Good Jobs principles can be found here: <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/goodjobs/Good-Jobs-Summit-Principles-Factsheet.pdf>.

To strengthen this service delivery flow, this WIOA 2024-27 State Plan focuses on the following key areas:

- Expand work-based learning opportunities, including Internship, Transitional Jobs, Pre-Apprenticeship, and Apprenticeship opportunities
- Strengthen accountability and transparency related to basic and occupational skills training opportunities
- Expand provision of supportive services to address temporary and systemic barriers to employment

- Deepen career coaching and mentoring capacity to strengthen individualization of supports and services

**Work-Based Learning**

Work-based learning includes a variety of experiences including Youth Work Experience, Transitional Jobs, On-the-Job Training (OJT) experiences, and Apprenticeship opportunities. These services bridge individualized career services and training services, as formally defined in WIOA Career Services in 20 CFR 678.430 and Training Services in 20 CFR 680.200. A key workforce goal during the Murphy administration has been the expansion of these opportunities. This plan continues and builds on the progress that our state and local programs have made over the last several years.

The development of work-based learning opportunities in New Jersey is centered both at the local and state levels. Ongoing coordination and alignment of programs and services supporting work-based learning within local areas, at the state level, and across state and local teams is a key priority to fully leverage the range of resources offered in New Jersey and develop and reach more career-seekers and employers with these opportunities.

At the state-level, two teams within the Workforce Development Division lead efforts related to work-based learning, (1) the Office of Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning and (2) the Business Engagement and Sector Strategies teams. The Office of Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning leads efforts to expand and support more work-based learning opportunities in New Jersey through state programs and grant opportunities. The Business Engagement and Sector Strategies team supports the development of more work-based learning opportunities by building partnerships and relationships at the local level and state level with industry, postsecondary partners, and economic development entities. The core state-level investments in work-based learning include the following:

Office of Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning	Business Engagement and Sector Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing Apprenticeships in Nontraditional Sectors (GAINS)</li> <li>• Pre-Apprenticeship in Career education (PACE)</li> <li>• NJBUILD (Builders Utilization Initiative for Labor Diversity)</li> <li>• Youth Transitions to Work (YTTW)</li> <li>• New Jersey Pathways Leading Apprentices to a College Education (NJPLACE)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Industry Partnerships</li> <li>• State On-the-Job Training Programs, including Dislocated Worker WDP, Work First New Jersey On-the-Job-Training, Return and Earn</li> <li>• WIOA Title I Business Services</li> </ul>

In addition, to these state-level investments and capacity, WIOA supports incredible opportunities for offering and expanding a variety of additional work-based learning opportunities in our One Stop Career Centers, including through Title I, Title IV, and other One Stop partners like Work First New Jersey.

In 2021, the SETC and NJDOL worked with GSETA to develop and release a training series aimed at building the capacity of Local Workforce Development Boards to develop and offer work-based learning opportunities. This training series offers a clear roadmap for supporting and building capacity across career-seeker and employer-focused teams working locally and at the state level.

This series includes the following trainings:

- Work-Based Learning (WBL) 101 Overview
- Work-Based Learning (WBL) 102 Candidate and Employer Processes
- Work-Based Learning 201 Lead Generation, Prospecting, and Getting Past Gatekeepers
- Work-Based Learning 202 The Six Steps of the Sale
- Work-Based Learning 301 Contracting, Invoicing, and Fiscal Trackers

These training and corresponding materials are available on GSETA’s professional development website.

Work-based learning opportunities are recognized as key elements of career pathways strategies in New Jersey that lead to “good jobs.” These opportunities help to match the unique skill needs of career-seekers and employers in targeted ways, as well as build pathways to lower cost postsecondary training opportunities. Over the next four years, the continued expansion of all work-based learning opportunities, with particular focus on the connection to sustained career pathways and employment opportunities, through Industry partnerships, through Apprenticeship opportunities, and in sequence with other services and activities will guide state and local-level efforts.

***Basic and Occupational Skills Training***

A variety of basic and occupational skills training opportunities are available and supported across Title I, Title II, and Title IV programs, as well as through many One Stop partners, including Work First New Jersey and SNAP E&T. A core focus of this 2024-27 State Plan is expanding access to high quality training opportunities. NJDOL, in partnership with the SETC, is working to expand transparency around these training opportunities, including around performance of training providers, to support informed decision-making among career-seekers and One Stop Career Center staff coaching and supporting them.

Basic and occupational skills training opportunities are supported through the following initiatives and efforts:

Basic Skills Training	Occupational-Skills Training (Career-Seeker-Driven)	Occupational-Skills Training (Employer-Driven)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Title II Adult Basic Education</li> <li>• Workforce Learning Labs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Title I Individual Training Accounts (ITAs)</li> <li>• Title IV</li> <li>• Work First New Jersey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Title I Incumbent Worker Training</li> <li>• Opportunity Grants</li> <li>• Upskill Grants</li> </ul>

Basic Skills Training	Occupational-Skills Training (Career-Seeker-Driven)	Occupational-Skills Training (Employer-Driven)
• Community Libraries	and SNAP E&T	• Fellowship Grants

NJDOL distributes AEFLA Title II Adult Basic Education funding through competitive state grant-making processes to eligible providers statewide. Title II providers are responsible for working with One Stop Career Centers to integrate Title II services into One Stop operations, as well as coordinate around intake and eligibility processes.

Additionally, New Jersey supports additional basic skills instructions through Workforce Learning Labs that are embedded in each One Stop Career Center, as well as through the Community Libraries initiative that supports basic skills instruction within NJ’s libraries. As part of this 2024-27 State Plan, the SETC and NJDOL are prioritizing the further integration of Title II services into One Stop Career Centers – clear pathways and information about Basic Skills instruction must be made available to all One Stop Career Center participants as part of assessment and plan development activities.

Furthermore, as highlighted earlier, Title II and Title I co-enrollment is a priority moving forward, and we encourage the cultivation of career pathways that leverage basic skills training and other work-based learning and training opportunities. In addition, we encourage blending funding for supportive services to support individuals in overcoming barriers to training completion and successful employment.

In addition to the development of basic skills, occupational skills training is a core service opportunity that our One Stop Career Centers offer. Career-seekers connect to occupational skills training in one of two ways: (1) by selecting a training provider and program that aligns with individual education and employment goals as defined through assessment and plan development activities (career-seeker-driven), or (2) through employers that have identified and developed training opportunities that align with their skill needs (employer-driven).

This WIOA 2024-27 State Plan will continue efforts to bring more transparency and accountability to the occupational skills training opportunities that New Jersey funds with federal and state workforce resources through My Career New Jersey, which includes New Jersey’s Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) and will continue to expand to include training performance information and machine-learning powered tools that can target support to career-seekers.

***Supportive Services***

Supportive services offer a holistic set of supports for addressing a wide variety of barriers to employment to help meet the unique circumstances and needs of individuals and open up opportunities for achieving their employment and education goals.

Supportive services may include, assistance with childcare, housing, accommodations for unique needs, legal services, training-related costs, and a range of other services needed to address barriers individuals face to succeeding in WIOA programs, training and/or employment, including needs-related payments. Supportive services must be coupled with long term plans for sustaining barrier reduction. NJDOL issued a Supportive Services Technical Assistance Guide in 2021 detailing the opportunities for integrating more supportive services

through WIOA funding and partnerships to support successful engagement in training and employment opportunities.

Without addressing structural barriers that exist in individuals' life, for example housing insecurity or child care needs, successful retention of employment is fragile. Increasing the utilization of WIOA funding and partnerships to provide supportive services is a priority of this plan. One Stop Career Centers must consider and develop specific plans and policies for robust provision of supportive services across all One Stop Career Center programs.

### ***Career Coaching***

As our workforce systems continue to evolve and deepen individualized support and services, the development of career coaching capacity in our One Stop Career Centers will continue to be a core activity. Career coaches and mentors are the cornerstone of successful WIOA programs – supporting and leveraging assessment strategies and the development of career plans to set individuals on a path customized to their needs.

NJDOL and LWDBs will continue to deepen relationships and understanding of this capacity to ensure that these activities are built into the roles and responsibilities of specific staff. The era of transactional connections to training opportunities or referrals to partners is behind us. We seek to foster a culture of accountability in our One Stop Career Centers– when a staff member interacts with a career-seeker, their responsibility is to ensure the success of that individual, actively connecting them to other coaches and mentors as needed and guiding them through specific opportunities.

### **Meeting the Needs of Underserved Communities**

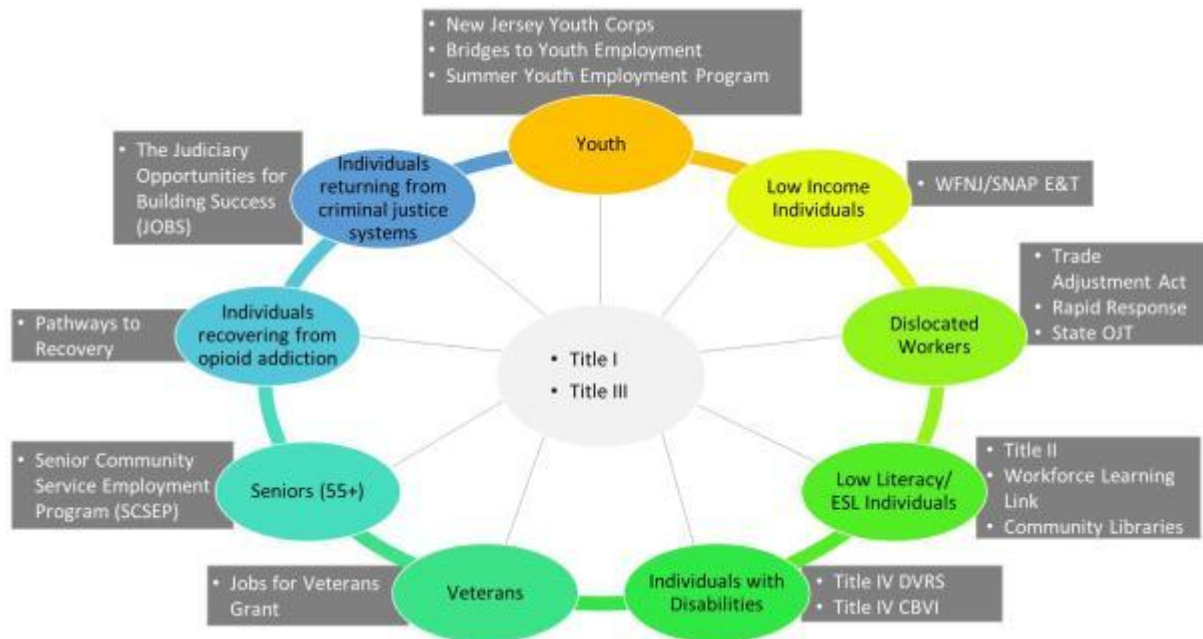
As we seek to support the development of a unified, cohesive workforce system, that aligns with WIOA requirements and opportunities, and strengthens the breadth and depth of service delivery, the needs of our most underserved communities are top of mind. The impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic have not been distributed evenly, and many communities that were already disadvantaged before the pandemic continue to struggle in the recovery underway. This 2024-27 WIOA state plan includes a vision that seeks to build and develop a workforce system that wraps its arms around anyone, serves everyone, and recognizes there are multiple pathways to success.

New Jersey is a state rich in workforce opportunities, many of which target and offer unique supports in meeting the needs of different populations. However, too often these programs have been undersubscribed and we have struggled as a workforce system overall to serve the most vulnerable populations. Over the next four years, we are focused on increasing the success of our workforce systems in opening up access to and meeting the needs of individuals facing specific barriers to employment, specifically individuals with low literacy, low incomes, and/or disabilities.

The strategies highlighted above, including greater coordination across the four core WIOA Titles to maximize supports for individuals with disabilities, low-income, and low-literacy; alignment of career-seeker programs targeting underserved communities with employer-facing efforts; and connection to the wide array of partner services available through One Stops, must be targeted and implemented in ways that prioritize and privilege populations facing the greatest need. The graphic below provides an overview of the many special populations that

New Jersey’s ecosystem of workforce programs supports. Our Title I and Title III programs serve as hub programs through which additional supports and services can be deployed to meet the needs of the diverse target populations supported by New Jersey’s career-seeker services.

### Overview of Workforce Programs Targeting Underserved Populations



Notes: A full page version of this graphic can be found here:

<https://www.nj.gov/labor/wioa/documents/resources/2024-27%20State%20Plan%20-%20Overview%20of%20Workforce%20Programs%20Serving%20Underserved%20Populations.pdf>

Across these programs, career coaching and mentorship are integral parts of an individual’s experience at every phase of service delivery. This includes setting career goals, integrating data about the current labor market, assessing individuals, establishing plans, and providing support throughout an individual’s engagement in services and beyond.

Most recently, NJDOL, in partnership with the Office of Innovation and LWDBs, began piloting Lifelong Learning Accounts (LiLA) in One Stop Career Centers. Career coaching is a centerpiece in this model. Coaching empowers career-seekers to make decisions in their own journey, providing them with a thought partner and accountability. Career coaches help drive informed choice. In addition, in 2025, SETC is working with Office of Innovation toward developing toolkits and marketing templates to increase outreach and marketing capacity of the local boards.

As we move forward with this 2024-27 State Plan over the next four years, the SETC and NJDOL will continue to support investment and capacity building in deeper career coaching activities across our One Stop Career Centers.

As a result of this 2024-27 State Plan, we expect to see increases in the number of individuals that are served by our Title I and Title III programs, specifically, as well as an increase in the number of individuals co-enrolled in more than one workforce program.

Enrolling significant numbers of additional participants in WIOA career and training services, specifically through Title I and Title III supports, will impact WIOA performance measures. In addition to projecting increased participation levels, NJDOL expects that performance targets will be adjusted through the Local Statistical Adjustment Model (SAM) to reflect expansion of the populations that receive support through Title I and III services. As we move to co-enrollment strategies, we also anticipate more joint responsibility for common measures across NJDOL and among LWDBs for Titles I, II, III, and IV performance.

### **Leveraging Policy, Data, Training and Technology**

Finally, we seek to build sustained capacity at the system level to better weather the inevitable social, economic, and political shifts that characterize our world. We need to ensure that the necessary infrastructure and resources are in place to do good work, even if and when priorities change.

As we move forward with the activities and strategies highlighted above, the SETC and NJDOL will continue to explore and integrate additional investments in infrastructure that support and build capacity at the state and local levels. This includes investments in stronger policy resources, better data, increased training opportunities, and innovative digital tools.

***Policy resources:*** Over the last two years, NJDOL has created a policy team to support the development of state-level policies that offer further guidance around the implementation of WIOA and other state-level programs. These policies are highlighted throughout this plan. In addition, as the state board, the SETC continues to offer guidance related to SETC priorities and procedures. Both the NJDOL and SETC will continue to invest in policy functions that support resources and tools that create space and offer clarity for innovative work that also meets the requirements of federal and state laws.

***Data:*** Antiquated and siloed data systems remain a core challenge and barrier to collaboration across One Stop Career Center partners. NJDOL has invested significant time in developing an RFP to secure a new system of record for WIOA. This project supports a holistic approach to modernizing WIOA data systems, in particular securing a system that will replace AOSOS and support data sharing with other workforce systems. In addition, the Office of Research and Information (ORI) and the Workforce Development Division have made and will continue to make additional investments in data and research personnel to support better data reporting and dashboards.

***Training:*** NJDOL and GSETA, with the support of the SETC, have developed a strong partnership over the last couple years to coordinate, align, and implement a joint agenda around professional development and training for staff working across One Stop Career Center programs. Over the course of the next four years, NJDOL and the SETC will continue to invest and augment this partnership to support the ongoing training and development of both state and local level staff.

***Technology:*** Over the last four years, accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic, NJDOL, SETC, and New Jersey's workforce partners have made significant investments in technology, continuing to move from paper-based and in person processes to virtual and digital tools. These investments supported a range of new resources from updating administrative processes – e.g., electronic signatures, virtual appointment system – to providing new programmatic offerings – e.g., SkillUp New Jersey. As we move forward, we will continue to support and encourage digital



tools, specifically those that offer opportunities for strengthening programmatic activities, for example digital coaching, online portfolios, and virtual reality work experiences. We recognize the limitations of predicting what opportunities technology will offer our systems over the next four years, and we seek to create spaces and environments that allow for the implementation of innovative practices that leverage technology.

## B. ALIGNMENT WITH ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE PLAN

Describe how the activities identified in (A) will be aligned with programs and activities provided by required one-stop partners and other optional one-stop partners and activities provided under employment, training (including Registered Apprenticeships), education (including career and technical education), human services and other programs not covered by the plan, as appropriate, assuring coordination of, and avoiding duplication among these activities.

As highlighted across this state plan, an important focus is bringing the full power of our state and federal workforce investments together as one public workforce system through the work of our One Stop Career Centers, which operate as part of the American Job Network. Over the last years as we have grappled with the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, the footprint of our One Stop Career Centers has expanded beyond their physical locations, specifically through virtual services.

While this plan includes efforts and initiatives that are supported beyond WIOA funding, WIOA legislation and guidance offers clear parameters and opportunities for aligning and integrating services and supports across all of our public workforce programs. As highlighted in earlier sections, New Jersey's One Stop Career Center partner policy articulates additional state workforce partners that are either required or recommended to support and engage in shared services through New Jersey's One Stop Career Center network. While these partners are included in this plan, this section highlights more details about these partner programs that fall outside of the core programs and requirements of WIOA.

We recognize that the multiple layers of initiatives and efforts taking place in New Jersey offer a level of complexity that cannot be easily mandated into a specific structure or set of coordinating activities. This plan seeks to create a clear vision for our collective work that we can drive towards together. We also seek to set a path that offers flexibility for our partners working closest to career-seekers and employers, including our Local Workforce Development Boards and One Stop Career Center staff, to develop processes and partnerships, with clear guidance, that can most effectively weave and connect the multiple resources that our public workforce system has to offer.

In this section, we highlight the specific augmentations that state workforce investments and other education investments offer to this plan, including investments in: (1) work-based learning, (2) youth programs, (3) other special populations, and (4) cross-sector partnerships and career pathway development.

### **State-Level Investments in Work-Based Learning**

The expansion of Apprenticeship and other work-based learning opportunities has and will continue to be a core focus in New Jersey. The opportunity to develop career pathway opportunities that blend classroom and work-based learning, driven and led by employer skills

and assets is a huge value add of our public workforce to the landscape of opportunities for career-seekers in New Jersey. As federal level Investing in America efforts continue to grow and build, New Jersey is in excellent position to leverage existing relationships and partnership and existing Apprenticeship capacity and expertise to further expand and develop quality work-based learning opportunities.

In addition to investments in pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship pathways, New Jersey has also made significant investments in On-the-Job (OJT) training opportunities, offering training that ties directly to employment and supports opportunities for individuals to earn wages as they learn, as well as incumbent worker and customized training opportunities. Below we provide a full overview of the programs that are supported through state funds:

WBL Types	Programs	Target Population
On-the-Job Training	Return and Earn	Dislocated Workers
	WDP Dislocated Worker OJT	Dislocated Workers
Work Experience/ Transitional Jobs	Summer Youth Employment Programs (SYEP)	Youth
Pre-Apprenticeship	PACE	Specified by individual programs
	Youth Transitions to Work Program (YTTW)	Youth
Apprenticeship	GAINS	Specified by individual programs
	NJBUILD	Women and minorities
	NJ Pathways Leading Apprentices to a College Education (NJPLACE)	Postsecondary students
Incumbent Worker Training	Upskill: NJ Incumbent Worker Training	Employers who need to provide training to workers to meet new or changing business needs
Customized Training	Opportunity Partnership Grants	Workers with barriers to employment or advancement
	Fellowship Grants	PhD graduates pursuing science and technology

### **State-Level Investments in Youth Programs**

As highlighted above, New Jersey invests in specific opportunities for supporting work-based learning for youth, specifically through the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) which supports work experiences and internships for youth every summer. In addition, NJDOL administers two additional youth investments, the New Jersey Youth Corps program and Bridges to Employing Youth. Together with WIOA Title I youth funding and services, these programs offer important opportunities for supporting specifically out-of-school youth in New Jersey.

- ***New Jersey Youth Corps:*** Youth Corps is a year-round, voluntary program that engages young adults (ages 16 to 25) without a high school diploma in full-time community service, training, and educational activities. Guided by staff who serve as mentors and role models, teams of youth called "crews" carry out a wide range of service projects. In return for their efforts to restore and strengthen communities, Corpsmembers receive: basic skills instruction, life skills, career counseling, and transition supports.

- ***Bridges to Employing Youth:*** The Bridges program seeks to expand the capacity of the workforce system to address the career development needs of vulnerable and underserved youth populations through an influx of specialized service providers. The Bridges program was developed to help address the barriers and unique challenges experienced by certain special youth populations, including: (1) Youth with disabilities, (2) Justice-involved youth, and (3) Youth who are in, or have aged out of, foster care, and (4) Pregnant or parenting youth.

As we move forward with this 2024-27 WIOA State Plan, we seek to further strengthen, weave, and leverage these investments supported through federal and state resources to create entry points to employment and educational opportunities to which youth might not otherwise gain access.

### **State-Level Investments in Other Underserved Populations**

In addition to investments in youth, New Jersey supports and administers funding for additional workforce programs designed to target the needs of other underserved populations, including: (1) individuals recovering from opioid abuse, (2) individuals on parole, and (3) low-literacy individuals. Below, we highlight these specific state-level investments that further augment and support the strength of our public workforce system in serving underserved communities:

- ***Pathways to Recovery:*** Pathways to Recovery was initially federally funded through a National Dislocated Worker grant. While that funding ended, New Jersey has continued to fund and support this program that provides employment assistance to those with a personal history of opioid use or individuals who have been affected by loved ones with a history of opioid use.
- ***Job Opportunities for Building Success (JOBS):*** JOBS funds career and training services for justice-involved individuals who face barriers to successful reentry in employment and their communities. Supports include career coaching, work-based learning opportunities, and supportive services.
- ***Workforce Learning Links:*** Workforce Learning Links are embedded in One Stop Career Centers to provide adult learners with instruction in reading, writing, math, communication, financial literacy, job search, and employability and life skills.
- ***Community Library Adult Literacy & Career Pathway Grant Program:*** The Community Libraries program complements existing Adult Literacy services by providing an additional avenue for literacy and career pathway training throughout New Jersey libraries. New Jersey libraries are easily accessible to local residents and offer a unique learning environment, often different from the traditional classroom setting. This program provides instruction and/or certification aligned with Title II standards
- ***Lifelong Learning Accounts (LiLA):*** This pilot provides individuals with agency in developing their own education and employment plans, offering up to \$9,600 for supporting training and wraparound services. Individuals work with a career coach to develop Individual Employment Plans (IEPs) and develop and manage the utilization of LiLA funding to support their success.

This plan continues to seek the integration of these programs into One Stop Career Centers and to expand service delivery through co-enrollment and partnership.

In addition, over the course of this 2024-27 WIOA State Plan, NJDOL and the SETC will continue to identify and connect other state workforce investments in the state to this plan. For example, NJDOL is currently working with the Division on Women to further integrate state workforce programs focused on the displaced homemakers:

- ***Division on Women in the Department of Children and Families:*** The employment readiness programs aim to facilitate financial self-sufficiency and advancement, through gainful employment and upskilling by providing job assessment, readiness/training, counseling, and placement services. Currently these services are primarily delivered through non-profits or community colleges operating a Displaced Homemaker Program (DHP) or a Hispanic Women’s Resource Center (HWRC). NJDOL and the Division on Women have enhanced collaboration to facilitate partnerships among these local grantees and One Stops.

### **Cross-Sector Partnerships and Career Pathway Development**

The development of cross-sector partnerships that bring together workforce, education, business, and other partners to support sustained delivery of career pathway opportunities is another area of focus that has been highlighted in this plan and as priorities for the current administration, as well as continuing with the new administration.

New Jersey has made significant investments in various efforts to support new career pathway opportunities through cross-sector coordination, specifically through its investment in Industry Partnerships. Our Industry Partnerships team convenes industry champions from individual sectors to identify workforce issues that needs to be addressed. Partners work collaboratively to develop solutions and career pathways that meet industry/sector needs. This ultimately opens up opportunities for career-seekers in New Jersey, and specifically those working through and with our public workforce systems.

### **C. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS**

Describe how the entities carrying out the respective core programs, Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan, and required and optional one-stop partner programs will coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality, customer-centered services, including supportive services (e.g. transportation), to individuals, including those populations identified in section II(a)(1)(B), and individuals in remote areas. The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

In this section, we provide an overview of the primary mechanisms that will drive the coordination and alignment of services to individuals across our One Stop Career Center partners. In the second part of this section, we specifically highlight the areas of coordination and alignment that are a priority for core One Stop programs.

### **Coordination and Alignment Mechanisms**

#### ***Overview of Required Services***

Within each One Stop Career Center in New Jersey that is part of the American Job Center network, LWDBs must provide a full range of required services that include the following, as highlighted in USDOL's Training and Employment Guidance Letters (TEGLs) 16-16 and 19-16, and NJWIN WD-PY22-6:

- **Basic Career Services:** Basic career services are universally accessible and must be made available to all individuals seeking employment and training services in at least one comprehensive American Job Center per local areas. Generally, these services involved less staff time and involvement and include such services as: eligibility determination, initial skill assessments, labor exchange services, provision of information on programs and services, and program referrals. These services may be provided by both by Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, as well as Title III Employment Services (ES).
- **Individualized Career Services:** Individualized career services must be provided to participants after American Job Center staff determine that such services are required to retain or obtain employment, consistent with any applicable statutory priorities. Generally, these services involved significant staff time and customization to each individual's need. Individualized career services include services such as: specialized assessments, developing an individual employment plan, counseling, work experience (including transitional jobs), etc.

Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) must identify the assessments to be used to determine eligibility and ensure eligibility determination procedures are consistent with state policies. American Job Center staff may use recent previous interviews, evaluations, or assessments by partner programs to determine if individualized career services would be appropriate. These services generally will be provided by Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, although it may be appropriate for Title III Employment Services staff to provide some of these services.

- **Follow-up Services** (NJWIN WD-PY21-5): Follow-up services must be offered and provided for participants all Title I Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker participants after exit for at least 12 months after exit. Follow-up services aid individuals as they transition and exit from Title I programs. Follow-up services must offer targeted support to individuals based on identified needs. Follow-up services support transitions and the success of individuals in employment or education placements. These services are critical to sustaining growth and progress achieved during an individual's engagement in Title I programs.
- **Business Services:** Through the American Job Centers, applicable one-stop partners develop, offer, and deliver quality business services that assist businesses and industry sectors in overcoming the challenges of recruiting, retaining, and developing talent for the regional economy.
- **Youth Services:** WIOA identifies 14 unique program elements that must be accessible to all youth receiving supports through Title I Youth programs, including access to paid work experiences, supportive services that help address barriers to employment, and a variety of educational and occupational training opportunities.

The table at the end of this section provides a full overview of the specific service categories included in these various types of services.

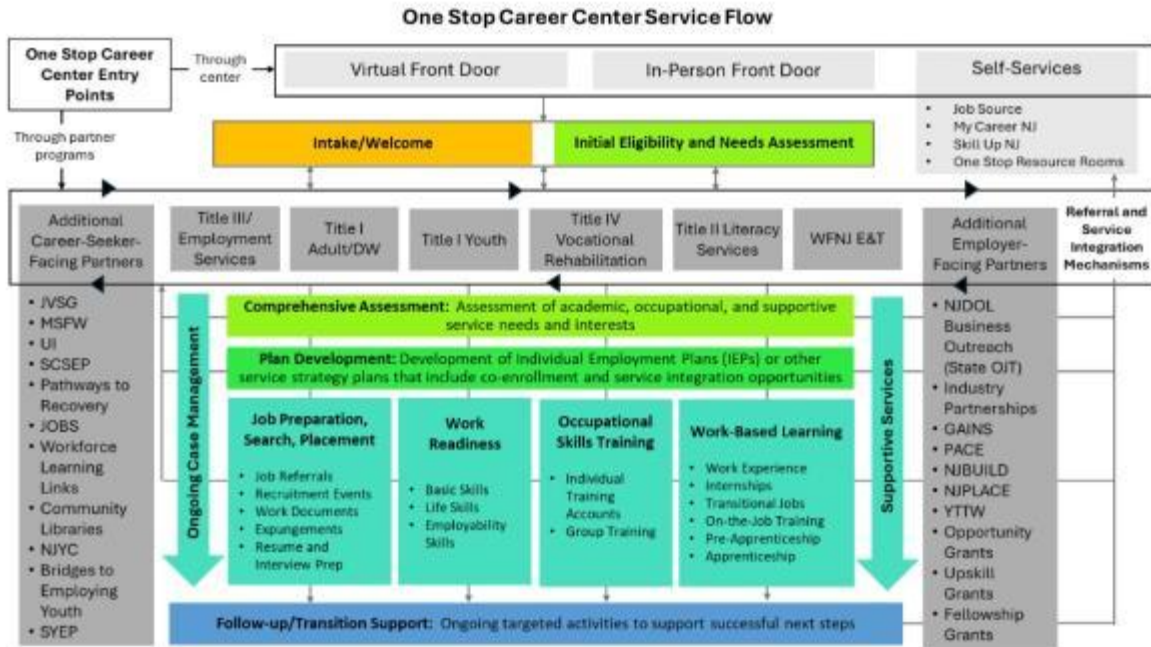
### ***A Common Service Flow***

Earlier in this plan, we introduced a set of universal service delivery components that guide the work across the multitude of partners and programs included in this plan. New Jersey's 23 One Stop Career Centers, which operate as part of the American Job Center network, are the primary vehicle for delivering One Stop partner workforce services.

In the graphic below, we provide a more detailed overview of a common service flow that guides the coordination and alignment of services for individuals in all of our One Stop Career Centers that draws on this set of universal service delivery components.

Some key points about this service flow:

- Flow into One Stop Career Center services exists across several entry points, including through: (1) virtual front doors of each One Stop, (2) physical front doors of each One Stop, (3) self services that are accessible outside of One Stops, and (4) the variety of programs and their staff, including Title II services which are primarily accessed within community college settings, youth programs that are accessible through contracted providers, and other locations like community libraries.
- Regardless of how customers flow into New Jersey's One Stop Career Center services, at the initial point of entry they must have access to all services and programs available through New Jersey's public workforce system
- Universal intake and initial eligibility and needs assessment activities must be shared and coordinated across all partners, with particular emphasis on the six core WIOA programs and WFNJ services
- Opportunities for referrals and service integration must be built in to customer flows in ways that facilitate connection at any point during an individual's service engagement as new needs and opportunities emerge
- Ongoing case management, in some cases shared through co-enrollment, and provision of supportive services offer key supports for ensuring the successful outcomes of participants
- Additional policies, documents, and practices, described below, facilitate and support the service flow.



Notes: A full page version of this graphic can be found here:

<https://www.nj.gov/labor/wioa/documents/resources/2024-27%20State%20Plan%20-%20One%20Stop%20Career%20Center%20Service%20Flow.pdf>

### MOUs/IFAs

One Stop Career Centers are overseen by New Jersey’s 17 Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) and competitively-procured One Stop Operators. Each LWDB facilitates the development of a comprehensive Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) with all of the required One Stop Career Center partners, as well as any additional recommended or local partners. While these MOUs/IFAs are formally negotiated and developed every three years with partners, the One Stop Operator’s role is to use the MOU/IFA as a guide in managing and supporting collaboration across partners, and these documents and agreements may be updated more frequently as relationships and opportunities shift.

The primary purposes of these MOUs are (1) to define partner responsibilities and contributions to the local delivery system, including cross-training opportunities, and (2) to codify processes that facilitate seamless service delivery to customers from multiple partners when necessary to support the best possible outcomes, including specific opportunities and processes for supporting co-enrollment. Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFAs) complement and build on the MOUs to ensure funding supports the One Stop Career Center infrastructure.

Specific policy and training resources regarding the development of MOUs/IFAs include the following:

- WD-PY22-4.2: New Jersey Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA)
- Guidance for MOU and IFA

- MOU/IFA Template
- WD-PY23-4: Additional Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) Guidance

### ***Improving Data Collection and Use***

Furthermore, New Jersey is taking several steps to increase the effectiveness of our current case management and participant tracking system – America’s One-Stop Operating System (AOSOS) – to allow for the seamless provision of services to the same customer by multiple partners. A new AOSOS interface was launched in Summer 2022 that offers more ease in accessing and entering data in AOSOS via the web.

Additionally, NJDOL created the AOSOS Technical Guide for Title I Service Delivery to coordinate and establish common standards of AOSOS data entry for our One Stop Career Centers, to ensure accurate reporting on our programs, as well as offer a higher quality of information for supporting case management and program oversight. As we move forward with this 2024-27 WIOA State plan, NJDOL will continue efforts to establish common data entry standards across One Stop partner programs utilizing AOSOS, particularly for our WIOA and WFNJ programs. This work continues, especially with SNAP recipients, as we navigate work requirements, service flow, and appropriate employment and training solutions for all participants.

Finally, as highlighted earlier in this plan, NJDOL is moving forward with a comprehensive data modernization project to replace AOSOS and introduce a new Workforce Case Management system that will enhance and offer new opportunities for tracking enrollment, progress, and outcomes across programs and partners contributing to our One-Stop Career Center network.

Over the next four years, NJDOL will focus on increasing the quality of the program data available to our state and local teams to inform continuous improvement of service delivery.

### ***Focus on Functional Alignment and Service Integration***

As highlighted earlier in this plan, NJDOL released a new Functional Alignment and Service Integration and Co-Enrollment policy in September 2023. Both of these policies provide specific details to support the development of teams, structures, and processes that support joint case management and service delivery for One Stop Career Center participants across the variety of employment, career, and training services available through partner programs.

***Functional Alignment:*** This policy highlights the role of Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs), with the support of One Stop Operators in organizing and supporting the work of American Job Centers around core functions that leverage and support the full set of partners and customers that are part of One Stop Career Center operations. Strong functional alignment contributes to the implementation of the service flow illustrated above.

***Service Integration and Co-Enrollment:*** This policy lays out the specific requirements of One Stop partners to work together, the opportunities for sharing customers, the roles and responsibilities of LWDBs and One Stop Operators in supporting service integration and co-enrollment, and specific details about how service integration and co-enrollment play out across the full engagement of a participant.

### **Coordination and Alignment Across WIOA Core Programs**



In addition to putting in place broader mechanisms for supporting coordination, this WIOA 2024-27 State Plan also places specific focus on coordination and alignment across the six core WIOA programs, Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth; Title III Wagner-Peyser; Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy; and Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation Services. In addition, coordination and alignment with WFNJ Employment and Training services is another area in which we are prioritizing alignment and coordination. Finally, this plan seeks to support coordination and linkages across all One Stop Career Center partners, including required and recommended state workforce programs, as highlighted in NJDOL's One Stop Partner policy.

### **Coordination and Co-Enrollment with WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy**

The purpose of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) Title II is to create a partnership among the Federal Government, States, and localities to provide, on a voluntary basis, adult education and literacy activities, in order to:

- Assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and economic self-sufficiency;
- Assist adults who are parents or family members to obtain the education and skills that— (1) Are necessary to becoming full partners in the educational development of their children; and (2) Lead to sustainable improvements in the economic opportunities for their family;
- Assist adults in attaining a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent and in the transition to postsecondary education and training, through career pathways; and
- Assist immigrants and other individuals who are English language learners in improving their: (1) Reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension skills in English; and (2) Mathematics skills; and
- Acquiring an understanding of the American system of Government, individual freedom, and the responsibilities of citizenship.

The specific types of services available through Title II funding include:

- **Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Adult Secondary Education (ASE):** These services support literacy instruction aligned to the College and Career Readiness Standards for eligible individuals. ABE supports individuals with Educational Functional Levels (EFLs) of 1-4, ASE supports individuals with EFLs of 5-6.
- **English Language Acquisition (ELA):** These services support English language instruction designed to help eligible learners achieve proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.
- **Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE):** These are education services provided to English language learners to achieve competence in the English Language and acquire instructions on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation.
- **Workforce Preparation:** These services include critical thinking skills, digital literacy, and self-management skills designed to support the employability of individuals and can be provided concurrently with literacy supports.

- ***Integrated Education and Training (IET)***: This service approach combines (1) adult education and literacy instruction, (2) workforce preparation activities, and (3) occupational training.

The State expects that a significant number of individuals accessing Title II services will also benefit from accessing WIOA Title I services concurrently, integrated with their literacy and basic skills services. All individuals receiving WIOA Title I services may not require Title II assistance, and, similarly, some individuals receiving Title II services may not need or be suitable for WIOA Title I services. However, where appropriate, in cases where the person requires the Title II services, New Jersey will co-enroll them into the two programs simultaneously and work to build a coordinated program of services between the two programs.

An important goal of this 2024-27 WIOA State Plan is the full integration of Title II services into One Stop Career Center operations. While many of these services are delivered outside of One Stop Career Centers, these literacy supports are critical to supporting and preparing many underserved populations. NJDOL and the SETC will continue to engage and support LWDBs and One Stop partners in these integration efforts.

Adult Education and Literacy services are detailed in the Title II-specific plan of this Combined Plan.

### ***Coordination and Co-Enrollment with WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser Act Services***

Appropriate co-enrollment of Wagner-Peyser participants is based on customers' needs and informed by system-wide common intake and common assessment tools. Wagner-Peyser and WIOA Title I partners share a common case management system (AOSOS). Employment Services (ES) staff delivering Title III supports and competitively-procured One Stop Career Center providers supporting Title I programs must develop clear and joint processes for supporting the strategic enrollment of all individuals who are in need of deeper individualized career and/or training services.

The co-enrollment of individuals in Title I and Title III services is critical to transforming New Jersey's One Stop service delivery from a sequence of service model to a career services model, enabling jobseekers to immediately access the services, including training, most beneficial to their employment needs. Further, improved communication between partner data systems helps minimize duplication of services, better manage referrals between partners, informs individualized customer action plans across partner agencies, and provides a more comprehensive and seamless delivery experience for customers.

Streamlined intake and eligibility between Title III and Title I programs is a key priority of this 2024-27 WIOA State Plan. All individuals who are eligible for Title I services must be enrolled to ensure access to the full range of individualized career and training services available through WIOA and our One Stop Career Centers.

Our public workforce system must develop and implement customer flows that maximize the role that Title III services play in serving as the most expansive entry point for bringing individuals into our One Stop Career Center services. Through direct connections to Unemployment Insurance, in particular through the RESEA program, and through the "Single Sign-On" system that supports coordinated services between UI and our One Stop Career

Centers, Title III services, specifically, provide pathway entry points for dislocated workers to receive holistic and comprehensive support. In addition, the My Career NJ: Career Resources, Job Training & Employment Tools helps participants find the right training program, get personalized job matches, and explore New Jersey's in demand careers. As we move forward with this plan, NJDOL and the SETC will explore additional metrics for our LWDBs related to co-enrollment with Title III and specifically the success of RESEA participants.

Two critical connection points between our Title I and Title III partners are the (1) common intake and assessment form, including collection of related documentation, and (2) the development of the Individual Employment Plans (IEPs). Clear lines of communication and hand-off must be developed across Employment Services and Title I staff to ensure that individuals experience services in a timely and seamless manner. USDOL's recent Training and Employment Guidance Number (TEGL No. 10-23) highlights mechanisms and processes for reducing administrative burdens and improving customer experiences. This policy and the flexibility it offers in ensuring that individuals connect to services with minimal administrative burdens, specifically through the use of self-attestation as a documentation option, eases opportunities for coordinating and aligning Title I and Title III access to services in particular. Furthermore, gathering documentation and helping individuals to get their identifying documents in order is an important support to offer as part of an individual's engagement in Title I and Title III services.

Wagner Peyser services are detailed in the Title III-specific plan included in this Combined Plan.

#### ***Coordination and Co-Enrollment with WIOA Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation***

New Jersey utilizes an option to deliver Vocational Rehabilitation services through two distinct programs. The majority of services are delivered through Vocational Rehabilitation staff at NJDOL (DVRS), for any individuals with disabilities. A portion of funds is segmented and delivered to the separate Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI) within the New Jersey Department of Human Services with a focus on serving individuals who are blind, vision-impaired or deaf-blind. These services and how they will coordinate with the wider WIOA services will be discussed in the following two subsections.

DVRS collaborates with all WIOA partners, and all but one of its Vocational Rehabilitation offices throughout the State of New Jersey are co-located at One-Stop Career Centers. They collaborate on a range of activities to ensure the highest level of support for individuals with disabilities.

CBVI is the primary agency responsible for delivering high-quality services to consumers who are blind, vision-impaired, and deaf-blind. Consistent with the requirements of WIOA, CBVI is committed through its array of programming to helping its consumers secure integrated, competitive employment. In pursuit of this general objective, CBVI administers both a comprehensive, residential training program and programs that focus on blindness-specific pre-employment training, including development of communications skills, orientation and mobility, nonvisual independent living techniques, and adjustment to blindness training.

CBVI is committed to working with all WIOA partners, including One-Stop Career Centers, to provide technical assistance that will help guarantee that general employment focused services are provided in accessible forms to consumers who are blind, vision-impaired, and deaf-blind. Services are integrated with wider DVRS services and the entire One-Stop system through a

number of mechanisms. Currently, CBVI's programs are not generally co-located with One-Stop Career Centers or other Vocational Rehabilitation services. As noted, the majority of services are by itinerant staff who deliver services directly to blind and visually impaired New Jersey residents in their homes or other community locations most suitable for delivery of those services.

DVRS and CBVI have information on their respective website, developed collaboratively and that is standard and reciprocal across the two programs. That information also provides common language and references to services and programs delivered by NJDOL that the populations served by the two organizations can access.

DVRS and CBVI services are detailed in the Title IV-specific plans included in this Combined Plan.

### ***Coordination and Co-Enrollment: Work First New Jersey***

The NJ Department of Human Services' Division of Family Development (DHS/DFD) is the agency responsible for overseeing Work First New Jersey (WFNJ), the state's Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), which also includes the state's General Assistance (GA) program, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). WFNJ services are administered at the local level by the 21 county agencies, under DFD supervision, and through various contracts with vendors for certain services.

NJDOL is responsible for WFNJ and SNAP employment-directed and workforce development activities as outlined below. Employment-directed and workforce development activities are administered at the local One-Stop Career Centers under NJDOL supervision. By integrating the WFNJ and SNAP population into the One-Stop Career Center system, opportunities for self-sufficiency, employment retention and career advancement are maximized.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is in place between the Department of Human Services and New Jersey Department of Labor guiding the close collaboration between the two entities in the delivery of WFNJ and SNAP services. The Memorandum of Understanding outlines the way in which WFNJ customers receive workforce-related services, how those activities will be tracked and reported, and the flow of funding of federal and state TANF, GA, and SNAP E&T funds to support these effort, as well as all other required provisions to ensure continuity of benefits along with the best possible workforce outcomes.

Services available to eligible customers with WFNJ, GA, and SNAP Employment and Training include:

- Career guidance and job search assistance
- Employability assessment and career planning
- Case management
- Vocational/job skills training
- Work-based learning opportunities, including community work experience
- Basic skills/literacy
- Referral to support services, as appropriate; and

- All other workforce services generally available to One-Stop system customers.

It is the goal of DHS and NJDOL that as many individuals receiving TANF, GA, and/or SNAP benefits, as possible, be given access to employment and training services delivered through the One Stop Career Centers to support their move toward employment and self-sufficiency. This 2024-27 WIOA State Plan sees the coordination and alignment of WFNJ employment and training services with Title I and Title III services as central to this.

WFNJ shares AOSOS as a system of record for employment and training services, offering streamlined opportunities for shared case management and shared service strategies.

Beginning with Program Year 2024, NJDOL and the SETC will work with our Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) to set specific targets for co-enrollment across WFNJ and WIOA Title I Adult services. This offers our system an opportunity to expand and increase the success of low-income individuals in gaining access to career pathway opportunities and ultimately, “good jobs.”

In addition, to supporting more integration of WIOA and WFNJ services within our One Stop Career Centers and through service delivery. NJDOL will also continue to support integration of these services by supporting more alignment of policy, data, and systems at the state level. Over the four years of this plan, NJDOL will continue to develop and build joint policies and monitoring systems – for both programmatic and fiscal activities, as well as align WFNJ employment and training services with WIOA activities through state-level policy. In addition, our WFNJ employment and training services are also part of Data Modernization efforts. The full integration of WIOA and WFNJ services is a core focus of this state plan.

### ***Coordination and Co-Enrollment Across One Stop Career Center Partners***

In addition to the core WIOA investments through Title I, II, III, and IV, and WFNJ investments in employment and training services, as highlighted throughout this plan, WIOA and New Jersey also mandate and require the integration of services across multiple workforce partner programs. The ongoing integration of these programs and services offer key pathways for supporting and serving more underserved populations that often face greater barriers to employment as part of our One Stop Career Center system. Below, we highlight these various partners and programs.

- ***Trade Adjustment Act (TAA):*** TAA participants are required to be co-enrolled as Title I Dislocated Worker participants as highlighted in Training Employment and Guidance Letter 4-20. TAA Navigators working at the state-level work with Local Workforce Development Boards and state- and local-level business services staff to identify, coordinate, and support trade-affected workers.
- ***Jobs for Veterans Grant (JVSG), Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFW), and Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment Grants:*** JVSG and RESEA participants are supported through staff and teams that work as part of NJDOL’s Employment Services (Wagner-Peyser) staff. MSFW programs are also supported and overseen through the same formal supervisory structure at NJDOL and connected to NJDOL’s Employment Services teams.
- ***Unemployment Insurance (UI):*** NJDOL continues to develop stronger linkages between our unemployment and public workforce systems through data and a joint

“Single Sign-On” system in which UI recipients can access UI benefit information, as well as self-services, and connections to Title III supports that offer linkages to other One Stop Career Center partners. The RESEA program that is supported by Employment Services staff is an important connection point for UI participants nearing the end of their benefits to receive additional career and training services and supports.

- ***Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), Pathways to Recovery, Judiciary Opportunities for Building Success (JOBS):*** These three programs target underserved populations – seniors, individuals recovering from opioid addiction, and individuals in probation, respectively. By offering programs that target the specific needs of these populations, individuals connect to case managers that can help them develop individualized service plans that draw on the full range of supports that One Stop Career Centers offer, including basic skills training, occupational skills training, supportive services, and other workforce preparation activities.
- ***Workforce Learning Links and Community Libraries:*** These NJDOL-funded initiatives support the provision of literacy services directly in One Stop Career Centers and community libraries in New Jersey, expanding Title II-funded programs and opportunities to connect and meet the needs of individuals with more open doors.
- ***New Jersey Youth Corps (NJYC), Bridges to Employing Youth, and Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP):*** These state workforce programs are administered through competitive grant processes and offer additional opportunities for supporting and serving both out-of-school and in-school youth, with an emphasis on service learning and work-based learning opportunities that offer strong alignment with Title I youth programs.
- ***State On-the-Job Training Programs and Industry Partnerships:*** These state-level business-facing teams help to develop and support pathway development by working with employers to develop and customize classroom- and work-based learning opportunities that tie directly to employer talent and skill needs and bring together state- and local-level resources.
- ***Growing Apprenticeships in Nontraditional Sectors (GAINS), Pre-Apprenticeship in Career Education (PACE), and NJBUILD (NJ Builders Utilization Initiative for Labor Diversity):*** These state workforce programs support the development of pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities statewide through a competitive grant process open to employers and training partners designing specific pathways. These pathways are potential opportunities for One Stop Career Center participants.
- ***New Jersey Pathways Leading Apprentices to a College Education (NJPLACE) and Youth Transitions to Work (YTTW):*** These state workforce program support the development of work-based learning opportunities for in-school secondary and postsecondary youth, supporting the connection of traditional education pathways to pre-apprenticeship and Apprenticeship opportunities.
- ***Opportunity Partnership Grants, Upskill Grants, and Fellowship Grants:*** These unique grant opportunities are administered by the state through competitive awards to

employers to support the development of work-based training opportunities for employees (new employees and incumbent workers).

- **Job Corps, YouthBuild, Career Technical Education (CTE) postsecondary programs, Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) employment and training activities, Housing Urban and Development (HUD) employment and training activities, Second Chance Act programs:** These federally-funded services and programs are administered by federal and sister state agencies and are required to partner with One Stop Career Centers, both to support connection to underserved populations and to provide additional targeted supports for One Stop participants.

**WIOA Services Overview Table**

Basic Career Services (20 CFR 678.430(a))	Training Services (20 CFR 680.200)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eligibility determinations</li> <li>• Outreach, intake, and orientation re: One Stop services available</li> <li>• Initial assessment of skill levels</li> <li>• Labor exchange services (job search and placement, and recruitment on behalf of employers)</li> <li>• Referrals to and coordination of activities with other programs</li> <li>• Provision of Labor Market Information</li> <li>• Provision of training provider performance and cost information</li> <li>• Provision of One Stop performance information</li> <li>• Provision of information in usable and understandable formats and languages about the One Stop's performance and about supportive services</li> <li>• Provision of meaningful assistance to individuals seeking Unemployment Insurance</li> <li>• Assistance in obtaining financial aid for non-WIOA training and ed programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occupational skills training through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs)</li> <li>• Adult education and literacy activities, including English Language Acquisition, in combination with occupational skills training</li> <li>• On-the-Job Training</li> <li>• Incumbent Worker Training</li> <li>• Programs that combine workplace training with related instruction</li> <li>• Skill upgrading and retraining</li> <li>• Entrepreneurial training</li> <li>• Registered Apprenticeship</li> <li>• Customized training</li> <li>• Other training services</li> </ul>
<p><b>Individualized Career Services (20 CFR 678.430(b))</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive and specialized assessments of the skill levels and service needs</li> <li>• Development of individual employment plans</li> <li>• Group counseling</li> <li>• Individual counseling</li> <li>• Career planning</li> <li>• Short-term pre-vocational (work readiness) services</li> <li>• Internships and work experiences that are linked to careers</li> <li>• Workforce preparation activities</li> <li>• Financial literacy services</li> <li>• Out-of-area job search assistance and relocation assistance</li> <li>• English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs</li> </ul>	<p><b>Business Services (20 CFR 678.435)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labor exchange activities and LMI for employers</li> <li>• Customized screening and referral of qualified participants</li> <li>• Customized services on employment-related issues</li> <li>• Customized recruitment events and job fairs</li> <li>• Human resource consultation services (e.g., writing/reviewing job descriptions, creating orientation sessions, analyzing employee turnover, supporting compliance with labor and employment laws)</li> <li>• Developing and implementing sector strategies</li> <li>• Development of registered apprenticeship programs and other work-based learning opportunities</li> <li>• Assistance in managing reductions</li> <li>• Assistance in accessing local, State, and federal tax credits</li> </ul>
<p><b>Follow-up Services (20 CFR 678.430(c))</b> Provided up to 12 months after the first day of employment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counseling regarding the workplace</li> <li>• Additional career planning/counseling</li> <li>• Assisting individuals and employers in resolving work-related problems</li> <li>• Connecting individuals to peer support groups</li> <li>• Providing individuals with referrals to other community resources</li> <li>• Providing individualized information about additional educational or employment opportunities</li> </ul>	<p><b>Youth Services (20 CFR 681.460; 20 CFR 681.700)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tutoring, study skills, and dropout prevention</li> <li>• Alternative education</li> <li>• Paid and unpaid work experiences</li> <li>• Occupational skills training</li> <li>• Leadership development</li> <li>• Supportive services</li> <li>• Adult mentoring</li> <li>• Follow-up services</li> <li>• Comprehensive guidance and counseling</li> <li>• Education offered concurrently with workforce preparation</li> <li>• Financial literacy</li> <li>• Provision of labor market information</li> <li>• Preparation for postsecondary education</li> <li>• Entrepreneurial skills training</li> </ul>

D. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS

Describe how the entities carrying out the respective core programs, any Combined State Plan partner program included in this plan, required and optional one-stop partner programs will coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality services to employers to meet their current and projected workforce needs and to achieve the goals of industry or sector partners in the state. The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

As highlighted earlier, a key goal of this 2024-27 WIOA State Plan is to **align the systems and supports serving businesses and those supporting career-seekers**, matching talent and supporting training to meet the skill and labor needs of employers, specifically those that are providing good jobs and career opportunities to New Jerseyans.

In addition to support through WIOA funding and other federal funding sources such as TANF, New Jersey invests in many other programs and initiatives that offer support to our businesses and employers. These programs and investments include the following:

Core Pre-Apprenticeship/ Apprenticeship Programs	Additional Business Programs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing Apprenticeships in Nontraditional Sectors (GAINS)</li> <li>• Pre-Apprenticeship in Career Education (PACE)</li> <li>• NJBUILD (Builders Utilization Initiative for Labor Diversity)</li> <li>• New Jersey Pathways Leading Apprentices to a College Education (NJPLACE)</li> <li>• Youth Transitions to Work (YTTW)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State On-the-Job Training Programs</li> <li>• Opportunity Partnership Grants</li> <li>• Upskill Grants</li> <li>• Fellowship Grants</li> <li>• Industry Partnerships</li> <li>• Workforce Opportunity Tax Credits</li> </ul>

As we move forward with this plan, we will continue to support the expansion of career pathway and work-based learning opportunities through these investments, recognizing the integral role career-connected training opportunities developed in partnership with employers offer in a labor market as dynamic as our current one. Over the next four years, the SETC and NJDOL will work closely with state and local partners to continue and expand offerings that are explicit in connecting the skill needs of employers and career-seekers across all of our One Stop Career Center programs and in particular in supporting the integration of services available to employers through Title I, Title II, Title III, and Title IV programs.

Key activities and strategies in this area include supporting:

1. Greater **connection among teams serving businesses** across our state and local programs and services, particularly drawing on New Jersey's State Business



Outreach team to support greater connection and integration of employer services across One Stop Career Center partners

2. Continued **expansion of NJDOL's Office of Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning** to support and spread the development of high-quality Pre-Apprenticeship, Apprenticeship, and other work-based learning opportunities in New Jersey
3. Continued focus on **cross-sector partnerships** that leverage the workforce system as a funding and implementation partner in the maintenance and development of high-quality career pathways
4. Continued focus on **"good job" practices** among employers

### **Connection and Integration of State- and Local-Level Employer-Facing Teams**

Services and solutions to support employer talent needs are central in New Jersey's workforce system – in state workforce programs and the delivery of services within New Jersey's 23 One Stop Career Centers. Across One Stop partners and programs, many different business-facing teams support employers. This includes the following teams and roles:

- ***NJDOL Business Outreach Team:*** The NJDOL Business Outreach Team is a state-level team that works with Local Workforce Development Boards and across One Stop Career Center partners to help meet the immediate and future talent pipeline needs of all employers and career-seekers in alignment with local sector strategies. The NJDOL Business Outreach team works closely with local area teams to support (1) stronger linkages and coordinated services for employers that leverage the wide variety of One Stop programs and funding sources, including Title I, Title II, Title III, Title IV, WFNJ, as well as other state-funded pre-apprenticeship and Apprenticeship programs, (2) the implementation of specific employer recruitment and career awareness events to build the profile of employers locally with potential career-seekers and among One Stop staff, and (3) the connection of employers and career-seekers participating in state-run programs like Rapid Response and Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) to additional services in New Jersey's One Stop Career Centers. This team is inclusive of NJDOL's On-the-Job Training (OJT) Contract Writers that work with employers to develop and structure OJT opportunities, as well as the Apprenticeship Outreach team that provides targeted support for employers in developing Registered Apprenticeship opportunities.
- ***Title IV Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) Business Services Team:*** The DVRS team overlays and works with NJDOL's Business Outreach team to support targeted hiring events, identification of qualified candidates for job orders, and identification of accommodations when hiring individuals with disabilities. In addition, this team consults with businesses to identify a firm or worksite's need for modifications to physical, organizational or other aspects of their business in order to be more welcoming and accessible for individuals with disabilities, both as employees and as customers.
- ***Local Veterans' Employment Representative:*** New Jersey concentrates funding from the Jobs for Veterans State Grant into full-time business services roles, Veteran Business Representatives (VBRs), that support the connection between employers and the

veteran community. VBRs outreach to businesses and develop priority hiring partnerships with New Jersey companies to place veterans into employment.

- **Industry Partner Sector Strategists:** NJDOL's sector managers recruit and work with industry partners to support the development to career pathway opportunities that can serve multiple career-seekers, driven by labor market demands and employer need. NJDOL works with employers, LWDBs, and other training and sector partners to develop sustained opportunities for skill development and training.
- **Title II State Implementation Team:** The state Title II administration team, led by NJ State Director for Adult Education, works closely with Title II providers and state partners, particularly the State Business Outreach Team, to ensure the connection of Title II participants to employers and employer-connected training opportunities. In particular, NJDOL is seeking to expand the provision of Integrated Education and Training programs (IETPs) that integrate adult education and occupational skills training opportunities, as well as provide support to employers in developing Workplace literacy programs. The connection between the Title II team and the State Business Outreach team is critical in supporting the expansion and connection of adult education and literacy services to career and training services that align with employer interests and needs.
- **Title I-funded LWDB Business Services Teams:** In addition to these state-level teams, many LWDBs also support and fund business services functions and staff utilizing local allocations. These teams help to guide and carry out employer services aligned with regional and local plans. This includes hosting local job fairs, creating On-the-Job Training (OJT) opportunities at the local level, and developing relationships with local employers and small businesses to help them with their unique hiring needs and in support of local sector strategies. In addition, many local areas host hiring events and maintain job boards to help local one stop customers job match with openings in the area.

While historically, many of these efforts have been siloed, this plan seeks to leverage our State Business Services team, in particular, to ensure that career-seekers and employers have access to services and solutions across different funding streams through one entry point.

NJDOL has put in place two policies that guide LWDBs in facilitating and supporting integrated Business Relations strategies and teams:

- **Requirement that NJDOL's Business Outreach team engage as a required One Stop partner:** To support greater integration of state-level and local-level employer services, NJDOL put in a place a new One Stop Career Center Partners policy requiring that NJDOL's Business Outreach team be a required partner in all One Stop Career Centers, including integration of this services in local MOUs and IFAs.
- **Functional alignment supporting the LWDB and One Stop Operator's role in coordinating business services across these teams:** In September 2023, NJDOL put in place a new Functional Alignment policy that provides guidelines for developing functional teams to work together to deliver seamless and shared service strategies, including employer-facing services.

In addition, Data Modernization efforts, including the connection to and integration of NJDOL's existing Salesforce client relationship management (CRM) platform, will play an important role in helping to support the coordination of business services across state- and local-level teams.

Regardless of the funding source or employer of record, work across business services teams will continue to be coordinated under the guidance of LWDB and One Stop Operator management. Through close collaboration, shared expertise of state and local area sectors and labor needs, the SETC and NJDOL envision a system where employers offering good jobs can access all of the resources and services our workforce system has to offer.

### **Expansion of NJDOL's Office of Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning**

In March 2018, Governor Murphy announced the development of the first Office of Apprenticeship in New Jersey, as well as the creation of the New Jersey Apprenticeship Network (NJAN), which includes the variety of partners supporting Apprenticeship. Since then, the Office of Apprenticeship has worked closely with the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) and has served as a key resource for employers, nonprofits and secondary and postsecondary institutions interested in apprenticeship opportunities. As part of this work, New Jersey launched new initiatives and expanded existing initiatives to support funding Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship opportunities, including Growing Apprenticeships in Nontraditional Sectors (GAINS), Pre-Apprenticeship in Career Education (PACE), and NJBUILD (Builders Utilization Initiative for Labor Diversity). The state's investments have supported the creation of 678 new Registered Apprenticeship programs in New Jersey – a more than 100 percent increase.

As part of this 2024-27 WIOA State Plan, the focus of this office will also include additional state-level work-based learning opportunities in New Jersey – as we seek to not only expand Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship opportunities, but also other work-based learning opportunities including Transitional Jobs, Internships, On-the-Job Training (OJT), and Incumbent Worker Training (IWT).

The Office of Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning will continue to steward funds from state workforce investments to support and reinforce workforce strategies deployed throughout the state and across our 17 LWDBs.

By continuing to grow these programs and support their connection to New Jersey's One Stop Career Center network, we seek to support sustained opportunities for work-based learning that are accessible to all career -seekers, and specifically those that have been traditionally underserved. By diversifying postsecondary opportunities and ensuring connection to employer skill needs, New Jersey seeks to continue serve as a model for building systems of career pathways opportunities.

The key goals outlined at the creation of this office continue to guide our work, inclusive of this expanded focus on work-based learning:

- Facilitate interactions among businesses, workforce intermediaries, apprentices, educators, and state and federal partners, including the United States Department of Labor.

- Increase diversity and inclusion in registered apprenticeship programs, and other work-based learning opportunities, in the state.
- Create formal linkages to employers, secondary and higher education systems so that more New Jerseyans receive opportunities in career pathways with upward mobility and sustainable wages.
- Help support the inclusion and attainment of credentials and college credit as part of work-based learning opportunities
- Develop pipelines for Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship opportunities through work-based learning and career counseling, among middle- and high-school students, out-of-school youth, as well as other underserved populations, including individuals with low income, low literacy, and disabilities

### **Integration of Workforce System and Resources in Career Pathway Opportunities**

In addition to state-level investments in Pre-Apprenticeship, Apprenticeship, and work-based learning. NJDOL's work includes connecting these resources and opportunities, as well as those funded and supported through WIOA and additional One Stop Career Center partners, such as Work First New Jersey, into robust career pathway opportunities. This includes taking advantage of working towards co-enrollment of participants in these programs and ensuring that the full suite of WIOA resources is made available across all program types. NJDOL's Office of Business Engagement and Sector Strategies works with employers and industry associations, other state-level agencies and partners, educational partners, as well as with LWDBs and other local partners to support the development of career pathways.

NJDOL's goal is to support and develop career pathways that lead to both industry-valued credentials and career placements that offer sustained wages and advancement opportunities. NJDOL leads the development of these partnerships and pathway development through its Industry Partnerships initiative. Industry Partner managers bring partners together where needs and opportunities emerge to establish new educational opportunities connected to employment in specific sectors. Industry Partnerships draw on the resources of NJDOL and other state partners like the Economic Development Authority (EDA). As we move forward, we also seek to explore the potential for braiding additional supports into these educational pathways, for example through Title I supportive services, that help to meet the needs of underserved populations and reduce specific barriers to employment.

In addition, NJDOL seeks to connect workforce funding and resources as a partner in other career pathway and cross-sector partnership initiatives, including:

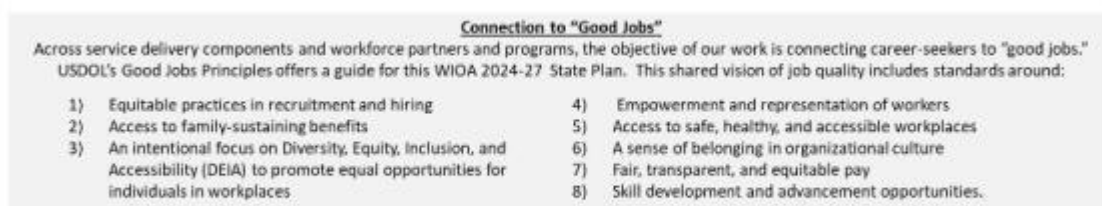
- ***CHIPS and Science Act:*** NJDOL is currently working and will continue to support the Governor's Office and Economic Development Authority (EDA) in helping business outreach to raise awareness of the CHIPS program,
- ***National Science Foundation, Tech Engines Hub:*** NJDOL is working in collaboration with EDA to promote employment in photonics in partnership with the National Science Foundation.
- ***Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD):*** NJDOL and the SETC are supporting efforts to expand high speed internet access through the Infrastructure

Reduction Act, specifically to support talent and skill needs that emerge during planning and implementation.

- **Career Roadmaps:** NJDOL contributes to and supports the Governor’s initiative to develop Career Roadmaps. Led by the Community College Consortium these detailed career pathway maps will offer detailed information for our workforce system and One Stop Career Centers regarding how to access and support pathways through community colleges.
- **Apprenticeship Technical Assistance Collaborative (A-TAC):** NJDOL is partnering with the Community College Consortium to develop resources that support the creation of Apprenticeship opportunities in New Jersey. Contracts with Jobs for the Future (JFF) and the American Institutes for Research (AIR) are supporting the development of a website and educational materials, as well as, a community of practice, to attract employers and support them in learning how to develop and sponsor Apprenticeship opportunities.

### **Focus on “Good Job” Practices**

All services to employers center around the need for connecting career-seekers to “good jobs.” The governor’s vision includes a specific focus on supporting and meeting the talent needs of choice employers that offer high quality employment opportunities. This continues to be a core and everyday focus of NJDOL and SETC. Vetting employers and working with businesses that share an interest in supporting career pathways that pay good wages. USDOL’s “good jobs” principles clearly articulate the types of employment opportunities that NJDOL and the SETC seek to develop and support. These principles are highlighted in the graphic below. Over the next four years, we will continue to work across programs and with our Local Workforce Development Boards to ensure that our public resources support the development and sustain “good jobs” in New Jersey.



In addition to supporting and incentivizing “good jobs,” NJDOL has created and will continue to invest in a new Office of Strategic Enforcement and Compliance that works across Wage and Hour and Workforce Development divisions to regulate employers who undercut their workers. Through this office, NJDOL is holding businesses in New Jersey accountable for failing to satisfy their outstanding liabilities to the State for violations of State wage, benefit, and tax laws.

## **E. PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND OTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS.**

Describe how the State's Strategies will engage the State's community colleges, adult education providers, area career and technical education schools, providers on the State's eligible training provider list, and other education and training providers, as partners in the workforce development system to create a job-driven education and training system. WIOA section 102(b)(2)(B)(iv). Include how the State's strategies will enable the State to leverage other Federal, State, and local investments to enhance access to workforce development programs at these institutions.

A key set of activities in this WIOA 2024-27 State Plan is the integration of our public workforce programs with our public education institutions and entities, including our secondary school districts, vocational education schools, and postsecondary partners, in particular our community colleges. New Jersey's state and federal public workforce dollars offer important entry points for New Jerseyans, particularly individuals from underserved communities, who may have had negative experiences with educational institutions in their past.

Three key areas of focus for us in developing stronger partnerships and relationships across our public workforce and educational partners include the following:

- Stronger integration of Title II Adult Education and Literacy Services in our One Stop Career Centers
- Continued partnership and alignment in developing work-based learning opportunities and sector strategies, including around federal Investing In America efforts
- Ongoing development of My Career NJ as a central location for information that connects our workforce and postsecondary systems

### **Title II Adult Education and Literacy Services Integration**

Through this 2024-27 WIOA State plan, NJDOL and the SETC seek to strengthen the integration of our high performing Title II services into our One Stop Career Centers. We recognize the importance of basic skills instruction and support in opening up career opportunities for many underserved populations in New Jersey.

The NJDOL office of Adult Literacy oversees over 70 community colleges, K-12 schools districts and non-profits who are the eligible Title II statewide literacy providers. All providers have met WIOA Title II demonstrated effectiveness requirements and are monitored annually. NJ Title II partners are not physically co-located within the One Stop Career Centers; referral mechanisms are in place to ensure providers are connecting Title II clients with wrap-around support services and other career services, in addition to adult literacy services.

The NJDOL Office of Adult Literacy (OAL) continues to support Title II providers' efforts to provide meaningful training and career opportunities by providing technical assistance and support for the development of Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs, specifically. This represents a critical opportunity for our workforce systems to connect workforce and occupational skills training opportunities as part of an integrated experience for participants.

The OAL staff and statewide providers are participating in OCTAE sponsored IET training and development activities to turnkey information statewide to strengthen partnerships and program development. The NJ State Director continues to work to support training and workforce activities through active membership in the SETC; by commissioning studies of Title

II data, challenges, and best practices in developing career ladders and IET programs; and by working to ensure ongoing professional development supporting Title II activities around co-enrollment, testing, and career services is shared throughout the NJ workforce system.

### **Work-Based Learning and Sector Strategy Partnerships**

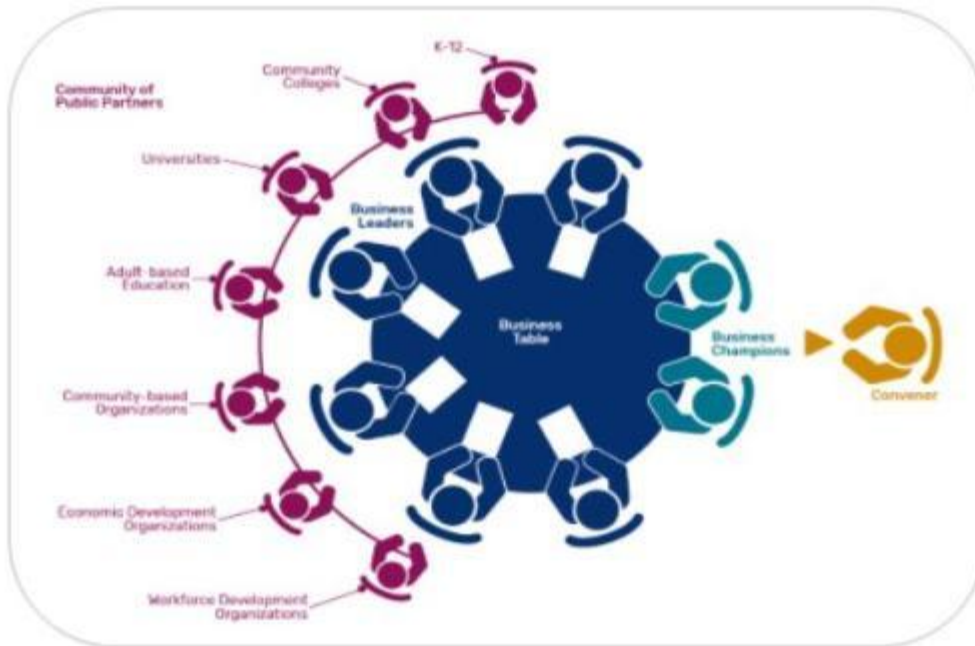
As we move forward, the expansion of work-based learning opportunities and particularly Apprenticeship opportunities will continue to be a primary focus for supporting the development of New Jersey's talent. Our education and training partners, and particularly our community colleges are key to this work as we seek to develop more pathways that integrate both classroom-based training and work-based learning experiences.

In March 2018, Governor Murphy announced the development of the first Office of Apprenticeship in New Jersey, housed in NJDOL, as well as the creation of the New Jersey Apprenticeship Network (NJAN). Through this office and work, New Jersey has expanded work-based learning opportunities through for example, Growing Apprenticeships in Nontraditional Sectors (GAINS), Pre-Apprenticeship in Career Education (PACE), and NJBUILD (Builders Utilization Initiative for Labor Diversity). Education and training partners have been key partners in many of these efforts.

Most recently, NJDOL has partnered with the New Jersey Council of County College through the Apprenticeship Technical Assistance Collaborative (A-TAC) to develop resources that support the creation of Apprenticeship opportunities in New Jersey, building the capacity for employer-led partnerships that can better leverage and maximize resources available through the Office of Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning. Contracts with Jobs for the Future (JFF) and the American Institutes for Research (AIR) are supporting the development of a website and educational materials, as well as, a community of practice, that seeks to support the ecosystem of partners developing and operationalizing Apprenticeship opportunities.

In addition to state-level investments in Pre-Apprenticeship, Apprenticeship, and work-based learning, NJDOL's work includes connecting these resources and opportunities, as well as those funded and supported through WIOA and additional One Stop Career Center partners, such as Work First New Jersey, into robust career pathway opportunities through our Industry Partnerships effort. Industry Partnerships bring partners together across sectors, including secondary and postsecondary partners, to develop career pathways that lead to both industry-valued credentials and career placements that offer sustained wages and advancement opportunities. The graphic below depicts the structure of our Industry Partnerships.

## Industry Partnerships and Partners



Across these efforts, NJDOL and the SETC seek to continue developing and expanding efforts that connect workforce opportunities and high quality educational experiences. For too long, our educational pathways have left too many individuals behind. Work-based learning opportunities that are designed to meet employer and career-seeker skill needs provide opportunities to expand the models and pathways that our educational institutions offer and support in New Jersey.

### **Investment in and Expansion of My Career New Jersey (NJ)**

NJDOL has launched the My Career NJ web portal, featuring a robust set of user-facing tools to empower individuals, particularly those from low-income, lower-skilled, underemployed, and unemployed Americans with comprehensive information, to make data-informed career decisions in an evolving economy. My Career NJ centralizes personalized career resources so users can leverage their unique skill sets in pursuit of their career aspirations. It features two new digital career tools: the NJ Training Explorer and the NJ Career Navigator.

***NJ Training Explorer:*** The Training Explorer enables customized filtering of training programs, provides information on tuition assistance, and gives users valuable insight into the providers that offer programs that meet their skill-building needs. This tool replaces the Eligible Training Provider (ETPL) and Consumer Report Card (CRC) website, formerly known as NJTOPPS.

***NJ Career Navigator:*** This machine-learning-powered recommendation engine leverages big data and machine learning to generate personalized job and career recommendations that align with each user's skill set, employment history, and individual professional goals across a wide range of private and public employment sectors.



My Career NJ brings key data and information about training and employment opportunities together to create a single access point for obtaining the most up-to-date information for guiding training and employment decisions. In addition, the resources and tools of My Career NJ support employers in finding better-qualified employees and allow NJDOL, LWDBs, and One Stop Career Center partners to use data-driven information to weed out fraudulent and low-quality training programs.

This new portal was produced through an innovative collaboration between the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the New Jersey State Office of Innovation, and Research Improving People's Lives (RIPL). It was developed using best practices in human-centered design and built on a state-of-the-art technology platform that will serve as a foundation for the development of additional functionality.

#### F. IMPROVING ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS

Describe how the State's strategies will improve access to activities leading to recognized postsecondary credentials, including Registered Apprenticeship certificates. This includes credentials that are industry-recognized certificates, licenses or certifications, and that are portable and stackable.

Increasing access to postsecondary credentials and the diversity of credentials that are accessible to all individuals is one of the highest priorities of this WIOA 2024-27 State Plan.

Our public workforce systems and investments offer tremendous opportunities for connecting individuals to high quality postsecondary credentialing opportunities that directly connect to the skills that employers need. Postsecondary credentials that are portable and stackable are the foundation of a system that supports lifelong learning for New Jerseyans that meet the needs of New Jersey businesses over time.

This WIOA 2024-27 State Plan seeks to (1) expand the variety of postsecondary credentials to which individuals have access, (2) expand who has access to postsecondary credentials, and (3) strengthen the career and employer connections as individuals work towards postsecondary credentials.

##### **Building Awareness of Postsecondary Credential Opportunities**

Postsecondary credentials represent a tremendous range of educational opportunities. In order to increase access, we must expand the credential literacy of our system and the transparency of these credential opportunities at all levels, across our state-level programs, in our local workforce systems, and specifically, among those serving and participating in our One Stop Career Services. Over the next four years, New Jersey will continue to support and expand credential literacy, with the support of partners like Credential Engine and New Jersey Council of Community Colleges, in particular through the continued development and expansion of the My Career New Jersey platform.

##### ***Developing Credential Literacy***

Over the last several years, many national organizations and initiatives have sought to expand and build awareness of the diversity of postsecondary credentials available, bringing attention to

the need for portable, stackable credentials that individuals can achieve over the course of a career. Credential Engine has served a leader in this work and core partner in New Jersey as we seek to strengthen state-wide understanding of credential opportunities, as well as data collection and reporting related to these credentials. Credential Engines Schema Handbook defines a variety of credential subclasses to help support the development of a common language across education and workforce partners. This includes the following categories of credentials highlighted in the table below:

Credential Type	Definition
<b>Badges</b>	Recognition designed to be displayed as a marker of accomplishment, activity, achievement, skill, interest, association, or identity.
<b>Certificate</b>	Credential which designates participation in, completion of, or demonstration of requisite knowledge and skills for a formal academic or training program, an occupation, or non-formal learning. This includes both academic and work-based learning certificates, including certificates attained through Apprenticeship models. (Distinct from degrees of higher education.)
<b>Certification</b>	Time-limited, revocable, renewable credential awarded by an authoritative body for demonstrating the knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform specific tasks or an occupation.
<b>Degree</b>	Academic credential conferred upon completion of a program or course of study, typically over multiple years at a college or university.
<b>License</b>	Credential awarded by a government agency or other authorized organization that constitutes legal authority to do a specific job and/or utilize a specific item, system or infrastructure and are typically earned through some combination of degree or certificate attainment, certifications, assessments, work experience, and/or fees, and are time-limited and must be renewed periodically.
<b>Micro-Credential</b>	Credential that addresses a subset of field-

Credential Type	Definition
	specific knowledge, skills, or competencies; often developmental with relationships to other micro-credentials and field credentials.

Source: <https://credreg.net/ctdl/handbook>

As our public workforce system continues to expand access to postsecondary credentials, we must continue to expand awareness and support for obtaining postsecondary credentials that align with the needs and interests of the individuals engaging in our public workforce systems. In many cases, this will also require building the awareness of these individuals regarding the full range of choices available to them – this is the core of “informed choice” in New Jersey’s public workforce system.

***My Career New Jersey (NJ)***

NJDOL has launched the My Career NJ web portal, featuring a robust set of user-facing tools to empower individuals, particularly those from low-income, lower-skilled, underemployed, and unemployed Americans with comprehensive information, to make data-informed career decisions in an evolving economy. My Career NJ centralizes personalized career resources so users can leverage their unique skill sets in pursuit of their career aspirations. It features two new digital career tools: the NJ Training Explorer and the NJ Career Navigator.

*NJ Training Explorer:* The Training Explorer enables customized filtering of training programs, provides information on tuition assistance, and gives users valuable insight into the providers that offer programs that meet their skill-building needs. This tool replaces the Eligible Training Provider (ETPL) and Consumer Report Card (CRC) website, formerly known as NJTOPPS.

*NJ Career Navigator:* This machine-learning-powered recommendation engine leverages big data and machine learning to generate personalized job and career recommendations that align with each user’s skill set, employment history, and individual professional goals across a wide range of private and public employment sectors.

My Career NJ brings key data and information about training and employment opportunities together to create a single access point for obtaining the most up-to-date information for guiding training and employment decisions. In addition, the resources and tools of My Career NJ support employers in finding better-qualified employees and allow NJDOL, LWDBs, and One Stop Career Center partners to use data-driven information to weed out fraudulent and low-quality training programs. It offers transparent information about the wide array of postsecondary credentialing opportunities available to New Jersey career-seekers and workers, whether interested in short-term employment or a long-term career pathway, or a training program that will help them increase their earnings.

This new portal was produced through an innovative collaboration between the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the New Jersey State Office of Innovation, and Research Improving People’s Lives (RIPL). It was developed using best practices in human-centered design and built on a state-of-the-art technology platform that will serve as a foundation for the development of additional functionality.

Over the next four years, NJDOL will continue to invest in the expansion of platform and integration of data to continue driving all of our One Stop partners and participants to this resource as a hub for informing postsecondary training and credentialing opportunities. The platform is located online at <https://mycareer.nj.gov/>.

### **Expanding Access to Postsecondary Credentials**

In March 2019, the NJ Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) published *Where Opportunity Meets Innovation: A Student-Centered Vision for New Jersey Higher Education*, articulating that every New Jerseyan, regardless of life circumstance, should have the opportunity to obtain a high-quality credential. Among other things, the plan commits to the expansion of best practices that include early exposure to postsecondary education, experiential learning opportunities, and the greater ease in earning credits for learning outside the classroom.

Through WIOA funding and state workforce investments, New Jersey's public workforce system offers incredibly opportunities for supporting greater access to higher education and lifelong learning, through various postsecondary credentialing opportunities.

New Jersey offers a variety of workforce programs, many of which target underserved populations, that support access to postsecondary credential opportunities. Below, we provide an overview of some of the key opportunities and programs supported through and in our One Stop Career Centers supporting connection to credentials:

#### ***WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker***

Through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs), WIOA funds can be utilized to support a wide range of occupational skills training. Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs), in partnership with NJDOL and the SETC, have the authority to establish policies and procedures that guide the use of ITAs to support both the individual needs of participants and target meeting needs of their local communities and businesses. All training that is supported through ITAs must be to training programs and providers included on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL).

The use of ITAs must connect to robust assessment and plan development activities, captured in Individual Employment Plans (IEPs). The needs and interests of individuals through informed choice must drive ITA amounts and duration. This opens up opportunities for continually considering and exploring how ITAs can help to meet the skill and training needs of individuals.

#### ***WIOA Title IV***

The provision of ITAs is not a regulatory requirement under WIOA Title IV. DVRS utilizes Workforce Development Program Funds designated to support access to occupational skills training for individuals who are eligible for DVRS services and whose training is agreed upon and documented on the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). When this funding source is not available or applicable, DVRS funds occupational skills training through its general federal award from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).

Training is provided to the individual consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice. Measurable skill gains and credentials attained through occupational skills training are considered

successful outcomes for key WIOA performance metrics. All training is geared to assist individuals with disabilities in achieving their employment goals.

### ***Work First New Jersey***

Through the SNAP funding, NJDOL offers competitive awards through SNAP STEPS (Skills, Training, Employment, Program to Success) to providers to support SNAP participants, specifically in connecting to and obtaining postsecondary credentials. These SNAP providers build and develop training partnerships, in particular with community colleges and other training partners to deliver and support individual and group training that is included on the ETPL. WFNJ, including TANF and GA funds, are allocated directly to LWDBs, which can directly support occupational skills training for individuals and/or groups that are included on the ETPL through the provision of Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) aligned with WIOA processes. The provision of occupational skills training is a key area in which WFNJ and WIOA co-enrollment is beneficial to maximize resources and support for low-income individuals. This WIOA State Plan seeks to strengthen these co-enrollment opportunities.

### ***Senior Community Service Employment Program***

Occupational skills training is supported through co-enrollment with Title I or WFNJ programs. Occupational skills needs and service strategies must be identified in a participant's Individual Employment Plan (IEP).

### ***Youth-Focused Programs***

WIOA Title I Youth funding also offers opportunities for supporting young people's connection to postsecondary credentialing through ITAs, specifically through co-enrollment in Title I Adult programs for young people 18 or older. In addition, New Jersey offers a range of youth-specific programs that can link to postsecondary credentialing opportunities, including through service learning (New Jersey Youth Corps), internships (Summer Youth Employment Program), and pre-apprenticeship (Youth Transitions to Work) and Apprenticeship opportunities (NJ Pathways Leading Apprentices to College). Postsecondary connections and credentialing opportunities for youth, especially among out-of-school youth, are a core focus of this state plan.

### ***Additional State Workforce Programs***

In addition to these Title I, Title IV, and WFNJ supports, additional occupational skills training is available through various other state workforce programs targeting specific underserved populations, for example Pathways to Recovery and JOBS. Occupational skills training is offered and delivered similarly to the SNAP STEPS program; third-party vendors are selected through a competitive process and build specific relationships with postsecondary partners to meet the needs of participants.

In addition, New Jersey's LiLA initiative provides each participant with up to \$9600 in funds that they self-direct to service activities, including occupational skills training and/or degree completion.

### ***Tuition Waivers***

In addition, to the resources and programs highlighted above, NJDOL also leads the state's Tuition Waiver efforts which offer opportunities for individuals in One Stop Career Centers to complete college degree tuition-free.

The Tuition Waiver program is a joint effort by NJDOL and the Commission on Higher Education. This program enables eligible unemployed customers to enroll, tuition-free, when vacant seats are available, in an appropriate course of instruction at public colleges and universities in New Jersey, providing them with identifiable skills leading to gainful reemployment. The customer and a One Stop Career Center Counselor jointly develop a course of instruction identified as part of their development of an Individual Employment Plan (IEP). NJDOL's Tuition Waiver policy further details this waiver process.

### ***Additional Higher Education Support***

In addition to these workforce development resources, additional initiatives such as Community College Opportunity Grants and the Educational Opportunity Fund, as well as federal Pell grants and workforce Pell grants under development, offer financial support for low-income individuals to pay for and access higher education opportunities.

### **Strengthen Career Connections with Postsecondary Credentialing**

In addition to expanding diversity of credentialing and diversity of access within our public workforce systems, a core focus of this WIOA State Plan is integrating and expanding work-based learning opportunities, including Youth Work Experience, Internships, Transitional Jobs, Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship opportunities.

Many different models and opportunities exist for integrating classroom and on-the-job training opportunities. Career pathways that are informed by and include employers, help to ensure that postsecondary credentialing aligns with entry and advancement in "good jobs." As highlighted in other areas of this plan, work-based learning opportunities are developed at the local level in partnership between employers and our Local Workforce Development Boards, at the state level through cross-sector initiatives like Industry Partnerships that design career pathways inclusive of classroom- and work-based learning opportunities around industry needs, and through state-level pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship grant opportunities that support employers and their partners in operationalizing integrated training opportunities that they have designed.

NJDOL and the SETC, in partnership with our Local Workforce Development Board will continue to support and expand opportunities that integrate and include classroom- and employer-based training, particularly for underserved communities, including individuals with low-income or low-literacy, and youth.

## **G. COORDINATING WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES**

Describe how the activities identified in (A) will be coordinated with economic development entities, strategies, and activities in the State.

The activities across our core programs and in our One Stop Career Centers connect to economic development entities through various teams supporting business services. At the

state-level our NJDOL Business Outreach and Industry Partnerships teams provide a direct connection between economic development partnerships that are developed at the state level to opportunities in our One Stop Career Centers, and vice versa. The experiences in our One Stop Career Centers help to inform economic development partnerships. These teams also support local-level economic strategies as determined by Local Workforce Development Boards through their partnerships with local economic development entities. In addition, local Business Services teams also help to support this alignment. Below we highlight more about this state and local-level work.

**Supporting State-Level Economic Development Activities**

NJDOL’s Offices of Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning, and Business Engagement and Sector Strategies, lead and support state-level efforts, working in coordination with many other partners, including, specifically, the State’s Economic Development Authority (EDA).

NJDOL’s Office of Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning team leads all activities related to procurement and contracting of state-funded work-based learning programs. The goal of this team is to seed opportunities for expanding work-based learning, and specifically Apprenticeship opportunities, as well as maintain the capacity of our workforce system, to support the highest level of work-based learning opportunities possible. The state’s total investment (FY19-FY24) has included over \$60 million in grants being award to support Apprenticeship sponsors, employers and community-based organizations in training funds. This plan will continue these efforts.

In addition, NJDOL’s Industry Partnerships team, that works within Business Engagement and Sector Strategies team, identifies and works with various state and local-level agencies, including the EDA, to identify and develop new educational and career pathways that align with and driven by business. These sector-level relationships and solutions not only serve individual workforce needs but also support broader economic development in New Jersey.

NJDOL connects these state-level strategies with the activities and services in our One Stop Career Centers through our state-level teams that support and also connect at the local level, including both our NJDOL State Business Outreach and Industry Partnerships teams.

Over the next four years, we anticipate that the trio of federal programs Investing In America (IIA) will further accelerate the development of opportunities at the state level that offer opportunities for participants in New Jersey’s One Stop Career Centers. Our NJDOL State Business Outreach and Industry Partnerships teams will continue to serve and develop their role as connectors between these state-level efforts and local-level service delivery.

Investing In America includes three core investments:

***Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Bipartisan Infrastructure Law)***

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) represents the largest single investment in infrastructure in history, totaling \$1.2 trillion in funding for projects across the Transportation, Climate, Energy, and the Environment, and Broadband. Anticipated projects will fall across the following categories.

Categories	Project Areas
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Categories	Project Areas
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roads, Bridges, and Major Projects</li> <li>• Passenger and Freight Rail</li> <li>• Public Transportaion</li> <li>• Airports and Federal Aviation Administration Facilities</li> <li>• Ports and Waterways</li> <li>• Safety</li> <li>• Electric Vehicles, Buses and Ferries</li> </ul>
Climate, Energy, and Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clean Energy and Power</li> <li>• Water</li> <li>• Resilience</li> <li>• Environmental Remediation</li> </ul>
Broadband	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing access to high-speed internet</li> </ul>

Most of the formula funding from IIJA will flow through New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT). The IIJA does not prescribe any specific role for Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) in the legislation, however, it does provide significant opportunities for workforce development across the state. NJDOL, along with the SETC and LWDBs will work together to partner with the NJDOT to take advantage of the historic investments from the IIJA. The first step in this process will be to align the state’s strategy with the collective goals of the NJDOT.

The NJDOT goals are to:

- Maximize federal dollars won by New Jersey, by prioritizing and supporting the most competitive applications.
- Ensure efficient deployment of funds by working with our county and municipal partners.

As more specific investments begin to take place, NJDOL and the SETC will work to ensure that LWDBs are aware of investments taking place in their communities, to ensure that these opportunities lead to local training, employment, and pathway opportunities.

***Creating Help Incentives to Produce Semiconductors (CHIPS) Act***

The CHIPS and Science Act was passed with the main goal of expanding investments in energy innovation, energy independence, and promoting research and development (R&D), manufacturing, and workforce development in the semi-conductor sector. The SETC and NJDOL will work with state partners to ensure that existing workforce investments align with and support emerging opportunities. Over \$200 million will be allocated to the National Science



Foundation's Workforce and Education fund through FY27 to bolster the country's capacity to prepare workers for jobs in these fields.

As these investments move forward in New Jersey, NJDOL and the SETC will coordinate with the appropriate state agencies and LWDBs to identify companies in NJ that are currently situated in semi-conductor manufacturing, training providers offering credentials and on-the-job training opportunities, and non-for-profit/advocacy organizations that work with marginalized groups to promote access to future job opportunities in the state.

NJDOL and the SETC will further specify interests in supporting training in semi-conductor R&D and manufacturing by leveraging state workforce development programs and grants with these current and future jobs, as much as possible.

### ***Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)***

The President's 2022 Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) represents the largest-ever U.S. investment in climate and energy. It aims to address the climate crisis, promote environmental justice, bolster domestic clean energy manufacturing, and align with the Biden-Harris Administration's goal of achieving a net-zero economy by 2050.

The IRA aims to incentivize climate and clean energy investments through tax incentives. Third-party estimates suggest it could generate over 1 million jobs in the energy and manufacturing sectors in the next decade. The Act aligns with the Biden Administration's focus on supporting workers by encouraging high labor standards in project construction. To qualify for increased credits and deductions, taxpayers must pay the local prevailing wage and hire a specified proportion of workers from registered apprenticeship programs, promoting well-paying union jobs and industry entry pathways.

The requirements of IRA align with New Jersey's priorities and the priorities shared in this 2024-27 WIOA State Plan. New Jersey's existing investments in pre-apprenticeship and Apprenticeship, strong trade unions, high wages, and focus on worker protections and benefits, make our state well-poised to leverage the opportunities IRA offers.

Like the IIJA, most of the IRA's funding will be flowing through NJDOT and water/energy utilities companies. The law does not provide direct funding for workforce development and much of the private sector incentives will be distributed through tax credits to businesses for investments that are made in development workers. A key focus for New Jersey will be developing and connecting partnerships with the business community, educational institutions, and training providers that are situated to benefit from IRA funding and resources.

As we move forward with this state plan, NJDOL and the SETC will work with state partners, e.g. NJDOT, and LWDBs to ensure that regular communication channels and dialogue exists regarding emerging projects across state- and local-level partners. In addition, NJDOL and the SETC will work to build awareness and connect existing state workforce investments, such as GAINS, PACE, and NJBUILD, as well as WIOA investments to support the development of career pathways and pipelines that meet the workforce needs of these new projects. We see these federal investments as critical opportunities for building, supporting, and expanding skilled labor in New Jersey. In addition, this plan will promote tax incentives for apprenticeship and workforce development investments available to the business community.

### **Supporting Local-Level Economic Development Activities**

In addition to these connections at the state-level, our Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) drive connections to economic development priorities and efforts locally. Over the next four years of this plan, NJDOL and the SETC are particularly interested in helping to elevate areas where these relationships are strong and supporting local communities where these relationships need to be developed and rebuilt. Our workforce development systems offer important opportunities for local economic development strategies, and vice versa.

As highlighted in the section above, many of our LWDBs support local level teams focused on businesses services, in addition to leveraging and working with state business-facing teams. Coordination with local economic development agencies and partners is a critical connection point for these teams. Local economic development priorities offer opportunities for building and developing career pathway opportunities, and LWDBs bring specific knowledge and expertise about local employer needs that can inform economic development strategies.

As we move forward with this 2024-27 State Plan, we recognize that the dynamism of our labor markets and acceleration in technologies will make our partnerships between economic and workforce development at the state and local levels more important than ever. This is an area we will continue to focus on and strengthen our efforts.

## B. STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS AND POLICIES

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a description of the State operating systems and policies that will support the implementation of the State strategy described in section **II Strategic Elements**. This includes—

### 1. THE STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS THAT WILL SUPPORT COORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGIES (E.G., LABOR MARKET INFORMATION SYSTEMS, DATA SYSTEMS, COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS, CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS, JOB BANKS, ETC.).

Investment in New Jersey’s State Operating systems is core to achieving the key goals articulated in this 2024-27 State Plan, including supporting the access of career-seekers to expanded career pathway opportunities, aligning the needs of businesses and career-seekers, and investing in public infrastructure that supports high quality employment opportunities.

Much of New Jersey’s workforce data is still housed in siloed, legacy systems. Over the next four years, NJDOL will secure and operationalize a new data and case management system to replace America’s One Stop Operating System (AOSOS), which currently serves as the system of record for our Title III and Title I programs, as well as WFNJ E&T services. In addition to offering significant new functionality in supporting case management and data collection and reporting for Title I, Title III, WFNJ E&T programs, it will also offer increased functionality in sharing data and supporting service integration even in program areas still utilizing separate systems of record.

We see this new system as a hub and center of all our operating systems moving forward. As we have prepared for the selection of a new system, this process has already depended on deep coordination across internal NJDOL and SETC staff, as well as with staff across our Local Workforce Development Boards. As we move forward with implementation, these partnerships

and the ongoing coordination of work remains critical in developing a system of our operating systems that support coordinated implementation of State strategies.

Below, we provide a catalog and overview of the current systems on which this State plan relies, including:

- Systems of Record/Case Management Systems for Core Titles
- Additional Data Systems
- Labor Market Information
- Career Services Resources

### **Systems of Record/Case Management Systems**

New Jersey depends on four systems of record across its six core WIOA programs. As we move forward with Data Modernization connection and coordination across these four systems is a core business requirement.

#### ***America's One-Stop Operating System (AOSOS)***

AOSOS is at the core of New Jersey's common data system used to support its workforce development system business needs. This system current supports a number of federal and state workforce development programs including: Workforce Investment Act (WIOA) Title I, including Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs; Title III, Wagner-Peyser Public Labor Exchange; Jobs for Veterans Grant (JVSG); Trade Adjustment Act (TAA); New Jersey's Workforce Development Partnership Program (WDP); and, Work First New Jersey (TANF, SNAP, and General Assistance).

Developed under a federal, multi-state and local areas partnership, AOSOS is used to meet the operational, tracking and reporting goals of WIOA's vision for the consolidation and coordination of multiple employment and training programs' services. As noted above, New Jersey is in the process of securing a new system that would ultimately replace AOSOS through our Data Modernization efforts, serving as the system of record and offering enhanced functionality and supports for the above-mentioned workforce programs.

#### ***Literacy, Adult and Community Education System (LACES)***

The primary tool that is utilized by the NJDOL Title II programs to evaluate local programs on an annual basis is LACES, New Jersey's management information system for adult education. LACES is a statewide, comprehensive, web-based system, which maintains student information including student demographics, assessments, goals, and performance outcomes. The system allows data to be tracked by individual student, class, instructor, and program. In addition, LACES provides a wide range of information, including snapshots of student and program performance, and personnel qualifications. On an annual and ongoing basis, NJDOL staff reviews each provider's enrollment as well as performance, which is evaluated according to NRS indicators through LACES.

#### ***AWARE Vocational Rehabilitation Case Management System - DVRS***

DVRS upgraded its case management system to a fully functional AWARE system from Alliance Enterprises during FFY 2014. This system serves as the system of record for general Title IV

participants. AWARE has made it possible for DVRS to streamline information, easier to generate and compile data and reports required by RSA in a timely manner and for internal management reviews.

AWARE provides all required reporting elements from the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). These reports include:

- Quarterly VR 113 – Cumulative Caseload Report
- Annual VR 911 – Case Services Report
- Annual VR-2 – VR Program/Cost Report

In order to encourage continuous monitoring and improvement, all the way through to the front-line staff, every counselor has access to their caseload; managers have access to their local office information, and field chiefs / upper management can look at the state as a whole. As with other programs in NJDOL, a dashboard approach is used to track the employment outcomes monthly, at minimum.

### ***FACTS - System 7 Vocational Rehabilitation Case Management System – CBVI***

In March of 2012, CBVI adopted System 7 Framework by Libera, Inc. to replace a legacy system at the agency. The system has been given the acronym of FACTS (Fully Accessible Case Tracking System) and provides a comprehensive solution for case and information management at CBVI. The FACTS system is a web-based solution, allowing staff to access case information remotely, to better serve consumers through an itinerant model of service provision. In addition, the FACTS system allows for the creation of PDQs (Pre-Defined Queries) that allows for the creation of various data reports.

FACTS has the capability to complete all reports required under WIOA, including:

- RSA-113: Cumulative Caseload Report
- RSA-911: Case Services Report
- RSA-2: Cost Report
- RSA-15: Vending Facility Programs (Randolph-Sheppard Programs)
- RSA-7-OB: Independent Living Services for Older Individuals who are Blind Annual Report

Libera, Inc. is gradually moving out of the business providing case management software for State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies. CBVI is currently in the process of transitioning to the AWARE case management system provided by Alliance Enterprises, Inc.

### **Additional Data Systems**

In addition to these four systems of record, NJDOL also depends on several additional data systems to drive and inform our workforce programs.

### ***SAGE/IGX***

System for Administrating Grants Electronically (SAGE) is the grant management tool that NJDOL has utilized for over ten years. IGX is the preferred brand name of the vendor IGX Solutions as it reflects their updated platform IGX. NJDOL is transitioning to the new platform IGX. It is our goal to have all Workforce Development contracts in IGX by 2026. Contracts that are competitively announced via the Notice of Award process are in SAGE/IGX as well as our Local Area contracts. SAGE/IGX has the following features:

- Application intake
- Panel Review Scoring
- Generates Notice of Award letters
- Executive review workflow for approval
- Obligates award amount with interface with State Treasury System.
- Contracts are generated with standard legal language, grant specific deliverables.
- Electronic signature is captured via user login
- Expenditures are processed through SAGE/IGX
- Payments are interfaced with State Treasury system
- Activity/Metric Reports
- Program specific metrics are collected via customized monthly reporting
- Customized Reports are developed based on program metrics.
- IGX has a two-step verification for logins as an added security feature.

### ***Salesforce***

New Jersey recognized the need for a more streamlined approach to information sharing and service tracking among the partners that are conducting outreach to and providing services to businesses and employers. NJDOL and its partners adopted Salesforce as a tool to support our federal and state-funded, business-facing workforce programs. Launched in May 2017, the Salesforce application is utilized by members our state-level business services team, including key representatives/liasons from the following programs: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I; WIOA Title II, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act; Jobs for Veterans State Grants; Trade Adjustment Act (TAA); New Jersey's Workforce Development Partnership Program (WDP); WorkFirst New Jersey (TANF, SNAP, and General Assistance); Senior Community Services Employment Program; Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and more recently, the New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI).

Salesforce collects data on businesses and workforce partners (which consist of colleges, libraries, trade organizations, and community and faith-based organizations). Having all partners use the same Salesforce platform provides a comprehensive picture of all workforce-related activities and various touch points, and promotes strategic planning, resource sharing and communication through the network.

### ***New Jersey State Data System (NJSDS), the State's Longitudinal Data System***

The New Jersey Statewide Data System (NJSDS) is the State of New Jersey's centralized longitudinal data system for public administrative data. Through coordination with partnering state agencies and initial funding from the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Labor, NJSDS has become a large statewide interagency and intergovernmental platform where data from participating agencies are securely stored to expand access and analysis to improve governance efforts, policymaking, and performance of public initiatives.

NJSDS aims to help the public and stakeholders make data-informed decisions to improve public policies and practices for New Jersey residents. This includes facilitating longitudinal and linked-data research, providing statistical data, and publishing reports on the NJSDS website, <https://njsds.nj.gov/>.

The data system contains Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage records, One-Stop Career Center implementation data, training provider enrollment and completion data, and higher education enrollment and completion data. Partners in NJSDS now include NJDOL, the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority, and the Department of Education. New Jersey was awarded a third grant under Round VII of the Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) to build out system infrastructure, add data sources, improve researcher access to data system, and supplement and develop internal Labor research and evaluation capacity. This system will further encourage program improvement by robust outcome measures and improved evaluations.

New Jersey is also a partner in the Multi-State Data Collaboratives, supported by the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA), the State Higher Executive Officers Association (SHEEO), and the Coleridge Initiative. Through these collaboratives, state agencies across the country are partnering to support the use of timely data to better understand local labor markets, labor market outcomes, racial and geographic disparities, and interventions that work.

### ***Intelligrants (IGX) System for Eligible Training Providers***

The Center for Occupational Employment Information (COEI) within the NJDOL Office of Research and Information, is responsible for the authorization and management of the Eligible Training Providers List (ETPL) and the collection of related data for state and federal workforce performance reporting.

The Intelligrants (IGX) system was launched in April 2023 as the new NJDOL system of record for eligible training providers and programs data. IGX is available as an online web portal that aims to consolidate training providers and program activity under one centralized location. Training providers can submit applications, access, update data and required documents and communicate directly through the IGX system.

All training providers seeking ETPL placement must first obtain approval from a qualified state or federal government agency to offer occupational skills training programs. Only after this approval is obtained can a training provider apply for ETPL placement. Under WIOA or State law, Eligible Training Providers (ETPs) are required to submit a formal application to COEI, which includes provider information as well as descriptions of each program of training

services to be offered. New providers are added to the ETPL as they are determined eligible. ETPL eligibility is valid for two years from the date of approval.

All ETPs are also required to submit quarterly student data, which enables NJDOL to calculate WIOA performance indicators and the State's CRC outcomes after matching the student data to UI wage records. UI Wage Record matching within the State of New Jersey is conducted by NJDOL and includes out-of-state wage records obtained by NJDOL through the State Wage Interchange System (SWIS) agreement with USDOL.

Approved programs along with Consumer Report Card (CRC) training and employment outcomes data are displayed on the MyCareerNJ website career tool at: <https://mycareer.nj.gov/training> for all New Jerseyans and workforce program customers to find training programs that meet their needs.

### ***State Wage Interchange System (SWIS)***

Additionally, New Jersey is a member of the State Wage Interchange System (SWIS), which allows for the performance reporting of long-term employment and earnings outcomes of participants in all WIOA titles and for the aggregate analysis of outcomes in other adjacent workforce and education programs. New Jersey used the Wage Record Interstate System (WRIS) through December 31, 2019. NJDOL entered into the State Wage Interchange System (SWIS) Data Sharing Agreement in November 2019. As of January 1, 2020, New Jersey utilizes SWIS Clearinghouse to facilitate the exchange of interstate wage data.

### **Governmental Labor Market Information Sources**

The NJDOL's Office of Research and Information (ORI) provides a wide variety of labor market information (LMI) products and services that support the NJDOL's workforce development and WIOA funded initiatives and measure NJ's labor market conditions. Some of these LMI products originate from data collected through five programs conducted by ORI staff in cooperation with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) and the US Census Bureau. These cooperative programs can be broken down as follows:

#### ***Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS)***

This cooperative program produces employment, and wage estimates annually for approximately 830 occupations. These estimates are available for the nation as a whole, for individual states, and for metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. Estimates of occupational employment and wages for specific industry sectors are also available. Data produced by the OEWS program are a key input to many of our LMI products including our long-term occupational projections and our demand occupations list.

#### ***Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)***

This program produces quarterly counts of employment and wages reported by employers covered under New Jersey's Unemployment Insurance (UI) laws. It is estimated that this program covers over 95% of jobs in NJ. Data are available by industry sector and by areas throughout the state including New Jersey's 21 counties and the state's largest cities. Quarterly estimates for all New Jersey municipalities are published annually.

#### ***Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)***

The LAUS program produces monthly estimates of New Jersey's resident labor force including the number of residents employed and unemployed. Also produced are the state's monthly unemployment rate, labor force participation rate and employment population ratio. Monthly labor force estimates are also produced for New Jersey's 21 counties and the state's largest cities. Annual estimates are produced for New Jersey's smaller cities.

### ***Current Employment Statistics (CES)***

The CES program produces detailed industry estimates of employment, hours, and earnings of workers on New Jersey's nonfarm payrolls. CES estimates are available State and Metro Statistical Area levels. Workers not covered by New Jersey's UI laws are included in these estimates.

### ***Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses (SOII)***

The program produces annual estimates on workplace injuries and illnesses. Specifically, injury/illnesses incident data are produced by industry sector and occupation. It also provides detailed case and various demographic data for injury/illness cases that involve one or more days away from work.

### ***Long-term Industry and Occupational Projections***

Our long-term industry and occupational projections are produced annually and done as part of the Projections Managing Partnership (PMP) under ETA's Workforce Information annual grant. These projections are a valuable data source for identifying growing or declining industry sectors and occupations within the state and its 21 counties. This product also serves as a key input to many other LMI and career information products, including New Jersey's Occupational Demand list.

### ***US Census Data***

The Office of Research and Information is home to the NJ State Data Center (SDC) which serves as the state's liaison for US Census datasets and data related to NJ, as well as Decennial Census activities. The SDC also provides support for our LMI efforts by providing NJ-specific data LMI products from US Census sources such as the American Community Survey, the Current Population Survey, the Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics Program, among others. The SDC also holds an annual meeting for the 21 NJ counties in the data center network. During the meeting, presentations are made on any new Census products that may benefit our LMI customers and stakeholders.

The SDC also holds an annual meeting for the 110 agencies in its network including all NJ County Planning Agencies, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO's), state government agencies, and federal depository libraries including the State Library and libraries at Rutgers and Princeton Universities. During the meeting presentations are made on any new Census products that may benefit our LMI customers and stakeholders.

### **Non-Governmental Labor Market Information (LMI) Sources**

In addition, NJDOL draws on two additional proprietary LMI sources:

- **Lightcast:** This data source provides current job postings data, as well as information about occupations, skills in demand, and career pathways.



- **IMPLAN:** This economic tool allows ORI to produce analyses to measure the impact of economic or business activities within the state or local areas. Measurements include jobs (direct, indirect and inferred), occupations and wages that would support this economic or business activity.

### **Career Resources**

In addition to the above-mentioned data systems, NJDOL has also made investments in career-seeker-facing tools that ease access to information and services.

#### ***My Career New Jersey (NJ)***

NJDOL launched the MyCareerNJ web portal in 2024, featuring a robust set of user-facing tools to empower individuals, particularly those from low-income, lower-skilled, underemployed, and unemployed Americans. MyCareerNJ centralizes personalized career resources so users can leverage their unique skill sets in pursuit of their career aspirations. It features three career tools: the NJ Training Explorer, the NJ Career Navigator, and NJ Career Pathways.

- **NJ Training Explorer:** The Training Explorer enables customized filtering of training programs, provides information on tuition assistance, and gives users valuable insight into the providers that offer programs that meet their skill-building needs.
- **NJ Career Navigator:** This machine-learning-powered recommendation engine leverages big data and machine learning to generate personalized job and career recommendations that align with each user’s skill set, employment history, and individual professional goals across a wide range of private and public employment sectors.
- **NJ Career Pathways:** Career Pathways is an interactive career exploration tool that helps users to understand how to enter and advance in in-demand careers in New Jersey. Career pathways in New Jersey’s manufacturing sector are currently online. New pathways in healthcare, construction, and transportation, distribution and logistics are slated to go live in the coming several months. Data that appears on the site are gleaned from several dozen interviews with New Jersey employers and industry experts.

MyCareerNJ brings key data and information about training and employment opportunities together to create a single access point for obtaining the most up-to-date information for guiding training and employment decisions. In addition, the resources, and tools of My Career NJ support employers in finding better-qualified employees and allow NJDOL, LWDBs, and One Stop Career Center partners to use data-driven information to weed out fraudulent and low-quality training programs.

This portal was produced through an innovative collaboration between NJDOL, the New Jersey Innovation Authority, and Research Improving People’s Lives (RIPL). It was developed using best practices in agile project management and human-centered design and built on a state-of-the-art technology platform that will serve as a foundation for the development of additional functionality.

### **Eligible Training Programs and Providers**

Every two years, NJDOL updates a statewide in-demand occupations list, which is sent out to all Workforce Development Boards (WDBs), One-Stop and Employment Services managers, and published on NJDOL's website as well as in MyCareerNJ. Programs aligned with occupations that are on the statewide in-demand occupations list are eligible for partial or whole tuition subsidies through WIOA Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). In addition, NJDOL allows for local variations in demand through its local and regional waiver process. Local area WDB directors and pre-specified WDB directors serving as regional representatives can apply for waivers in one of two ways:

1. Submit letters from employers in their local area or region attesting to a history of and future plans to hire individuals trained in an occupation that is not otherwise listed on the statewide in-demand occupations list; or
2. Submit a waiver request based on local area or regional labor market information. In 2025, for the first time, NJDOL published a list of eligible occupations in the 17 local areas and three regions.

These policies support WIOA requirements and goals to support training that (1) is in-demand, portable, and stackable, and (2) leads to higher wages, career advancement, and increased job security.

### **NJDOL: Overview of Operational Structure**

*Including our Local WDBs, through policy development, training, and program monitoring activities.*

### **Office of Research and Information**

The Office of Research and Information (ORI) supports New Jersey's WIOA investments through data analysis and validation, the development and administration of tools for consumers, including the ETPL, and through the provision of Labor Market Information. Three core teams support these efforts, including:

- **Workforce Research and Analytics:** This Division includes teams that support development and implementation of WIOA evaluations, analysis and reporting of data related to WIOA programs to federal and state partners, the annual evaluation of Title I WIOA programs, as well as the negotiation and development of performance metrics, including the development of statistical adjustment models. In addition, this team is responsible for data validation across multiple program areas.
- **Economic and Demographic Research:** This Division gathers, examines, and distributes Labor Market Information (LMI) to a variety of stakeholders including officials, Local Workforce Development Boards, job seekers. It produces a range of reports, such as Labor Market Spotlights, and assesses the fiscal impact of policies.
- **Center for Occupational Employment Information:** This Division established by New Jersey statute, administers, and oversees the New Jersey Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) including the CRC, and develops, and maintains and operates MyCareerNJ. In partnership with the EDR division, it issues the statewide in-demand occupations list and manages the local and regional waiver process. It provides data-driven career information and support for career guidance, academic counseling programs, and

education decision-making by individuals in areas related to careers, including the development of robust online resources and tools for all New Jerseyans.

### ***Job Source***

New Jersey launched a new job board and self-service website for job seekers, allowing career-seekers to create a profile, perform effective job searches, and access valuable tools for supporting their job searches. The site has various assessment tools to help the seeker identify characteristics in themselves that then can be matched to industries, positions, and even educational opportunities. The site offers several applications that can guide the user through creating a resume, professional letters, job applications, reference lists, and much more with helpful tips to consider. The site offers suggestions for interviewing, social media usage and researching companies. The site has links to NJDOL's calendar of events, job fairs, apprenticeship opportunities and labor market information. It allows for the seeker to use many of the functions without registration but also offers the opportunity for them to create a free account to have more capabilities and save documents to their account for easy retrieval even from their mobile device.

### ***SkillUp New Jersey (Metrix Learning)***

In 2021, New Jersey began its investment at the state level in Metrix Learning's SkillUp platform, making this resource available to all New Jersey residents. New Jersey residents can now access more than 5,000 free online Skillsoft courses via the SkillUp New Jersey training program. Courses are offered in a variety of high-demand industry sectors, including information technology, business analysis, customer service, project management, and digital literacy.

Course content ranges from basic work readiness skills for new workers to tailored training for high-level professionals and management. Offerings include Customer Service, Microsoft Office, Adobe, Quick Books, Analytical Skills, Data Management/Reporting, Time Management, Leadership Skills, Health & Safety, and First Aid, among many others. In addition, the platform offers training tracks leading to more than 100 industry certifications.

**2. THE STATE POLICIES THAT WILL SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE'S STRATEGIES (FOR EXAMPLE. CO-ENROLLMENT POLICIES AND UNIVERSAL INTAKE PROCESSES WHERE APPROPRIATE). IN ADDITION, PROVIDE THE STATE'S GUIDELINES FOR STATE-ADMINISTERED ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO A ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM AND ANY ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE FOR ONE-STOP PARTNER CONTRIBUTIONS.**

Over the last few years, NJDOL has made significant investments in our state policy development. This continues to remain a priority as we continue to seek to clarify and set forth guidelines for implementing WIOA and other state workforce opportunities in our state. Over the next four years of this WIOA state plan, we will continue to work closely with our Local Workforce Development Boards to provide additional policies and policy updates that support the goals of WIOA and provide the space for high quality administrative and programmatic practices in our local areas and One Stop Career Center network.

In addition, NJDOL seeks to specifically build out a body of state policies that help to clarify and govern WFNJ E&T services over the next four years in alignment with WIOA policies and activities.

Finally, NJDOL and SETC will work together to update the full body of policies that exist across our two entities to ensure that policies issued from SETC and NJDOL both reinforce one another and serve as a single system of policies for our Local Workforce Development Boards.

Below, we provide an overview of the key policies, specifically those issued over the last few years, that are central to the strategies highlighted in this WIOA 2024-27 State Plan. In addition, we highlight additional training resources created in partnership among NJDOL, SETC, and GSETA to further support the implementation of federal and state-level policies related to WIOA, as well as specific MOUs with state partners that also serving as guiding documents in our work.

### **LWDB Governance and Core Functions**

Local governance and policies related to the core functions of Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) have been and will continue to be a core focus of policy development for NJDOL and SETC. This includes supporting and guiding our local areas in building out specific capacities related to developing regional and state plans, developing annual budgets, coordinating the development of local MOUs/IFAs, supporting the competitive procurement of One Stop providers, and conducting fiscal and programmatic monitoring activities related to One Stop provider contracts.

- Local Workforce Development Board Certification (SETC #2020-02)
- Local Governance (WD-PY21-6)
- NJ Regional and Local Plan Policy (SETC)
- LWDB Budgets and Staffing (SETC #2016-03)
- Program Year 2023 (PY23)/Fiscal Year (FY24) Budget Guidelines and Requirements (WD-PY22-16)
- New Jersey Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Infrastructure Funding Agreement (WD-PY22-4)
- Additional Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) Guidance (WD-PY23-4)
- Competitive Procurement of Title I One Stop Operator, Career Services, and Youth Services (WD-PY22-5)

### **American Job Centers**

A core responsibility of our LWDBs is the oversight and coordination of contracted and partner services in New Jersey's American Job Centers/One Stop Career Centers. These policies provide an overview of the responsibilities and the authority that this entails.

- American Job Center Requirements (WD-PY22-6)
- One Stop Career Center Certification Process (SETC #2016-14)

- One Stop Career Center Partners (WD-PY22-3)
- Functional Alignment Policy (WD-PY23-3)
- Service Integration and Co-Enrollment (WD-PY23-5)
- Unified One Stop Career Center Complaint Procedures (WD-PY22-9)

### **Eligible Training Programs and Providers**

These policies provide an overview of the programs and providers that are eligible for support through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). These policies support WIOA requirements and goals to support training that (1) is in-demand, portable, and stackable, and (2) leads to higher wages, career advancement, and increased job security.

- ETPL Requirement and Monitoring Procedures for Work-Based Learning Contracts (WD-PY22-1)
- Industry-Valued Credentials (SETC #2016-11)

### **Workforce Pell**

Because Workforce Pell requires both higher-education oversight and detailed program-level training and outcomes data, NJDOL and OSHE are co-leading statewide implementation planning. OSHE provides oversight of program quality, accreditation, credit articulation, and statewide higher education policy — all central to determining whether short-term programs meet federal standards and articulate into degree pathways. NJDOL, through the Center for Occupational Employment Information (COEI), which resides within its Office of Research and Information, oversees the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), which is the state’s most complete and detailed inventory of non-degree workforce training programs. NJDOL also brings access to wage-record and labor-market data needed to assess program eligibility. In November 2025, the two agencies convened a statewide interagency working group, with additional representation from:

- Division of Consumer Affairs (DCA)
- Economic Development Authority (EDA)
- Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA)
- Department of Education (NJDOE)
- State Employment and Training Commission (SETC)

### **Credential Engine**

Since 2023, NJDOL has partnered with Credential Engine to publish its ETPL data to the national Credential Registry to help New Jerseyans make more informed data-driven education and career decisions. Credential Engine, a non-profit organization based in Washington D.C., partners with key agencies and organizations to identify and operationalize the use of transparent credential information that allow states, regions, and stakeholders to improve services, practices, programs, and policies for the benefit of students, workers, veterans, employers, educators, policymakers, and others to make more informed decisions in the

marketplace of credentials and to significantly advance the publishing of credentials in those states and regions to the Registry. NJDOL is working with partners including Credential Engine to strengthen credential data collection and reporting, and with the New Jersey Council of Community Colleges to include high-value quality credentials in career pathway mapping initiatives with post-secondary educational institutions around the state. NJDOL is currently seeking a technology solution that will enable its data collection to remain refreshed.

### **Service Delivery**

NJDOL will continue to develop and deliver policy that supports the Universal Service Delivery Components highlighted earlier in this plan, seeking to clarify and support expanded career and training service opportunities allowed by WIOA. We will continue to support and emphasize activities in policy related to the expansion of work-based learning and supportive services and deeper, individualized career coaching supports, that are identified as priorities in this plan.

- WIOA Formula-Funded On-the-Job Training (OJT) Policy (WD-PY21-3)
- WIOA Title I Incumbent Worker Policy (WD-PY21-4)
- WIOA Title I Placement, Exit, and Follow-up Policy (WD-PY21-5)
- WIOA Title I: Assessment Technical Assistance Guide
- WIOA Title I: Supportive Services Technical Assistance Guide

### **Training**

In addition to issuing policy, the SETC and NJDOL have also supported the development of training modules and materials that further reinforce key WIOA policies, specifically in the areas of work-based learning and local governance. These trainings are listed and linked below.

#### ***Work-Based Learning:***

- Work-Based Learning (WBL) 101 Overview
- Work-Based Learning (WBL) 102 Candidate and Employer Processes
- Work-Based Learning 201 Lead Generation, Prospecting, and Getting Past Gatekeepers
- Work-Based Learning 202 The Six Steps of the Sale
- Work-Based Learning 301 Contracting, Invoicing, and Fiscal Trackers

#### ***Local Governance:***

- Module 1: Introduction to Local Governance
- Module 2: Local Workforce Development Board
- Module 3A: Competitive Procurement
- Module 3B: Competitive Procurement
- Module 3C: Competitive Procurement

- Module 4: Evaluating Proposals
- Module 5: Setting Up Clear Agreements
- Module 6: Budgeting
- Module 7: Monitoring More than a Requirement
- Module 8: MOUs and IFAs
- Module 9: Monitoring Approach and Outcomes
- Module 10: Budgeting II

### **State-Level Memoranda of Understanding**

In addition to these policy and training resources, Memoranda of Understanding between State agencies also provide key policy guidance that supports New Jersey in fully realizing the goals set out in this WIOA 2024-27 State Plan. These include:

- MOU between New Jersey Department of Human Services (NJ DHS) and NJDOL guiding the WorkFirst New Jersey program and its coordination with the WIOA system.
- MOU between the NJDOL Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and the NJ DHS, Division of Developmental Disabilities, Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired guiding the division of labor, coordination and collaboration between these two entities for delivery of Vocational Rehabilitation services.
- MOU between NJDOL and the Department of Human Services Division of Developmental Disabilities in support of the above MOU.
- MOU among NJDOL, the Youth Justice Commission and State Parole Board on coordination of services for juvenile ex-offenders/re-entering individuals.
- MOU between the SETC Council on Gender Parity in Labor and Education and Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, School of Management and Labor Relations - Center for Women and Work to provide a gender and pay equity lens on industry data and occupations, and explore ways to strengthen career pathways, and credentials within industries.
- MOU among NJDOL, the Department of Education, Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, Higher Education Student Assistance Authority, and Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University to support and maintain the New Jersey State Data System (NJS DS).

## 3. STATE PROGRAM AND STATE BOARD OVERVIEW

### A. STATE AGENCY ORGANIZATION

Describe the organization and delivery systems at the State and local levels for the programs covered in the plan, including the organizational structure. Include an organizational chart.

NJDOL is the primary state-level department that leads and supports the operationalization and implementation of the activities in this 2024-27 WIOA State Plan, in partnership with New Jersey's 17 Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs). The SETC supports the development and oversight of the overarching strategy for New Jersey's public workforce system – including providing support, guidance, and accountability for NJDOL, LWDBs, and other state and local partners in implementing the activities outlined in this state plan.

Specifically, NJDOL administers all six core WIOA programs (Title I – Adult/DW/Youth, Title II, Title III, and Title IV), with the exception of Title IV programs for the Blind which is administered within the New Jersey Department of Human Services (DHS) through the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI).

Additionally, NJDOL administers many of the other One Stop required program partners, including:

- Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Programs
- Jobs for Veterans Grants (JVSG)
- Unemployment Insurance
- Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)
- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)

In addition, NJDOL, through an MOU with the Department of Human Services (DHS), guides and provides all Employment and Training (E&T) services for Work First New Jersey programs, which includes Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and General Assistance (GA).

Other required WIOA One Stop partner programs and their administering agencies, include:

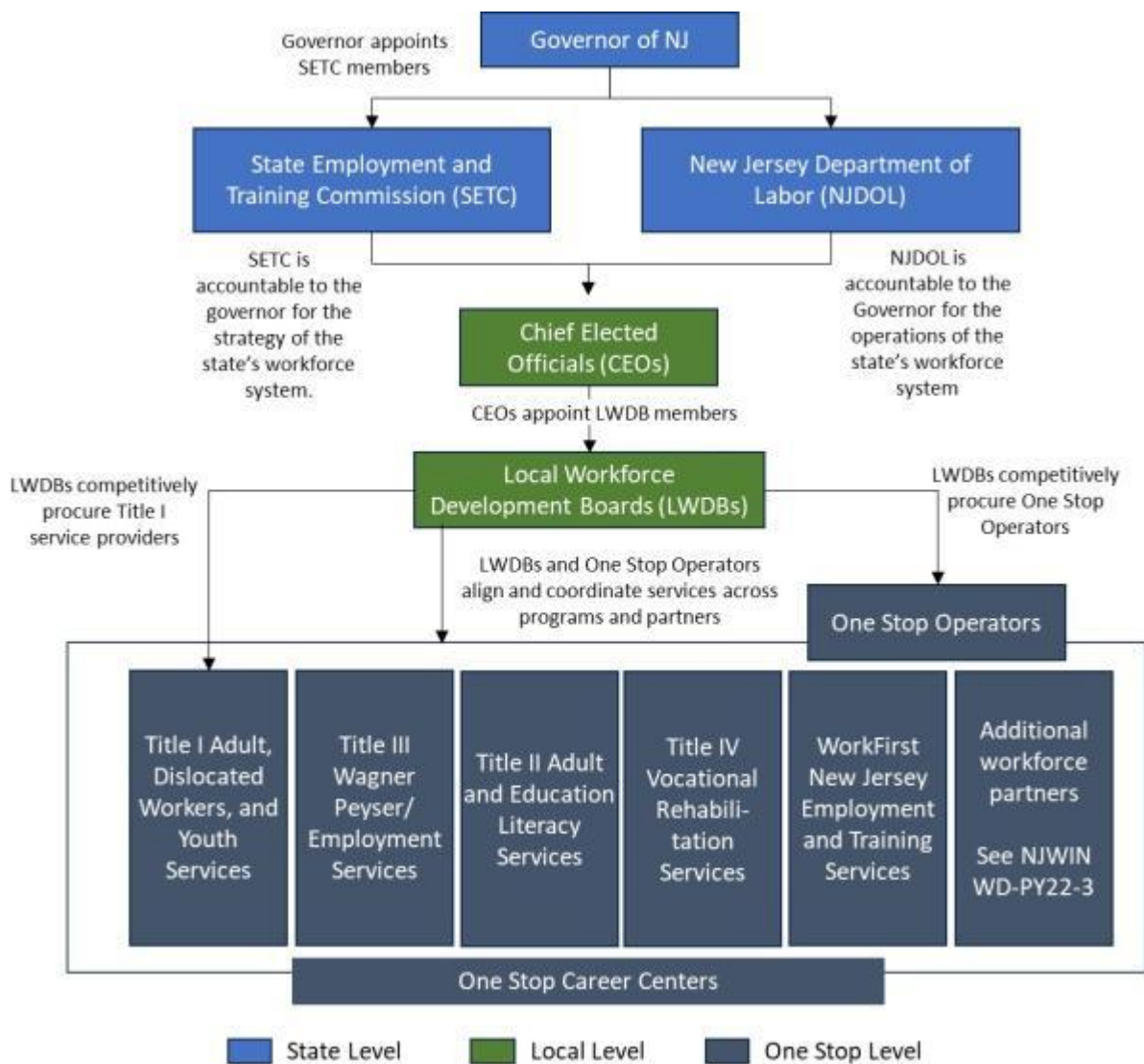
- Career and Technical Education (CTE) postsecondary programs, administered by NJ's Department of Education (DOE)
- Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) employment and training activities, administered by NJ's Department of Community Affairs (DCA)
- Housing Urban and Development employment and training activities, administered federally by HUD
- Second Chance Act and YouthBuild programs, administered by the US Department of Labor

In addition to these WIOA-required partners, NJDOL also administers a variety of other state workforce programs, as highlighted in other sections of this plan.

The SETC works closely with NJDOL to oversee the coordination of these programs across NJDOL, and with other federal and state agency partners, as well as with Local Workforce Development Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs), established by Chief Elected Officials (CEOs) in local areas.



The diagram below provides an overview of New Jersey’s governance and service delivery structure.



Notes: A full page version of this graphic can be found here: <https://www.nj.gov/labor/wioa/documents/resources/2024-27%20State%20Plan%20-%20Overview%20of%20State%20Governance%20and%20Service%20Delivery%20Structure.pdf>

In the sections below, we provide more detail on the structure of the SETC, NJDOL, and LWDBs in supporting the operationalization and implementation of the workforce strategies highlighted in this 2024-27 WIOA State Plan

**SETC: Overview of Governance Structure**

The State Employment and Training Commission (SETC) is the state workforce development board charged with strategic and continuous improvement of the delivery of workforce development activities for the State of New Jersey, with a high priority on performance measures and successful outcomes.

The governor appoints the SETC chair and members to develop and oversee New Jersey's public workforce strategies by bringing together the multitude of partners supporting workforce activities across departments and across the state. The SETC works with NJDOL to support and guide Chief Elected Officials in each Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) and their Local Workforce Development Boards to implement strategies and activities aligned with WIOA and state workforce requirements in New Jersey's 23 One Stop Career Centers.

The SETC is responsible for setting the overarching strategies and priorities of New Jersey's public workforce system, drawing on the expertise of the diverse members that comprise the board. This work is conducted as a full board and through a variety of committees, including, State Rehabilitation Councils, Council on Gender Parity in Labor and Education, Governance, Performance, State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services, Shared Youth Vision Council, and Apprenticeship Pathway Committee.

### **NJDOL: Overview of Operational Structure**

As highlighted above, NJDOL is responsible for the operationalization of WIOA strategies in New Jersey and administers Title I funds across local areas. In addition Title II, Title III, and Title IV programs are all administered and implemented statewide by NJDOL. Title IV services for the blind and visually impaired are administered through CBVI in the Department of Human Services. In addition, NJDOL also administers a number of other state workforce programs that are included in this plan.

Several different teams within NJDOL help to support and drive WIOA strategies at the state level and the local level. The primary teams supporting WIOA investments across NJDOL, include the Workforce Development Division, the Employment Accessibility Services Division, the Office of Research and Information, the Office of Finance and Accounting, and the Office of Internal Audit.

### **Workforce Development Division**

Title I, II, and III programs, as well as all of New Jersey's state workforce programs, are all administered by staff working within NJDOL's Workforce Development Division. Additionally, overarching program and grant administration, data management, policy and training development, and program monitoring operate within this division. The Workforce Development Division is organized in three core program teams, and two additional support teams. These are highlighted below:

- ***Career Services:*** This unit oversees all Title III services and programs, including Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment Grants (RESEA), Jobs for Veterans Grants (JVSG), and Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFW) programs. In addition, this team supports state-level coordination with LWDBs in operating One Stop Career Centers, and houses data management of AOSOS, which serves as New Jersey's WIOA system of record.
- ***Transitional Workforce Services:*** This unit oversees federal- and state-level workforce investments in special populations, including individuals with low-literacy, low-income, histories of incarceration or opioid addiction, and other specific barriers to employment, as well as youth and seniors. This includes program administration of Title II, the Senior

Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), and Work First New Jersey (WFNJ) Employment and Training Services.

- ***Business and Training Services:*** This unit includes the Office of Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning and the Business Engagement and Sector Strategies teams that support, administer, and operationalize programs and strategies related to support and engagement of New Jersey businesses. This portfolio includes federal investments through Rapid Response, Trade Adjustment Act (TAA), and Title I Business Services, as well as state-funded opportunities, such as, Pre-Apprenticeship in Career Education (PACE) and Growing Apprenticeship in Nontraditional Sectors (GAINS).
- ***Workforce Support Teams:*** In addition to these core program teams, NJDOL's Quality Improvement and Program Administration team helps to administer all federal- and state-level workforce grants and supports connection to other administrative units. NJDOL's Program Oversight and Development team helps to guide and oversee the work of local stakeholders, including our LWDBs, through policy development, training, and program monitoring activities.

### ***Office of Research and Information***

The Office of Research and Information (ORI) supports New Jersey's WIOA investments through data analysis and validation, the development and administration of tools for consumers, including the ETPL, and through the provision of Labor Market Information. Three core teams support these efforts, including:

- ***Workforce Research and Analytics:*** This Division includes teams that support development and implementation of WIOA evaluations, analysis and reporting of data related to WIOA programs to federal and state partners, as well as, negotiation and development of performance metrics, including the development of statistical adjustment models. In addition, this team is responsible for data validation across multiple program areas.
- ***Division of Economic and Demographic Research:*** This Division gathers, examines, and distributes Labor Market Information (LMI) to a variety of stakeholders including officials, Local Workforce Development Boards, job seekers and many others. It produces a range of reports, such as the Labor Market Spotlight, and assesses the fiscal impact of policies.
- ***Center for Occupational Employment Information:*** This Division established by New Jersey statute, administers, and oversees the New Jersey Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). It provides data-driven career information and support for career guidance, academic counseling programs, and education decision-making by individuals in areas related to careers; including the development of robust online resources and tools for all New Jerseyans. This division also generates a consumer report card to ensure program quality and equity standards for the ETPL and supports and updates the labor demand occupations list.

### ***Additional NJDOL Offices***

- **Employment Accessibility Services Division:** The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services is housed within this area of NJDOL, which supports and implements Title IV (General) services across the state and within each One Stop Career Center.
- **Office of Finance and Accounting:** This unit oversees all fiscal reporting across local areas, the state, and federal agencies, as well as Title I fund transfers between NJDOL and LWDBs.
- **Office of Internal Audit:** This unit supports fiscal monitoring and oversight of WIOA funds in New Jersey, including annual fiscal monitoring of all LWDBs, including LWDBs and fiscal agents.

Across these divisions, units, and teams, NJDOL seeks to provide coordinated fiscal and program supports to ensure the integrity and quality of WIOA implementation in the state of New Jersey.

The figure below provides an overview of the NJDOL’s structure, as highlighted above.

**NJDOL Teams and Structure**

Office of Finance and Accounting	Office of Research and Information	Workforce Development Division	Employment Accessibility Services	Office of Internal Audit
This office oversees all fiscal reports and oversight of fund transfers to LWDBs, as well as fiscal reporting to state and federal agencies.	<b>Workforce Research and Analytics:</b> This unit includes data reporting and analysis, as well as data validation.	<b>Career Services:</b> This unit includes Title III, RESEA, JVSG, Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers, and Workforce Information Systems and Evaluation	This division houses teams administering, supporting, and implementing Title IV Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services.	This office supports fiscal monitoring and oversight of WIOA funding and specifically the fiscal and administrative operations of LWDBs.
	<b>Division of Economic and Demographic Research:</b> This unit support provides and supports use of LMI.	<b>Transitional Workforce Services:</b> This unit includes Special Populations (which includes SCSEP), Title II, Youth Programs, WFNJ Employment and Training Programs, and other state workforce investments targeting underserved populations.		
	<b>Center for Occupational Employment Information:</b> This unit supports and implements the ETPL.	<b>Business and Training Services:</b> This unit includes the Office of Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning, and Business Engagement and Sector Strategies teams – which supports TAA, Rapid Response, and Title I Business Services.		
		<b>Additional Core Workforce Teams:</b> Quality Improvement and Program Administration, Program Oversight and Development (including WIOA Policy, Monitoring, and TA)		

*Notes: A full page version of this graphic can be found here: <https://www.nj.gov/labor/wioa/documents/resources/2024-27%20State%20Plan%20-%20NJDOL%20Teams%20and%20Structure.pdf>*

**LWDBs: Overview of Service Delivery Structure**

New Jersey’s Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) offer an additional layer of accountability and governance across New Jersey’s public workforce system. With the support of competitively procured One Stop Operators and Title I service providers, LWDBs play a critical role in shaping the landscape of workforce programs and delivery at the local level through New Jersey’s One Stop Career Centers.

The One Stop Career Center network and its community partners are New Jersey’s front-line for workforce development services and activities. At the local level, there are 17 Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) overseen by 17 LWDBs. These LWDBs manage a network of 23

One Stop Career Centers that are part of the American Job Network. These One Stops serve as the on-the-ground hubs and centers of New Jersey’s public workforce system and the multitude of workforce partners and programs operating in New Jersey.

In addition, many local workforce areas meet customers in the community, utilizing local libraries, social service offices, non-profits, and educational settings to hold counseling appointments, job fairs, and other outreach services.

Below, we provide a full overview of New Jersey’s 17 Local Workforce Development Areas and One Stop Career Center locations.

Local Workforce Development Area	One Stop Career Center Location
Atlantic County	Pleasantville, NJ
Bergen County	Hackensack, NJ
Burlington County	Westampton, NJ
Camden County	Cherry Hill, NJ
Cumberland-Salem-Cape May Counties	Rio Grande, NJ Salem, NJ Vineland, NJ
Essex County	East Orange, NJ
Gloucester County	Sewell, NJ
Hudson County	Jersey City, NJ
Mercer County	Trenton, NJ
Middlesex County	New Brunswick, NJ Perth Amboy, NJ
Monmouth County	Neptune, NJ
Northwest NJ (Morris – Sussex – Warren Counties)	Randolph, NJ Newton, NJ Phillipsburg, NJ
Newark City	Newark, NJ

Local Workforce Development Area	One Stop Career Center Location
Ocean County	Toms River, NJ
Passaic County	Paterson, NJ
Greater Raritan (Somerset – Hunterdon Counties)	Somerville, NJ
Union County	Elizabeth, NJ Plainfield, NJ

## B. STATE BOARD

Provide a description of the State Board activities that will assist State Board members and staff in carrying out State Board functions effectively. Also, provide a membership roster for the State Board consistent with 20 CFR 679.110-120, including members’ organizational affiliations and position titles.

### **SETC Membership Overview**

The Governor appoints the Chairman of the SETC and two legislative members. Public members are appointed by the Governor and are confirmed by the Senate. The membership includes representatives from business, organized labor and community-based organizations, state and local education and governmental agencies, and private citizens. Members of the Governor’s Cabinet also serve on the SETC, including the Commissioners of the Department of Community Affairs, Department of Education, Department of Human Services, and Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the Secretary of Higher Education, and the CEO of the New Jersey Economic Development Authority. In addition, program leads for Title I, II, III, IV serve on the SETC.

The appointment of SETC members includes a number of steps:

- The proposal of a slate of members to the Governor and the Governor’s Appointments Office, which oversees NJ Boards, Commissions and Authorities
- Creation of seat assignments and member terms with the Governor’s Appointments Office
- Appointment of members by the Governor to the SETC
- Confirmation of member appointments by the NJ Senate

All members serve without compensation. The diverse, bipartisan membership of the SETC ensures that all concerned parties can fully participate in developing an effective workforce system for New Jersey. The membership composition of the SETC is highlighted in state statute N.J.S.A. 34:15C.

### **SETC Membership Roster**

#### **NJ State Employment & Training Commission Board Member List 2026**

**Chairman (vacant)**

**John Gagliano**

Exec Vice President  
EPS Corporation

**Hosea Johnson**

President/CEO  
Johnson Associates Systems

**Gregg DeBaere**

President/CFO  
Atlantic Coast Communications NJ, Inc.

**John Sarno**

Attorney  
Robinson Miller, LLC

**Evan Weiss**

CEO  
NJ Economic Development Authority

**Andrea Karsian**

CEO  
Wholesale Auto Supply Co

**Teri Duda**

Vice President  
Berkeley College, Government Affairs

**Joanne Trezza**

Vice President  
Arrow Storage Products

**Sally Nadler**

Consultant  
SPHR

**Anthony Ferrera**

Township Administrator Hillsborough  
Ferrera & Associates

**John G Donnadio**

Executive Director  
New Jersey Association of Counties

**Benjie Wimberly**

Assemblyman  
NJ General Assembly

**Charles Wowkenech**

President  
NJ State AFL-CIO

**Clifford Reisser**

Principal  
IBEW Local 269

**Nicholas Gacos**

President  
National Association of Blind Merchants

**Kevin Jarvis**

Commissioner  
New Jersey Department of Labor

**Lily Laux**

Commissioner  
New Jersey Department of Education

**Dr. Stephen Cha**

Commissioner  
New Jersey Department of Human Services

**Margo Chaly**

Acting Secretary  
New Jersey Office of Higher Education Norbut

**Christine Norbut Beyer**

Commissioner  
New Jersey Division of Children and Families

**Jacqueline Suarez**

Acting Commissioner  
New Jersey Department of Community Affairs

**Dr. Danielle Jubanyik**

State Director for Adult Education  
New Jersey Department of Labor

**Dr. Charyl Yarbrough**

Assistant Commissioner  
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

**Overview of SETC Functions**

The SETC identifies and analyzes critical issues relating to workforce readiness and provides policy guidance to the Governor and to state professionals in the fields of employment, training and education. The SETC serves as the central coordinating body for collaboration among governmental agencies in advancing workforce strategies across the state. The SETC reports to the Governor on the progress that has been made and the issues that must be addressed in the area of employment, training and education.



The specific functions and duties of the SETC are outlined in WIOA regulations, included in 20 CFR 679.130 and further detailed in NJSA 34:15C-6.

***WIOA: Core SETC Functions***

- **State Plan development:** Development, implementation, and modification of the State plan
- **Alignment of Workforce Development Programs:** Review of statewide policies, programs, and recommendations on state-level to align workforce development programs in a manner that supports a comprehensive and streamlined workforce development system state-wide
- **Continuous improvement of the workforce development system:** Ongoing learning and development of strategies related to the removal of barriers to employment, development of career pathways, effective outreach strategies, employer engagement, regional and local area designations, effective service delivery and professional development strategies
- **State performance accountability systems:** Development and updating of comprehensive State performance accountability measures, including State adjusted levels of performance, to assess the effectiveness of the core programs in the State as required under section 116(b)
- **Identification of best practices:** Identification and dissemination of information related to the effective practices of (1) One Stop Career Centers, (2) LWDBs, and (3) career and training service delivery
- **Coordination of service provision:** Development and review of statewide policies affecting the coordinated provision of services through the State's one-stop delivery system described in section 121(e), including criteria and procedures for LWDBs to assess One Stop Career Centers and guidance related to cost allocation of One Stop partners to support One Stop Career Center operation
- **Technology use and strategies:** Development of strategies for technological improvements to facilitate access to, and improve the quality of, services and activities provided through the one-stop delivery system, including to support digital literacy, postsecondary credential attainment, professional development of workforce professionals, and accessibility to individuals with disabilities and living in rural areas
- **Alignment of technology and data systems:** Development of strategies for aligning technology and data systems across one-stop partner programs to enhance service delivery and improve efficiencies in reporting on performance accountability measures
- **Title I allocation formulas:** Development of allocation formulas for the distribution of funds for employment and training activities for adults, and youth workforce investment activities, to local areas as permitted under sections 128(b)(3) and 133(b)(3)
- **Annual Reports:** The preparation of the annual reports described in paragraphs (1) and (2) of section 116(d)

- **State-level workforce and LMI systems:** Development of the statewide workforce and labor market information system described in section 15(e) of the Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 491-2(e))
- **Statewide policy oversight and development:** Development of other policies that promote statewide objectives for, and enhance the performance of, the workforce development system in the State

***New Jersey State Statute: Additional Details***

- **Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) oversight:** Ensure the full participation of LWDBs in the planning and supervision of local workforce systems; Oversee and develop appropriate standards to ensure LWDB compliance with state and federal law, the State Plan, and other relevant requirements regarding membership, staffing, meetings, and functions; Establish guidelines to be used by the LWDBs in performing the planning, policy guidance, and oversight functions required of them; Approve local plans that meet the criteria established for the establishment of New Jersey’s One Stop Career Center network
- **Higher education partnerships:** Foster and coordinate initiatives of the Department of Education and the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education to enhance the contributions of public schools and institutions of higher education to the implementation of the state workforce plan and policies
- **Policy reviews:** Examine federal and state laws and regulations to assess whether those laws and regulations present barriers to achieving any of the goals of the SETC and public workforce system; As appropriate, issue reports to the Governor and Legislature on its findings, including recommendations for changes in state or federal laws or regulations concerning workforce programs or services, including, when appropriate, recommendations to merge other State advisory structures and functions into the SETC
- **Inter-Agency Agreements:** Have the authority to enter into agreements with the head of each state department or commission which administers or funds education, employment or training programs, including, but not limited to, the Departments of Labor and Workforce Development, Community Affairs, Education, and Human Services and Higher Education, the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, and the Juvenile Justice Commission, to align and support programs and activities within the public workforce system

**SETC Staff Positions**

In addition to SETC board members, the SETC includes a full-time staff that helps to support all of the required state board functions highlighted – supporting full board activities, agendas, and meetings, as well as all SETC committees. These staff positions and members include the following:

- Joan Desmarais, Deputy Executive Director
- Carlye Lamarca, Administrative Assistant

- Kyree Robinson, Program Specialist

The SETC selects an Executive Director to facilitate and guide the work of the SETC. Up to four additional administrators may be appointed to support the work of the SETC. The executive director and the administrators serve in the State unclassified service. The commission may also hire and employ, pursuant to Title 11A, Civil Service, of the New Jersey Statutes, other professional, technical, and clerical staff as may be necessary to perform the functions assigned to the SETC. In addition, the SETC may call to its assistance and avail itself of the services of the employees of any other units of State government as it may require and as may be available to it for that purpose.

#### 4. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS AND ONE-STOP PROGRAM PARTNERS

##### A. ASSESSMENT OF CORE AND ONE-STOP PROGRAM PARTNER PROGRAMS.

Describe how the core programs will be assessed each year based on State performance accountability measures described in section 116(b) of WIOA. Describe how other one-stop delivery system partner program services and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan will be assessed each year. This State assessment must include the quality, effectiveness, and improvement of programs broken down by local area or provider. Such state assessments should take into account local and regional planning goals.

NJDOL understands that to achieve a stronger and fairer economy, valid and transparent data is required for guiding operations and driving decision making. The modernization of data and monitoring systems and enhancing the access of internal and external partners to this information is a huge priority of this WIOA State Plan.

New Jersey's approach to supporting quality, effectiveness, and improvement is grounded in systems and processes designed to promote learning by leveraging data and dialogue. Providing access to quality information lays the groundwork for spreading and advancing promising practices that support us in our goals of connecting New Jersey's talent to good jobs.

New Jersey's monitoring systems align with the performance measurement system outlined in section 116 of WIOA, as well as expanded metrics identified at the state level by NJDOL and the SETC. We will continue to refine and develop state-level metrics over the next four years, including expanding the programs and services that we include in a unified, comprehensive performance system.

In this section, we highlight the indicators of performance that our assessment and monitoring systems support, as well as the specific monitoring and assessment activities that we will continue to support and develop at the state and local levels.

#### **Overview of Performance Indicators**

##### ***Primary Indicators of Performance***

New Jersey will assess its core programs, provided under WIOA Title I, Title II, Title III and Title IV, at the state, regional and local levels based on the primary indicators of performance outlined in section 116 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act including:

1. *Entered Employment Rate (6 months): percentage of participants in unsubsidized employment, second quarter after exit from the program;*
2. *Entered Employment Rate (1 year): percentage of participants in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program;*
3. *Earnings: Median earnings of participants, who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;*
4. *Credential Attainment Rate: percentage of participants who obtained a recognized post-secondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent during participation in or within 1 year after exit from the program. A participant who has obtained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent is only included in this measure if the participant is also employed or is enrolled in an education or training program leading to a recognized post-secondary credential within 1 year from program exit;*
5. *Measurable Skill Gains: percentage of participants who during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized post-secondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains, defined as documented academic, technical, occupational or other forms of progress, towards such a credential or employment.*
6. *Effectiveness in Serving Employers: The percentage of participants in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program who were employed by the same employer in the second and fourth quarters after exit.*

Local targets have historically been set based on the same federal regression model as used at the state level. New local targets will be set after the state targets have been approved by USDOL and USED.

### ***Primary Indicators for Eligible Youth***

The primary indicators of performance for the youth program authorized under chapter 2 of subtitle B consist of:

- The percentage of program participants who are in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment, during the second quarter after exit from the program;
- The percentage of program participants who are in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment, during the fourth quarter after exit from the program; and
- The primary indicators of performance described in subclauses (III) through (VI) of subparagraph (A)(i).

### **State-Level Monitoring System**

Several teams across NJDOL and the SETC review and contribute to the measurement of these performance indicators, as well as review of the policies, systems, and processes that our Local Workforce Development Boards and One Stop Career Center partners implement to drive towards success for participants that are ultimately reflected in these performance indicators.

The table below provides an overview of the teams that comprise the State’s system of monitoring and assessing core and one stop partner programs. These reviews extend to data entered in New Jersey’s system of record, fiscal procedures, service delivery activities, local governance and oversight activities, as well as additional program-specific monitoring activities.

Monitoring Area	Category	Frequency	State Leads
Performance Measures	Service Delivery	Annual	Office of Research and Information, Workforce Development Division, SETC
WDB Certification	Local Governance	Every two years	SETC
Annual Title I Monitoring	WIOA Program and Policy compliance	Annual	Program Oversight and Development
Quarterly Reviews	Budget and service delivery	Quarterly	Workforce Development Division
Data Validation	System of record and file reviews	Annually	Office of Research and Information - Data Validation
Fiscal Audits	Fiscal and admin system reviews	Annually	Office of Internal Audit
Program-Specific Monitoring	Program and fiscal reviews	Annually	e.g., Title II, Title IV, WFNJ

Below we provide more details on these various monitoring areas:

**Performance Measures:** NJDOL Office of Research and Information (ORI) works with the Workforce Development Division and the SETC to support and facilitate assessment of the effectiveness of states and local areas in achieving positive outcomes for individuals served by the workforce development system’s core and one stop partner programs on annual basis. The SETC makes available on its website the WIOA Local Workforce Development Board Performance report published by U.S. Department of Labor - Employment and Training Administration (ETA), Office of Policy Development and Research, Office of Workforce Investment, WIOA Local Workforce Development Board Performance Program Year 2023 and WIOA Local Workforce Development Board Performance Program Year 2024.

**WDB Certification:** The SETC conducts a WDB certification process every two years to verify that Local Workforce Development Boards in New Jersey are conducting their business in alignment with WIOA requirements and regulations. Through WDB Certification reviews, the SETC ensures that the workforce investment activities carried out in the local area meet service delivery, fiscal integrity, and performance accountability metrics.

**Annual Title I Reviews:** The Program Oversight and Development team that works within the Workforce Development Division monitors LWDBs’ compliance with WIOA program and

policies related to service delivery and local governance. These reviews are designed to support LWDBs' effectiveness in overseeing One Stop operations, including oversight and monitoring of providers.

**Quarterly Reviews:** The Workforce Development Division is continuing to develop mechanisms and resources that provide regular, less formal feedback on budget and spending and service delivery expectations.

**Data Validation:** The Data Validation Unit, working within ORI, verifies that data entry and documentation conducted by LWDBs is done according to federal and state guidelines. These reviews include verification of eligibility documents, outcomes (industry recognized credentials), and priority of service. In addition, through these reviews, this team highlights anomalies identified in service delivery.

**Fiscal Reviews:** The Office of Internal Audit (OIA) reviews and verifies fiscal compliance, including reviews of contracts, financial reporting, cost allocation plans, cash disbursements and expenditures, payables, obligations, cash reimbursement, payroll and benefits, subrecipient monitoring, equipment inventory, and other administrative requirements.

**Program-Specific Reviews:** In addition, several teams conduct additional monitoring of their specific program areas and funding streams, including Title II, Title IV, and WFNJ programs.

### **Local Monitoring Systems**

In addition to state-level monitoring system, Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) are also critical players in WIOA monitoring and oversight systems. LWDBs are required to have a One Stop Committee to monitor performance of the workforce system in the local area and achievement of negotiated performance goals. Additionally, fiscal and programmatic monitoring and oversight are core functions of the Local Workforce Development Board.

As part of this 2024-27 State Plan, NJDOL and SETC will continue to support the development of capacity among our Local Workforce Development Board to perform fiscal and program monitoring of their contracted providers, including One Stop Operators, One Stop Career Services providers, and One Stop Youth Service providers. The NJDOL-GSETA Training Partnership's Local Governance Training Series includes two modules that provide an overview of developing high quality monitoring systems, these include:

- Module 7: Monitoring: More than a Requirement
- Module 9: Monitoring Approach and Outcomes

Monitoring both helps to ensure that Local Workforce Development Boards support compliance of federal and state guidelines and also supports the assessment of One Stop operations and services. Monitoring is grounded in the agreements and contracts that outline service expectations and initiate service delivery within our One Stop Career Centers.

Through monitoring local areas help to support a system of monitoring and assessment that drives continuous improvement in our public workforce systems – reinforcing and deepening activities conducted at the state and federal levels.

## B. PREVIOUS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

For each four-year state plan and state plan modification, provide the results of assessments of the effectiveness of the core programs and other one-stop partner programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the Unified or Combined State plan during the preceding 2-year period (i.e. the 2-year period of the plan modification cycle), in accordance with methods described in 4(A). Describe how the State is adapting its strategies based on these assessments.

As we continue to transition our systems in alignment with WIOA, New Jersey remains focused on working diligently to bring America's One Stop Operating System (AOSOS) into technical compliance with WIOA. In response to ongoing NJDOL reviews, feedback from Local Workforce Development Boards, and reporting revisions from USDOL, the integrity of New Jersey's WIOA data will continue to be maintained at the highest level and improved with system advancement and upgrades.

Furthermore, as we move toward full scale data modernization and efforts to replace AOSOS, continued improvement of the accuracy and integrity of these data is a key goal. This includes accurate reporting of outcomes measures, as well as accurate details regarding the characteristics of those we are serving and the provision of service delivery activities. This full range of data is critical in supporting adaptation of strategies to best support New Jersey career-seekers, especially as we seek to expand serving underserved populations.

In this section, we provide an overview of our WIOA performance measures from PY22, PY23 and PY24. These years of data reflect our system in years that were deeply affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and our state's recovery from the pandemic. In reflecting on our data and systems, we recognize opportunities to continue improving connection to credentials and employment, as well as the need to expand the populations that we are serving. As highlighted in other sections of this plan, co-enrollment, especially across Title I and WFNJ, and Title I and Title II services, increasing access for individuals with low literacy and low income backgrounds, we expect that this will have an impact on performance outcomes across programs – by increasing the number of participants counted in performance metrics, including individuals with higher barriers to employment, and building new strategies and partnerships for serving these underserved populations.

### **Overview of PY22-PY23 and PY24-PY25 Performance**

In the tables that follow, NJDOL used the following Measure Results thresholds:

- Exceeded: Percent of Goal Achieved is more than 100% of Goal
- Met: Percent of Goal Achieved is 90-100% of Goal
- Not Met: Percent of Goal Achieved is less than 90% of Goal

The Measure Results thresholds outlined above are consistent with WIOA law. The US Departments of Labor and Education, under their regulatory authority, have provided further guidance on performance accountability for WIOA core programs. The Training and Employment Notice (TEN) 04-23 provided guidance for Program Year (PY) 2022. Subsequently, TEN 04-24 and TEN 01-25 advised states of the performance indicators and thresholds to be used for state performance assessments in PY2023 and PY 2024, respectively.

Pursuant to this guidance, states were given updated thresholds for performance accountability in these program years; it is important to note that not all programs were assessed at the 90% threshold outlined under WIOA law for all performance indicators.

The State used the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) primary indicators performance measures to negotiate goals and report outcomes for the WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs; Title III Wagner-Peyser programs; Title II Adult Education and Literacy programs; and Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation programs, for Program Years 2022, 2023 and 2024. This will continue for Program Year 2025.

WIOA Performance Indicators - PY 2022	Goal	Actual	Percent of Goal Achieved	Measure Results
<b>Title IB - Adult Program</b>				
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	61.0%	70.7%	115.9%	Exceeded
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	60.8%	67.4%	110.9%	Exceeded
Median Earnings	\$5,400	\$7,291	135.0%	Exceeded
Credential Attainment Rate	65.0%	67.8%	104.3%	Exceeded
Measurable Skill Gains	51.3%	68.6%	133.7%	Exceeded
<b>Title IB - Dislocated Worker Program</b>				
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	61.4%	66.6%	108.5%	Exceeded
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	62.5%	69.0%	110.4%	Exceeded
Median Earnings	\$7,800	\$9,681	124.1%	Exceeded
Credential Attainment Rate	71.0%	70.5%	99.3%	Met



WIOA Performance Indicators - PY 2022	Goal	Actual	Percent of Goal Achieved	Measure Results
Measurable Skill Gains	53.1%	76.9%	144.8%	Exceeded
<b>Title IB - Youth Program</b>				
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	61.4%	65.8%	107.2%	Exceeded
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	58.2%	69.2%	118.9%	Exceeded
Median Earnings	\$2,300	\$3,240	140.9%	Exceeded
Credential Attainment Rate	52.7%	56.9%	108.0%	Exceeded
Measurable Skill Gains	67.0%	66.7%	99.6%	Met
<b>Title III - Wagner-Peyser Program</b>				
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	47.9%	56.0%	116.9%	Exceeded
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	47.4%	55.6%	117.3%	Exceeded
Median Earnings	\$5,650	\$7,962	140.9%	Exceeded
<b>Title II - Adult Education and Literacy</b>				
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	44.0%	42.0%	95.5%	Met
Employment (Fourth Quarter	43.0%	42.8%	99.6%	Met

WIOA Performance Indicators - PY 2022	Goal	Actual	Percent of Goal Achieved	Measure Results
after Exit)				
Median Earnings	\$5,900	\$6,500	110.2%	Exceeded
Credential Attainment Rate	36.0%	23.2%	64.4%	Not Met
Measurable Skill Gains	50.0%	59.1%	118.2%	Exceeded
<b>Title IV - Vocational Rehabilitation</b>				
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	43.1%	54.1%	125.5%	Exceeded
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	37.4%	46.4%	125.4%	Exceeded
Median Earnings	\$5,490	\$6,330	115.3%	Exceeded
Credential Attainment Rate	30.0%	42.4%	141.3%	Exceeded
Measurable Skill Gains	47.4%	56.1%	118.4%	Exceeded
WIOA Performance Indicators PY 2023	Goal	Actual	Percent of Goal Achieved	Measure Results
<b>Title IB - Adult Program</b>				
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	62.0%	69.6%	112.2%	Exceeded
Employment (Fourth Quarter	61.8%	71.1%	102.6%	Exceeded

WIOA Performance Indicators - PY 2022	Goal	Actual	Percent of Goal Achieved	Measure Results
after Exit)				
Median Earnings	\$5,500	\$7,692	139.9%	Exceeded
Credential Attainment Rate	65.5%	63.4%	108.5%	Exceeded
Measurable Skill Gains	52.3%	74.8%	143.0%	Exceeded
<b>Title IB - Dislocated Worker Program</b>				
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	62.4%	74.4%	119.2%	Exceeded
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	63.0%	73.8%	109.6%	Exceeded
Median Earnings	\$7,900	\$10,353	138.4%	Exceeded
Credential Attainment Rate	71.5%	69.1%	103.2%	Exceeded
Measurable Skill Gains	54.1%	80.2%	148.2%	Exceeded
<b>Title IB - Youth Program</b>				
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	62.4%	61.9%	99.2%	Met
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	59.2%	67.0%	87.8%	Not Met
Median Earnings	\$2,400	\$3,640	151.7%	Exceeded
Credential Attainment Rate	53.7%	52.0%	124.8%	Exceeded
Measurable Skill	67.5%	60.7%	89.9%	Not Met

WIOA Performance Indicators - PY 2022	Goal	Actual	Percent of Goal Achieved	Measure Results
Gains				
<b>Title III - Wagner-Peyser Program</b>				
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	48.9%	59.6%	122.0%	Exceeded
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	48.4%	62.1%	128.2%	Exceeded
Median Earnings	\$5,750	\$8,675	150.9%	Exceeded
<b>Title II - Adult Education and Literacy</b>				
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	46%	45.29	98%	Met
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	45%	44%	98%	Met
Median Earnings	\$6,100	\$6,200	101%	Exceeded
Credential Attainment Rate	37%	31.97	86%	Not Met
Measurable Skill Gains	51.5%	62.81%	122%	Exceeded
<b>Title IV - Vocational Rehabilitation</b>				
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	46.1%	53.4%	115.8%	Exceeded
Employment (Fourth Quarter	40.4%	52.8%	130.7%	Exceeded

WIOA Performance Indicators - PY 2022	Goal	Actual	Percent of Goal Achieved	Measure Results
after Exit)				
Median Earnings	\$5,554	\$6,830	122.9%	Exceeded
Credential Attainment Rate	31.0%	39.9%	128.7%	Exceeded
Measurable Skill Gains	*	*	*	*

\*Under USED-RSA guidance FAQ24-02, state Title IV core programs were not assessed for the Measurable Skill Gains rate.

WIOA Performance Indicators PY 2024	Goal	Actual	Percent of Goal Achieved	Measure Results
<b>Title IB - Adult Program</b>				
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	68.0%	61.2%	90.0%	Met
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	66.0%	63.4%	96.0%	Met
Median Earnings	\$7,000	\$8,260	118.0%	Exceeded
Credential Attainment Rate	63.5%	59.7%	94.0%	Met
Measurable Skill Gains	62.0%	86.1%	138.9%	Exceeded
<b>Title IB - Dislocated Worker Program</b>				
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	64.0%	66.5%	104.0%	Exceeded
Employment (Fourth Quarter	68.3%	67.8%	99.2%	Met

WIOA Performance Indicators PY 2024	Goal	Actual	Percent of Goal Achieved	Measure Results
after Exit)				
Median Earnings	\$9,200	\$10,796	117.3%	Exceeded
Credential Attainment Rate	71.0%	67.1%	94.5%	Met
Measurable Skill Gains	70.0%	83.8%	119.7%	Exceeded
<b>Title IB - Youth Program</b>				
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	67.0%	59.1%	88.2%	Not Met
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	65.5%	58.4%	89.1%	Not Met
Median Earnings	\$3,300	\$4,070	123.3%	Exceeded
Credential Attainment Rate	52.7%	50.4	95.7%	Met
Measurable Skill Gains	68.0%	79.5%	117.0%	Exceeded
<b>Title III - Wagner-Peyser Program</b>				
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	53.5%	53.7%	100.4%	Exceeded
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	59.5%	55.2%	92.8%	Met
Median Earnings	\$7,800	\$8,663	111.1%	Exceeded
<b>Title II - Adult Education and Literacy</b>				

WIOA Performance Indicators PY 2024	Goal	Actual	Percent of Goal Achieved	Measure Results
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	44%	48.40%	110%	Exceeded
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	46%	47.63%	103%	Exceeded
Median Earnings	\$6,550	\$7,410	113%	Exceeded
Credential Attainment Rate	36%	38.47	107%	Exceeded
Measurable Skill Gains	56%	66%	118%	Exceeded
<b>Title IV - Vocational Rehabilitation</b>				
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	54.6%	51.9%	95.1%	Not Met
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	46.9%	47.8%	101.9%	Exceeded
Median Earnings	\$6,400	\$6,867	107.3%	Exceeded
Credential Attainment Rate	42.9%	39.9%	93.0%	Not Met
Measurable Skill Gains	56.6%	31.4%	55.4%	Not Met

**SETC Performance Measures and Outcomes Sharing**

NJDOL Office of Research and Information (ORI) works with the Workforce Development Division and the SETC to support and facilitate assessment of the effectiveness of states and local areas in achieving positive outcomes for individuals served by the workforce development system's core and one stop partner programs on annual basis. The SETC makes available on its website the WIOA Local Workforce Development Board Performance report published by U.S. Department of Labor - Employment and Training Administration (ETA), Office of Policy Development and Research, Office of Workforce Investment, WIOA Local Workforce Development Board Performance Program Year 2023 and WIOA Local Workforce Development Board Performance Program Year 2024.

## C. EVALUATION

Describe how the State will conduct evaluations and research projects of activities carried out in the State under WIOA core programs; how such projects will be coordinated with, and designed in conjunction with, State and local boards and with State agencies responsible for the administration of all respective core programs; and, further, how the projects will be coordinated with the evaluations provided for by the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Education under WIOA (WIOA Section 116(e)).

NJDOL has created a multi-year plan for its research and evaluation activities which includes capacity-building at the State level. Since 1988, the State has maintained a longstanding research partnership with the Heldrich Center at Rutgers University due to its long history in using the data and because of Rutgers' status as a public institution.

Workforce Development reports and evaluations can be found here - [Projects - Heldrich Center for Workforce Development](#)

Since that time, through multiple federal Workforce Data Quality Initiatives (WDQIs) and State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) grants, the State established a multi-agency data-use agreement to establish the New Jersey State Data System (NJSDS). This longitudinal data system is housed at the Heldrich Center. The NJSDS includes data not only from NJDOL, but also the NJDOE, NJ Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, and the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA).

NJDOL plans to use NJSDS and other data to support evaluations of the performance of federal- and State-supported education and job training programs by instituting a plan to conduct evaluations and to reinforce a culture within the State to make data-informed decisions. Further, NJDOL proposes to conduct multiple evaluations to leverage the relatively new administrative data sources focusing on outcomes related to job training, transition services for persons with disabilities, UI claimants' post-benefit outcomes, and use of apprenticeships.

Listed below are the current and planned evaluation and research projects in NJDOL.

### **WIOA Evaluation Activities**

#### ***PY 2020 WIOA Evaluation: A Study of WIOA Title I Services and Service Delivery in PY20***

The John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey worked with the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOL) to conduct a process study of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I services during Program Year (PY) 2020, defined as the period of July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. This study encompasses all three WIOA Title I main populations — adult, dislocated worker, and youth services and examines both career and training services. The goal of this study was to examine WIOA Title I service delivery in PY20. The context of PY20, however, cannot be understated. As the first full program year operating within the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic, this study examines how NJDOL and local areas adapted services to virtual, remote, or hybrid formats to accommodate the influx of job seekers and the public health directives at that time, and how virtual and remote services affected overall WIOA Title I services in PY20. The study further examines how service modifications were perceived to have worked by local



One-Stop Career Center staff. A third, and final, goal of the study was to provide information to NJDOL for use in future decisions around investments in WIOA Title I service delivery and when it considers continuous system improvements to provide customer-centered services to those in need of support.

### Methodology

The Heldrich Center used qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to assess information regarding WIOA Title I services as they were operated and delivered in PY20. To understand and provide a broad overview of WIOA Title I adaptations in PY20, researchers utilized the following multi-method approach to data collection:

- Conducted an analysis of the Workforce Integrated Performance System (WIPS) customer data from PY18, PY19, and PY20;
- Administered one bifurcated survey of local area One-Stop Career Center personnel to document and collect WIOA Title I service adaptations in PY20;
- Conducted structured interviews with state-level NJDOL workforce staff who are responsible for the implementation of WIOA Title I services;
- Conducted structured interviews with local area One-Stop Career Center staff at a variety of One-Stop locations in New Jersey; and
- Conducted focus groups with customers who received WIOA Title I services in PY20.

In developing the research instruments, Heldrich Center researchers used the following definitions for modes in which WIOA Title I services may have been delivered during PY20:

- In person: Service delivery that takes place in the One-Stop Career Center office location in a face-to-face setting;
- Remote: Service delivery that utilizes phone-based technology platforms and devices delivered synchronously;
- Virtual: Service delivery that utilizes computer-based technology platforms and devices delivered synchronously or asynchronously; and
- Hybrid: A mixture of service delivery modes.

### Research Questions

- Who accessed WIOA Title I (adult, dislocated worker, and youth) services (career and training) in PY20?
- How did local area One-Stops in New Jersey adapt to providing WIOA Title I services to adult, dislocated worker, and youth customers during the July 2020 to June 2021 period when it was no longer possible to implement a fully in-person mode of service delivery?
- When reflecting on the adaptations in service delivery in PY20 for WIOA Title I services, what do local area One-Stop personnel believe were the most successful and least successful service transitions to a remote/ virtual mode of delivery?

- If virtual and/or hybrid service delivery continues, what recommendations do local area One-Stop personnel have about what such a hybrid mode and mix of services should ideally look like? What investments could be made to support virtual and/or hybrid service delivery?
- What changes to processes and/or data systems, if any, should be made to ensure that service delivery is adequately documented in a hybrid or virtual mode of service delivery?
- What do local area One-Stop personnel need to be able to adapt more quickly to a public emergency in the future? How could the state support local area personnel during a future public emergency?
- What was the WIOA Title I customer experience like in PY20? How do customers who received WIOA Title I services feel about their experience interacting with the public workforce system?
- How can the state and local public workforce system be prepared for future disruptions and/or disaster recovery?
- Where should future investments in WIOA Title I service delivery be made?

#### Findings

- Expansion of services: Local areas felt they could reach more people with the ability to offer services via a range of service delivery models: in-person, hybrid, virtual, and remote.
- Lesson learned on service delivery: Areas that are perceived to better/more impactful with in person services are intake and orientation.

#### Recommendations

- Investment in technological tool consistency across local areas should be the next frontier of investment for NJDOL.
- NJDOL could test and invest in modernization, technology tools, and ideas for innovation using small grants/pilots to continue to strengthen virtual service delivery infrastructure.
- NJDOL could invest in technology solutions to standardize the virtual “front door” for customers across all local areas, in collaboration with the New Jersey Office of Innovation.

The final report was provided to NJDOL and the SETC in July 2023 and made publicly available online at the SETC website.

#### ***RESEA Evaluation: Impact Evaluation Study***

The New Jersey Department of Labor contracted with the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey to fulfill its RESEA evaluation requirement. In cooperation with the NJDOL, the Heldrich Center proposes to conduct a

component evaluation which uses a randomized controlled trial of a text message intervention nudging RESEA participants to their appointments and the completion of documentation.

The Heldrich Center will also use this impact evaluation to evaluate the efficacy of push text notifications to a random sample of RESEA participants and compare their outcomes to RESEA participants who do not receive them. The benefits of using an impact evaluation for this evaluation is to inform New Jersey Department of Labor (NJDOL) on the impact of text notifications to participation in RESEA and on whether to continue, or even scale up, the text notification intervention for RESEA participants to improve participation and employment outcomes.

Reemployment evaluation studies in the past were based on whole program components, as well as on broad categories of services at the program level. A first step in the study design involved a review of the existing studies on the Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research (CLEAR) with high and moderate causal ratings using random assignment designs (CLEAR, 2019). The advantage of a randomized design is that it prevents systematic pre-existing differences between study groups from creating bias in evaluation. Based on this research, the study proposes a two-group random control trial to assess the effect of text notification services on job seekers' participation rates in RESEA, their duration of unemployment, and on wages after re-employment.

To summarize broadly:

1. The Heldrich Center will receive weekly files of UI claimants that have been profiled for RESEA services.
2. Heldrich Center researchers will send letters, via US Priority Mail service, to all RESEA claimants inviting them to consent to participate in the study.
3. Of those who consent, claimants will be randomly assigned into a treatment or control group.
4. Those in the treatment group will receive weekly text notifications regarding their required participation in RESEA services and other job search services provided by NJDOL.
5. Of those who consent, claimants who were randomly assigned to the control group will receive typical RESEA services provided by NJDOL.

### Research Questions

This study seeks to understand the efficacy of RESEA services as it currently stands, to better calibrate the program to meet specific needs that align with the changing nature of the job market. The study specifically aims to answer the following questions:

1. Does providing text alerts to UI claimants (to receive updates and reminders to engage in services offered) improve the participation of RESEA participants?
2. Does providing text alerts to UI claimants (to receive updates and reminders to engage in services offered) reduce the average duration of unemployment compensation and/or improve employment and earnings outcomes?

3. What is the role of increased RESEA participation (meeting attendance and Individual Employment Plan (IEP) completion) on the primary outcomes (duration and employment)?

### Outcomes

Assessing workforce outcomes will allow us to determine the relative success or failure of the text alert notification coupled with traditional NJDOL RESEA services versus the traditional NJDOL RESEA service delivery model alone. The following intermediate and primary outcomes were tracked:

#### Intermediate Outcomes:

- Participation in the Initial Meeting
- Participation in the Follow-up Meeting
- IEP Forms Completion

#### Primary Outcomes:

- Duration of unemployment compensation (defined by UIPL 1-20 as the number of weeks RESEA participants receive UC)
- Employment (measured in the second full calendar quarter following the start of a participant's UC claim, as defined by UIPL 1-20)<sup>1</sup>
- Wages earned in the 2nd full quarter following re-employment measured in wages for the quarter (or three-month period)<sup>2</sup>

### Timeline and Final Report

To implement this study, 3,162 RESEA recipients who had opted into text message reminders from July to September 2024 were randomly assigned into a treatment or control group. A series of five motivational text messages (available in Table 4 and the appendix) were sent to those assigned to the treatment group from July 29 to October 4, 2024.

Following the enrollment of the required sample of study participants, Heldrich Center researchers analyzed participant outcomes: participation in RESEA, duration of weeks on UI compensation, and wages following re-employment after their period on UI. The Heldrich Center prepared a final evaluation report and a series of in-depth presentations to report study outcomes, including data visualizations, for key stakeholders. The final report was provided to NJDOL and SETC in December 2025 and made publicly available online.

### ***PY 2021 WIOA Evaluation: An Evaluation of WIOA Services in New Jersey, Program Year 2021***

The New Jersey Department of Labor contracted with the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey to fulfill its WIOA annual evaluation requirement.

### Background

Access to transportation in the state of New Jersey remains an ongoing challenge for many populations. With an emphasis placed on the barriers for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I and Title IV customers, transportation is perceived to be a significant barrier for people with disabilities and others in accessing workforce development services that assist with obtaining employment. In Program Year 2021 (PY21), spanning July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022, the COVID-19 pandemic may have also exacerbated existing transportation challenges and/or created new opportunities for innovative solutions to transportation challenges. This evaluation will explore the dynamics of the transportation challenges that exist for WIOA customers in PY21 and pose potential innovative solutions to address those challenges.

This study had three primary objectives:

1. Identify transportation service challenges for WIOA customers in New Jersey at participating in WIOA services at the One-Stop Career Centers;
2. To identify and highlight promising transportation programs and/or services that could be expanded or replicated in five New Jersey rural/southern counties (Atlantic, Burlington, Cumberland, Salem, and Cape May) where transportation is perceived by local policymakers as a significant challenge to WIOA service participation and employment; and
3. To offer meaningful, tangible recommendations to the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJLWD), and to rural counties, on how to modify WIOA service delivery in light of the transportation challenges that exist for WIOA customers in those areas.

#### Timeline

The WIOA Program Year 2021 evaluation was conducted from October 15, 2023 to March 31, 2024.

#### Research Questions:

1. To what extent were transportation services provided through WIOA to Title I and Title IV customers during Program Year 2021? What was the size and scope of transportation services provided in New Jersey to access WIOA services, enroll in training, and search for and prepare for employment?
2. What are the transportation service delivery strategies currently implemented in five of New Jersey's rural/southern counties (Atlantic, Burlington, Cumberland, Salem, and Cape May)?
3. What, if any, transportation service strategies currently offered in one or more of New Jersey's rural counties warrant further evaluation and/or expansion and replication, based on transportation and workforce development staff and/or other state subject matter experts?
4. What modifications could be made to WIOA services in context of the transportation challenges identified in New Jersey?

#### Final Evaluation Report

In March 2024, the Heldrich Center submitted a final evaluation report to NJDOL and made publicly available on the SETC website. The final report includes –

- An analysis of transportation services provided through WIOA to Title I and Title IV customers during Program Year 2021, using the available data.
- The identification and profile of two to three examples of transportation programs that are considered promising or innovative.
- A landscape of transportation programs/initiatives recently tried and/or current operated in the targeted rural/southern counties in New Jersey.
- The identification of potential WIOA service modifications in context of the transportation challenges noted in the rural/southern counties in New Jersey.
- Recommendations on programs that could be expanded and/or piloted in other areas of the state, based on qualitative research, have high levels of satisfaction from state and local staff or subject matter experts.

### **Coordination with Partners and the State Workforce Board**

The above-highlighted data, research, and evaluation projects are all developed and supported in coordination with a variety of partners, including the Office of Research and Information (ORI), including specifically the Workforce Research and Analytics Unit, the Workforce Development (WFD) division, and in collaboration with other state partners, including the State Employment and Training Commission (SETC) and the Garden State Employment and Training Association (GSETA), the membership organization of New Jersey's Local Workforce Development Boards.

Key venues for collaboration include the SETC and NJDOL's Evaluation Workgroup. Through these groups, program stakeholders, including state staff, the SETC and local boards, are engaged in evaluation design, implementation, dissemination and incorporation of evaluation findings and recommendations. The evaluations will use a variety of methodologies, including quantitative and qualitative techniques, and customer satisfaction; will incorporate data from NJSDS and other sources; and will be designed to provide actionable results to inform program and policy decisions.

### ***NJDOL Evaluation Workgroup***

In 2021, the NJDOL Evaluation Workgroup was formed to support a greater culture of evidence-based practices within NJDOL. This group is convened bi-monthly to review current evaluation activities, set research priorities, and plan for future coordination of evaluations and research projects. The group now includes representatives from the following program areas within NJDOL: Workforce Development (Titles I and III), Adult Education and Literacy (Title II), the NJDOL Office of Apprenticeship, Transitional Workforce Services (WFNJ) and Employment Accessibility Services (Title IV), as well as members of the Heldrich Center team.

### ***Coordination with the SETC***

The SETC, the State Workforce Board, has been a long-standing partner in evaluation activities undertaken by NJDOL. Evaluation activities have been designed, coordinated and disseminated with the support of the SETC, including presentations to the full board, to local workforce

development board directors, and to workforce stakeholders at the Garden State Employment and Training Association (GSETA) events. All ongoing and future evaluations reports will be published on the SETC and NJDOL website, as they are completed. Publications are posted at: <https://www.nj.gov/njsetc/performance/index.html>

The NJDOL Office of Research and Information (ORI) works with the Workforce Development Division and the SETC to support and facilitate assessment of the effectiveness of states and local areas in achieving positive outcomes for individuals served by the workforce development system's core and one stop partner programs on annual basis. The SETC makes available on its website the WIOA Local Workforce Development Board Performance report published by U.S. Department of Labor - Employment and Training Administration (ETA), Office of Policy Development and Research, Office of Workforce Investment, WIOA Local Workforce Development Board Performance Program Year 2023 and WIOA Local Workforce Development Board Performance Program Year 2024.

***Coordination and Cooperation with Evaluations provided for by the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Education under WIOA***

New Jersey will continue to coordinate its activities with the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Education, to support evaluations provided for under WIOA. As indicated in Section 116 of WIOA, New Jersey and the State agencies responsible for the administration of all respective core programs will cooperate to the extent practicable, including the provision of data (in accordance with appropriate privacy protections established by the Secretary of Labor), the provision of responses to surveys, and allowing site visits in a timely manner, for the Secretaries or their agents.

The NJDOL Office of Internal Audit (OIA) coordinates the collection of data, survey responses, and site visits for all information requests received from the Federal Government. This includes information needed for federal evaluations, assessments, and compliance reviews. As the main contact for the Federal team, OIA will reach out to the appropriate divisions to obtain the information requested and ensure all requests for information are responded to in a timely fashion.

**5. DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS FOR CORE PROGRAMS**

Describe the methods and factors the State will use in distributing funds under the core programs in accordance with the provisions authorizing such distributions.

**A. FOR TITLE I PROGRAMS**

Provide a description of the written policies that establish the State's methods and factors used to distribute funds to local areas for—

**I. YOUTH ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 128(B)(2) OR (B)(3)**

In accordance with WIOA Section 128(b)(3), New Jersey will use the following Title I Youth allocation formula, in accordance with Training and Employment Guidance Letter TEGl 15-22 and approved by the SETC to support Youth activities.

**Youth Formula**

New Jersey will use the following formula to allocate Youth funds to local areas.

% of Youth Funds	Indicator	Description
33.3%	Relative number of <b>Disadvantaged Youth</b> in each local area, compared to the total number of disadvantaged youth in the state	A disadvantaged youth is defined as an individual age 16 through 21 who received an income, or is a member of a family that received a total family income that, in relation to family size, does not exceed the higher of the poverty line, or 70 percent of the Lower Living Standard Income Level (LLSIL).
33.3%	Relative number of unemployed individuals in <b>Areas of Substantial Unemployment</b> in each local area, compared to the total number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment in the state	Any area that is of sufficient size and scope to sustain a program of workforce investment activities that has an average rate of unemployment of a least 6.5 percent for the most recent 12 months
33.3%	Relative excess <b>Number of Unemployed Individuals</b> in each local area, compared to the total excess number of unemployed individuals in the state	The number that represents the number of unemployed individuals in excess of 4.5% of the civilian labor force in the State; or the number that represents the number of unemployed individuals in excess of 4.5% of the civilian labor force in areas of substantial unemployment in the State

No local area shall receive an allocation percentage for a fiscal year that is less than 90 percent of the average allocation percentage of the local area for the 2 preceding fiscal years. Amounts necessary for increasing such allocations to local areas to comply with the preceding sentence shall be obtained by ratably reducing the allocations to be made to other local areas.

**Governor’s Set Aside**

The Governor reserves 15 percent of the funds from the WIOA Youth programs to carry out statewide activities. As highlighted above, the remaining Youth program funds are distributed based on the WIOA formulas highlighted above to Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs).



The Governor's reserve, which include Title I funds reserved across Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker allocations, supports NJDOL and SETC in carrying out their required functions. This includes activities related to fiscal and programmatic oversight, technical assistance, state policy development, as well as research and evaluation. Specifically, these funds support staff working across the Office of Finance and Accounting, the Office of Research and Information, the Office of Internal Audit, and the Workforce Development Division.

In addition, the Title I Program Governor's Set Aside supports additional state-level workforce development priorities, aligned with activities highlighted in this plan, including:

- **Additional Youth Investments:** New Jersey supports expanded opportunities for in-school and out-of-school youth through support for special programs that offer unique opportunities for expanding career and training opportunities for young people 16-24. Key initiatives include New Jersey's Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and investments in the New Jersey Youth Corps (NJYC) which blends community service learning with academic and career development opportunities. New Jersey remains committed to creating a diversity of entry points for youth career development across the state.
- **Industry Partnerships:** As highlighted in this plan, Industry Partnerships offer a key strategy for matching and developing the talent and skill needs of industry sectors and New Jersey workers. This focused work on developing sustained career pathway opportunities to develop New Jersey's talent will continue to be a high priority across the four years of this plan.
- **Workforce Professional Development:** As New Jersey's moves forward to integrate services across core, required, and additional state workforce programs, NJDOL and GSETA are working together through the NJDOL-GSETA training partnership to support a joint training agenda that deepens and expands the knowledge of workforce development services and practices. Over the next four years, support for cross-training is a key priority as we seek to operationalize a more coordinated public workforce system in the state of New Jersey.
- **Expanded Access Points:** Another priority for these reserve funds is investment in initiatives and resources that expand access points beyond the front door of our One Stop Career Centers, this includes investment in virtual services and resources, as well as support for mobile One-Stops and public library programs.
- **Other Program Priorities:** In addition, NJDOL and the SETC support other innovative programs through the Governor's Reserve, specifically focusing on increased access for underserved populations and launching new employer partnerships in emerging industries, e.g., clean energy.

## II. ADULT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) OR (B)(3)

In accordance with WIOA section 133(b)(2) and (b)(3), New Jersey will use the following Title I Adult allocation formula, in accordance with Training and Employment Guidance Letter TEGL 15-22 and approved by the SETC, to support Adult activities.

**Adult Formula**

New Jersey will use the following formula to allocate Adult funds to local areas.

% of Adult Funds	Indicator	Description
33.3%	Relative number of <b>Disadvantaged Adults</b> in each local area as compared to the total number of disadvantaged adults in the state	A disadvantaged adult is and individual age 22 through 72 who received an income, or is a member of a family that received a total family income, that, in relation to family size, does not exceed the higher of - the poverty line; or 70 percent of the lower living standard income level
33.3%	Relative <b>Excess Number of Unemployed Individuals</b> in the local area as compared to the total excess number of individuals in the state	The number that represents the number of unemployed individuals in excess of 4.5% of the civilian labor force in the State; or the number that represents the number of unemployed individuals in excess of 4.5% of the civilian labor force in areas of substantial unemployment in the State
33.3%	Relative number of unemployed individuals in <b>Areas of Substantial Unemployment</b> in the local area as compared to the total number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment in the state	Any area that is of sufficient size and scope to sustain a program of workforce investment activities that has an average rate of unemployment of a least 6.5 percent for the most recent 12 months

No local area shall receive an allocation percentage for a fiscal year that is less than 90 percent of the average allocation percentage of the local area for the 2 preceding fiscal years. Amounts necessary for increasing such allocations to local areas to comply with the preceding sentence shall be obtained by ratably reducing the allocations to be made to other local areas.

**Governor's Set Aside**

The Governor reserves 15 percent of the funds from the WIOA Youth programs to carry out statewide activities. As highlighted above, the remaining Youth program funds are distributed based on the WIOA formulas highlighted above to Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs).

The Governor's reserve, which includes Title I funds reserved across Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker allocations, supports NJDOL and SETC in carrying out their required functions. This includes activities related to fiscal and programmatic oversight, technical assistance, state policy development, as well as research and evaluation. Specifically, these funds support staff working across the Office of Finance and Accounting, the Office of Research and Information, the Office of Internal Audit, and the Workforce Development Division.

In addition, the Title I Program Governor's Set Aside supports additional state-level workforce development priorities, aligned with activities highlighted in this plan, including:

- **Additional Youth Investments:** New Jersey supports expanded opportunities for in-school and out-of-school youth through support for special programs that offer unique opportunities for expanding career and training opportunities for young people 16-24. Key initiatives include New Jersey's Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and investments in the New Jersey Youth Corps (NJYC) which blends community service learning with academic and career development opportunities. New Jersey remains committed to creating a diversity of entry points for youth career development across the state.
- **Industry Partnerships:** As highlighted in this plan, Industry Partnerships offer a key strategy for matching and developing the talent and skill needs of industry sectors and New Jersey workers. This focused work on developing sustained career pathway opportunities to develop New Jersey's talent will continue to be a high priority across the four years of this plan.
- **Workforce Professional Development:** As New Jersey's moves forward to integrate services across core, required, and additional state workforce programs, NJDOL and GSETA are working together through the NJDOL-GSETA training partnership to support a joint training agenda that deepens and expands the knowledge of workforce development services and practices. Over the next four years, support for cross-training is a key priority as we seek to operationalize a more coordinated public workforce system in the state of New Jersey.
- **Expanded Access Points:** Another priority for these reserve funds is investment in initiatives and resources that expand access points beyond the front door of our One Stop Career Centers, this includes investment in virtual services and resources, as well as support for mobile One-Stops and public library programs.
- **Other Program Priorities:** In addition, NJDOL and the SETC support other innovative programs through the Governor's Reserve, specifically focusing on increased access for underserved populations and launching new employer partnerships in emerging industries, e.g., clean energy.

III. DISLOCATED WORKER EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) AND BASED ON DATA AND WEIGHTS ASSIGNED

In accordance with WIOA section 133(b)(2), New Jersey will use the following Title I Dislocated Worker allocation formula, in accordance with Training and Employment Guidance Letter TEGL 15-22 and approved by the SETC to support Dislocated Worker activities.

**Dislocated Worker Formula**

New Jersey will use the following formula to allocate Dislocated Worker funds to local areas.

% of DW Funds	Indicator	Description
25%	<b>Declining Industries</b>	Based on the total projected employment change in declining industries
25%	<b>Insured Unemployment Data</b>	Based on number of Unemployment Insurance claimants
25%	<b>Long-term Unemployment</b>	Based on number of claimants who have exhausted Unemployment Insurance
25%	<b>Unemployment Concentration</b>	Number of Unemployed Individuals in a local area

New Jersey does not allocate based on the following data, even though allowable under WIOA:

- Plant Closing and Mass Layoff Data: An accurate source of data is not available at the state or local level
- Farmer-Rancher Economic Hardship Data: an accurate source of data is not available at the state or local level.

No local area shall receive an allocation percentage for a fiscal year that is less than 90 percent of the average allocation percentage of the local area for the 2 preceding fiscal years. Amounts necessary for increasing such allocations to local areas to comply with the preceding sentence shall be obtained by ratably reducing the allocations to be made to other local areas.

**Governor’s Set Aside**

The Governor reserves 15 percent of the funds from the WIOA Youth programs to carry out statewide activities. As highlighted above, the remaining Youth program funds are distributed based on the WIOA formulas highlighted above to Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs).

The Governor’s reserve, which includes Title I funds reserved across Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker allocations, supports NJDOL and SETC in carrying out their required functions. This includes activities related to fiscal and programmatic oversight, technical assistance, state policy development, as well as research and evaluation. Specifically, these

funds support staff working across the Office of Finance and Accounting, the Office of Research and Information, the Office of Internal Audit, and the Workforce Development Division.

In addition, the Title I Program Governor's Set Aside supports additional state-level workforce development priorities, aligned with activities highlighted in this plan, including:

- **Additional Youth Investments:** New Jersey supports expanded opportunities for in-school and out-of-school youth through support for special programs that offer unique opportunities for expanding career and training opportunities for young people 16-24. Key initiatives include New Jersey's Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and investments in the New Jersey Youth Corps (NJYC) which blends community service learning with academic and career development opportunities. New Jersey remains committed to creating a diversity of entry points for youth career development across the state.
- **Industry Partnerships:** As highlighted in this plan, Industry Partnerships offer a key strategy for matching and developing the talent and skill needs of industry sectors and New Jersey workers. This focused work on developing sustained career pathway opportunities to develop New Jersey's talent will continue to be a high priority across the four years of this plan.
- **Workforce Professional Development:** As New Jersey's moves forward to integrate services across core, required, and additional state workforce programs, NJDOL and GSETA are working together through the NJDOL-GSETA training partnership to support a joint training agenda that deepens and expands the knowledge of workforce development services and practices. Over the next four years, support for cross-training is a key priority as we seek to operationalize a more coordinated public workforce system in the state of New Jersey.
- **Expanded Access Points:** Another priority for these reserve funds is investment in initiatives and resources that expand access points beyond the front door of our One Stop Career Centers, this includes investment in virtual services and resources, as well as support for mobile One-Stops and public library programs.
- **Other Program Priorities:** In addition, NJDOL and the SETC support other innovative programs through the Governor's Reserve, specifically focusing on increased access for underserved populations and launching new employer partnerships in emerging industries, e.g., clean energy.

## B. FOR TITLE II

### I. DESCRIBE THE METHODS AND FACTORS THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL USE TO DISTRIBUTE TITLE II FUNDS.

The New Jersey Department of Labor's Office of Adult Literacy (OAL) conducted a full and open competition for a 5-year grant cycle for AEFLA Title II Section 231, 225, and 243 funds in March of 2025. The Notice of Grant Opportunity (NGO) is a legally reviewed and approved DOL document publicly posted so that eligible entities may apply for grant funding.

Each funding stream for WIOA Title II Section 231, 243, and 225 funding was held as a separate competition for eligible providers per USED requirements. A total of 17 NJ AEFLA grants were

awarded to lead consortia agencies or sole providers; there are an additional 45 partner agencies providing services for the current 5-year cycle which cover all NJ counties.

Each consecutive year's grant amount and conditions are based on the following criteria:

- contract compliance, including success in meeting contracted enrollment level of service and providing the contracted services.
- evidence of sufficient progress in meeting federally imposed targets for the agency performance outcome measures.
- evidence of continuous program improvement
- compliance with fiscal and programmatic policies and guidelines.
- monitoring and program reviews.
- and the actual amount of the federal award.

As part of the grant application process, all applicants were required to submit evidence of demonstrated effectiveness in the parameters set by NJDOL Office of Adult Literacy (OAL) in order for the application to be reviewed and considered for funding as required by the Office of Career and Technical Education (OCTAE). To demonstrate effectiveness, applicants that have been funded under Title II AEFLA, as amended by WIOA, in the three program years immediately preceding the competition will be required to provide performance data under WIOA section 116 from those years.

Applicants who were not previously funded by the Office Adult Literacy under Title II AEFLA, as amended by WIOA were required to provide performance data demonstrating their past effectiveness in serving basic skills deficient eligible individuals, including evidence of success in achieving outcomes in comparable measures.

For both groups, these measures include effectiveness in helping students develop their academic skills in reading, writing, mathematics, and English language acquisition, achieving high school equivalency, and transitioning into employment and/or postsecondary education/training.

The content of Section 231, 243, and 225 funding grant applications addressed the seven requirements and thirteen considerations identified in the Act. Eligible providers were required to demonstrate clear alignment of proposed activities and services to the strategies and goals of the local workforce development plans for the intended areas to be served.

Through a standardized process developed by the NJDOL OAL, Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) reviewed eligible Title II providers' applications for alignment with the local plan. With this process in place, NJDOL continues to strengthen LWDBs' capacity to partner with literacy providers. Eligible providers were required to submit NJ AEFLA applications to OAL through the electronic IGX grants management system, formally known as SAGE. Once the review of applicant eligibility was completed, the State Director held a technical assistance meeting with LWDBs to review the expected process, answer questions, and provide a timeline. OAL staff distributed the eligible applications to the appropriate local workforce boards for review and provided additional technical assistance. The State Director established a timeline for the application review process and provided a review/scoring rubric to all local boards,

which included a section for LWDBs to provide recommendations to improve alignment of proposed Title II services with the local plans. OAL utilized the recommendations and results of the review when making decisions regarding grant awards and expectations.

The most current American Community Survey data and formula determine the availability AEFLA funding for each NJ county. All eligible applications received by the due date and time were read and scored by a 3-person panel trained by the NJ State Director of Adult Literacy. All agencies that passed the eligibility requirements and subsequent scoring metrics were funded for the current NJ AEFLA 5-year grant cycle.

II. DESCRIBE HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL ENSURE DIRECT AND EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ALL ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS TO APPLY AND COMPETE FOR FUNDS AND HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL ENSURE THAT IT IS USING THE SAME GRANT OR CONTRACT ANNOUNCEMENT AND APPLICATION PROCEDURE FOR ALL ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS [(WIOA TITLE II SECTION 231(C)(1)-(2)].

To ensure direct and equitable access for funding, the NJDOL and the OAL have policies, procedures, and guidelines in place to ensure that equal access to apply and compete for WIOA Title II funds. The Notice of Grant Opportunity (NGO) is the mechanism in which to apply for grant funding through NJDOL. The NGO is a legally reviewed and approved document and is published on the NJDOL public website and dictates all requirements for the grant awards and application. Once the NGO is published, all grant information is posted to the Office of Adult Literacy (OAL) website, which is accessible to the public. The OAL website includes the current NGO and past NGO, the specific questions and answers provided as a result of the mandatory Technical Assistance meeting required for all potential Title II applicants, the current Title II provider directory, all intake forms and policies, including the NJ State Assessment Policy, so that potential applicants can better understand program requirements.

The OAL staff conducted the latest grant competition in March 2025 for a 5-year award. All applications went through the NJDOL IGX electronic grants management system, formally known as SAGE. Training on how to access the IGX system and respond to the grant applications for AEFLA funding was provided by DOL trained staff through a required, virtual meeting. Any questions and answers from that technical assistance meeting were posted online via the OAL website. All potential applicants were granted access to the same grant application for each funding stream being competed.

In accordance with NJDOL OAL grant guidelines, grant applications deemed eligible were evaluated by a panel of three trained individuals. Panel members included staff from the NJDOL Division of Workforce Development, the NJ Department of Education, other State agencies, and other qualified subject matter experts. The State Director lead the training requirements for panelists and included a review of the NGO and AEFLA specific terms, the expected review and scoring process, the use of required systems to access applications and scorecards, the timeline for completion, and answered any questions before and during the panel review process.

OAL staff developed a scoring rubric for each funding stream (Section 231, 243, and 225) which addressed all items in the grant application/NGO. Once the applications were reviewed and scored via the approved DOL panel, they were ranked from highest to lowest scoring. OAL recommended award grants to the highest scoring applicant in each of the local workforce

development areas and continued to award funds until all applications for service in the local area with a passing score were funded. A total of 17 contracts with NJDOL were awarded.

### C. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

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

As outlined previously in this Plan, New Jersey utilizes an option to deliver Vocational Rehabilitation services through two distinct programs. The majority of services are delivered through Vocational Rehabilitation staff housed at NJDOL for any individuals with disabilities. A portion of allocation is segmented and distributed to the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI), housed within the New Jersey Department of Human Services; CBVI focuses on serving individuals who are blind, vision-impaired or deaf-blind.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) and Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI) work under a Memorandum of Understanding outlining:

- The criteria determining to which program an individual customer is referred based on their disability;
- Methods of referral between the two agencies and their services and programs;
- Eligibility;
- Consultation and coordination between the two agencies; and
- Interagency meetings, exchange of materials, interagency liaisons.

The MOU allocates funds based on an 80/20 split, with 80 percent of allocable funds going to DVRS and 20 percent going to CBVI for their respective program operations. This allocation is justified by the following factors:

- Population. The distribution takes into account the proportion of persons with disabilities who are expected to be served by each agency, based on prior history. This proportion has been stable since the MOU was first signed in 2000.
- Level of services. In general, it is understood that delivering high-quality vocational rehabilitation services to blind, vision-impaired, and deaf-blind consumers is more expensive on average than it is to deliver similar services to persons with other disabilities, because of the extra training required to enable these consumers to function successfully and independently with limited or no vision. Specifically:
- CBVI administers a year-round, residential program to provide blind, vision-impaired, and deaf-blind consumers with training in pre-employment blindness skills, e.g. Orientation and Mobility; Braille or other low-vision communication strategies; assistive technology instruction; skills of independent living (techniques for independently managing in the home, including cooking, dressing, cleaning, money management, etc.); and classes on Adjusting to Blindness or Vision Loss.



- Similarly, these same services are offered to some consumers in their homes, where they are unable or unwilling to invest an extended period, on average approximately twenty weeks, in New Jersey's intensive residential program.
- Additionally, some consumers are sent out-of-state for blindness-specific, pre-employment training, where CBVI does not offer the particular instruction needed for a given consumer's employment objective.
- Due to the nature of the disability, a disproportionate number of blind, vision-impaired, and deaf-blind consumers require substantial amounts of post-secondary education in order to qualify for the types of jobs where blind, vision-impaired, and deaf-blind consumers have traditionally been most successful and accepted within the labor market.

## 6. PROGRAM DATA

### A. DATA ALIGNMENT AND INTEGRATION

Describe the plans of the lead State agencies with responsibility for the administration of the core programs, along with the State Board, to align and integrate available workforce and education data systems for the core programs, unemployment insurance programs, and education through postsecondary education, and to the extent possible, the Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan. The description of the State's plan for integrating data systems should include the State's goals for achieving integration and any progress to date.

Describe data-collection and reporting processes used for all programs and activities, including the State's process to collect and report data on co-enrollment, and for those present in the one-stop centers.

#### I. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PLANS TO MAKE THE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR THE CORE PROGRAMS INTEROPERABLE TO MAXIMIZE THE EFFICIENT EXCHANGE OF COMMON DATA ELEMENTS TO SUPPORT ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

As stated previously in this plan, America's One-Stop Operating System (AOSOS) is the core data system used to support the New Jersey workforce development system. AOSOS currently meets the operational, tracking and reporting requirements of WIOA and serves as the system of record for all Title I programs and Title III, Wagner Peyser programs, including RESEA and JVSG. In addition, AOSOS serves as the system of record for Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) and WorkFirst New Jersey Employment and Training.

In addition, the other core WIOA programs use the following systems as their systems of record.

- Title II - Literacy, Adult and Community Education System (LACES)
- Title IV (DVRS) - AWARE Vocational Rehabilitation Case Management System
- Title IV (CBVI) - FACTS - System 7 Vocational Rehabilitation Case Management System

### **Data Integration Challenges**

New Jersey continues to make updates across our formal systems record to maximize the efficacy of these systems. For example, NJDOL worked with its vendor to launch a cloud-based AOSOS application in 2022 that increased speeds in using the system and simplified data entry screens. However, even with these updates, these systems are not designed for the level of data sharing and cross-program analysis that WIOA and our workforce systems demand in 2024.

Key challenges include the following:

***Difficulty of linking data from different systems:*** As highlighted in earlier sections, Title II and Title IV programs specifically, are required to utilize separate systems of record. Because Title I, II, III, and IV all utilize legacy systems of record, extraction and sharing of data across systems is very challenging.

***Cumbersome data extraction and reporting:*** Even among programs sharing use of AOSOS as a system of record, the extraction and reporting of data is cumbersome, new reports must be built and tested by teams that have expertise in these systems. This has hindered access of programmatic teams at the state and local levels to real time data about service delivery. In addition, data entry parameters have evolved differently across programs as different programs have developed and identified codes for entering data that are separate from one another.

***Inconsistent data sharing processes:*** AOSOS currently includes data-sharing interfaces with Unemployment Insurance and Department of Human Services (DHS) systems. However, even when data links are initially set up, these processes have hit unexpected shifts that have limited the efficacy of data sharing, and/or depend on manual processes that have suffered as institutionalized knowledge in the form of staff have shifted.

### **Maximizing Existing Data Tools and Resources**

NJDOL and SETC continue to explore and identify additional tools for supporting the connection and use of data within and across workforce programs using our existing systems investing in – for example:

- ***Future Works (NJ Performs):*** A platform offered through an external vendor that leverages NJDOL’s federal data reports to organize and share data outside of AOSOS. Many local areas utilize Future Works to ensure timely case management data entry and to generate quarterly reports to be shared at the local board level.
- ***SETC Performance Dashboard:*** The SETC manages a performance dashboard that also leverages federal reports to highlight system performance across at the state and within local areas.
- ***Workforce Data Team:*** Most recently, NJDOL’s Workforce Development Division has created a new team to further develop and integrate new dashboard tools that draw directly on AOSOS data into state and local workforce teams monitoring and continuous learning processes. Additionally, specific projects to explore disconnects in data linkages across partners are underway to ensure that when data sharing is in place, data are accurately transferring.

While we will continue to explore and develop stronger resources and tools to support our use of data and AOSOS for assessment and evaluation purposes, we are also in the process of securing an entirely new Statewide Workforce Case Management solution to replace AOSOS.

Over the four years of this plan, this Data Modernization project and the integration of this system into our collective work will represent a major body of work across One Stop partner programs, and across our state and local teams.

### **Data Modernization**

New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development is currently in the process of procurement of a comprehensive web-enabled, Software-as-a-Service (SaaS), system. The State envisions this new Workforce Solution as a tool that will allow career-seeking New Jerseyans to have access to the education and training necessary to access high-quality employment. It will provide a connection between job seekers and employers that are offering high-quality employment to fill their talent needs quickly and efficiently. It will support both customer self-service integration and performance driven outcomes designed around the principles of universal access, customer choice, and service alignment.

The new Workforce Case Management solution will:

- Integrate, scale, and consolidate the case management of federal, state, and local Workforce programs, services, and activities into a centralized core system.
- Provide leading-edge technology for self-service/virtual service delivery and electronic communication amongst all jobseekers/participants, employers, providers, partners, and Workforce Development staff.
- Enhance and offer new opportunities for tracking enrollment, progress, and outcomes across programs and partners contributing to our statewide Workforce program including the One-Stop Career Center network.
- Allow for automated referrals from partner agencies, providers, and community partners including county and municipal welfare agencies for the management of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), General Assistance (GA), and Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
- Provide customized strategies for jobseekers and employers through the enhancement of functionality related to: (1) Business Services and Work-Based Learning, supporting matches, (2) Virtual Services, specifically to support virtual intake and connection to services, (3) Career Services, to facilitate customized support and coaching, and (4) Supportive Services, to increase connection across community partners to address needs
- Provides functionality to capture document imaging and electronic signatures.
- Interface with ancillary systems to improve data integrity for federal and state reporting.
- Maintain comprehensive federal and state required reporting, while enhancing functionality to include ad-hoc reporting and query capabilities that allow for continued data interoperability.
- Allow for ongoing adaptability to accommodate potential legislative federal and/or state mandates.

## II. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PLANS TO INTEGRATE DATA SYSTEMS TO FACILITATE STREAMLINED INTAKE AND SERVICE DELIVERY TO TRACK PARTICIPATION ACROSS ALL PROGRAMS INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN

NJDOL and SETC are involved in efforts to strengthen coordination of data as part of service delivery, and also through longer term efforts to track outcomes across our educational and workforce systems. Our vision is to create a fully integrated case management system with a focus on performance and outcome reporting to continuously serve the customers to achieve self-sufficiency, and to use reporting in real time to improve service delivery.

### **One Stop Career Center Data Integration**

As discussed in the above section, NJDOL is actively engaged in a Data Modernization effort to update and upgrade the AOSOS case management and reporting system. This effort includes exploration of enhanced integration with the Title II LACES system and the Title IV AWARE and FACTS systems.

Another data system integration effort at NJDOL has been the development of a single sign-on for Unemployment Insurance and One Stop Career Center services. Claimants are able to use one sign-on to see the status of their UI claims as well as services for which they are eligible or already enrolled in through the workforce system. The Integrated Workforce Registration System is a national initiative to promote and enhance the partnerships and shared missions of the Unemployment and Workforce Development systems within NJDOL. This system integrates common core functions making the re-employment experience more seamless and friendly by directing customers via a common registration process to all the services provided by the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development. This single sign-on system for jobseekers supports a common workforce registration system for Unemployment Insurance, re-employment services, resume creation and job and skill matching.

As we move forward with a new Workforce Case Management system to replace AOSOS, streamlined intake and connection to services is a high priority. Through this new system, we seek to support universal processes for determining eligibility across One Stop Career Center programs and connecting career-seekers to the full range of services that are available as part of a single stream of service. In addition, these new tools available to local case management staff, will allow case manager to spend more quality time serving the customers, instead of engaging in repetitive data entry tasks. A new system will modernize many of our business processes and procedures that will benefit both staff and customers.

As we plan for a new data system that helps to better support streamlined intake and service delivery, NJDOL and SETC will also continue to support our Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) in coordinating and sharing data at the local level to facilitate shared service delivery to customers. Recent NJDOL policies offer guidance and support for LWDBs and One Stop Operators to lead these local efforts, including:

- **Functional Alignment:** NJDOL released a Functional Alignment policy in September 2023 outlining the authority of LWDBs to coordinate partners and service and support cross-functional teams, inclusive of activities around data sharing.
- **Service Integration and Co-Enrollment:** In addition, NJDOL released a Service Integration and Co-Enrollment policy in September 2023 highlighting specific

opportunities for co-enrollment across One Stop Career Center programs, including around eligibility and intake processes.

NJDOL and SETC will continue to work with our LWDBs to identify opportunities for strengthening data sharing at the state and local levels to support intake processes that allow for determining eligibility and intake across multiple programs rather than a single program.

### **Longitudinal Data Integration**

The State has also created the New Jersey State Data System (NJSDS). NJSDS is a collaboration between NJDOL, NJDOE, the NJ Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, the NJ Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA), and the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University. It is the State's centralized, longitudinal data system, developed through a US Department of Education grant and with support from the partner agencies. NJSDS gathers data from New Jersey's P-12 system into a comprehensive, statewide system that maintains information for K-12 students from their exit from high school through entry into higher education and/or the State workforce. The K-12 data is combined with workforce customer data from NJDOL and post-secondary education student data from OSHE, as well as financial aid information from HESAA. NJSDS provides valuable information and data for participants from all these systems to State and local policymakers, the public, as well as practitioners in K-12 schools, higher education institutions, workforce programs, and career and technical training schools to help calculate outcomes.

Through coordination with partnering state agencies and initial funding from the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Labor, NJSDS has become a large statewide interagency and intergovernmental platform where data from participating agencies are securely stored to expand access and analysis to improve governance efforts, policymaking, and performance of public initiatives. NJSDS aims to help the public and stakeholders make data-informed decisions to improve public policies and practices for New Jersey residents. This includes facilitating longitudinal and linked-data research, providing statistical data, and publishing reports on the NJSDS website, [njsds.nj.gov](http://njsds.nj.gov).

### **III. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE BOARD WILL ASSIST THE GOVERNOR IN ALIGNING TECHNOLOGY AND DATA SYSTEMS ACROSS REQUIRED ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS (INCLUDING DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMON INTAKE, DATA COLLECTION, ETC.) AND HOW SUCH ALIGNMENT WILL IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY TO INDIVIDUALS, INCLUDING UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS**

Over the next four years, alignment of technology and data systems across One Stop Career Center partners is a core priority as we work towards the broader goals guiding this plan. The use of data to support shared case management, integration of programs and services, and continuous improvement of programs and services will help to drive stronger opportunities and outcomes for our career-seekers and businesses in New Jersey. The SETC's Performance Committee, in conjunction with NJDOL and LWDBs, will renew efforts to serve as a hub in providing support and oversight around these efforts and ensuring that these processes and systems drive towards improvements in service delivery, especially among New Jersey's underserved populations.

As highlighted in other sections, three key activities will drive efforts to align our technology and data systems: (1) Data Modernization efforts, (2) ongoing expansion of New Jersey Career Center, and (3) expansion of NJDOL and SETC dashboard tools.

### **Data Modernization**

As highlighted earlier, New Jersey, like many states, experiences the challenge of having legacy data systems operating contemporaneously with newly implemented data systems. New Jersey is committed to modernizing its technology and data systems to ensure the most efficient and effective utilization. For example, the current modernization strategy includes acquiring a system that combines the functionality to support multiple programs. With increasing demand to provide as many services and resources as possible to our career seeking customers, we need data systems that easily track services provided and supports customer access to timely and effective services. We look forward to data systems that will track services and co-enrollment strategies across multiple funding streams, including Title I, Title III, WorkFirst New Jersey, SCSEP, and other state workforce programs, and ease connections to other data systems serving other core populations such as Title II and Title IV. This approach will improve quality of the service delivery to our customers and ease the burden of our workforce professionals by eliminating the use of multiple systems.

### **My Career New Jersey (NJ)**

NJDOL launched the MyCareerNJ web portal in 2024, featuring a robust set of user-facing tools to empower individuals, particularly those from low-income, lower-skilled, underemployed, and unemployed Americans. MyCareerNJ centralizes personalized career resources so users can leverage their unique skill sets in pursuit of their career aspirations. It features three career tools: the NJ Training Explorer, the NJ Career Navigator, and NJ Career Pathways.

- NJ Training Explorer: The Training Explorer enables customized filtering of training programs, provides information on tuition assistance, and gives users valuable insight into the providers that offer programs that meet their skill-building needs.
- NJ Career Navigator: This machine-learning-powered recommendation engine leverages big data and machine learning to generate personalized job and career recommendations that align with each user's skill set, employment history, and individual professional goals across a wide range of private and public employment sectors.
- NJ Career Pathways: Career Pathways is an interactive career exploration tool that helps users to understand how to enter and advance in in-demand careers in New Jersey. Career pathways in New Jersey's manufacturing sector are currently online. New pathways in healthcare, construction, and transportation, distribution and logistics are slated to go live in the coming several months. Data that appears on the site are gleaned from several dozen interviews with New Jersey employers and industry experts.

MyCareerNJ brings key data and information about training and employment opportunities together to create a single access point for obtaining the most up-to-date information for guiding training and employment decisions. In addition, the resources, and tools of My Career NJ support employers in finding better-qualified employees and allow NJDOL, LWDBs, and One

Stop Career Center partners to use data-driven information to weed out fraudulent and low-quality training programs.

This portal was produced through an innovative collaboration between NJDOL, the New Jersey Innovation Authority, and Research Improving People's Lives (RIPL). It was developed using best practices in agile project management and human-centered design and built on a state-of-the-art technology platform that will serve as a foundation for the development of additional functionality.

### **NJDOL and SETC Dashboard Tools**

In addition to better integration of data, the SETC and NJDOL are committed to continuing to improve access to clear dashboards that provide overviews of service delivery and performance outcomes across our One Stop Career Center programs. As highlighted in earlier section, the SETC provides performance data via the portal at USDOL at WIOA Local Workforce Development Board Performance Program Year 2023 and WIOA Local Workforce Development Board Performance Program Year 2024.

Additionally, NJDOL's Workforce Development Division has invested in the development of a new team to work in coordination with the Office of Research and Information (ORI) to support the development and use of data reporting and dashboard tools that provide access to common data within and across One Stop Partner programs. Reporting tools and quarterly dashboards are used internally to track performance and also serve a local aid to Local areas to assess performance in real-time.

As we move towards Data Modernization, NJDOL and the SETC will work to integrate these dashboard tools into a new Workforce Case Management system.

#### **IV. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S DATA SYSTEMS AND PROCEDURES TO PRODUCE THE REPORTS REQUIRED UNDER SECTION 116, PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM. (WIOA SECTION 116(D)(2)).**

The State's Common Data System, AOSOS, is used to track program progress for workforce customers, especially with respect to performance targets. NJDOL provides local areas with the following reports to monitor their progress:

- Quarterly reports documenting primary indicators of performance against goals for each WDB area (similar to the ETA 9090 report used by NJDOL for federal reporting);
- Quarterly or monthly reports (depending on the specific measure) documenting performance outcomes for the New Jersey; and
- Quarterly basic rosters of WIOA participants.

The Title II data system, LACES, is used for program monitoring, reporting and tracking performance outcomes measures for Adult Education and Family Literacy program customers. NJDOL provides local workforce areas and program providers with the following reports to support performance accountability:

- The NJDOL Office of Adult Literacy (OAL) staff develop and produce all reports through the NRS-approved LACES database. OAL staff review all data bi-weekly, complete monthly monitoring desk audits, and utilize LACES for a customized yearly

report card for each individual Title II agency, taking into account all federal negotiated targets and State targets. Risk assessments and monitoring are tied to provider performance.

- Title II staff conduct quarterly wage and employment matches with data provided from AOSOS and compare this to data in the LACES system for federal reporting.
- Title II staff works with the NJDOL Office of Research and Information (ORI) team to review data in conjunction with the required data validation.
- Title II utilizes the State Wage Interchange System (SWIS) to examine wage and employment records across state lines.

The AWARE and FACTS data systems are used for program monitoring, reporting and tracking performance outcomes measures for WIOA Title IV Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) customers.

The follow reports are used to support performance accountability:

- DVRS staff submits the RSA 911 and RSA 17 quarterly reports to the USED Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), as required; the staff uses these reports to track service levels, expenditures and performance outcomes for all DVRS activities throughout the year.
- These reports are further used to support the DVRS quality assurance and field management staff to monitor local area activities and ensure compliance with RSA performance metrics.
- DVRS staff also submits the ETA 9169 annual report, which includes DVRS and Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI) data, for combined performance outcome reporting. This report is also used to support performance monitoring and quality assurance activities.

#### B. ASSESSMENT OF PARTICIPANTS' POST-PROGRAM SUCCESS

Describe how lead State agencies will use the workforce development system to assess the progress of participants who are exiting from core programs in entering, persisting in, and completing postsecondary education, or entering or remaining in employment. States may choose to set additional indicators of performance.

In Program Years 2023, 2024 and 2025, New Jersey continued to utilize the primary indicators of performance as required under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) for adults, dislocated workers, and youth; these indicators continue to be incorporated for additional WIOA core programs as per guidance from the US Departments of Labor and Education. The primary indicators for the WIOA programs are as follows:

##### **Title I - Adult Measures**

- Employment rate in second and fourth quarter post exit
- Median earnings in second quarter post exit
- Credential attainment rate



- Measurable skill gains

#### **Title I - Dislocated Worker Measures**

- Employment rate in second and fourth quarter post exit
- Median earnings in second quarter post exit
- Credential attainment rate
- Measurable skill gains

#### **Title I - Youth Measures**

- Placement in employment, training or education activities in second and fourth quarter post exit
- Median earnings in second quarter post exit
- Credential attainment rate
- Measurable skill gains

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

- Employment rate in second and fourth quarter post exit
- Median earnings in second quarter post exit

#### **Title II - Adult Education and Literacy Measures**

- Employment rate in second and fourth quarter post exit
- Median earnings in second quarter post exit
- Credential attainment rate
- Measurable skill gains

#### **Title IV - Vocational Rehabilitation Measures**

- Employment rate in second and fourth quarter post exit
- Median earnings in second quarter post exit
- Credential attainment rate
- Measurable skill gains

#### **Effectiveness in Serving Employers (implemented beginning in PY2024)**

- Retention with the Same Employer

### **C. USE OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) WAGE RECORD DATA**

Explain how the State will meet the requirements to utilize quarterly UI wage records for performance accountability, evaluations, and as a source for workforce and labor market

information, consistent with Federal and State law. (This Operational Planning element applies to core programs.)

Per federal workforce grant reporting requirements, State Wage Records are used in the calculation of programs' quarterly common measure performance outcomes. New Jersey used the Wage Record Interstate System (WRIS) to more accurately evaluate and determine program performance outcomes through December 31, 2019. Effective January 1, 2020 NJDOL entered into the State Wage Interchange System (SWIS) Data Sharing Agreement and began utilizing SWIS Clearinghouse to facilitate the exchange of interstate wage data.

UI Wage records are used at the state and local level to check for employment outcomes and to validate data that is recorded at the time of initial employment after exit. These records also support labor market trends and more importantly, if customers are obtaining training-related employment upon exit from program.

State UI wage record data are utilized as a critical component of Eligible Training Provider (ETP) outcomes and in WIOA evaluations when assessing employment and wage outcomes for program participants. State UI wage records may also be shared with outside entities, under specific data sharing agreements, to support the evaluation of public programs and services offered in New Jersey. Further, New Jersey uses state UI wage records to support research projects under the auspices of the state longitudinal data system, the New Jersey State Data System (NJSDS) housed at Rutgers University – Heldrich Center for Workforce Development.

#### D. PRIVACY SAFEGUARDS

Describe the privacy safeguards incorporated in the State's workforce development system, including safeguards required by section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g) and other applicable Federal laws.

As highlighted throughout this plan, a priority of NJDOL and the SETC is to expand access to data, including the integration of data across One Stop Career Center programs, as well as the use of technology to expand services to individuals. As these data and technology investments and activities expand, privacy safeguards remain central to these efforts. NJDOL continues to support and enforce federal and state policies pertaining to the handling of personally identifiable information for both hard and electronic records. NJDOL seeks to balance expansion of access to and use of data through new technology and systems with ensuring the ongoing confidentiality of information. As we seek to support more data sharing, strong policies and procedures are more important than ever and include the (1) development of strong and clear state-level policies related to privacy safeguards, (2) the development and expansion of procedures and processes related to supporting access to data systems, including specifically AOSOS, and (3) development and monitoring of local level policies related to privacy safeguards.

##### **State-Level Privacy Policies**

NJDOL has continuously had policy in place supporting the protection of Personally Identifiable Information (PII): <https://www.nj.gov/labor/wioa/documents/techassistance/NJWIN%206-15.pdf>. All state and local level activities act in accordance with the provisions laid out in this

policy. This policy has helped to guide NJDOL efforts, as we seek to expand both access to data and services through technology.

Policies around competitive procurement of One Stop Career Services providers have also necessitated expanding AOSOS access to personnel outside of NJDOL and our local county agencies. NJDOL developed new procedures and protocols for providing access to AOSOS as a result of this need, outlined in NJDOL's Access to America's One Stop Operating System (AOSOS) for Partners and Vendors in New Jersey American Job Centers (WD-PY23-7). All individuals obtaining access to AOSOS must undergo a background check, participate in a Cornerstones of Confidentiality training, as well as provide signed agreements committing to the confidentiality of information. As we continue to expand access to information and data over the course of this state plan period, this balance of access and privacy is one that NJDOL and the SETC will continue to prioritize in our work.

Additionally, requirements related to the General Education Provisions Act are covered by Department of Education funded programs as indicated in the definition of applicable program in 20 U.S.C.S. 1221.

The NJDVRS CASE SERVICES POLICY MANUAL, covers privacy in Section 1.7, Confidentiality and the Release of Information. Training is provided to every counselor to ensure understanding of confidentiality and ethical standards and practices, especially related to new challenges in use of social media, new partnerships, and data sharing.

Furthermore, the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired is a division of the New Jersey Department of Human Services, and as such, is subject to comply with all privacy safeguards enumerated in Administrative Order: 2.01 (Confidential Information and Client Records) that was issued on March 17, 2016. This includes compliance with all privacy safeguards established in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). The Department of Human Services is considered a covered entity under HIPAA, and all divisions follow those stringent privacy protocols. Pursuant to N.J.A.C 10:91-5.6, participant information maintained by the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI) shall not be released without the written consent of the participant, or upon Court Order. A participant may authorize the release of confidential information and medical records to or from the agency by signing the "Authorization to Disclose Information Form," consenting to the release of information.

### **Local-Level Privacy Policies**

In addition to following state level privacy policies, all local areas are required to develop and document policies that ensure compliance with the federal requirements. As part of its regular monitoring, the Program Compliance Unit will verify that these policies have been developed and are being implemented. Additionally, the WIOA Program Oversight and Development (POD) team has incorporated privacy safeguards into the professional development that is provided to all One-Stop staff. Training and monitoring reflect the most current statutes and interpretations to ensure that all staff are regularly made aware of, and comply with, the provisions of the law.

## **7. PRIORITY OF SERVICE FOR VETERANS.**

### **A. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT THE PRIORITY OF SERVICE PROVISIONS FOR COVERED PERSONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE JOBS FOR**

VETERANS ACT, CODIFIED AT SECTION 4215 OF 38 U.S.C., WHICH APPLIES TO ALL EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS FUNDED IN WHOLE OR IN PART BY THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR.

B. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL MONITOR PRIORITY OF SERVICE PROVISIONS FOR VETERANS.

C. DESCRIBE THE TRIAGE AND REFERRAL PROCESS FOR ELIGIBLE VETERANS AND OTHER POPULATIONS DETERMINED ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE SERVICES FROM THE JOBS FOR VETERANS STATE GRANTS (JVSG) PROGRAM'S DISABLED VETERANS' OUTREACH PROGRAM (DVOP) SPECIALIST/CONSOLIDATED POSITION.

All covered persons in accordance with the requirements of the Jobs for Veterans Act, receive priority of service in the One-Stop system. In practice, this means serving Veterans immediately and ensuring that they are prioritized for receiving individualized career services and training services, as needed and identified. Customers identifying as veterans and eligible persons are asked about length of service and potential barriers to employment as part of the intake process. Veterans and eligible persons meeting eligibility requirements and possessing a USDOL-VETS designated significant barrier to employment must be connected to a Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program specialist for services and case management immediately.

Priority of service provisions for covered persons is embedded in the eligibility guidance provided to Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs). In addition, LWDBs are also required to develop their own priority of service policy that meets the requirements codified at section 4215 of 38 U.S.C.

NJDOL has established guidance on how to determine covered persons and covered persons with significant barriers early in the triage and intake process within the One Stop Career Centers. This involves cross training all One Stop staff with particular emphasis on staff responsible for triage on the importance of immediately serving and connecting Veterans to services and supports. There is and will continue to be prominent signage in all One Stop Career Centers informing customers that covered persons receive priority of service.

Through the Jobs for Veterans State Grant, Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists help veterans and eligible persons with significant barriers to employment successfully navigate the job market and receive the support they need to return to the workforce. When a covered person comes into the One Stop Career Center, they are triaged at intake to determine if they have a significant barrier to employment. One Stop Career Centers utilize a standard form to determine if barriers exist and if a veteran and/or eligible person should be referred to a DVOP for coaching. In addition, eligible individuals should also be screened for eligibility to other workforce programs to ensure that they have access to the widest range of services possible.

Priority of service monitoring for veterans is integrated in the service delivery monitoring and will be a routine part of monitoring activity going forward. Monitoring will involve both reviewing extracts of records and sampling. The monitoring team will work closely with the Data Validation unit to ensure accurate data entry around priority of service for veterans. As described elsewhere in this plan, more regular reporting from local areas and routine state-level review of reports will also improve this monitoring.

## 8. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners), will comply with section 188 of WIOA (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, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities. This also must include a description of compliance through providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. Describe the State's one-stop center certification policy, particularly the accessibility criteria.

As our systems have adapted to Covid-19, accessibility has taken on new meaning – increasingly NJDOL is considering accessibility not just in terms of physical location but also with virtual technology and in the virtual world. This both opens up access in new ways and offers new barriers to individuals with disabilities. Many individuals with disabilities have been severely impacted by the pandemic and some may face higher barriers in returning to in-person activities. These are factors that we will continue to explore, using data to unpack the nuances and variety of experiences individuals with disabilities face, and address in our strategies moving forward. In February 2026, SITEIMPROVE training will be provided to all staff, to ensure that websites are accessible to users with disabilities, which in turn benefits all users and ensures compliance with organizational and legal policies.

NJDOL has created a system that is responsive to the needs of customers with disabilities. All One Stop Career Centers are in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act standards. NJDOL is fortunate to have the WIOA Title IV Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) integrated in the department with WIOA Title I and WIOA Title III programs. NJDOL conducts annual monitoring visits to ensure the accessibility of all One Stop Career Centers, including ensuring that assistive technologies remain in place to support individuals. Our goal is to ensure that individuals with disabilities receive access to the broadest range of services possible and targeted to their individual interests and needs no matter how they enter the public workforce system. Specifically, our annual onsite monitoring includes reviews of (1) completion of annual One Stop accessibility assessments in the local area, (2) efforts to ensure universal access, resources and services to individuals with disabilities, and (3) procedures for identifying applicants who need assistance during any One Stop support, including individuals with disabilities.

DVRS is a core participant in the One Stop system and maintains an active presence in the 17 Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) as well as on the State Employment and Training Commission (SETC). NJDOL uses the expertise and resources of DVRS to inform accessibility to One Stop Career Centers and in service delivery to customers. Specifically, the SETC is connected to the two State Rehabilitation Councils, outlined in prior sections.

Through the recommendations of the Councils, policies and practices are examined to ensure that One Stop services are fully accessible to all, including access to physical location, services, information, and technology. Members from both Councils assisted in the creation of an Accessibility Checklist that has been integrated into the SETC's One Stop Career Center Certification guidance established by the SETC, LWDBs are required to conduct Accessibility Assessments as part of their annual One Stop Career Center certifications annually. The

Accessibility Checklist is used to analyze the competency of a One Stop Career Center in the areas of: staff training and knowledge; employer engagement; customer focus; quality of programs; and technology. The current guidance is being updated and will be released formally in March 2026. **"DRAFT Assessment of One-Stop Career Center Programmatic and Physical Accessibility .pdf"**

The Councils also seek to educate and inform their members and their organizations on critical disability workforce issues. The relationship between the two State Rehabilitation Councils and the SETC provides a platform for ongoing conversations to ensure that the full array of One Stop services continue to be available to individuals with disabilities, not only through connections to Title IV services, but also through co-enrollment with other One Stop Career Center programs such as Title III or Title I.

The SETC and the State agencies serving people with disabilities also seek to educate and inform their members and their organizations on critical disability issues and work together to ensure that the full array of One Stop services are available to individuals with disabilities.

Other specific strategies include the following:

- Participation by DVRS leadership and staff in all of the NJDOL efforts to coordinate services to all customers.
- Participation by DVRS leadership and staff with NJDOL Office of Research and Information committees that identify key industry sectors, in order to ensure consideration of employment for people with disabilities in sector planning activities.
- Availability of Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI)'s first point of contact team to support efforts at the One Stop Career Centers. CBVI is not on-site at all One Stop Career Centers but is able to help bridge individuals to their services, as well as provide expertise and technical assistance where needed in serving persons with disabilities.

In addition to developing shared strategies through connections across programs via the state workforce board, SETC, and New Jersey's LWDBs. NJDOL will continue to strengthen training opportunities for front-line staff in One Stop Career Centers to support individuals with disabilities. In addition, the state encourages LWDBs to invest local dollars in professional development opportunities that support and strengthen the accessibility of One Stop services by developing a shared understanding of the services available to individuals with disabilities and best practices for engaging individuals who have unique barriers to engagement.

As NJDOL continues to build up common training opportunities across state- and local-level staff working in One Stop Career Centers, DVRS and CBVI will help to support training opportunities to support and further institutionalize accessibility practices in our One Stop Career Centers.

#### 9. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners) will ensure that each one-stop center is able to meet the needs of English language learners, such as through established procedures, staff training, resources, and

other materials. Describe how English language learners will be made aware of the opportunity to enroll and/or co-enroll in all the core programs for which they are eligible.

New Jersey's One Stop Career Centers are each equipped with tools and staff to support the needs of individuals with limited English proficiency. Bi-lingual Spanish/English staff are available in nearly every One Stop. Depending on the composition of the local population, staff bi-lingual in other languages are available to serve non-native English speakers. NJDOL also provides an on-demand translation tool through a vendor who provides bi-lingual translators in over 100 languages. NJDOL also provides written information in multiple languages for distribution at One Stop Career Centers and through the department's website.

Computer labs at One Stop Career Centers (often blended with the Resource Centers), called the Workforce Learning Links offer extensive computer-based learning tools and are the state's main effort to provide basic skills, literacy, and English as Second Language training to WIOA customers on a drop-in, open-access basis. Additional tools such as Aztec software system, are also utilized in the One Stop Career Centers, to help support access. If a customer is determined in need of these services, they are referred directly to WIOA Title II Adult Education services for AEFLA related services including English as a Second/Other Language and related services. One Stop Career Centers, in many areas, also have strong partnerships with local libraries and community-based organizations such as Literacy Volunteers of America and agencies that focus on services to English language learners.

All One-Stop Career Centers conduct English Language Acquisition (ELA) Testing. In addition, the following procedure is followed to ensure proper service delivery and support to English language learners.

- Update customer assessment procedures at intake to reflect additional allowable assessments;
- Assess customers entering the One Stop with National Reporting System (NRS) approved testing instruments for career pathways/credentials, educational needs, and program participation barriers;
- Utilize CASAS Reading GOALS as the initial and primary ABE assessment instrument to determine 3 client referrals; (NOTE: If a customer has already completed high school, NJDOL recommends the CASAS appraisal tool for Reading and Math to determine a particular career pathway or credential program.)
- Utilize Reading GOALS Appraisal, and/or the Math GOALS Appraisal in eTests, if CASAS pretesting is only being conducted to obtain the grade level for entrance into Career and Technical Education (CTE) or another program; further, utilize Reading GOALS when local One Stops are assessing grade level for entrance into a Career and Technical Education (CTE) or similar program.
- Continue to regularly enter CASAS scores into America's One-Stop Operating System (AOSOS), and in accordance with the updated intake procedures, identify how assessment scores will be shared among WIOA Title I areas and Title II providers; and (NOTE: Consideration must be given to the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act.) Upon entry into AOSOS, the customer can be further assessed for co-enrollment opportunities for all WIOA and state funded employment and training programs.

Additionally, Title II providers will receive a policy surrounding use of federal funds for marketing with the goal of assessing their communities' needs and ensuring Title II services for English Language Learners are accessible and available in several languages so that potential co-enrollment and referrals can be made from the One Stop system to Title II providers.

#### IV. COORDINATION WITH STATE PLAN PROGRAMS

Describe the methods used for joint planning and coordination among the core programs, and with the required one-stop partner programs and other programs and activities included in the Unified or Combined State Plan.

NJDOL and the SETC continue to work closely with the Garden State Employment and Training Association (GSETA) and our Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) to identify and support opportunities for strengthening New Jersey's public workforce systems together, in alignment with broader economic development goals.

The DRAFT version of this modification will be shared with the NJ State Employment & Training Commission for feedback, especially from employers, as well as with our partner state agencies, local workforce development boards, higher education and DOE.

Additionally, a public comment period will be conducted for this Plan. The Plan will be issued for public comment in March 2026 and notice of the public comment period was sent to state agencies, partner organizations, advocacy groups, and interested parties. This plan will be updated to include those comments in the Appendix when the comment period is complete.

#### V. COMMON ASSURANCES (FOR ALL CORE PROGRAMS)

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The State has established a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a State Board or local board member, or the entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts;	Yes
2. The State has established a policy to provide to the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of State Boards and local boards, and information regarding activities of State Boards and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes;	Yes
3. The lead State agencies with optimal policy-making authority and responsibility for the administration of core programs reviewed and commented on the appropriate operational	Yes



The State Plan must include	Include
planning elements of the Unified or Combined State Plan, and approved the elements as serving the needs of the populations served by such programs;	
<p>4. (a) The State obtained input into the development of the Unified or Combined State Plan and provided an opportunity for comment on the plan by representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administering the core programs, required one-stop partners and the other Combined Plan programs (if included in the State Plan), other primary stakeholders, including other organizations that provide services to individuals with barriers to employment, and the general public, and that the Unified or Combined State Plan is available and accessible to the general public;</p> <p>(b) The State provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by the State Board, including State agency official(s) for the Unemployment Insurance Agency if such official(s) is a member of the State Board;</p>	Yes
5. The State has established, in accordance with WIOA section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments made for the core programs to carry out workforce development activities;	Yes
6. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with uniform administrative requirements in this Act, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA section 184(a)(3);	Yes
7. The State has taken the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA section 188,	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
Nondiscrimination, as applicable;	
8. The Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program;	Yes
9. The State will pay an appropriate share (as defined by the State board) of the costs of carrying out section 116, from funds made available through each of the core programs;	Yes
10. The State has a one-stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all one-stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA);	Yes
11. Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate; and	Yes
12. Priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses is provided in accordance with 38 USC 4215 in all workforce preparation, development or delivery of programs or services funded directly, in whole or in part, by the Department of Labor.	Yes

## VI. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

The State must address all program-specific requirements in this section for the WIOA core programs regardless of whether the State submits either a Unified or Combined State Plan.

### PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE I-B

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following with respect to activities carried out under subtitle B—

#### A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

##### 1. REGIONS AND LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS

##### A. IDENTIFY THE REGIONS AND THE LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS DESIGNATED IN THE STATE

#### **New Jersey Workforce Regions**

Working in partnership with NJDOL, the SETC adopted three regional designation options as part of New Jersey’s Blueprint for Talent Development in June 2015. These designations were codified in SETC Policy Resolution #2015-04 which resolved that three (3) workforce planning regions be designated in New Jersey: North Region, Central Region, and South Region. These have remained New Jersey’s regions and are highlighted in the Regional Designation map below.

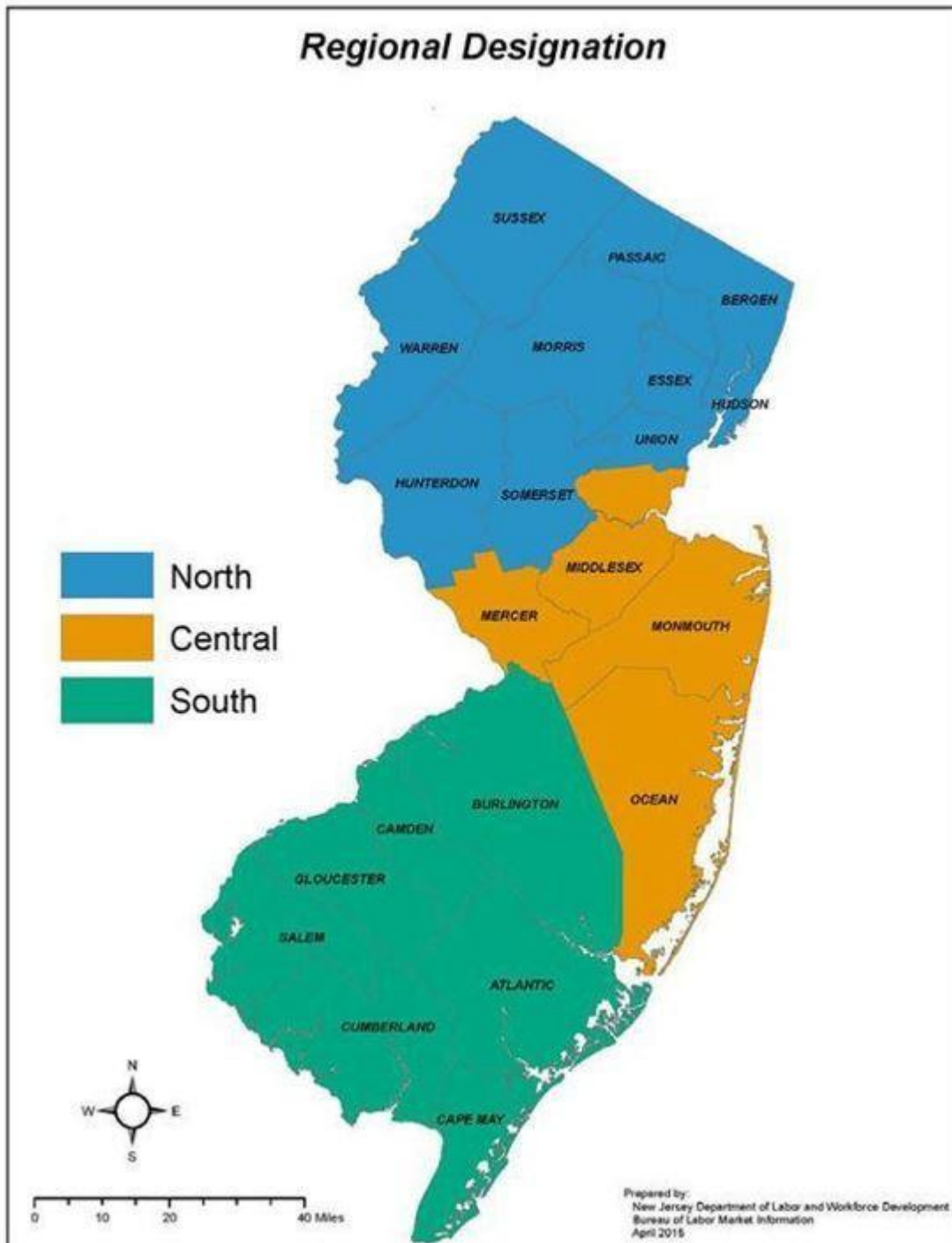
**New Jersey Local Workforce Development Areas**

The 17 Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) in New Jersey were designated after reviewing county areas, population size, and the factors and process for initial local area designation described below in Section VI(a)(1)(B) of this plan. In 2022, the Morris-Sussex-Warren area became known as the Workforce Development Board of Northwest New Jersey, though the local area designation remains the same.

The SETC and NJDOL took corrective action in 2022 to merge the Hudson County and Jersey City boards into the single Hudson County WDB, based on guidance from the US Department of Labor.

These LWDBs and regions are highlighted in the table and map below.

North Region	Central Region	South Region
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bergen County</li> <li>• Essex County</li> <li>• Hudson County/Jersey City</li> <li>• City of Newark</li> <li>• Passaic County</li> <li>• Union County</li> <li>• Greater Raritan (Somerset-Hunterdon Counties)</li> <li>• Northwest NJ (Morris-Sussex-Warren Counties)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mercer County</li> <li>• Middlesex County</li> <li>• Monmouth County</li> <li>• Ocean County</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Atlantic County</li> <li>• Burlington County</li> <li>• Camden County</li> <li>• Gloucester County</li> <li>• Cumberland-Salem-Cape May Counties</li> </ul>



As required under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014, the State Employment and Training Commission designated Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) for a period of initial designation from July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2017. The process for designation is outlined in SETC Policy #2015-02 and detailed in the next section of this plan.

B. DESCRIBE THE PROCESS AND POLICY USED FOR DESIGNATING LOCAL AREAS, INCLUDING PROCEDURES FOR DETERMINING WHETHER THE LOCAL AREA MET THE CRITERIA FOR “PERFORMED SUCCESSFULLY” AND “SUSTAINED FISCAL INTEGRITY” IN ACCORDANCE WITH 106(B)(2) AND (3) OF WIOA. DESCRIBE THE PROCESS USED FOR IDENTIFYING REGIONS AND PLANNING REGIONS UNDER SECTION 106(A) OF WIOA. THIS MUST INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION

## OF HOW THE STATE CONSULTED WITH THE LOCAL BOARDS AND CHIEF ELECTED OFFICIALS IN IDENTIFYING THE REGIONS

As required under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014, the State Employment and Training Commission designated Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) for a period of initial designation from July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2017. The process is outlined in SETC Policy #2015-02 and described below.

### **LWDA Designation Process**

The SETC provided local areas with an Initial Designation Request Letter Template for local board signature and approval by Local Elected Officials in October 2015. Local areas submitted signed request letter with local elected official approval to SETC on or before December 28, 2015. After receiving Initial Designation Request letters, SETC and NJDOL verified local area performance and fiscal integrity for PY 2012 and PY 2013.

### **Performance Success**

For the purposes of initial designation, an area was determined to have performed successfully if:

the local area has met or exceeded all common measures under WIA in the two preceding years, Program Years 2012 and 2013. To meet the measure, the local area must have achieved at least 80 percent of the performance target. If the local area did not meet one or more of the common measures, the LWDA subsequently created a performance improvement plan or corrective action plan that was approved by the SETC, and the LWDA followed through on the planned improvements and subsequently met or exceeded that measure in the following program year.

### **Fiscal Integrity**

An area was determined to have sustained fiscal integrity if the Secretary of the United States Department of Labor has not made a formal determination, during either of the last 2 consecutive years preceding the determination regarding such integrity, that either the grant recipient or the administrative entity of the area mis-expended funds provided under 29 U.S.C. 3151 through 3181 (Chapter 32, Subchapter 1, Part B, of WIOA) (or, if applicable, Title I of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 as in effect prior to the effective date of such part B of this subchapter) due to willful disregard of the requirements of the provision involved, gross negligence, or failure to comply with accepted standards of administration.

### **Region Designation Process**

After designation of LWDAs, the state-led WIOA Governance and Planning Workgroup, comprised of LWDB directors and SETC members examined the requirements of WIOA, the labor market areas and regional economic development areas, and resources in the State, and considered the potential opportunities and challenges involved in creating regional partnerships.

Working in partnership with NJDOL, the SETC adopted three regional designation options as part of New Jersey's Blueprint for Talent Development in June 2015. Presentations of these three regional designation options were subsequently provided to the New Jersey Association of Counties, LWDB Chairs and Directors, One Stop Operators, and Local Chief Elected Officials at

meetings held throughout the state. The regional designations presentation was made available for written public comment. The SETC Governance Committee reviewed the workgroup recommendations, the feedback provided in the regional workforce meetings, and public comment received. The committee proposed and SETC subsequently approved SETC Policy Resolution #2015-04.

### **Initial LWDA and Region Designations**

The SETC initially approved 18 local area requests and 17 Local Workforce Development Boards on March 29, 2016, under SETC Policy Resolution #2016-09.

The SETC also approved SETC Policy Resolution #2016-02 outlining the process for subsequent local area designations.

#### **C. PROVIDE THE APPEALS PROCESS AND POLICY REFERRED TO IN SECTION 106(B)(5) OF WIOA RELATING TO DESIGNATION OF LOCAL AREAS**

Any unit of general local government (including a combination of such units) or grant recipient that requests but is not granted designation of an area as a local area may appeal that determination pursuant to the procedure set forth at N.J.A.C. 12:42-3.11 (Appeals), as follows:

- If a local area and/or local board disagrees with the corrective action and/or penalty determination of the Assistant Commissioner under N.J.A.C. 12:42-3.10, the local area and/or local board may submit an appeal to the Commissioner in writing no later than 30 days after having received notice of the corrective action and/or penalty determination being appealed.
- All appeals submitted to the Commissioner in writing shall state the basis for the appeal and shall include any documentary evidence that the local area and/or local board would like the Commissioner to review prior to rendering his or her decision.
- The Commissioner shall review the documentary evidence presented by the local area and/or local board and shall request any additional information or conduct any investigation necessary to render a decision.
- The Commissioner's decision shall be based on the written record and shall be rendered within 30 days after receipt of the appeal.
- If a local area and/or local board disagrees with the decision of the Commissioner, it may appeal that decision to the Secretary of the United States Department of Labor under 20 CFR 667.650(b) not later than 30 days after the local area receives the decision of the Commissioner.

#### **D. PROVIDE THE APPEALS PROCESS AND POLICY REFERRED TO IN SECTION 121(H)(2)(E) OF WIOA RELATING TO DETERMINATIONS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING**

The SETC and NJDOL worked with LWDBs, One Stop Operators, and One Stop Career Center partners to create a State Funding Mechanism for Infrastructure Costs, SETC Policy Resolution #2017-03. The finalized policy details an appeals process in compliance with WIOA requirements. In addition, NJDOL policies outline specific requirements related to developing

### **Appeals Process**

The appeal process includes the following.

- If a local area and/or local board, partner program or Chief Elected Official (CEO) disagrees with the State determination of the local area infrastructure budget, the local area and/or local board may submit an appeal to NJDOL's Commissioner in writing no later than 30 days after having received notice of the corrective action and/or penalty determination being appealed.
- All appeals submitted to the Commissioner in writing shall state the basis for the appeal and shall include any documentary evidence that the local area and/or local board would like the Commissioner to review prior to rendering his or her decision.
- The Commissioner shall review the documentary evidence presented by the local area and/or local board and shall request any additional information or conduct any investigation necessary to render a decision.
- The Commissioner's decision shall be based on the written record and shall be rendered within 30 days after receipt of the appeal.

### **Basis for Appeal**

An LWDB, partner program, or CEO may appeal the State determination based on the following:

- The determination is inconsistent with the proportionate share requirements of 20 CFR 678.735(a);
- The determination is inconsistent with the cost contribution limitations in § 678.735(b);
- The determination was inconsistent with the cost contributions caps as described in 20 CFR 678.738.

## 2. STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES

### A. PROVIDE STATE POLICIES OR GUIDANCE FOR THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM AND FOR USE OF STATE FUNDS FOR WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES

The SETC and NJDOL both help to support the development of state-level guidance for supporting the implementation of WIOA activities in New Jersey. The SETC and NJDOL coordinate these activities to ensure the consistency of state-level policy. State-level policy provides guidance that defines how specific structures and mechanisms operate in New Jersey, further disseminates and clarifies federal-level policies, and provides more specific guidance related to the implementation of specific WIOA activities.

### **State Policy Dissemination and Access**

As new or revised State policies or guidance are established, they are shared with local areas through the following methods:

- Policies adopted by the SETC are posted on the SETC website at <http://njsetc.net/njsetc/policy/resolutions/> and notice of their availability is provided to local areas via e-mail. Information on new policies is also provided at regular meetings held by NJDOL and SETC with Local Workforce Development Board directors and staff. Regia; r
- NJDOL's Program Oversight and Development team, which works within the Workforce Development Division, includes a dedicated policy team that supports the development of additional state-level policies that offer guidance around the implementation of WIOA, in alignment with federal policies. These policies are issued through guidance documents called New Jersey Workforce Innovation Notices (WINs). NJDOL distributes these policies to LWDBs, who are responsible for further disseminating these policies to their local area stakeholders. All NJWINs are published on NJDOL's website at <https://www.nj.gov/labor/wioa/resources/>.

NJDOL and SETC engage in regular reviews to determine what policies and procedures need to be updated, also identify and develop new policies based on federal priorities and local area needs.

### **Recent Key NJDOL Policies**

Since the 2020 State Plan, NJDOL has focused on policies and guidance supporting local governance and building strategic alignment in local workforce development areas. This has included new policies focused on:

- Local Governance (WD-PY21-6), which outlines the requirements and obligations of LWDBs, Chief Elected Officials, Fiscal Agent, and other key partners in overseeing the WIOA-funded system.
- One Stop Partners (WD-PY22-3.1), Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) (WD-PY-22-4.2), **and** Infrastructure Funding Agreements (WD-PY23-4) which outline the ways that partners work together in the One Stop System. New Jersey includes a number of state partners as required and recommended partners, beyond those specifically required by WIOA.
- Competitive Procurement (WD-PY22-5.1), providing a comprehensive overview of Title I service procurement expectations LWDBs in soliciting and contracting for One Stop, Career Services, and Youth Service providers.
- Budget Guidelines and Requirements (WD-PY22-16), supporting LWDBs in developing budgets that support the full range of capacities expected of the board, related to both local governance and service delivery. This policy was issued in draft form to pilot new tools for PY24 Budgeting and will be revised for PY25.
- Functional Alignment in American Job Centers (WD-PY23-3) describing functional work structures and offering guidance for suggested functions in One Stop networks, without prescribing a specific staffing model, the proportion of resources that must be devoted to each function, or staff titles or positions performing specific functions.
- Service Integration and Co-Enrollment (WD-PY23-5), providing specific guidance on the role of Local Workforce Development Boards in supporting integration of services



through the development of strategies and supports that facilitate co-enrollment of various federal and state workforce programs with Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth services. The policy calls for co-enrollment practices to be in place by July 1, 2024 but was issued in draft form to allow for evolving conversation among USDOL, LWDBs, and other stakeholders.

More recent policy issuances from 2024, 2025 are listed below and can be found on our technical resource page, <https://www.nj.gov/labor/wioa/resources>

WD-PY25 #	Subject	IssueDate	Category
25-1	Payment of Profit	07/10/25	Fiscal
25-2	Poverty Guidelines and Lower Living Standard Income Levels	08/01/25	Operations (Rescinded)
25-3	TEGL No. 08-21, Change 2	08/20/25	Operations
25-4	TEN No. 01-25	08/20/25	Operations
25-5	Supporting Basic Education and Literacy Services in New Jersey's One Stop Career Centers	09/26/25	Operations
25-6.1	Individual Training Accounts	11/21/25	Operations
25-7	PY24 Policy Updates and Listing of Current Policies	10/09/25	Operations
25-8	Required Local Policies	11/13/25	Admin
25-9	Triage	12/18/25	Operations
25-10	Poverty Levels and Lower Living Standard Income Levels	2/9/26	Operations
25-11	Required Publication of Legal Notices	2/11/26	Admin
25-12	Supplemental Wage Reporting Guidance	2/12/26	Operations

**2024**

WD-PY24 #	Subject	IssueDate	Category
24-1	Sanctions Procedures - Corrective Actions, Penalties, and Appeals	07/16/24	Admin
24-2	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and WorkFirst New Jersey (WFNJ) Budget Guidelines and Requirements		

**Additional Policy Resources and Supports**

In addition to formal policies, New Jersey worked in partnership with the Garden State Employment and Training Association (GSETA) to develop and offer a series of trainings on local governance, reinforcing the priorities of the policies listed above. All trainings were offered as self-paced webinars. To complement the development of new policies and resources, NJDOL increased the capacity of its monitoring, oversight, and technical assistance functions. For PY2022, monitoring focused on local policies; governance agreements; transparency of LWDB business and activities; and procurement of One Stop and youth services providers. The information collected from monitoring supported LWDBs in improving programs, governance, and operations, and also informed the provision of technical assistance and the development of policies by NJDOL.

Initiatives regarding resources and supports include the following from our WIOA Program Oversight and Development Unit include training sessions: The 5p's of an Effective One Stop Operator, RISE - Regional Improvement & Strategy Exchange Sessions, Quarterly Reports, One Stop On-site Meetings and Tours, ES Essentials Training, and our Monthly Leadership meeting that includes all providers and service delivery partners.

Technical Assistance and Training is being provided in the following areas: Eligibility Training, Measurable Skills Gains Training, Youth Services, Service in Quarter, VSC; Transition to Simpli Gov, and Youth Work Experience.

Program Monitoring for PY 24 and PY25 include, annually, Web Review, Service Delivery, and Onsite Program Accessibility; in addition to MOU/IFA, WDB Certification, inclusive of OSCC Certification (SETC), Required Policies, Procurement, Governance, and Service Delivery.

B. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE INTENDS TO USE GOVERNOR'S SET ASIDE FUNDING FOR MANDATORY AND DISCRETIONARY ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING HOW THE STATE WILL CONDUCT EVALUATIONS OF TITLE I ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES.

**Governor's Set Aside**

The Governor reserves 15 percent of the funds from the WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth funds to carry out statewide activities. The remaining Title I program funds are distributed based on the WIOA formulas highlighted above to Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs).

The Governor's reserve supports NJDOL and SETC in carrying out their required functions. This includes activities related to fiscal and programmatic oversight, technical assistance, state policy development, as well as, specifically, research and evaluation activities. Specifically, these funds support staff working across the Office of Finance and Accounting, the Office of Research and Information, the Office of Internal Audit, and the Workforce Development Division.

In addition, the Title I Program Governor's Reserve supports additional state-level workforce development priorities, aligned with activities highlighted in this plan, including:

- ***Additional Youth Investments:*** New Jersey supports expanded opportunities for in-school and out-of-school youth through support for special programs that offer unique opportunities for expanding career and training opportunities for young people 16-24. Key initiatives include New Jersey's Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and investments in the New Jersey Youth Corps (NJYC) which blends community service learning with academic and career development opportunities. New Jersey remains committed to creating a diversity of entry points for youth career development across the state.
- ***Industry Partnerships:*** As highlighted in this plan, Industry Partnerships offer a key strategy for matching and developing the talent and skill needs of industry sectors and New Jersey workers. This focused work on developing sustained career pathway opportunities to develop New Jersey's talent will continue to be a high priority across the four years of this plan.
- ***Workforce Professional Development:*** As New Jersey's moves forward to integrate services across core, required, and additional state workforce programs, NJDOL and GSETA are working together through the NJDOL-GSETA training partnership to support a joint training agenda that deepens and expands the knowledge of workforce development services and practices. Over the next four years, support for cross-training is a key priority as we seek to operationalize a more coordinated public workforce system in the state of New Jersey.
- ***Expanded Access Points:*** Another priority for these reserve funds is investment in initiatives and resources that expand access points beyond the front door of our One Stop Career Centers, this includes investment in virtual services and resources, as well as support for mobile One-Stops and public library programs.
- ***Other Program Priorities:*** In addition, NJDOL and the SETC support other innovative programs through the Governor's Reserve, specifically focusing on increased access for underserved populations and launching new employer partnerships in emerging industries, (e.g., clean energy), business growth, and ensuring New Jersey residents have access to the best employment opportunities.

## **Evaluations**

NJDOL has created a multi-year plan for its research and evaluation activities which includes capacity-building at the State level. Since 1988, the State has maintained a longstanding research partnership with the Heldrich Center at Rutgers University due to its long history in using the data and because of Rutgers' status as a public institution. Since that time, through multiple federal Workforce Data Quality Initiatives (WDQIs) and State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) grants, the State established a multi-agency data-use agreement to establish the New Jersey State Data System (NJSDS), formerly branded as NJEEDS. This longitudinal data system is housed at the Heldrich Center. NJSDS includes data not only from NJDOL, but also the NJDOE, NJ Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, and the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA).

NJDOL plans to use NJSDS and other data to support evaluations of the performance of federal- and State- supported education and job training programs by instituting a plan to conduct evaluations and to reinforce a culture within the State to make data-informed decisions. Further, NJDOL proposes to conduct multiple evaluations to leverage the relatively new administrative data sources focusing on outcomes related to job training, transition services for persons with disabilities, UI claimants' post-benefit outcomes, and use of apprenticeships.

Through these resources and the collection of data through additional qualitative and quantitative methods, NJDOL conducts targeted evaluation studies of Title I programs in each program year in accordance with WIOA requirements to support learning and continuous improvement of Title I strategies and services.

The Governor's set aside funds have been allocated to support the WIOA Title I evaluation activities for past program years; this will continue for Program Years 2024 and 2025.

C. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL UTILIZE RAPID RESPONSE FUNDS TO RESPOND TO LAYOFFS AND PLANT CLOSINGS AND COORDINATE SERVICES TO QUICKLY AID COMPANIES AND THEIR AFFECTED WORKERS. STATES ALSO SHOULD DESCRIBE ANY LAYOFF AVERSION STRATEGIES THEY HAVE IMPLEMENTED TO ADDRESS AT RISK COMPANIES AND WORKERS.

### **Rapid Response Funds**

NJDOL uses an integrated Business Services Team to deliver Rapid Response activities. Business Services Representatives (BSRs), who are already connected to employers, help to coordinate Rapid Response on-site assistance to employers who either request such services, through the Federal WARN Act, or are mandated to use these services through the New Jersey WARN Act. The team provides appropriate information, referrals and counseling to workers who are subject to plant closings or mass layoffs.

The Rapid Response Team, when applicable, will have an initial meeting with employers who are planning a layoff event. Staff will meet with management and/or union personnel (if appropriate) to develop a plan to serve the company's workforce. This initial meeting identifies the services to be offered and the service delivery dates. The team works across programs and partners to facilitate services offered to affected employees. Information shared includes Unemployment Insurance, Re-employment Services, Training Assistance, and additional services and resources available. State staff often works in conjunction with LWDBs to conduct outreach and make affected employees aware of services, including the following:

Unemployment Insurance	Explanation of benefit calculations and eligibility requirements Assistance in how to file an online or telephone claim Review information on dependency benefits, partial claims, direct deposit and taxes. Explain how payments would or would not affect claim including severance, PTO, 401k, pension.
Re-Employment Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-Stop Career Center Registration</li> <li>• Labor Market Information</li> <li>• Referrals to available jobs</li> <li>• Introduction to Career MyCareer.NJ.gov</li> <li>• Referral to Jersey Job Clubs</li> <li>• Résumé Review and Development</li> </ul>
Training Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to state and federal retraining programs including assistance available through New Jersey Community Colleges, WIOA/WDP grant programs and On-the-Job Training</li> </ul>
Additional Customized Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job Search Workshops</li> <li>• Résumé Workshops</li> <li>• Help with job solicitation campaigns</li> <li>• Targeted Job Fair assistance</li> <li>• Registration Forms Completion</li> <li>• Help in deciphering federal/state plant closing requirements</li> <li>• Support for continuing health insurance and similar coverage</li> </ul>

NJDOL's goal is to respond to layoff events in a timely manner and relay actionable information to the affected workers. When NJDOL has sufficient notification of pending layoffs, it can develop a strong and integrated strategy to support affected employees. As an example, when a Nestle plant reported a planned closing in six months, BSRs and NJDOL's Sector Strategies team worked together on solutions. With the Food and Manufacturing sector strategies partnerships, two job fairs were set up for employees who would be affected by the closing even before the layoffs. The Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) participated alongside the job fair to provide services such as resume review and training opportunities. This integrated approach with sufficient lead time resulted in 30 employees filing for unemployment benefits rather than the full 200 who would have been laid off. NJDOL anticipates using this approach whenever

possible and refining it to make elements part of Rapid Response strategies even with a less optimum timeframe.

NJDOL also focuses on layoff aversion and how assistance can be provided to companies contemplating a layoff, through the Layoff Aversion Program. Layoff aversion is about keeping companies in business by providing strategic alternatives to keep workers in their present jobs or quickly move them into comparable new jobs.

Successful layoff aversion strategies employed by the Rapid Response Team have focused on using technology tools to seamlessly transition workers from downsizing companies to growing companies. Workers from downsizing companies are entered into the One-Stop case management system with an identified case number tying them to the layoff event. This creates a ready pool of qualified and dependable candidates for hiring companies to tap.

State funds supplement Rapid Response funds in New Jersey's layoff aversion efforts. For example, UPSKILL is a competitive grant program that reimburses employers for costs associated with training frontline employees. As noted in the previous section, it is anticipated that more state funds will be invested in to assist companies currently at a competitive workforce disadvantage due to changing technology, inefficient operations, and/or poorly trained staff.

Several LWDBs partner on a regular basis with SCORE, a small business mentoring agency, and Small Business Development Centers to offer training to business owners and entrepreneurs. Rapid Response Team members direct appropriate business owners to these resources, and also, when appropriate, advised downsized workers of the opportunity to use their industry expertise or proprietary knowledge to transition from employee to consulting or entrepreneurship.

The Rapid Response Team partners with NJDOL Business Services and Industry Partnerships teams who develop customized solution strategies using private and public sector resources. The following are examples of the private and public sector organizations the BSRs work with to implement layoff aversion strategies:

- Chambers of Commerce
- Industry Trade Associations
- NJ Business & Industry Association
- NJ County College Consortium
- Small Business Development Centers
- State and Local Economic Development Agencies
- Trade Unions

#### D. DESCRIBE THE STATE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES TO PROVIDE RAPID RESPONSES IN CASES OF NATURAL DISASTERS INCLUDING COORDINATION WITH FEMA AND OTHER ENTITIES.

In the event of a natural disaster, the state will provide Rapid Response services to impacted businesses and their employees. In the case of significant natural disasters that require FEMA

involvement, New Jersey convenes a State Response Team under the direction of the Office of Emergency Management in the Division of State Police, Department of Law and Public Safety. This team provides a forum for collaboration between state agencies, FEMA and other federal agencies. NJDOL's representative on the State Response Team will be responsible for ensuring strong communication and collaboration between the department's Rapid Response efforts and the work of FEMA. In the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, NJDOL worked closely with FEMA in the delivery of a wide variety of employment related assistance to impacted workers, including the provision of Disaster Unemployment Insurance benefits and the implementation of a National Emergency Grant (NEG). The policies and protocols developed through this collaboration will be used in the event of any additional significant natural disasters.

E. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE PROVIDES EARLY INTERVENTION (E.G., RAPID RESPONSE) AND ENSURES THE PROVISION OF APPROPRIATE CAREER SERVICES TO WORKER GROUPS ON WHOSE BEHALF A TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE (TAA) PETITION HAS BEEN FILED. (SECTION 134(A)(2)(A) AND TAA SECTION 221(A)(2)(A) .) THIS DESCRIPTION MUST INCLUDE HOW THE STATE DISSEMINATES BENEFIT INFORMATION TO PROVIDE WORKERS IN THE GROUPS IDENTIFIED IN THE TAA PETITIONS WITH AN ACCURATE UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROVISION OF TAA BENEFITS AND SERVICES IN SUCH A WAY THAT THEY ARE TRANSPARENT TO THE DISLOCATED WORKER APPLYING FOR THEM (TRADE ACT SEC. 221(A)(2)(A) AND SEC. 225; GOVERNOR-SECRETARY AGREEMENT). DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE FUNDS THAT HAVE BEEN RESERVED FOR RAPID RESPONSE TO PROVIDE SERVICES FOR EVERY WORKER GROUP THAT FILES A TAA PETITION AND HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THE PROVISION OF APPROPRIATE CAREER SERVICE TO WORKERS IN THE GROUPS IDENTIFIED IN THE PETITION (TAA SEC. 221(A)(2)(A)).NOTE: UNTIL THE TAA PROGRAM IS REAUTHORIZED, THE REQUIREMENTS TO PROVIDE RAPID RESPONSE AND APPROPRIATE CAREER SERVICES TO WORKER GROUPS ON WHOSE BEHALF A PETITION HAS BEEN FILED IS NOT APPLICABLE.

Through New Jersey WARN Act, before the first termination of employment occurs, an employer must provide no less than 60 days' advance notice in writing to the following entities:

- Commissioner of NJDOL;
- The chief elected official of the municipality where the establishment is located;
- Each employee whose employment is to be terminated; and
- Any collective bargaining unit of employees at the establishment.

When NJDOL receives a WARN notice, it connects that notice to TAA staff so that that team can research whether the employees are also eligible for TAA assistance. In general, TAA activities mirror Rapid Response programs in providing an integrated array of services to both affected employees and employers.

Strategies that New Jersey employs and plans to employ moving forward include co-enrollment of Trade Act and potential Trade Act affected workers under WIOA Dislocated Worker, in coordination with filing for Unemployment Insurance (UI). This will potentially shorten the time

period for Trade Act affected workers to receive re-training, by jump-starting the process in anticipation of Trade Act certification.

In addition, the TAA Unit has dedicated one staff member to act as a liaison with the Rapid Response team to reach out to companies on whose behalf a TAA petition has been filed. The liaison informs Rapid Response of filed petitions and coordinates a visit to the company. The liaison will attend the event with the Rapid Response team in order to answer potential questions regarding the filed petition. The liaison also attends Rapid Response events for companies that do not currently have a petition filed but which have a high likelihood of being trade affected. The liaison attends these sorts of events in order to investigate and question the company’s leadership as well as the workers in order to determine if a petition should in fact be filed.

## B. ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKERS PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

### 1. WORK-BASED TRAINING MODELS

If the State is utilizing work-based training models (e.g. on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, transitional jobs, and customized training) as part of its training strategy and these strategies are not already discussed in other sections of the plan, describe the State’s strategies for how these models ensure high quality training for both the participant and the employer.

Work-based learning includes a variety of experiences including Youth Work Experience, Transitional Jobs, On-the-Job Training (OJT) experiences, and Apprenticeship opportunities. These services bridge individualized career services and training services, as formally defined in WIOA (20 CFR 680.700-840). A key workforce goal during the Murphy administration has been the expansion of these opportunities. This plan continues and builds on the progress that our state and local programs have made over the last several years.

The development of work-based learning opportunities in New Jersey is centered both at the local and state levels. Ongoing coordination and alignment of programs and services supporting work-based learning within local areas, at the state level, and across state and local teams is a key priority to fully leverage the range of resources offered in New Jersey and to develop and reach more career-seekers and employers with these opportunities.

At the state-level, two teams within the Workforce Development Division lead efforts related to work-based learning, (1) the Office of Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning and (2) the Business Engagement and Sector Strategies teams. The Office of Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning leads efforts to expand and support more work-based learning opportunities in New Jersey through state programs and grant opportunities. The Business Engagement and Sector Strategies team supports the development of more work-based learning opportunities by building partnerships and relationships at the local level and state level with industry, postsecondary partners, and economic development entities. The core state-level investments in work-based learning include the following:

Office of Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning	Business Engagement and Sector Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growing Apprenticeships in Nontraditional Sectors (GAINS)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Industry Partnerships</li> <li>State On-the-Job Training Programs,</li> </ul>



Office of Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning	Business Engagement and Sector Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-Apprenticeship in Career education (PACE)</li> <li>• NJBUILD (Builders Utilization Initiative for Labor Diversity)</li> <li>• Youth Transitions to Work (YTTW)</li> <li>• New Jersey Pathways Leading Apprentices to a College Education (NJPLACE)</li> </ul>	<p>including Dislocated Worker WDP, Work First New Jersey On-the-Job-Training, Return and Earn</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WIOA Title I Business Services</li> </ul>

In addition, to these state-level investments and capacity, WIOA supports incredible opportunities for offering and expanding a variety of additional work-based learning opportunities in our One Stop Career Centers, including through Title I, Title IV, and other One Stop partners like Work First New Jersey.

In 2021, the SETC and NJDOL worked with GSETA to develop and release a training series aimed at building the capacity of Local Workforce Development Boards to develop and offer work-based learning opportunities, specifically through Title I funds. This training series offers a clear roadmap for supporting and building capacity across career-seeker and employer-focused teams working locally and at the state level. This series includes the following trainings:

- Work-Based Learning (WBL) 101 Overview
- Work-Based Learning (WBL) 102 Candidate and Employer Processes
- Work-Based Learning 201 Lead Generation, Prospecting, and Getting Past Gatekeepers
- Work-Based Learning 202 The Six Steps of the Sale
- Work-Based Learning 301 Contracting, Invoicing, and Fiscal Trackers

These training and corresponding materials are available on GSETA’s professional development website.

Work-based learning opportunities are recognized as key elements of career pathways strategies in New Jersey that lead to “good jobs.” These opportunities help to match the unique skill needs of career-seekers and employers in targeted ways, as well as build pathways to lower cost postsecondary training opportunities. Over the next four years, the continued expansion of all work-based learning opportunities, with particular focus on the connection to sustained career pathways and employment opportunities, through Industry partnerships, through Apprenticeship opportunities, and in sequence with other services and activities will guide state and local-level efforts.

## 2. REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

Describe how the State will incorporate Registered Apprenticeship into its strategy for service design and delivery (e.g., outreach to sponsors and prospective sponsors, identifying potential participants and connecting them to apprenticeship opportunities).

In March 2018, Governor Murphy announced the development of the first Office of Apprenticeship in New Jersey, as well as the creation of the New Jersey Apprenticeship Network (NJAN), which includes the variety of partners supporting Apprenticeship. Since then, the Office of Apprenticeship has worked closely with the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) and has served a key resource for employers, nonprofits and secondary and post-secondary institutions interested in apprenticeship opportunities. As part of this work, New Jersey launched new initiatives and expanded existing initiatives to support funding Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship opportunities, including Growing Apprenticeships in Nontraditional Sectors (GAINS), Pre-Apprenticeship in Career Education (PACE), and NJBUILD (Builders Utilization Initiative for Labor Diversity). The state's investments have supported the creation of 678 new Registered Apprenticeship programs in New Jersey – a more than 100 percent increase.

### **Office of Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning Expansion**

As part of this 2024-27 WIOA State Plan, the focus of this office will also include additional state-level work-based learning opportunities in New Jersey – as we seek to not only expand Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship opportunities, but also other work-based learning opportunities including Transitional Jobs, Internships, On-the-Job Training (OJT), and Incumbent Worker Training (IWT).

The Office of Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning will continue to steward funds from state workforce investments to support and reinforce workforce strategies deployed throughout the state and across our 17 LWDBs.

By continuing to grow these programs and support their connection to New Jersey's One Stop Career Center network, we seek to support sustained opportunities for work-based learning that are accessible to all career -seekers, and specifically those that have been traditionally underserved. By diversifying postsecondary opportunities and ensuring connection to employer skill needs, New Jersey seeks to continue serve as a model for building systems of career pathways opportunities.

The key goals outlined at the creation of this office continue to guide our work, inclusive of this expanded focus on work-based learning:

- Facilitate interactions among businesses, workforce intermediaries, apprentices, educators, and state and federal partners, including the United States Department of Labor.
- Increase diversity and inclusion in registered apprenticeship programs, and other work-based learning opportunities, in the state.
- Create formal linkages to employers, secondary and higher education systems so that more New Jerseyans receive opportunities in career pathways with upward mobility and sustainable wages.

- Help support the inclusion and attainment of credentials and college credit as part of work-based learning opportunities.
- Develop pipelines for Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship opportunities through work-based learning and career counseling, among middle- and high-school students, out-of-school youth, as well as other underserved populations, including individuals with low income, low literacy, and disabilities.

### **Office of Business Engagement and Sector Strategies**

In addition to state-level investments in Pre-Apprenticeship, Apprenticeship, and work-based learning. NJDOL’s work includes connecting these resources and opportunities, as well as those funded and supported through WIOA and additional One Stop Career Center partners, such as Work First New Jersey, into robust career pathway opportunities. This includes taking advantage of working towards co-enrollment of participants in these programs and ensuring that the full suite of WIOA resources is made available across all program types. NJDOL’s Office of Business Engagement and Sector Strategies works with employers and industry associations, other state-level agencies and partners, educational partners, as well as with LWDBs and other local partners to support the development of career pathways.

The NJDOL Business Outreach Team is a state-level team that works with Local Workforce Development Boards to help meet the immediate needs of all employers and career-seekers connecting to One Stop Career Centers, in alignment with local sector strategies. The NJDOL Business Outreach team works closely with local area teams to support (1) the implementation of specific employer recruitment and career awareness events to build the profile of employers locally, (2) linkages of state employer-focused programs into local systems – including, specifically opportunities offered through NJDOL’s Office of Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning, and (3) the connection of employers and career-seekers participating in state-run programs like Rapid Response and Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) to additional services in New Jersey’s One Stop Career Centers.

This team is inclusive of NJDOL’s On-the-Job Training (OJT) Contract Writers that work with employers to develop and structure OJT opportunities, as well as the Apprenticeship Outreach team that provides targeted support for employers in developing Registered Apprenticeship opportunities.

### **3. TRAINING PROVIDER ELIGIBILITY PROCEDURE**

Provide the procedure, eligibility criteria, and information requirements for determining training provider initial and continued eligibility, including Registered Apprenticeship programs (WIOA Section 122).

#### **Eligible Training Provider List**

*Provide the procedure, eligibility criteria, and information requirements for deciding training provider initial and continued eligibility, including Registered Apprenticeship programs (WIOA Section 122).*

New Jersey is unique among states in that the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) serves functions beyond those envisioned within Section 122 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. New Jersey state law (N.J.S.A. 34:15C-10.2) requires the creation of the ETPL

and states that "no training provider who is not an approved training provider included on the [ETPL] shall receive any federal job training funds *or state* job training funds". Job training is defined as occupational training, remedial instruction or occupational safety and health training. As a result of this unique statute, New Jersey currently maintains a catalog of more than 4,500 career-focused programs on its ETPL.

New Jersey state law (N.J.S.A. 34:1A-86) also mandates the collection and display of specific provider and program performance data on a publicly available Consumer Report Card. At the New Jersey Department of Labor & Workforce Development (NJDOL), the Center for Occupational Employment Information (COEI), a division of NJDOL's Office of Research and Information, is responsible for the administration of the ETPL.

The ETPL, as envisioned by State and federal law, is critical to ensure that the highest level of training services is available to the residents of New Jersey. Additionally, the New Jersey Consumer Report Card (CRC), which contains provider and program performance data on every program on the ETPL and appears on the NJ Training Explorer (<https://mycareer.nj.gov/training>), is an essential tool not only to the workforce system but to all New Jerseyans making informed customer choices about available training opportunities.

WIOA provides that participants in need of training services to enhance their job readiness or career pathway may access career training through a list of state-approved training providers and their state-approved training programs, known as the ETPL. WIOA requires the Governor to establish eligibility procedures for the ETPL. WIOA allows the Governor to designate a state agency to administer all aspects of the ETPL. The Center for Occupational Employment Information (COEI) within the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOL) administers New Jersey's ETPL.

### **Eligibility Procedure**

All training providers seeking ETPL placement must first obtain approval from a qualified state or federal government agency to offer occupational skills training programs. Only after this approval is obtained can a training provider apply for ETPL placement.

All training providers seeking placement on the ETPL under WIOA or State law are required to submit a formal application to COEI, which includes provider information as well as descriptions of each program of training services to be offered. New providers are added to the ETPL as they are determined eligible. ETPL eligibility is valid for two years from the date of approval.

All ETPs are also required to submit quarterly student data, which enables NJDOL to calculate WIOA performance indicators and the State's CRC outcomes after matching the student data to UI wage records. UI Wage Record matching within the State of New Jersey is conducted by NJDOL and includes out-of-state wage records obtained by NJDOL through the State Wage Interchange System (SWIS) agreement with USDOL.

### **Registered Apprenticeship New Sponsor Requirements**

New Jersey has a minimally burdensome mechanism in place to add Registered Apprenticeship program sponsors to the ETPL (CFR 680.470(a)).

Registered Apprenticeship programs will remain on the ETPL until they are no longer registered, until the Registered Apprenticeship program sponsor notifies the state that it no longer wants to be included on the ETPL, or the Registered Apprenticeship program is determined to have intentionally supplied inaccurate information or to have substantially violated any provision of WIOA Title I or WIOA regulations, including 29 CFR 38. Substantial violations are not further itemized but left to the discretion of the Commissioner of the Department of Labor. In its work through Data for the American Dream and the National Skills Coalition's Quality Postsecondary Nondegree Credentials Policy Academy, New Jersey will endeavor to develop clear guidance on this and other issues.

Any interested Registered Apprenticeship program sponsor may choose to be on the ETPL but may not be required to submit program performance information through NJDOL's system of record, known as Intelligrants (IGX).

### **Initial Eligibility Criteria with Requirements**

Training providers seeking ETPL placement under the initial eligibility procedures must submit a completed ETPL Initial Eligibility Application for each campus location to COEI using IGX. COEI will decide the provider's eligibility for ETPL placement.

Local areas must also include the past performance of providers into their evaluations of proposals and the award of grants and contracts for youth workforce investment activities. Requests for Proposals (RFPs) must include expectations, questions, and criteria related to past performance. Additionally, procurement processes should include mechanisms for reviewing past performance data of past providers, as well as researching potential providers' standing in the community and as a business. As part of past performance assessments, RFPs can offer providers an opportunity to honestly assess their past performance in proposals and demonstrate learning that has resulted. Performance challenges at their best offer pathways to continuous improvement. Procurement and development of partnership agreements in offering youth services are a critical juncture for improving, changing, and innovating youth programming. Local boards must ensure processes adequately include assessments of past performance and plans for continuous improvement, whether services are to be provided by the same provider or a new provider.

### **Continued Eligibility with Requirements**

All providers are required to submit a renewal application to maintain their ETPL listing past the initial approval period. NJDOL has an established procedure for the biennial review of provider eligibility through its renewal procedures. This includes verification of the registration status of apprenticeship programs and removal of any registered apprenticeship programs that are no longer valid (CFR 680.470(j)). As a part of the biennial review of eligibility, COEI must remove training programs from the ETPL that fail to meet criteria to remain eligible, which may include failure to meet established performance levels.

Providers deemed eligible for ETPL renewal will be notified by the Intelligrants (IGX) system writing of such approval and updated in the ETPL within one week. Providers COEI deems ineligible for ETPL renewal will be notified through IGX of their denial within the same time frame, including the reasons for ineligibility. Ineligible providers may be required to produce supplemental documentation to COEI to regain eligibility to the ETPL.

Providers who wish to add new programs or modify existing programs on the ETPL during an initial or renewal approval period must submit a change request via IGX. Program additions or modifications approved by COEI will be added or updated on the ETPL within one week.

Pursuant to State law (N.J.S.A. 34:15D-S), "[a]n employer who directly provides training and employment services to his own employees shall not be regarded as a service provider and shall not be subject to any requirement to obtain approval by the state" as an ETP. Training providers that are contracted by employers to provide customized training services funded by state or federal sources are not listed on the ETPL as per 20 CFR 680.530.

A training provider and/or its program(s) may be considered ineligible for ETPL placement, or removed from the ETPL for the following reasons:

1. A training provider does not possess, fails to submit, or loses its certificate/letter of approval from a qualified government agency;
2. The initial and/or renewal application was not completed, was not completed by the established due date, or failed to contain all the required information;
3. A training provider failed to submit timely and accurate student record data;
4. A training provider failed to meet required performance outcomes (if established);
5. A training provider intentionally supplied inaccurate or false information, including student records; or
6. A training provider substantially violated a provision of Title I of WIOA or its implementation regulations.

If a provider is removed from the ETPL pursuant to the items 1-4 listed above, the provider may be reinstated upon COEI's receipt of all required information. If a provider is removed from the ETPL pursuant to items 5 or 6 above, the provider shall be removed for a period of not less than two years. Providers are liable to repay all adult and dislocated worker funds received during the period of non-compliance.

### **Performance Standards**

All training providers listed on the ETPL are required to submit data quarterly for all students enrolled in the programs listed on the ETPL regardless of funding source (private pay and funded students). Failure to submit the required data in a timely manner may result in the provider's removal from the ETPL. Student social security numbers submitted by training providers are matched with wage records by NJDOL or through NJDOL's participation in USDOL's SWIS procedures. Student outcomes are reported annually through the ETA 9171 report and the Consumer Report Card (CRC). The CRC, as structured, displays the following performance information for training providers and their individual programs:

- Percentage of enrollees who complete the program within 150% of the expected duration of the program;
- Percentage of program participants in unsubsidized employment six months and one year after completion;

- Median annualized wages earned in unsubsidized employment six months and one year after completion; and
- Top three detailed six-digit NAICS industries in which completers are employed.

The CRC is a transparency tool on the New Jersey Training Explorer, the platform in New Jersey that provides comprehensive information on its training program opportunities, tuition and financial assistance information, and support resources to its users. Additional information that New Jersey collects from all training providers and their programs and highlights on New Jersey Training Explorer include, but are not limited to:

- Program description;
- Availability to WorkFirst New Jersey (TANF) and SNAP customers;
- Credential at completion;
- Public transportation accessibility and directions;
- Wheelchair accessibility;
- Hours;
- Languages offered; and
- Childcare offered.

The New Jersey Training Explorer digital tool also indicates whether each program is aligned with the labor demand occupations list, and therefore eligible for WIOA subsidy.

### **MyCareer NJ**

NJDOL launched the MyCareerNJ web portal in 2024, featuring a robust set of user-facing tools to empower individuals, particularly those from low-income, lower-skilled, underemployed, and unemployed Americans. MyCareer NJ centralizes personalized career resources so users can leverage their unique skill sets in pursuit of their career aspirations. It features three career tools: the NJ Training Explorer, the NJ Career Navigator, and NJ Career Pathways.

- **NJ Training Explorer:** The Training Explorer enables customized filtering of training programs, provides information on tuition assistance, and gives users valuable insight into the providers that offer programs that meet their skill-building needs.
- **NJ Career Navigator:** This machine-learning-powered recommendation engine leverages big data and machine learning to generate personalized job and career recommendations that align with each user's skill set, employment history, and individual professional goals across a wide range of private and public employment sectors.
- **NJ Career Pathways:** Career Pathways is an interactive career exploration tool that helps users to understand how to enter and advance in in-demand careers in New Jersey. Career pathways in New Jersey's manufacturing sector are currently online. New pathways in healthcare, construction, and transportation, distribution and logistics are slated to go live in the coming several months. Data that appears on the site are gleaned from several dozen interviews with New Jersey employers and industry experts.

MyCareerNJ brings key data and information about training and employment opportunities together to create a single access point for obtaining the most up-to-date information for guiding training and employment decisions. In addition, the resources, and tools of My Career NJ support employers in finding better-qualified employees and allow NJDOL, LWDBs, and One Stop Career Center partners to use data-driven information to weed out fraudulent and low-quality training programs.

This portal was produced through an innovative collaboration between NJDOL, the New Jersey Innovation Authority, and Research Improving People’s Lives (RIPL). It was developed using best practices in agile project management and human-centered design and built on a state-of-the-art technology platform that will serve as a foundation for the development of additional functionality.

Since 2023, NJDOL has partnered with Credential Engine to publish its ETPL data to the national Credential Registry to help New Jerseyans make more informed data-driven education and career decisions. Credential Engine, a non-profit organization based in Washington D.C., partners with key agencies and organizations to identify and operationalize the use of transparent credential information that allow states, regions, and stakeholders to improve services, practices, programs, and policies for the benefit of students, workers, veterans, employers, educators, policymakers, and others to make more informed decisions in the marketplace of credentials and to significantly advance the publishing of credentials in those states and regions to the Registry.

### **Workforce Pell**

Because Workforce Pell requires both higher-education oversight and detailed program-level training and outcomes data, NJDOL and OSHE are co-leading statewide implementation planning. OSHE provides oversight of program quality, accreditation, credit articulation, and statewide higher education policy — all central to determining whether short-term programs meet federal standards and articulate into degree pathways. NJDOL, through the Center for Occupational Employment Information (COEI), which resides within its Office of Research and Information, oversees the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), which is the state’s most complete and detailed inventory of non-degree workforce training programs. NJDOL also brings access to wage-record and labor-market data needed to assess program eligibility. In November 2025, the two agencies convened a statewide interagency working group, with additional representation from:

- Division of Consumer Affairs (DCA)
- Economic Development Authority (EDA)
- Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA)
- Department of Education (NJDOE)
- State Employment and Training Commission (SETC)

To date, the working group has:

- Held plenary meetings to establish its workplan and map federal requirements to state systems;



- Analyzed data that will enable it to operationalize Workforce Pell program eligibility;
- Devised a data collection plan to collect provider, program, and student data from qualifying institutions;
- Obtained input from higher education and the business community on its eligibility work.
- Begun work on a communications and provider-support plan since successful implementation will require a coordinated statewide communication plan to inform two- and four-year colleges and universities, private career schools, apprenticeship sponsors, other eligible training providers, employers, and the public about Workforce Pell eligibility, application processes, and data requirements.

### **Non-Governmental Labor Market Information (LMI) Sources**

In addition to BLS and Census data, NJDOL draws on two proprietary LMI sources:

- Lightcast: This data source provides current job postings data, as well as information about occupations, skills in demand, and career pathways.
- IMPLAN: This economic tool allows ORI to produce analyses to measure the impact of economic or business activities within the state or local areas. Measurements include jobs (direct, indirect, and inferred), occupations and wages that would support this economic or business activity.

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### **Eligible Training Programs and Providers**

Every two years, NJDOL updates a statewide in-demand occupations list, which is sent out to all Workforce Development Boards (WDBs), OneStop and Employment Services managers, and published on NJDOL's website as well as in MyCareerNJ. Programs aligned with occupations that are on the statewide in-demand occupations list are eligible for partial or whole tuition subsidies through WIOA Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). In addition, NJDOL allows for local variations in demand through its local and regional waiver process. Local area WDB directors and pre-specified WDB directors serving as regional representatives can apply for waivers in one of two ways:

1. Submit letters from employers in their local area or region attesting to a history of and future plans to hire individuals trained in an occupation that is not otherwise listed on the statewide in-demand occupations list; or
2. Submit a waiver request based on local area or regional labor market information. In 2025, for the first time, NJDOL published a list of eligible occupations in the 17 local areas and three regions.

These policies support WIOA requirements and goals to support training that (1) is in-demand, portable, and stackable, and (2) leads to higher wages, career advancement, and increased job security.

### **NJDOL: Overview of Operational Structure**

*Including our LWDBs, through policy development, training, and program monitoring activities.*

#### **Office of Research and Information**

The Office of Research and Information (ORI) supports New Jersey's WIOA investments through data analysis and validation, the development and administration of tools for consumers, including the ETPL, and through the provision of Labor Market Information. Three core teams support these efforts, including:

- **Workforce Research and Analytics:** This Division includes teams that support development and implementation of WIOA evaluations, analysis and reporting of data related to WIOA programs to federal and state partners, the annual evaluation of Title I WIOA programs, as well as the negotiation and development of performance metrics,

including the development of statistical adjustment models. In addition, this team is responsible for data validation across multiple program areas.

- Economic and Demographic Research: This Division gathers, examines, and distributes Labor Market Information (LMI) to a variety of stakeholders including officials, Local Workforce Development Boards, job seekers. It produces a range of reports, such as Labor Market Spotlights, and assesses the fiscal impact of policies.
- Center for Occupational Employment Information: This Division established by New Jersey statute, administers, and oversees the New Jersey Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) including the CRC, and develops, and maintains and operates MyCareerNJ. In partnership with the EDR division, it issues the statewide in-demand occupations list and manages the local and regional waiver process. It provides data-driven career information and support for career guidance, academic counseling programs, and education decision-making by individuals in areas related to careers, including the development of robust online resources and tools for all New Jerseyans.

4. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR FOR THE ADULT PRIORITY OF SERVICE REQUIREMENT IN WIOA SECTION 134 (C)(3)(E) THAT REQUIRES AMERICAN JOB CENTER STAFF, WHEN USING WIOA ADULT PROGRAM FUNDS TO PROVIDE INDIVIDUALIZED CAREER SERVICES AND TRAINING SERVICES, TO GIVE PRIORITY OF SERVICE TO RECIPIENTS OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE, LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS, AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT (INCLUDING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS).

One of the key goals guiding this plan, aligned with the vision of the Governor's office, is to expand and develop pathways and services that open up access to career opportunities for all New Jerseyans, particularly underserved populations, including low-income and low-literacy individuals. As we move forward, we look to balance opportunities for serving all New Jerseyans with the critical importance of meeting the needs of our most underserved populations. Adult Priority of Service requirements are a critical way that we achieve these goals. As we move forward, three key efforts will help to ensure that our state and local areas meet Priority of Service requirements:

- State-Level Monitoring
- Data Modernization and Integration
- Co-Enrollment and Service Integration of Adult Title I with Work First New Jersey (WFN) and Title II services

NJDOL's Data Validation Unit conducts annual reviews of Priority of Service, reviewing data in AOSOS, New Jersey's system of record, to verify the percentage of individuals that meet Priority of Service requirements. This unit has provided technical assistance regarding Priority of Service requirements and data entry to ensure and support that our local areas meet these requirements. These efforts will continue as NJDOL moves to a new system of record through data modernization.

In addition, as part of its One-Stop Career Center Certification process, New Jersey requires local areas to identify the process for implementing and monitoring the priority for public assistance

recipients, other low-income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient in accordance with the requirements of WIOA sec. 134(c)(3)(E).

### **Data Modernization**

New Jersey's investments in data infrastructure will support increasing service to priority populations. A new system of record will ease data entry and documentation of income and literacy levels, as well as provide access to real-time or near real-time dashboards that allow local areas and the state to better understand their progress in connecting with these targeted populations, particularly through Title I Adult funding.

### **5. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S CRITERIA REGARDING LOCAL AREA TRANSFER OF FUNDS BETWEEN THE ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAMS**

NJDOL issued NJWIN WD-PY22-15 in June 2023 outlining the procedures for transfer of funds between Title I Adult programs, including appropriate forms to be submitted to NJDOL. The policies outlined in that procedure include:

#### **For all transfer requests:**

- The local area must ensure that all WIOA subrecipient agreements in SAGE/IGX (our budgeting system) and in place between NJDOL and the local area have been received, accepted, and approved by all parties.
- The local area must be up to date on all required report/information submissions to NJDOL, including those not related to the specific transfer request.
- Submissions of requests include specific details regarding the use of funds, justification for funds, and documentation of expenditures and level of service prior to the request.
- Requests must be signed by the LWDB director, LWDB chair, and Chief Elected Official.

#### **Dislocated Worker Funds Transfer to Adult:**

- The local Workforce Development Board must certify that it lacks sufficient funds from other sources to adequately serve the WIOA Title I Adult priority populations: Public Assistance Recipients, Other Low-Income Individuals, and Basic Skills Deficient Individuals; AND
- The local Workforce Development Board must certify that it has determined that there are no pending layoffs within their local area that will impact the Dislocated Worker program; AND
- The State will consider any impact on potential eligibility for National Dislocated Worker Grants.

#### **Adult Funds Transfer to Dislocated Worker:**

The local Workforce Development Board must certify that the local workforce area has sufficient Adult funds (i.e., TANF, GA, WIOA Adult) to serve the WIOA Adult priority population, including public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals and basic skills deficient individuals.

In June of 2023, additional guidance was issued, WDPY2215WIOATitleITransferandRequestofFundsProcedures.pdf. This policy provides procedures for the request of additional WIOA funds from New Jersey Department of Labor (NJDOLE) to support Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs, as well as procedures for requesting the transfer of funds between local WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs based on requirements in the WIOA Final Rules at 683.130(c). EFFECTIVE DATE: This New Jersey Workforce Innovation Notice is effective immediately. POLICY RESCISSONS: This policy rescinds and replaces WD-PY21-2 immediately.

6. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S POLICY ON WIOA AND TAA CO-ENROLLMENT AND WHETHER AND HOW OFTEN THIS POLICY IS DISSEMINATED TO THE LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARDS AND REQUIRED ONE-STOP PARTNERS. TRADE ACT SEC. 239(F), SEC. 235, 20 CFR 618.325, 20 CFR 618.824(A)(3)(I).

NJ issued NJWIN 5-16, noting that beginning on July 1, 2016, employees subject to WARN and former employees of companies downsizing for which a Trade Act petition has been filed would be automatically co-enrolled in Wagner-Peyser and WIOA Dislocated Worker in anticipation of a Trade Act petition approval. That policy highlights TEGL 3-15, which calls for partners to *"continue to work together and use the systems and processes in place to serve the adult and dislocated worker populations, including co-enrolled TAA-certified workers, rather than using a parallel process that duplicates services available through the one-stop center. This would include ensuring that co-enrolled TAA participants, whose training under the TAA program must be subject to approval under TAA program criteria, are not subjected to duplicative assessments for TAA and WIOA. Additionally, TAA participants would not be allowed duplicative job search benefits under both the TAA and WIOA. Co-enrollment may also assist in making additional funds available for On-the-job training (OJT)."*

NJDOLE supplemented that initial policy with NJWIN 14-16, providing guidance on data entry in America's One-Stop Operating System (AOSOS) and the forwarding of records to the one-stop operator.

NJDOLE's policy on Service Integration and Co-Enrollment released in 2023 (NJWIN-PY23-5) reinforces the requirement to co-enroll all Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) participants in Title I Dislocated Worker programs and offers more specific details on how One Stops can leverage co-enrollment at every point of an individual's service engagement from intake through to successful outcomes. Co-enrollment, including co-enrollment of WIOA and TAA programs, is a priority of this 2024-27 WIOA State Plan.

7. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S FORMAL STRATEGY TO ENSURE THAT WIOA AND TAA CO-ENROLLED PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE NECESSARY FUNDED BENEFITS AND SERVICES. TRADE ACT SEC. 239(F), SEC. 235, 20 CFR 618.816(C)

After a company has been certified by USDOL as being impacted by foreign trade, the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development Trade Act Unit contacts affected employees to set up a Trade Act orientation to explain benefits. At that orientation, eligible

participants complete a New Jersey Trade Act Application for Benefits. The orientation and application connect eligible participants to TAA-specific benefits, including:

- **Training:** classroom training, on-the-job training, or customized training designed to meet the needs of a specific employer or group of employers, apprenticeship programs, and more
- **Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA):** income support available in the form of weekly cash payments to workers who are enrolled in a full-time training course and have exhausted their unemployment insurance
- **Job search allowance:** reimbursement for costs of seeking employment outside of the worker's commuting area
- **Relocation allowance:** reimbursement for relocation costs for employment outside of the worker's commuting area
- **Alternative Trade Adjustment Assistance (ATAA) and Reemployment Trade Adjustment Assistance (RTAA):** a wage subsidy for up to two years that is available to reemployed older workers and covers a portion of the difference between a worker's new wage and their old wage (up to a specified maximum amount)
- **Health Coverage Tax Credit (HCTC):** a tax credit to help pay the costs of health insurance

Enrolled participants receive job referrals, job development, job search skills workshop, career counseling, testing and other supportive services from their local One-Stop Career Center

The state's Trade Adjustment and Rapid Response work closely together as an additional source of support for prospective participants. The Business Services unit includes a Trade Adjustment Act unit, which works closely with the TAA Unit has dedicated one staff member to act as a liaison with the Rapid Response team to reach out to companies on whose behalf a TAA petition has been filed. The liaison informs Rapid Response of filed petitions and coordinates a visit to the company. The liaison will attend the event with the Rapid Response team in order to answer potential questions regarding the filed petition. The liaison also attends Rapid Response events for companies that do not currently have a petition filed but which have a high likelihood of being trade affected. The liaison attends these sorts of events in order to investigate and question the company's leadership as well as the workers in order to determine if a petition should in fact be filed.

#### 8. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PROCESS FOR FAMILIARIZING ONE-STOP STAFF WITH THE TAA PROGRAM. 20 CFR 618.804(J), 20 CFR 618.305

The TAA is administered in the NJDOL Business Engagement & Sector Strategies Unit. NJDOL has made a priority of better integrating this division into its workforce strategies and the One Stops Career Centers; for example, this group was a required state-level partner in the most recent Memorandum of Understanding. Because of this increasingly collaborative relationship, One Stop staff receive cross-training and support for providing information about TAA services.

An example of this learning is that NJDOL Business Engagement is in the process of securing training for up to 150 staff associated with business outreach activities. The training is a

continuation of the NextGen Sector academy developed in 2019. This training will focus on both a reboot and advancement of the sector strategies model. It will include all State Business Services staff as well as staff identified by Local Workforce Development Boards. The goal is to ensure all parties are working in tandem as well as understand the complimentary role each staff member contributes to addressing business workforce needs.

State Business Engagement & Sector Strategies staff also have additional opportunities for engaging in joint professional development with other LWDB and One Stop staff through the following:

- Program awareness trainings provided directly through NJDOL
- Training activities supported through the NJDOL's training partnership with GSETA (Garden State Employment and Training Association)
- Virtual training available through NJDOL's Learning Management System (LMS)
- The annual GSETA conference

### C. YOUTH PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.

With respect to youth workforce investment activities authorized in section 129 of WIOA, States should describe their strategies that will support the implementation of youth activities under WIOA. State's must-

1. IDENTIFY THE STATE-DEVELOPED CRITERIA TO BE USED BY LOCAL BOARDS IN AWARDING GRANTS OR CONTRACTS FOR YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES AND DESCRIBE HOW THE LOCAL BOARDS WILL TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE ABILITY OF THE PROVIDERS TO MEET PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES BASED ON PRIMARY INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE FOR THE YOUTH PROGRAM AS DESCRIBED IN SECTION 116(B)(2)(A)(II) OF WIOA.<sup>11</sup> FURTHER, INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE STATE ASSISTS LOCAL AREAS IN DETERMINING WHETHER TO CONTRACT FOR SERVICES OR TO PROVIDE SOME OR ALL OF THE PROGRAM ELEMENTS DIRECTLY.

<sup>11</sup> Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(i)(V)

As with other populations, the changes brought on by Covid-19 and accelerated technology shifts are affecting youth engagement in our labor market. WIOA youth services offer an opportunity for expanding and innovating workforce opportunities for young people in our state. Our LWDBs and workforce systems are poised to serve as key centers for innovation around postsecondary options and pathways for young New Jerseyans and must serve as leaders in offering high-quality, alternative options for career development and training. These solutions will need to draw on new virtual technologies and mediums to reach and support young people with different interests, experiences, and skill levels.

As we move forward with this 2024-27 WIOA State Plan, we recognize that significant opportunities exist for innovating and expanding our youth workforce models, particularly in the face of economic and social changes. We also recognize the need to expand the reach and quality of services for youth with low literacy levels, as well as young people who have a secondary credential that are navigating transitions to employment and/or additional postsecondary training.

The SETC and NJDOL encourage Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs), with the full participation of their standing youth committees and/or the full board, to develop and identify new and priority areas of service based on youth interest and needs and to ensure that procurement includes the development of high-quality RFPs, competitive processes that include multiple proposals, and strong contracting and monitoring mechanisms.

As LWDBs seek to develop youth strategies and procure partners to support these strategies, the SETC and NJDOL recommends the following steps:

- Conduct an environmental scan to identify partner agencies that are providing program elements in the area/region. The local board can then enter into agreements for these program elements to be provided using non-WIOA funds.
- Consider the WIOA priorities:
  - 75 percent of funds must be spent on out-of-school youth (not counting administrative funds; must be services to this population only); and
  - 20 percent of all youth funds must be spent on work experience.
- Review records to estimate the total spending on ITAs in the program year.
- Consider other relevant factors such as the local labor market.

Further, the SETC has established ten (10) criteria for the evaluation of youth service programs. These criteria, which are central to the provider and selection process, are listed below:

- The program will have a record of demonstrated effectiveness.
- The program will not discriminate in any way and will be in full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- The provider must have the capacity to identify issues that are hindering youth from succeeding in the program and recommend the appropriate support services.
- The provider must be able to detail how linkages between communities, academic, occupational learning, and work experience will be used to enhance the youth development and employability. They should also demonstrate the involvement of the business/employer community.
- The program will maintain a close working relationship with the local One-Stop Career Center.
- Programs with industry-valued credentials as a goal will make arrangements for participants to test for and obtain the credential.
- Any program offering summer employment opportunities must be linked to academic and occupational learning as a complement to overall year-round program goals. Summer employment opportunities operated as a stand-alone Summer Youth Program are specifically prohibited.



- The provider must establish specific timeframes for evaluation of participant performance, attendance and progress, including level of academic performance, vocational abilities/skills, aptitudes, and interests.
- The provider must identify process and strategies to be used to ensure that participants receive planned services and reach planned goals and what corrective actions will be available for participants who are not meeting the requirement of each activity or goals. The provider must detail the internal systems that will be used to report and monitor programmatic and fiscal activities.
- The provider must permit federal, state, and local area staff and designated agents to conduct regular monitoring activities, including communication with customers and contractor staff at instructional sites.

Furthermore, local areas have the authority to develop a system of youth services that draws on several different service delivery mechanisms and a variety of partners. Local WDBs strategies may include (1) partnership agreements (MOUs) for the provision of specific program elements using non-WIOA funds, (2) direct delivery of program elements and framework services within One-Stop Career Centers, and (3) procurement of specific program elements and services. New Jersey seeks to develop systems of youth services locally that connect to other One-Stop Career Center partners and pathways.

In addition to these criteria outlined for procurement of youth services, NJDOL has developed resources to support best practices in procurement and oversight of contracted providers, including Youth providers. They include a new policy, WD-PY22-5.1, Competitive Procurement of One Stop Operator, Career Services and Youth Providers, and materials developed through the GSETA Training Partnership.

A video training - Virtual Youth Worker Experience Training Session 20251118 185726UTC Meeting Recording was held in November of 2025 is available on our you tube channel.

The guidance in WD-PY22-5 around procurement of services for youth allows for LWDBs to provide some youth program elements and does not require procurement of all 14 program elements. In the case that an LWDB does choose to provide these services, the LWDB must submit a waiver documenting how the LWDB will monitor and ensure the accountability and quality of this service provision. As a best practice and to comply with legal requirements for procurement, entities that are performing more than one role in the system must submit a waiver, highlighting that appropriate separations and firewalls are in place and that required competitive procurement processes have taken place. Any LWDB and/or supporting organization of an LWDB that is providing Youth Services must follow waiver procedures.

The local governance training series developed in partnership with the Garden State Employment and Training Commission included three modules on procurement; a module on evaluating proposals; and two modules on monitoring providers. Each module included a video approximately half an hour long; an application guide; and, in many cases, sample documents. The relevant modules are:

- Workforce Procurement Introduction, Standards & the LWDB's Role in Procurement
- Competitive Procurement – Competitive Procurement Process & RFP Best Practices

- Procurement Monitoring & RFP Best Practices
- Evaluating Proposals
- Monitoring: More Than a Requirement
- Monitoring: Approach and Outcomes

While the policy WD-PY22-5.1 and the training modules were not specifically targeted toward procurement of youth providers, the resources support LWDBs in best practices and improvement in procurement and oversight of youth services.

2. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE ASSISTS LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARDS IN ACHIEVING RESULTS FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL AND IN-SCHOOL YOUTH. DESCRIBE PROMISING PRACTICES OR PARTNERSHIP MODELS THAT LOCAL AREAS ARE IMPLEMENTING AND THE STATE'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING AND SCALING THOSE MODELS WITHIN THE STATE FOR BOTH IN-SCHOOL AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH.

We envision our One-Stop Career Centers as a central resource hub for directing out-of-school youth to specialized opportunities and a broad base of supports to meet academic and occupational skill need and interests, as well reduce specific barriers impacting the potential for success in education or employment.

NJDOL's strategy for youth services includes the same goals as its full workforce system:

1. Expand and develop pathways and services that open up access to career opportunities for career-seekers, particularly for historically disadvantaged populations, including students, workers, and jobseekers
2. Align the systems and supports serving businesses and those supporting workers, matching talent and supporting training to meet the skill and labor needs of employers, specifically those that are providing good jobs and career opportunities
3. Strengthen our public infrastructure to both support and enforce high quality employment practices, including fostering protections for workers and supporting a competitive business climate, through the implementation of new technologies and streamlined processes

New Jersey's public workforce system was impacted significantly by the Covid-19 pandemic. As we continue to rebuild services and supports and adjust to the changes in our labor market, especially as it relates to the needs and interests of youth in New Jersey, we will continue to build and focus services on out-of-school youth populations. As we engage in this work, NJDOL is requesting a waiver of the requirement to expend 75% of all Governor's reserve and local formula youth funds on out-of-school youth. A waiver will allow the space for New Jersey's system to put in place new strategies and supports for ensuring that we are engaging and best supporting out-of-school youth in New Jersey.

Opportunities for youth exist through our core partnerships with Title III, Title II, and Title IV programs, as well as WorkFirst NJ. New Jersey Youth Corps, Career and Technical Education

partners, and Apprenticeship programs also offer additional opportunities for integrated services and the design of multiple pathways for youth through our One-Stop Career Centers. One-Stop Career Centers can provide the Hub that is needed to allow youth to access the Supportive Services necessary to remove barriers to completing school, a certificate program or maintaining employment.

***New Jersey Youth Corps:*** New Jersey operates the New Jersey Youth Corps program, which is one of the largest youth service and conservation corps in the United States. Youth Corps is a year-round, voluntary program which engages young adults (ages 16-25) in full-time community service, training, and educational activities. Guided by staff who serve as mentors and role models, teams of youth called "crews" carry out a wide range of service projects. Corps members receive a stipend while enrolled in Youth Corps. Additionally, in return for their efforts to restore and strengthen communities, Corps members also receive:

- Education development in basic skills and preparation to obtain a GED or locally issued Adult High School Diploma;
- Life skills and employability skills instruction;
- Personal and career counseling to build self-esteem, clarify values, and develop leadership skills while they are developing their career portfolio;
- Transition services and continuing support services as they transition to college, training, employment or other national and domestic service opportunities; and
- Community service opportunities which develop positive employability skills while addressing unmet community needs.

Out-of-School Youth over age 18 are also able to participate in the full menu of services available at New Jersey's One-Stop Career Centers, including all of the job search, job preparation, career planning, and training services. These Youth may access Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) and work-based training opportunities in the same ways that Adult and Dislocated Worker participants may, through the opportunities listed on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL).

***WIOA Title I, II, III, and IV partners:*** Title I Youth services collaborate with other WIOA system partners including: Wagner-Peyser in cases where Youth have been employed and are subsequently laid off from their employment; Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) and Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI) for Youth with disabilities; and WorkFirst New Jersey through coordinated efforts for families and services for young adult TANF or SNAP recipients. Additionally, Title II programs coordinate and work in tandem with Title I programs to serve students age 16 years of older in need of basic skills. In all these cases coordination is substantially the same as the other methods of coordination outlined in Section III on Operational Planning Elements, subsection on State Strategy Implementation, and subsections on Coordination with WIOA Partner programs.

***CTE and Apprenticeship:*** Partnerships with technical schools and community colleges through Career and Technical Education and other Apprenticeship programs also offer specific opportunities for collaboration and integration of service. As a state we are interested in further

exploring the diversity of our Out-of-School youth and the multiple pathways that our One-Stop Career Centers through direct supports, partnership, and procured services can offer.

3. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE ASSISTS LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARDS IN IMPLEMENTING INNOVATIVE MODELS FOR DELIVERING YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING EFFECTIVE WAYS LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARDS CAN MAKE AVAILABLE THE 14 PROGRAM ELEMENTS DESCRIBED IN WIOA SECTION 129(C)(2); AND EXPLAIN HOW LOCAL AREAS CAN ENSURE WORK EXPERIENCE, INCLUDING QUALITY PRE-APPRENTICESHIP AND REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP, IS PRIORITIZED AS A KEY ELEMENT WITHIN A BROADER CAREER PATHWAYS STRATEGY.

NJDOL and the SETC recognize the critical importance and unique opportunities for serving and supporting youth in New Jersey. Our young people are entering a labor market that is evolving and changing as a result of the pandemic and the acceleration in new technologies. In many cases, this generation of workers, comes with different expectations of work and different opportunities for managing their own careers, particularly through the gig economy. As we move forward with this 2024-27 WIOA State Plan, the development of innovative service delivery models and initiatives will continue to remain a priority of this plan.

As part of this 2024-27 WIOA State Plan, NJDOL and the SETC have prioritized the expansion of work-based learning experiences across WIOA programs, and specifically for Title I youth programs. This plan seeks to support a variety of youth work experience opportunities, including through internships, pre-Apprenticeship, and Apprenticeship opportunities. This focus on work-based learning has been a priority and the continued expansion of these opportunities is a high priority of this plan moving forward.

We are requesting to waive the requirement at WIOA section 129(c)(4) and 20 CFR 681.590 that the State and youth programs expend not less than 20% of the funds allocated to them to provide ISY And OSY with paid and unpaid work experiences, instead expecting to expend not less than 15% of funds. While NJDOL and the SETC seek to leverage the full opportunities that WIOA allows to meet the 20% work experience requirement, we recognize that more technical assistance is needed across our public workforce system on the types of activities and costs that count towards this 20% requirement. The development of new experiences and better classification of costs are key strategies for strengthening the provision of youth work experience opportunities in New Jersey.

### **LWDB Opportunity and Responsibility**

LWDBs are responsible for developing local program models and delivering the program within the parameters set by federal and state guidelines. They are required to ensure that the WIOA youth program elements are available and included in local proposal designs. The WDB has the option to create and maintain a Youth Standing Committee to lead the development of the local youth workforce investment system.

Regardless of whether such a committee exists, it is the responsibility of LWDBs to:

- Actively engage business, community and educational stakeholders around local needs and priorities for youth services; and

- Provides strategic direction and coordination with other programs and initiatives in their communities to make the best use of limited resources.
- Develop a comprehensive, integrated and coordinated system of youth services that effectively prepares young people for higher education and future employment by implementing the 14 program elements, as highlighted above.

Many opportunities exist for innovating around the delivery of individual program elements, as well as building networks of services and supports that crossover organizations to deliver the full set of 14 program elements. LWDBs have the opportunity and responsibility for identifying partners and developing strategies that support the implementation of the 14 program elements in innovative ways to meet the evolving needs and interests of New Jersey's young people.

### ***Youth Procurement***

Our renewed emphasis on procurement and oversight, as highlighted in NJDOL's Competitive Procurement Policy, is an important lever for our LWDBs in supporting innovative youth strategies, including through digital and in-person delivery methods. This starts with the development of strategies among LWDBs, through the development of high quality RFPs, rigorous selection processes, development of contracts, and oversight of those contracts.

### ***Partnership Development***

Further, 20 CFR 681.470 states that non-WIOA funds can be used to provide WIOA youth program elements under certain conditions. Therefore, NJDOL allows local programs to leverage partner resources to provide some of the readily available program elements. However, the local area must ensure that if a program element is not funded with WIOA Title I youth funds, the local program has an agreement in place with a partner organization to ensure that the program element will be offered. This may be included in their comprehensive MOU/IFA document with all One Stop partners. The LWDB must ensure that the program element is closely connected and coordinated with the WIOA youth program.

Leveraging of youth funds will expand local program capacity and demonstrate greater fiscal responsibility with the limited funds available. Local areas must demonstrate efforts to identify and enter into agreements with agencies which are already providing program elements. The SETC and NJDOL provide technical assistance to support local leveraging efforts.

### ***Use of Data***

We also expect that improvements in data entry and analysis, as we modernize our system of record and leverage new dashboard tools now and in the future, will help to better support youth strategies, particularly as it relates to monitoring strategies related to the provision of the 14 program elements.

Through competitive procurement, partnership development, and additional data tools, over the course of this plan, NJDOL and the SETC will continue to support LWDBs in leveraging these various activities to ensure that all elements are available, accessible, and delivered in innovative ways. Together we will work together to support and hold providers accountable for high quality youth service provision.

## **State-Level Youth Strategy**

Beyond the requirements outlined in WIOA Title I, New Jersey provides leadership for the state's youth strategy through the SETC's Shared Youth Vision Council. The Shared Youth Vision Council recommends service, policy and program components that serve youth at the local level in the workforce system and recommends or assists in the programs and services that focus on youth workforce policy that best serve the needs of clients. With a focus on ensuring quality services for NJ's youth, we will define success by the creation of a highly skilled, motivated, and conscientious workforce to help strengthen New Jersey's economic future. The Shared Youth Vision Council was formed to assist New Jersey with the development of a comprehensive youth strategy around the development of workforce policies and program strategies focused on building capacity, fortifying career awareness efforts and highlighting innovative programs that create pathways to employment for youth. The Council connects state agencies, education, community organizations, workforce development programs and other youth related stakeholders around a singular shared youth vision: providing and guiding youth to education, employment, retention of employment, and nationally-recognized credentials. The upcoming topics to be addressed by the Share Vision Youth Council in 2026 include:

### **Shared Youth Vision Council New Council Themes & Directions**

1. Professional Development for Youth navigating through the current economic crisis. *Shifting Economy* – In today's society, open markets and globalization, and AI may result in laying off workers and outsourcing work to countries where it is cheaper. Where does this leave the youth?
2. Family Intervention - Homelessness, Pregnancy, etc. "Opportunity Youth" – including homeless youth and those involved with the justice system, regardless of their school status?
3. Mental Health- managing stress, depression, cyber bullying, and peer pressure. Creating Spaces for Dialogue. Substance Abuse. Education Inequality
4. The role of libraries serving as support to one stop operators? (greater flexibility to expand access to services)

In addition, the SETC issues guidelines for the development of local plans, including youth-related requirements. NJDOL provides the monitoring arm of the State to ensure alignment and compliance of these activities.

4. PROVIDE THE LANGUAGE CONTAINED IN THE STATE POLICY FOR "REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO ENTER OR COMPLETE AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT" CRITERION FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(B)(III)(VIII) AND FOR "REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO COMPLETE AN EDUCATION PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT" CRITERION FOR IN-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(C)(IV)(VII). IF THE STATE DOES NOT HAVE A POLICY, DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THAT LOCAL AREAS WILL HAVE A POLICY FOR THESE CRITERIA.

WIOA provides the flexibility and authority to states and LWDBs in expanding the definition of who is eligible for Title I youth services to include additional populations that have been

identified as needing additional assistance, as well as allowing for a 5% exemption from low-income requirements.

Additional policy with details is forthcoming from NJDOL regarding the opportunities for expanding access and ensuring that young jobseekers in New Jersey have access to the career and training services that they need. Expanding WIOA youth eligibility allows for an opportunity to address unique community needs for those who have a barrier to completing an education program or to secure and hold employment. Any local area that seeks to expand criteria for eligibility through requires additional assistance must codify these criteria in clear policies that define and offer documentation standards regarding various criteria.

These criteria must also align with local plans for in-school and out-of-school youth.

As stated in the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development policy document, "Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Title I: Youth Eligibility Determination and Documentation Guidelines for Local Workforce Development Areas" (WD-PY19-6.1) issued by NJDOL in June 2015 and revised January 2019, the following is the State's definition of Requires Additional Assistance: "An individual who requires additional assistance to complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment."

A hard copy of the document(s) used to verify this criterion (see the WIOA Eligibility Desk Aid) must be provided and kept in the participant's folder. This criterion is recorded in AOSOS by selecting "Yes" from the drop-down list on the Employment tab in the Comprehensive Assessment window. The assistance needed and justification must be documented in the fields below "Job Behavior and Skills." The two types of justifications are: (1) to complete an educational program and (2) to secure and hold employment. The specific issue must be recorded. The use of this criterion must be limited.

In the same document, "limitation" is defined: "No more than five percent of the in-school youth served in a local area may be an individual who requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment. [WIOA Sec. 129 (a) (3)]."

#### D. SINGLE-AREA STATE REQUIREMENTS

In States where there is only one local workforce investment area, the governor serves as both the State and local chief elected official. In such cases, the State must submit any information required in the local plan (WIOA section 106(d)(2)). States with a single workforce area must include—

1. ANY COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD THAT REPRESENT DISAGREEMENT WITH THE PLAN. (WIOA SECTION 108(D)(3).)
2. THE ENTITY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISBURSAL OF GRANT FUNDS, AS DETERMINED BY THE GOVERNOR, IF DIFFERENT FROM THAT FOR THE STATE. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(15).)
3. A DESCRIPTION OF THE TYPE AND AVAILABILITY OF WIOA TITLE I YOUTH ACTIVITIES AND SUCCESSFUL MODELS, INCLUDING FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(9).)

New Jersey is not a single-area state.

4. A DESCRIPTION OF THE ROLES AND RESOURCE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE ONE-STOP PARTNERS.

New Jersey is not a single-area state.

5. THE COMPETITIVE PROCESS USED TO AWARD THE SUBGRANTS AND CONTRACTS FOR TITLE I ACTIVITIES.

New Jersey is not a single-area state.

6. HOW TRAINING SERVICES OUTLINED IN SECTION 134 WILL BE PROVIDED THROUGH INDIVIDUAL TRAINING ACCOUNTS AND/OR THROUGH CONTRACTS, AND HOW SUCH TRAINING APPROACHES WILL BE COORDINATED. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL MEET INFORMED CUSTOMER CHOICE REQUIREMENTS REGARDLESS OF TRAINING APPROACH.

New Jersey is not a single-area state.

7. HOW THE STATE BOARD, IN FULFILLING LOCAL BOARD FUNCTIONS, WILL COORDINATE TITLE I ACTIVITIES WITH THOSE ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE II. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE BOARD WILL CARRY OUT THE REVIEW OF LOCAL APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED UNDER TITLE II CONSISTENT WITH WIOA SECS. 107(D)(11)(A) AND (B)(I) AND WIOA SEC. 232.

New Jersey is not a single-area state.

8. COPIES OF EXECUTED COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WHICH DEFINE HOW ALL LOCAL SERVICE PROVIDERS WILL CARRY OUT THE REQUIREMENTS FOR INTEGRATION OF AND ACCESS TO THE ENTIRE SET OF SERVICES AVAILABLE IN THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM, INCLUDING COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH ENTITIES ADMINISTERING REHABILITATION ACT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.

New Jersey is not a single-area state.

E. WAIVER REQUESTS (OPTIONAL)

States wanting to request waivers as part of their title I-B Operational Plan must include a waiver plan that includes the following information for each waiver requested:

1. IDENTIFIES THE STATUTORY OR REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS FOR WHICH A WAIVER IS REQUESTED AND THE GOALS THAT THE STATE OR LOCAL AREA, AS APPROPRIATE, INTENDS TO ACHIEVE AS A RESULT OF THE WAIVER AND HOW THOSE GOALS RELATE TO THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;
2. DESCRIBES THE ACTIONS THAT THE STATE OR LOCAL AREA, AS APPROPRIATE, HAS UNDERTAKEN TO REMOVE STATE OR LOCAL STATUTORY OR REGULATORY BARRIERS;
3. DESCRIBES THE GOALS OF THE WAIVER AND THE EXPECTED PROGRAMMATIC OUTCOMES IF THE REQUEST IS GRANTED;
4. DESCRIBES HOW THE WAIVER WILL ALIGN WITH THE DEPARTMENT'S POLICY PRIORITIES, SUCH AS:
  - A. SUPPORTING EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT;
  - B. CONNECTING EDUCATION AND TRAINING STRATEGIES;



- C. SUPPORTING WORK-BASED LEARNING;
  - D. IMPROVING JOB AND CAREER RESULTS, AND
  - E. OTHER GUIDANCE ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT.
5. DESCRIBES THE INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER; AND
6. DESCRIBES THE PROCESSES USED TO:
- A. MONITOR THE PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE WAIVER;
  - B. PROVIDE NOTICE TO ANY LOCAL BOARD AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER;
  - C. PROVIDE ANY LOCAL BOARD AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER AN OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON THE REQUEST;
  - D. ENSURE MEANINGFUL PUBLIC COMMENT, INCLUDING COMMENT BY BUSINESS AND ORGANIZED LABOR, ON THE WAIVER.
  - E. COLLECT AND REPORT INFORMATION ABOUT WAIVER OUTCOMES IN THE STATE'S WIOA ANNUAL REPORT.
7. THE MOST RECENT DATA AVAILABLE REGARDING THE RESULTS AND OUTCOMES OBSERVED THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EXISTING WAIVER, IN CASES WHERE THE STATE SEEKS RENEWAL OF A PREVIOUSLY APPROVED WAIVER.

NJDOL and the SETC are requesting **one renewal waiver as part of this 2024-27 WIOA State Plan 2-year modification**.

- A waiver of the requirement that New Jersey and our local areas expend 75 percent of all Governor's reserve and local formula youth funds on out-of-school youth

Below we provide specific details regarding the request of this waiver.

#### **Out-of-school youth spending waiver**

The State of New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOL) is submitting this request under the waiver authority in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) regulations at 20 CFR 679.600. NJDOL respectfully requests continuation of the waiver of requirement at WIOA Section 129(a)(4)(A) and 20 CFR 681.410 that the State and local areas expend 75 percent of Governor's reserve youth funds and local formula youth funds on out-of-school youth (OSY). Under this waiver, The State and local boards would be able to use up to 50 percent of WIOA youth funds for in-school youth services for Program Year (PY) 2026 though PY 2028.

Local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) have expressed a need to provide additional assistance to in-school youth, while continuing to ensure that the needs of out-of-school youth are being met. To assist the local areas, in program year (PY) 2024, NDOL implemented a quarterly report that provides local WDBs with information regarding performance, service levels and progress towards WIOA spending priorities, including the OSY work experience. Using this report, NJDOL alerts local areas to performance and spending issues throughout the course of the year. It is also used to identify technical assistance needs. We will continue to use this tool to assist local areas in maximizing their workforce funds. The continuation of the

waiver would also provide needed flexibility that would allow the State and the local WDBs to allocate resources to meet the needs of the public.

**1. Statutory and/or regulatory requirements that the State would like to waive:** We are requesting to waive the requirement at Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Section 129(a)(4)(A) and 20 CFR 681.410 that the State and local areas expend 75 percent of Governor's reserve youth funds and local formula youth funds on out-of-school youth (OSY).

**2. Actions the State has undertaken to remove state or local statutory or regulatory barriers:** There are no state or local statutory or regulatory barriers that conflict with this waiver request.

**3. State strategic goal(s):** As part of this modification to our 2024-27 WIOA State Plan, the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOLE) and the State Employment and Training Commission (SETC), the State Workforce Development Board, will continue our efforts to provide more pathway opportunities for youth, and in particular out-of-school youth. WIOA Title I Youth funds offer opportunities for reconnecting young New Jerseyans to education and training experiences that can lead to sustained employment opportunities in good jobs. We seek to continue the waiver to complete our work of developing new strategies designed to ensure that out-of-school youth are being prepared for meaningful and sustainable employment.

**4. Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from implementation of the waiver:** This waiver will offer the opportunity for NJDOLE, the SETC, and our local areas to continue the work we have done under the previous waiver in identifying new strategies to better connect OSY with work. In the previous waiver, we indicated we would put in place better fiscal reporting systems for tracking expenditures in real-time. NJDOLE now tracks this information monthly and share quarterly, or more frequently if issues are detected in spending patterns to allow for more immediate action as necessary.

**5. Quantifiable projected programmatic outcome resulting from the implementation of the waiver:** Under the previous waiver, the State was able to ensure that all but one local WDB expended at least 50 percent of their funds on OSY. The one outstanding local area has significant contractual issues with their WIOA youth program provider and has been receiving technical assistance from NJDOLE. We will remediate the issues with this local area and ensure that all local areas are expending the required 75 percent by the end of the program year in which the plan expires in 2027. NJDOLE will also ensure that this opportunity afforded by the waiver is utilized to ensure program quality reflected in employment outcomes.

**6. Individuals, groups, or populations benefitting, or otherwise impacted by the waiver from the waiver:** This waiver will allow us to build and strengthen capacity to serve out-of-school youth.

**7. How the state plans to monitor waiver implementation including collection of measurable waiver outcome information:** NJDOLE has implemented the quarterly report for local WDBs that was proposed in our previous waiver request. As mentioned in Section 4, this report provides local WDBs with information regarding performance, service levels and progress towards WIOA spending priorities, including OSY. NJDOLE has used this report to help local WDBs identify any issues early in the year so that action can be taken in a timely manner.

The reports are also utilized by NJDOL to identify technical assistance needs related to progress towards performance indicators, service levels, and expenditure management.

**8. Assurance of state posting of the request for public comments (including the dates that the state made the draft request available for public comment) and notification to affected local workforce development boards:** NJDOL and the SETC will be posting this waiver request as part of the required 30-day public comment period for the 2024-27 WIOA State Plan 2-year modification.

TITLE I-B ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The State has implemented a policy to ensure Adult program funds provide a priority in the delivery of training services and individualized career services to individuals who are low income, public assistance recipients and basic skills deficient;	Yes
2. The State has implemented a policy to ensure local areas have a process in place for referring veterans with significant barriers to employment to career services provided by the JVSG program’s Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist;	Yes
3. The State established a written policy and procedure that set forth criteria to be used by chief elected officials for the appointment of local workforce investment board members;	Yes
4. The State established written policy and procedures to ensure local workforce investment boards are certified by the governor every two years in accordance with WIOA section 107(c)(2);	Yes
5. Where an alternative entity takes the place of a State Board, the State has written policy and procedures to ensure the alternative entity meets the definition under WIOA section 101(e) and the legal requirements for membership;	Yes
6. The State established a written policy and procedure for how the individuals and entities represented on the State Workforce	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
Development Board help to determine the methods and factors of distribution, and how the State consults with chief elected officials in local areas throughout the State in determining the distributions;	
7. The State will not use funds received under WIOA Title I to assist, promote, or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA section 181(b)(7);	Yes
8. The State distributes adult and youth funds received under WIOA equitably throughout the State, and no local area suffers significant shifts in funding from year-to-year during the period covered by this plan;	Yes
9. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I;	Yes
10. The State agrees to report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in its WIOA Annual Report.	Yes
11. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance under section WIOA 184(a)(3);	Yes

**ADULT PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

**Performance Goals for the Core Programs**

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the two years covered by the plan modification. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the two years of the plan modification.

While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	62.0		63.0	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	64.0		65.0	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	6900.0		7000.0	
Credential Attainment Rate	57.0		58.0	
Measurable Skill Gains	67.0		68.0	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.*

#### DISLOCATED PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

##### **Performance Goals for the Core Programs**

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the two years covered by the plan modification. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the two years of the plan modification.

While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
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Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	59.0		60.0	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	61.0		62.0	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	9700.0		9800.0	
Credential Attainment Rate	60.0		61.0	
Measurable Skill Gains	75.0		76.0	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

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*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.*

#### YOUTH PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

##### Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the two years covered by the plan modification. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the two years of the plan modification.

While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	53.0		54.0	
Employment (Fourth Quarter	52.0		53.0	

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
After Exit)				
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	3600.0		3700.0	
Credential Attainment Rate	45.0		46.0	
Measurable Skill Gains	71.0		72.0	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

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*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.*

#### PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR WAGNER-PEYSER PROGRAM (EMPLOYMENT SERVICES)

All Program-Specific Requirements provided for the WIOA core programs in this section must be addressed for either a Unified or Combined State Plan.

##### A. EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF

#### 1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL STAFF THE PROVISION OF LABOR EXCHANGE SERVICES UNDER THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT, SUCH AS THROUGH STATE EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO STATE MERIT STAFF EMPLOYEES, STAFF OF A SUBRECIPIENT, OR SOME COMBINATION THEREOF.

On January 6, 2020, USDOL released the *Wagner-Peyser Act Staffing Flexibility* rule, which gave States additional flexibility with regard to the administration of the programs funded with Wagner-Peyser funds. At this time, New Jersey intends to continue to use its state merit staff employees to deliver Wagner-Peyser services.

#### 2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL UTILIZE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF TO ENSURE STAFF IS ABLE TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES TO BOTH JOBSEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS

Employment Service staff, as well as other program areas, participate in professional development that is provided directly through NJDOL teams, or coordinated through a new training partnership created between NJDOL and GSETA (Garden State Employment and Training Association). This professional development takes several forms, including online sessions, in-person training, and webinars. Additionally, professional development resources have been made available to all One-Stop Career Center staff through the WIOA Technical

Assistance webpage <https://nj.gov/labor/wioa/>. This page includes desk references, including technical guides for America's One Stop Operating System (AOSOS), Assessments, and Supportive Services; New Jersey Workforce Innovation Notices outlining policy and processes for compliance with state and federal priorities; and webinars on topics such as work-based learning.

NJDOL also incorporated training opportunities for One-Stop staff relating to the provision of services to individuals with disabilities, in coordination with DVRS and CBVI. NJDOL has developed a new Learning Management System that provides access to training and technical resources, as well as a statewide training calendar to ensure coordination of training across units.

Staff also attend the annual GSETA conference, which features training on topics including leadership, career services, youth services and services for special populations.

### 3. DESCRIBE STRATEGIES DEVELOPED TO SUPPORT TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACROSS CORE PROGRAMS AND THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) PROGRAM AND THE TRAINING PROVIDED FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND WIOA STAFF ON IDENTIFICATION OF UI ELIGIBILITY ISSUES AND REFERRAL TO UI STAFF FOR ADJUDICATION

The incredible number of NJ Unemployment Insurance recipients during the Covid-19 pandemic both strained and brought to light needed changes across our system. Questions about Unemployment Insurance were met in every corner of our system. The need for continued integration and connection of One Stop partners emerged as a critical need. However, we also recognize that integration and connection will no longer always require co-location. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, NJDOL has continued to pursue strategies that develop cross-training opportunities and systems that work across One Stop partners – this includes efforts to modernize our data systems, the development of a Single Sign-On, and investments in universal platforms such as Skill Up New Jersey that can offer training opportunities across programs.

In addition, NJDOL has sought to build out specific centers of technical assistance within our core programs – Title I, II, III, and IV programs, as well as Work First New Jersey (WFNJ). A key goal moving forward is to support connection and cross-training through the development of our new Learning Management System (LMS), as well as through NJDOL's training partnership with GSETA, drawing on the internal expertise of our teams, our local areas, and outside partners.

#### B. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE WILL PROVIDE INFORMATION AND MEANINGFUL ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUALS REQUESTING ASSISTANCE IN FILING A CLAIM FOR UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION THROUGH ONE-STOP CENTERS, AS REQUIRED BY WIOA AS A CAREER SERVICE

New Jersey operates 23 One-Stop Career Centers. Prior to Covid-19, UI staff was gradually transforming its service delivery model from in-person services at all sites to focus on concentrating staff at three regional Reemployment Call Centers. As part of this transition, UI increased its capacity to serve customers in One-Stop Centers through a system of courtesy telephones and online resources at the majority of One-Stops. Wagner-Peyser staff were trained to resolve common and simple non-monetary issues for UI customers, to assist UI customers with access to online resources and the courtesy phones, to maintain accessibility for customers with disabilities, and to provide translation services to non-English speaking claimants. When



Covid-19 began, this shift to remote systems accelerated and evolved to try to meet the incredible influx of UI customers that resulted from the pandemic. As UI rolls have declined, NJDOL's leadership with the Governor's office is seeking to develop strategies for strengthening our UI services statewide, drawing on the lessons learned from the pandemic to balance in-person services and leverage technology and the opportunities for remote support within our One-Stop Career Center network.

C. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S STRATEGY FOR PROVIDING REEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE TO UI CLAIMANTS AND OTHER UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS

Unemployment insurance claimants receive a worker profiling score upon filing for benefits. The score measures the probability of the claimant exhausting benefits before finding new employment. Claimants receiving a profiling score are entered into the RESEA (*Re-Employment Services and Eligibility Assessment*) selection pool for mandatory One-Stop services. RESEA participants are mailed an invitation during the second week of their UI and report generally five to six weeks into their claim. NJDOL is currently utilizing text messaging, phone contacts, and email notifications to alert UI claimants that are scheduled for RESEA appointments.

The RESEA workshop offers claimants One-Stop Career Center and career assessment information, labor market information, an individualized work search plan, and a review of their eligibility for unemployment insurance benefits. New Jersey will service approximately 30,000 RESEA participants in the current program year but hopes to dramatically increase the number moving forward due to the proven value of this effective reemployment tool.

During Covid-19, the need for RESEA support dramatically increased, and NJDOL sought to maintain the same quality and sequence of service through virtual supports. As we move forward, we seek to continue to develop RESEA programs as a bridge from UI to more individual career services and training support.

D. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE W-P FUNDS TO SUPPORT UI CLAIMANTS, AND THE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN W-P AND UI, AS APPROPRIATE INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:

1. COORDINATION OF AND PROVISION OF LABOR EXCHANGE SERVICES FOR UI CLAIMANTS AS REQUIRED BY THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT;

Specifically, New Jersey will utilize Wagner-Peyser funds to support UI claimants in the following ways:

- The State automatically pre-registers reemployment service-eligible UI claimants into the One-Stop case management system, America's One-Stop Operating System (AOSOS). This pre-registration is accomplished through a daily electronic batch data transfer from the UI mainframe system to New Jersey's AOSOS database. Almost all UI claimants are pre-registered in AOSOS; only those claimants who are coded as temporarily laid off and those who are attached to a union hiring hall are exempt from this pre-registration. This electronic data transfer enables all One-Stop partners to access identifying information on UI claimants in order to offer reemployment services.
- Federal legislation requires all states to provide reemployment assistance to those claimants who are permanently laid off and are identified as most likely to benefit from One-Stop services. Selected claimants are required to participate in this mandatory

program of reemployment services. Unemployment claimants who are identified and referred to reemployment services through the profiling system, Re-Employment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA), must participate in reemployment services as a condition of continued UI benefit eligibility. The goal is to keep jobseekers focused on the search for new employment and to ensure that those no longer looking for work do not continue to receive UI benefits.

- New Jersey Unemployment Compensation law requires that a claimant for UI benefits be able to work, be available for work and be actively seeking work. While there is no minimum number of employer contacts required of UI claimants to maintain eligibility, One-Stop staff evaluate claimants work search history as part of the UI eligibility determination portion of the RESEA. Telephone, in-person contacts, and applying for job openings or sending résumés electronically using the state’s online labor exchange system or directly at employer websites, are all acceptable work search methods.
- UI claimants calling NJDOL for assistance or information may be placed on hold while waiting for the next available customer service representative. Information on One-Stop Career Center reemployment services are shared with claimants as they wait, including virtual services available at the department’s website.

Data regarding reemployment rates for UI claimants is captured and reported quarterly. The comparison of the reemployment rate for those receiving One-Stop Career Center services is compared to a control group of claimants not receiving services in order to determine effectiveness of service delivery.

Claimants filing online are directed to the online re-employment orientation video after completing their application for unemployment benefits. This orientation provides information on re-employment services including labor exchange, basic and occupational skills training, career exploration, and staff-assisted services such as Jersey Job Club workshops, employment counseling, and program eligibility/assessment services available at the One-Stop Career Centers. Upon filing, claimant information automatically populates the One-Stop case management system to facilitate service delivery and minimize duplicate data entry. Claimants required to attend mandatory workshops receive eligibility reviews, group workshops, one-on-one LMI and re-employment planning, and referral to re-employment services such as basic and occupational skills training, Jersey Job Club workshops, and the state’s job board.

In order to provide more proactive services to UI claimants, the balance of UI claimants not selected for RESEA will be invited to attend a re-employment orientation. Claimants not reporting to any mandatory session are referred to UI adjudication staff for a non-monetary review. Claimants and UI applicants visiting a One-Stop Career Center for filing or resolving claims issues are directed by staff to resource room PCs and provided technical assistance on filing or directed to the UI phone bank for priority connection to a UI call center. While Wagner-Peyser staff are not UI issues experts, they can assist with technology tools, resolve simple and common UI issues, and encourage claimants to engage in re-employment services. Technology improvements include the launch of a single sign-on application for UI claimants that will provide them with a convenient and common vehicle for UI and re-employment services. And, since UI claimants will be required to use the single sign-on to certify the continuation of benefits on a weekly basis, engagement with re-employment services will occur more frequently.

## 2. REGISTRATION OF UI CLAIMANTS WITH THE STATE'S EMPLOYMENT SERVICE IF REQUIRED BY STATE LAW;

The State automatically pre-registers reemployment service-eligible UI claimants into the One-Stop case management system, America's One-Stop Operating System (AOSOS). This pre-registration is accomplished through a daily electronic batch data transfer from the UI mainframe system to New Jersey's AOSOS database. Almost all UI claimants are pre-registered in AOSOS; only those claimants who are coded as temporarily laid off and those who are attached to a union hiring hall are exempt from this pre-registration. This electronic data transfer enables all One-Stop partners to access identifying information on UI claimants in order to offer reemployment services.

## 3. ADMINISTRATION OF THE WORK TEST FOR THE STATE UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION SYSTEM, INCLUDING MAKING ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENTS (FOR REFERRAL TO UI ADJUDICATION, IF NEEDED), AND PROVIDING JOB FINDING AND PLACEMENT SERVICES FOR UI CLAIMANTS; AND

New Jersey Unemployment Compensation law requires that a claimant for UI benefits be able to work, be available for work and be actively seeking work. While there is no minimum number of employer contacts required of UI claimants to maintain eligibility, One-Stop staff evaluate claimants work search history as part of the UI eligibility determination portion of the RESEA. Telephone, in-person contacts, and applying for job openings or sending résumés electronically using the state's online labor exchange system or directly at employer websites, are all acceptable work search methods.

UI claimants calling NJDOL for assistance or information may be placed on hold while waiting for the next available customer service representative. Information on One-Stop Career Center reemployment services are shared with claimants as they wait, including virtual services available at the department's website.

Claimants filing online are directed to the online re-employment orientation video after completing their application for unemployment benefits. This orientation provides information on re-employment services including labor exchange, basic and occupational skills training, career exploration, and staff-assisted services such as Jersey Job Club workshops, employment counseling, and program eligibility/assessment services available at the One-Stop Career Centers.

## 4. PROVISION OF REFERRALS TO AND APPLICATION ASSISTANCE FOR TRAINING AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES.

Claimants filing online are directed to the online re-employment orientation video after completing their application for unemployment benefits. This orientation provides information on re-employment services including labor exchange, basic and occupational skills training, career exploration, and staff-assisted services such as Jersey Job Club workshops, employment counseling, and program eligibility/assessment services available at the One-Stop Career Centers.

E. AGRICULTURAL OUTREACH PLAN (AOP). EACH STATE AGENCY MUST DEVELOP AN AOP EVERY FOUR YEARS AS PART OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN REQUIRED UNDER SECTIONS 102 OR 103 OF WIOA. THE AOP MUST INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF NEED. AN

ASSESSMENT NEED DESCRIBES THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS IN THE AREA BASED ON PAST AND PROJECTED AGRICULTURAL AND FARMWORKER ACTIVITY IN THE STATE. SUCH NEEDS MAY INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO: EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND HOUSING.

1. ASSESSMENT OF NEED. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS IN THE AREA BASED ON PAST AND PROJECTED AGRICULTURAL AND FARMWORKER ACTIVITY IN THE STATE. SUCH NEEDS MAY INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO: EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND HOUSING.

Despite New Jersey's densely populated northeastern and southwestern regions close to New York and Philadelphia, farming continues to be a significant economic force in the state's rural areas. Approximately 730,000 acres or 15.6 percent of the state's area is used for farming. In order of sales, Cumberland, Atlantic, Monmouth, Gloucester, and Burlington lead New Jersey's 21 counties, accounting for about 60 percent of agricultural production statewide.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture 2022 Census of Agriculture showed that New Jersey's agricultural industry added 115 new farms, leaving the Garden State just short of the 10,000 farms mark at 9,998. The increase went against the national trend, which showed a 7 percent decrease in the number of farms in the U.S. New Jersey's overall agriculture products sold increased from just over \$1.1 billion in 2017, to almost \$1.5 billion in 2022. The Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker (MSFW) outreach program and H-2A activities of the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development are limited to a sampling of the roughly 1,300 farms that use Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers.

Typical characteristics of MSFWs in NJ include predominantly Spanish, Haitian Creole, or Korean speaking, from countries of origin that include Mexico, Guatemala, Jamaica, Haiti, Korea, and U.S. born workers from Puerto Rico. Farmworkers tend to have low levels of literacy, with minimal access to resources and supportive services. Due to lack of transportation, many rely on friends/family, crew leader shuttles, or public transportation options. Also, lack of healthcare access tends to increase risk of undiagnosed and unreported/underreported health conditions. Given the housing options associated with migratory and temporary based employment such as those associated with the farming industry, MSFWs are overrepresented in housing areas that tend to have overcrowding, forcing many to share kitchen and bathroom areas. Regarding access to employment and training programs, MSFWs may benefit from Employment Services (ES) services, including partnerships with MSFW serving organizations, but due to long work hour schedules, remote area location associated with farms, and mistrust in government agencies given the issues associated with immigrant communities, MSFWs tend to not participate with ES employment and training programs/services. Based on past and projected agricultural and farmworker activity in NJ, farmworkers, including MSFWs, needs include:

- Flexible hours for accessible services as agricultural work hours do not always coincide with typical business hours
- Assistance with language barriers, including English language classes
- ES services offered in culturally and linguistically appropriate manner, including bilingual one-stop staff, translated list of services and programs, referrals to appropriate supportive services resources

- Increased collaboration with MSFW serving organizations, including Pathstone, to build a sense of trust within farmworker communities while increasing program service capacity
- Increased co-enrollment with WIOA core programs, including Title 1 and II for training options.
- Streamlined ES service delivery to ensure all MSFW are provided ES services and protections in an equitable manner, on a statewide basis
- Increased WDB involvement and activity, as it relates to creating policies and programs tailored to serve MSFW communities, particularly in local areas with ETA designated Significant Offices
- Referral systems to pandemic related programs and services, including COVID-19 vaccination, testing, and symptoms management.
- Increased awareness regarding CDC and NJ DOH COVID-19 related guidance and safety recommendations, using culturally and linguistically appropriate tools.

Addressing unmet employment and training needs by offering and incentivizing training and employment programs, including work experience components, On the Job Training (OJT), Incumbent Worker training, as well as partnering with community businesses to create employment and training opportunities tailored to meet unique needs of MSFWs. The five designated MSFW Significant offices will participate in all upcoming work-based learning training sessions offered by the Office of Career Services.

2. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY IN THE STATE MEANS: 1) IDENTIFYING THE TOP FIVE LABOR-INTENSIVE CROPS, THE MONTHS OF HEAVY ACTIVITY, AND THE GEOGRAPHIC AREA OF PRIME ACTIVITY; 2) SUMMARIZE THE AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS' NEEDS IN THE STATE (I.E. ARE THEY PREDOMINANTLY HIRING LOCAL OR FOREIGN WORKERS, ARE THEY EXPRESSING THAT THERE IS A SCARCITY IN THE AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE); AND 3) IDENTIFYING ANY ECONOMIC, NATURAL, OR OTHER FACTORS THAT ARE AFFECTING AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE OR ANY PROJECTED FACTORS THAT WILL AFFECT AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE

The U.S. Department of Agriculture 2022 Census of Agriculture shows that New Jersey's agricultural industry added 115 new farms. There are now approximately 10,000 farms in NJ. The increase went against the national trend, which showed a 7 percent decrease in the number of farms in the U.S. The data showed that the nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, and sod industry are New Jersey's leading agricultural sector with sales at nearly \$725 million, an increase of \$225 million from the previous census. New Jersey ranks fifth in the nation in nursery stock sales at \$296 million. The vegetable industry is New Jersey's second highest in sales at nearly \$295 million, followed by fruits and berries at nearly \$200 million. The top three sectors comprise more than 80 percent of total sales for New Jersey agriculture. The Census showed that New Jersey continues to be among the top producers in the U.S. of several crops such as eggplant at No. 3, cranberries, and asparagus at each at No. 4, and blueberries at No. 5. Other crops New Jersey is ranked in the top 10 in the nation for production include peaches, plums, bell peppers, spinach, bok choy, escarole, kale, and romaine lettuce among others. The farming season generally runs from April thru November in New Jersey

New Jersey's top five **most labor-intensive** agricultural commodities, listed below with their peak months, are:

1. Blueberries, July
2. Cranberries, October
3. Orchards: Peaches, August; Apples, September
4. Vegetables: Asparagus, May; Tomatoes, July; Mixed Vegetables, August; Sweet Potatoes, October
5. Nurseries, March

These crops were concentrated in the following New Jersey counties:

- Blueberries (Atlantic County)
- Cranberries (Burlington County)
- Orchards (Gloucester, Salem and Cumberland Counties)
- Vegetables (Gloucester, Salem and Cumberland Counties)
- Nurseries (Gloucester, Salem and Cumberland)

Blueberries are the official fruit of New Jersey. There is approximately 68 million pounds grown in the state annually. New Jersey's 80 million dollar blueberry industry is backed by about 254 farms spanning 8,800 harvested acres, with about 7,594 of those acres located in the Hammonton area of Atlantic County. There is a high concentration of H2A workers hired in this area of the state because of the large amount of blueberry farms. Agricultural employers are concerned with labor supply and production costs. Beyond workforce issues, New Jersey farm employers believe the state's agriculture industry was also impacted by the **COVID 19 pandemic**, price hikes in fuel and chemicals and by worker competition from other sectors.

New Jersey farmers hire both foreign and local workers to fill labor demands during agricultural peak season. **H-2A job orders have remained consistent, despite pandemic related labor shortages.**

NJ's Agricultural Industry Profile indicates a downward trend in foreign-born agricultural employment.

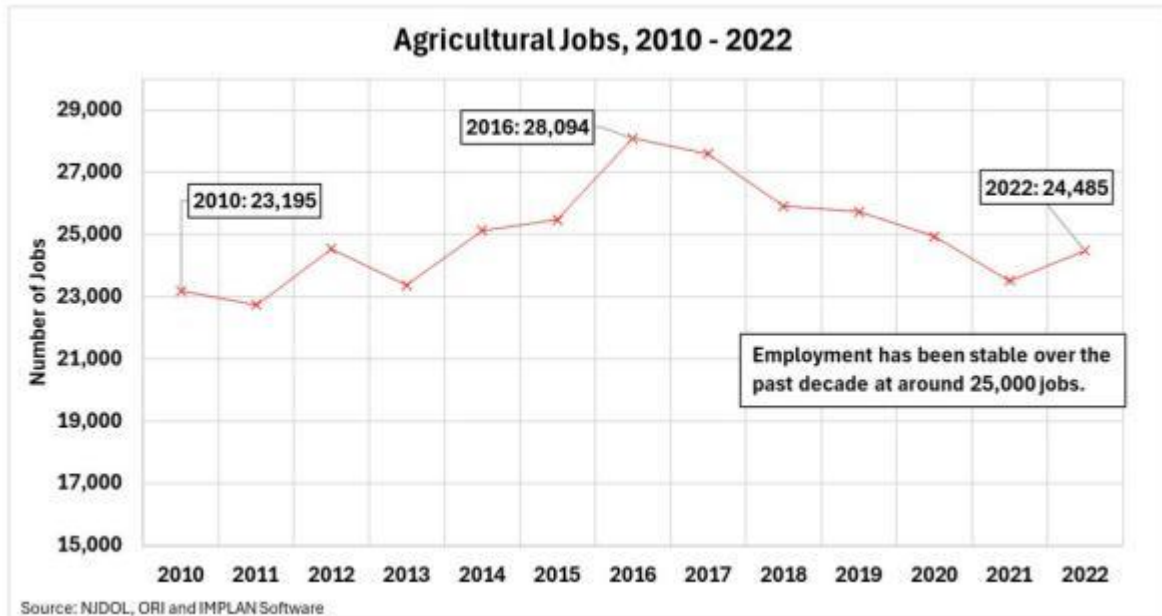
## Migrant Workers by County 2017 & 2022

County	2017	2022	Change
ATLANTIC	6,363	3,952	(2,411)
BERGEN	(D)	-	
BURLINGTON	739	879	140
CAMDEN	296	199	(97)
CAPE MAY	(D)	(D)	
CUMBERLAND	1,173	1,499	326
ESSEX	-	-	
GLOUCESTER	733	581	(152)
HUDSON	-	-	
HUNTERDON	287	125	(162)
MERCER	26	38	12
MIDDLESEX	(D)	42	
MONMOUTH	175	292	117
MORRIS	108	128	20
OCEAN	23	8	(15)
PASSAIC	(D)	(D)	
SALEM	479	379	(100)
SOMERSET	48	6	(42)
SUSSEX	-	(D)	
UNION	-	-	
WARREN	110	83	(27)
<b>NEW JERSEY</b>	<b>10,675</b>	<b>8,248</b>	<b>(2,427)</b>

Source: Census of Agriculture, Table 1. County Summary Highlights: 2022 & 2017

A planned Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) marketing strategy addresses many workforce development issues facing NJ farmers. NJ farmers will continue to work with outreach workers and one stop center staff for their staffing needs.

According to the NJ Agricultural Industry Profile, New Jersey has witnessed increases in support activity and nursery positions as well as declines in the overall number of agricultural jobs and foreign workers. These, among other things, may be correlated to things such as agricultural work robotization and commodity consumption.



New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Office of Research and Information, noted that NJ's Agricultural Industry Profile, has revealed shifts in agricultural product consumption, cultivation, and technology. This along with decreases in the employment of H2A workers provide for impactful factors to consider regarding the projected health of New Jersey's Agricultural Sector.

3. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS MEANS SUMMARIZING MIGRANT AND SEASONAL FARM WORKER (MSFW) CHARACTERISTICS (INCLUDING IF THEY ARE PREDOMINANTLY FROM CERTAIN COUNTRIES, WHAT LANGUAGE(S) THEY SPEAK, THE APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF MSFWs IN THE STATE DURING PEAK SEASON AND DURING LOW SEASON, AND WHETHER THEY TEND TO BE MIGRANT, SEASONAL, OR YEAR-ROUND FARMWORKERS). THIS INFORMATION MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT DATA SUPPLIED BY WIOA SECTION 167 NATIONAL FARMWORKER JOBS PROGRAM (NFJP) GRANTEEES, OTHER MSFW ORGANIZATIONS, EMPLOYER ORGANIZATIONS, AND STATE AND/OR FEDERAL AGENCY DATA SOURCES SUCH AS THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR (DOL) EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION

There is no officially published count of the number of farm workers in the state during the growing season. Estimates are complicated due to the mobility of migrant and seasonal farm workers as they move from crop to crop.

However, a statewide estimate shows 10,000-11,000 workers during New Jersey's 2022 growing season, up from the statewide estimate of 600-800 workers during low season.

Numbers are based on past estimates, wage and crop surveys and input from partners such as WIOA Section 167 grantee PathStone. In addition, data from the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, USDA, and New Jersey Farm Bureau was used to further inform and support statistics used in the State's agricultural plan.

The makeup of New Jersey's farm labor workforce is:



- *Seasonal farmworkers* – individuals who are employed, or were employed in the past 12 months, in farm work of a seasonal or other temporary nature and are not required to be absent overnight from his/her permanent place of residence. Non-migrant individuals who are full-time students are included in this group, per the Wagner Peyser Act Staffing Final Rule/88 FR 82658. Labor is performed on a seasonal basis where, ordinarily, the employment pertains to or is of the kind exclusively performed at certain seasons or periods of the year and which, from its nature, may not be continuous or carried on throughout the year.
- *Migrant farmworkers* – individuals who travel to perform farm work and who are unable to return to their permanent residence the same day. The migrant farmworker labor force in New Jersey consists of intrastate and interstate as well as H-2A farmworkers. The department places particular emphasis in providing services to migrant farmworkers as it recognizes that these workers may be less aware of local area resources and support services.
- *Intrastate migrant farmworkers* – individuals who followed migrant streams within the state. These farmworkers usually migrate throughout MSFW areas within the state.
- *Interstate migrant farmworkers* – individuals who follow migrant streams from state to state. Most interstate migrant farmworkers in New Jersey migrate through Georgia, Maine, Michigan, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, New York and Pennsylvania.
- *H-2A foreign labor certified farmworkers* – individuals with temporary visas authorizing them to work in the United States on a seasonal basis for a predetermined employer under specific terms and conditions.

Spanish and Creole/French are the most common languages spoken by foreign workers in New Jersey, whose three largest areas of origin are the countries of Mexico, Haiti, and the U.S. Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The numerous migrant workers often have a need for housing. Other leading needs of farm workers include on-site assistance accessing employment services, benefits and worker protections as well as assistance with unemployment insurance claims.

Farmworkers are especially likely to be disadvantaged in terms of access to information about new or changing labor market conditions and job opportunities. They are also disproportionately poor, and their economic status may limit their physical access to public labor market information and assistance resources.

The physical distances and relative social isolation typical of many rural environments slows the transmission of information by word-of-mouth. Even though seasonal migrant workers may move great distances from one crop area to another over the course of planting, tending and harvesting seasons, their knowledge is often limited to a familiar circuit of employment opportunities, and they commonly lack rapid access to information that would enable them to alter routine migration patterns to take advantage of new opportunities. The low educational attainment of farmworkers is a major barrier to efficient access and rapid response to changing labor market conditions.

Workers in agricultural labor or services often perform work in remote locations for short periods of time and therefore may have little or no access to community or government

resources, decreasing their ability to obtain information about alternative employment opportunities that could enable them to bargain more effectively.

Farmworkers are still in need of COVID related services, including vaccination and testing resources. NJDOL will continue to collaborate with its sister agencies and community partners to ensure MSFWs are made aware of available resources, including appropriate referral methods.

**Past and Projected Agricultural and Farmworker Activity**

As seen in the chart below, approximately 2,906 MSFWs were contacted in PY 2024, representing a 28 percent increase over the PY 2022 total of 2,263 contacts. Outreach activity was concentrated during New Jersey’s peak crop season from May through October. Compared with PY 2022, PY 2024 also showed a modest increase in job application referrals and one AJC-related complaint, which was promptly and appropriately resolved by the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development’s Equal Employment Opportunity officer in coordination with the U.S. Department of Labor.

NJDOL anticipates that the number of MSFWs contacted in PY 2025 and subsequent years will meet or exceed PY 2024 levels as the program continues to advance, supported by experienced staff, enhanced agricultural outreach data, expanded resources, and targeted technical assistance.

PY 2022	Best Estimate: MSFWs in Area	# of MSFWs Personally Contacted	Approx. Staff Days Performing Outreach	# of Applications for Jobs Taken	# of AJC-Related Complaints Received from MSFWs	# of Apparent Violations Referred to Enforcement Agencies
Jul	10540	687	10	0	0	0
Aug	10540	521	15	0	0	0
Sep	10540	292	11	1	0	0
Oct	5940	235	12	0	0	0
Nov	1570	0	0	0	0	0
Dec	380	0	0	2	0	0
Jan	120	0	0	0	0	0
Feb	350	0	0	0	0	0
Mar	580	0	0	0	0	0
Apr	2690	0	0	0	1	0

PY 2022	Best Estimate: MSFWs in Area	# of MSFWs Personally Contacted	Approx. Staff Days Performing Outreach	# of Applications for Jobs Taken	# of AJC-Related Complaints Received from MSFWs	# of Apparent Violations Referred to Enforcement Agencies
May	9040	341	12	0	0	0
Jun	13887	830	14	1	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>66177</b>	<b>2906</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>

The Outreach Workers are trained in Complaint System procedures and are prepared to take on-site complaints as needed. In addition, apparent violations observed by the Outreach Workers will be referred to the appropriate enforcement agencies. Outreach Workers are required to maintain a daily Outreach Log.

Depending on local circumstances (such as MSFW and employer preferences), outreach contacts may occur in agricultural fields during the workday. However, many MSFWs prefer to continue working rather than stopping to talk with an Outreach Worker. In that situation, the Outreach Workers may need to meet MSFWs during lunch or after MSFWs finish their work (usually returning to their living quarters or gathering areas).

Employment Services outreach staff are funded with Wagner-Peyser “10 percent” funds. Based upon NJDOL’s analysis of resources available to support outreach and an assessment, there is an adequate and sufficient amount of resources available.

#### 4. OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

The local offices outreach activities must be designed to meet the needs of MSFWs in the State and to locate and contact MSFWs who are not being reached through normal intake activities. Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:

New Jersey has designated five locations as Significant and Bilingual Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFW) offices:

- Atlantic County One-Stop Career Center, 2 South Main Street, Pleasantville, New Jersey 08232
- Cumberland County One-Stop Career Center, 3322 College Drive, PO Box 1500, Vineland, NJ 08362
- Gloucester County One-Stop Career Center, 1480 Tanyard Road, Suite A, Sewell, NJ 08080 and 215 Crown Point Road, Thorofare, NJ 08086
- Somerset County One-Stop Career Center, 75 Veterans Memorial Drive East, Somerville, NJ 08876
- Burlington County One Stop Career Center, 795 Woodlane Rd, Westhampton, NJ 08060

Pleasantville covers over 130 farm employers in its outreach service area. It is strategically located with access to South Central and Central New Jersey outreach service areas. It is a Farm

Labor Contractors registration site and is located in a town with a crop of national interest which attracts over 8,000 farmworkers during the peak season.

Vineland covers over 300 farm employers and processes H-2A applications in its outreach service area. It is strategically located with access to the most farming intensive counties of the State and it is a Farm Labor Contractors registration site.

**Outreach**

Outreach staff will contact 40 MSFWs per week on average with a goal of reaching a total of 4,500 MSFWs through the five local offices during the growing season. The figure will remain fixed to adjust for changes in projected staffing levels and potential workforce adjustments in alignment with U.S. Department of Labor regulations.

Local Office	# of MSFWs to be Contacted during PY 23	Staff Days Conducting Outreach	# of Days per Week	# of Farms, Campsites or Gathering Places per Day	# of MSFW Contact per Day
Atlantic	900	90	4	2	10
Cumberland	900	90	4	2	10
Gloucester	900	90	4	2	10
Somerset	900	90	4	2	10
Burlington	900	90	4	2	10

Significant MSFW office staff and management, outreach workers and other appropriate personnel are provided with the computer-based training on services to farmworkers and farm employers.

To strengthen and expand outreach services MSFWs, NJDOL designated the Burlington County One-Stop Career Center as a significant office in PY22. Although outreach staffing levels have been slightly below target, overall staffing has remained stable. Outreach territories have been strategically expanded to maximize engagement with MSFWs across the state. Employment Services staff will continue to ensure that MSFWs have access to services at all New Jersey AJC locations.

Self-assessments of One-Stop Career Centers include reviews of MSFW daily outreach logs and plans, Complaint System logs, MSFW program performance and compliance reports. Field office reports to the State Monitor Advocate (SMA) include information compiled through internal and external customer contacts, customer satisfaction surveys, system-generated reports, and input provided by stakeholders.

Outreach visits are made to the agricultural community from April to November with the vast majority of the visits between May 10th and October 30th, to locate and contact MSFWs at their working, living and/or gathering areas to inform them of current One-Stop Career Center, PathStone Inc., and other community-based organization services which may be of interest.

Outreach activities are consistent with 20 CFR Part 653.107 and serve to implement strategies aimed to identify, document and track MSFWs as they access basic and individualized career services and training services offered through the state's One-Stop Career Centers.

### **Outreach Strategies**

Since Program Year 2011, the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development has worked to recruit an MSFW Outreach team that includes permanent, year-round, bi-lingual staff. It has also sought to develop a broader MSFW outreach effort in which outreach workers, local office management, and partners from community-based MSFW service organizations have 1) ongoing communication with one another and 2) a better understanding of their respective roles in ensuring MSFWs the same quality services as non-MSFW customers.

In recent years, the focus of outreach worker training has been on making the staff subject matter experts in MSFW procedures and regulations, such as the:

- Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act (MSPA)
- Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)
- OSHA/ETA/State Housing Standards and Field Sanitation rules
- Federal/State Farm Labor Contractor Registration rules and Child Labor laws
- and others

The State Monitor Advocate emphasizes the importance of providing employment service and benefit information in Spanish, Haitian Creole, and other languages commonly spoken by MSFWs; Limited English Proficiency resources; and a unified complaint system.

Consistent with DOLETA strategies for enhancing opportunities for agricultural employers, limited-English proficient individuals, and farmworker adults and youth, New Jersey's outreach priorities have included:

- Retaining the permanent status of Outreach Workers.
- Increasing the number of MSFW participating in labor exchange activities.
- Increasing the number of agricultural employers utilizing labor exchange services.
- Promoting the use of the Agricultural (Intrastate and Interstate Clearance) Recruitment System (ARS).
- Encouraging participation of MSFWs seeking to transition to higher-wage jobs and permanent non-agricultural employment.
- Enhancing collaboration with MSFW service provider organizations.
- Integrating MSFWs and organizations providing service to MSFWs in One-Stop Career Centers (OSCCs).

Outreach training for all parties will place more emphasis on these MSFW strategies.

#### **A. CONTACTING FARMWORKERS WHO ARE NOT BEING REACHED BY THE NORMAL INTAKE ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED BY THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE OFFICES**

The New Jersey outreach program will continue to focus on locating and contacting farmworkers not reached through normal intake activities conducted by One-Stop Career Centers. NJDOL will explore and implement processes intended to meet and exceed DOLETA compliance requirements in providing qualitatively equivalent and quantitatively proportionate service delivery to MSFWs.

Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Program (MSFW) outreach training and information will be extended to all of the state's One-Stop Career Centers, not just to staff at the Significant MSFW offices. The NJ State Monitor Advocate (SMA) continues to focus on providing a unified understanding of the MSFW program to all One-Stop Career Centers in New Jersey. Visits have helped the SMA identify the specific information and training materials needed by each office, especially those where MSFW service requests and job orders have been less frequent. All local offices have the resources to help more MSFWs if internal procedures, such as handling complaints, are more consistent and informal.

NJDOL continues to refine its strategies in effectively networking with agencies and community-based organizations throughout the state, including underserved agricultural areas in the state. The traditional approach of boosting MSFW awareness of local services through outreach worker field visits needs to continue to be balanced by alerting more local community colleges, churches, legal services, health clinics, agricultural extension services, farmers' markets, events and festivals to the importance of them actively directing more of the MSFWs they encounter to the One-Stop Career Centers.

NJDOL is also looking for new and reliable ways that the outreach team and community-based organizations can work together to collect and analyze more data on who the MSFW population encompasses, where they are concentrated statewide, and what their specific service needs. Understanding why some MSFWs have failed to connect to support services may require new approaches to traditional survey techniques as well. Training outreach workers on how to take advantage of the state's AOSOS customer case management system remains a high priority.

#### B. PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO OUTREACH STAFF.

Enhanced and ongoing training events for outreach workers, local office staff and community organizations is an important vehicle for getting the word out on new MSFW concerns, such as harassment on the job, career service resources, and native language materials summarizing farmworker rights under state and Federal law.

Adding MSFW questions to local office monitoring interviews is an area where technical guidance could help do more to bring MSFW services closer to the levels offered to non-MSFW clients. NJDOL has built an ongoing rapport with colleagues in the National Monitor Advocate system and obtains technical assistance via the Regional and the National Monitor Advocate office staff.

Technical assistance provided to outreach staff consists of the following:

- Training that includes in-person and computer-based training on services to farmworkers and farm employers, Agricultural Recruitment System (Intrastate and Interstate Clearance). Review of MSFW data entry and tracking into NJ's case management system, America One Stop Operating System (AOSOS)

- Targeted training by NJ Labor Market Analysts to address local area labor demand needs, including partnership strategies with local area Business Resource Centers
- Ongoing cross-training with WIOA Partners, including Titles I and II, to increase co-enrollment into funded employment and training programs
- Provide State-issued vehicles, laptops, and cell phones
- Enhancing collaboration with MSFWs' service provider organizations in order to assist with outreach efforts, including sharing resources and collaborative training efforts to address service delivery, referrals, rights and protections, and career and employment opportunities
- Ongoing reviews of MSFW daily outreach logs and plans, complaint system logs, MSFW program performance, compliance reports customer, satisfaction surveys, and input provided by stakeholders, in order to identify best practices, areas of needed improvement, training needs, and policy area needs
- SMA will continue to support the network of service delivery by providing technical support and training and will be available, in an advisory capacity, to NJDOL in order to maintain program integrity and compliance with federal program mandates.
- Staff will be required to attend meetings, training conferences, and program-related events in agricultural areas throughout the state, including partner and non-partner MSFW serving agencies, and USDOL. Ongoing review of MSFW rights, including overview of both ES regulations and ES laws and NJ's Unified Complaint System.
- Ongoing training via resources provided by ETA's Workforce GPS.

#### C. INCREASING OUTREACH WORKER TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACROSS CORE PROGRAMS INCLUDING THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) PROGRAM AND THE TRAINING ON IDENTIFICATION OF UI ELIGIBILITY ISSUES

Training for outreach workers is being expanded beyond traditional MSFW laws on the Federal level, such as the Fair Labor Standards Act and Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act, to give the staff a deeper understanding of updated Department of Labor and Workforce Development programs involving eligibility for state Unemployment Insurance assistance, Wage & Hour guidelines, and state standards for safety and housing. Online surveys and webinars can also educate professional staff on topics such as how to determine if a worker has enough days worked and enough farm work income to qualify as an authentic "Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker."

The NJDOL Division of Career Services (DCS) conducts annual WIOA Core Partner Cross-training, where lead trainers present on program eligibility, services, and service delivery collaborations. Programs that attend include, but are not limited to:

1. Title I Adult/Dislocated Worker and Youth
2. Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy
3. Title II Employment Services, including MSFW and RESEA Programs
4. Title IV DVR

DCS will expand the training to also include Unemployment Insurance (UI), Pathstone (NFJP grantee), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Senior Community Service Employment, TANF, and Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG). All One-Stop staff, including outreach workers, must attend Core Partner training. NJDOL DCS field staff also hold ongoing planning meetings in their assigned local areas to discuss changes, challenges, and training/technical assistance requests, as part of an ongoing partner service delivery improvement conversation.

NJDOL monitoring efforts are designed to oversee that required partners provide access to its programs or activities through the one-stop delivery system, participate in the operations of the one-stop system, and provide representation on local WDBs. NJDOL also conducts quarterly Central Office Partners Meetings, where each partner updates the one-stop delivery system regarding program eligibility changes, programs and services, and collaboration opportunities.

#### D. PROVIDING STATE MERIT STAFF OUTREACH WORKERS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES TO ENSURE THEY ARE ABLE TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES TO BOTH JOBSEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS

NJDOL is working on further developing its internal protocols and providing technical training as needed. Professional development activities and training are provided through conference calls, training webinars, video conferencing and train the trainer workshops. Upcoming professional development for one stop center staff and partner programs include:

1. Effective outreach strategies for serving farmworkers
2. Strategies for serving farmworkers in ES, including English Language Learners (ELL) and low digital literacy farmworkers: Intake, assessment, case management, referrals, and reporting/tracking.
3. Employment Service (ES)/Employment-Related Law Unified Complaint System: Identifying, addressing and resolving complaints and apparent violations. Farmworker Rights.
4. Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS): Process, Outreach, and Marketing
5. Protecting farmworkers from sexual harassment and human trafficking
6. Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act (MSPA)
7. Child Labor Laws: Protecting children in the fields
8. America One Stop Operating System (AOSOS) Review: Documenting MSFW services and activities
9. Division of Wage and Hour Regulations and Process related to MSFW System
10. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Standards and Protocols
11. Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)

#### E. COORDINATING OUTREACH EFFORTS WITH NFJP GRANTEE AS WELL AS WITH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COMMUNITY SERVICE AGENCIES AND MSFW GROUPS

In May 2024 NJDOL finalized an updated MOU with our NFJP, Pathstone.org. This MOU includes the mention of timely information exchange, cross-training and the use of technology to achieve



quality inter-agency referrals. NJDOL and the NFJP have agreed to develop and incorporate the use of tools such as referral forms via email, follow-up phone calls/meetings, as needed and the use of shared real-time activity calendars to coordinate outreach and service provision to MSFWs.

The strategy mandates NJDOL and Pathstone conduct joint outreach processes, including providing required information on partner programs, and/or services, reporting activities, and conducting need gap analyses where outreach or service delivery is inadequate. Required shared information includes, but is not limited to, number of outreach contacts made, number of participants enrolled, number of referrals made, services provided, performance indicators, labor market and wage information, supportive services available, and participants receiving reemployment assistance benefits.

In addition to this, NJDOL periodically meets and discusses topics of interest with MSFW-serving groups such as the South Jersey Collaborative which, besides the NFJP, includes representatives from the Department of Health, relevant Consular Offices and other stakeholder groups. NJDOL's Office of Strategic Outreach and Partnerships has also been instrumental in supporting coordination efforts by identifying opportunities for combined outreach and partnerships between agencies.

Pathstone will continue to report apparent violations and referral of complaints to local one-stop center managers and/or MSFW outreach staff or SMA. Strategies, outlined in forthcoming NJDOL policy, will be developed to ensure service delivery collaboration exists for Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) where no MSFW outreach staff are present. This may include the use of technology and other innovative outreach protocols, as well as collaborative partnerships with other state, regional, or local social service agencies. Further collaborative efforts include working on special projects and cross training, such as the Annual MSFW training, hosted by NJDOL. Pathstone and NJDOL will continue to coordinate emergency assistance needs for MSFWs.

Regarding improving partnerships, Pathstone and NJDOL continue to host regular meetings with a wide range of local, regional and state organizations engaged in MSFW support services, known as the Helping Hands Coalition. WDBs in Significant Offices areas are also expected to invite Pathstone to serve on their WIOA Youth sub-committees to ensure that policies are created reflecting strategies that serve the needs of MSFW youth, including co-enrollment into the WIOA Title I Youth Program. SMA will also assist Pathstone in initiating discussions between local providers and WDBs to ensure MSFWs are effectively served.

New Jersey's outreach workers and One-Stop Career Centers, in collaboration with strategic partners and affiliated sites, will continue to coordinate service delivery including, but not limited to:

1. Providing a full range of employment services, benefits, and protections on a basis that is qualitatively equivalent and quantitatively proportionate to services provided to non-MSFWs;
2. Accessing and using job order information effectively;
3. Facilitating activities in accessing self-assisted services via electronic technologies;

4. Referring individuals to agricultural and non-agricultural jobs, training, and supportive services as well as available testing, counseling, and other job development services;
5. Referring individuals and family members to supportive services for which they may be eligible;
6. Conducting follow-up contacts as necessary and appropriate to ensure desired outcomes;
7. Marketing services available in the local office and providing location information for the nearest One-Stop Career Center or community-based partner offices;
8. Assisting in posting résumés online and conducting on-line job searches through the NJDOL labor exchange website; and
9. Assisting in communicating between limited English proficient individuals referred to jobs and employers.

#### 5. SERVICES PROVIDED TO FARMWORKERS AND AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS THROUGH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM

Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:

A. PROVIDING THE FULL RANGE OF EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICES TO THE AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY, BOTH FARMWORKERS AND AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS, THROUGH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM. THIS INCLUDES:

I. HOW CAREER AND TRAINING SERVICES REQUIRED UNDER WIOA TITLE I WILL BE PROVIDED TO MSFWs THROUGH THE ONE-STOP CENTERS

II. HOW THE STATE SERVES AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS AND HOW IT INTENDS TO IMPROVE SUCH SERVICES

Career and training services required under WIOA Title I will be provided to MSFWs through the One-Stop Career Centers. NJ ensures that all Workforce Boards and One-Stop Career Centers serve all applicants, including MSFWs. Bilingual staff are available at all significant centers as well as many other centers across the state. As part of the registration process, customers will be identified as MSFWs at the initial point of contact/intake and provided with a verbal and written explanation of services available in English, Spanish or Creole. A MSFW desk aid is available to all staff to assist in identifying MSFWs. Services including basic, individualized (training) and follow-up, will be provided as necessary. Individualized and training services, including co-enrollment options, will be provided through referrals to on-site partner programs. The NJ labor exchange system, Job Source, allows for self-services at any location, without the need of visiting a One-Stop Career Center. Customers utilizing self-services at the One-Stop Career Center, however, will have access to staff assistance. The MSFWs' knowledge, skills and abilities will be assessed to determine appropriate jobs to which they may be referred. Job referrals will be provided through mass recruitments, Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS), H-2A job referrals, and job developments. Effort will be made to refer MSFW jobseekers to H-2A job orders whenever possible. For H-2A job orders, staff will ensure terms and conditions of employment are discussed prior to referral and that the jobseeker is aware of the assurances afforded. H-2A job orders are suppressed in the management information system for the

purpose of ensuring maximum protections to the applicant. Staff are encouraged to follow up on all referrals made to H-2A job orders. Referrals will be made to English as a Second Language classes to reduce language barriers and resume and interviewing skills workshops to enable MSFWs to become more competitive in the workforce. Staff will also provide career guidance and suggest training programs that would best serve the needs of those who are not job ready or those who are ready for a change in occupation. Other programs MSFWs may be referred to include Vocational Rehabilitation (for disabled MSFWs), older workers' programs and housing assistance agencies. Staff will also be familiar with and refer MSFWs appropriately to other community supportive services. The State Monitor Advocate will conduct quality assurance visits to all significant offices on an annual basis to ensure that MSFWs have equal access to employment opportunities through NJ's one-stop center delivery system.

NJ ensures that all One-Stop Career Centers assist all employers, including agricultural employers, in filling job openings. To increase employer participation, links will be established with employers, employer councils, and other employer groups to identify potential employers to establish a pool by which to refer MSFWs. One-Stop Career Center staff in significant MSFW centers will perform marketing outreach to growers, harvesters and processors. The Business Service Representatives (BSR) at the Business Resource Centers will develop new employer contacts, maintain existing contacts and encourage job order creation through the local career centers. BSRs also inform agricultural employers on how to register and use the NJDOL labor exchange system for talent needs, provide current information on applicant availability and labor market information, assist with conducting job searches online using the state's job board, and provide assistance with information on employment and training programs, tax incentives, subsidized employment, and Work Opportunity Tax Credits.

MSFW Outreach workers will also promote labor exchange services to agricultural employers through participation at employer conferences or meetings. Identifying the needs of agricultural employers will continue to be a high priority. Strategies that will be used to promote labor exchange services to agricultural employers include recruiting agreements, job fairs and new business relationships. Some of these efforts include advising worker advocates and groups through notifications of job orders in both English and Spanish; and providing notification to employers and advocates of any changes to foreign labor program requirements that affect workers. Mass recruitment agreements will be offered to agricultural employers at the beginning of a season or when large pools of labor are needed. These agreements can include services such as marketing, prescreening, referral, and completion of applications and I-9 documents. The Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) is an alternative to the H-2A program that will be offered to employers who have temporary agricultural or food processing jobs and are in need of workers. State and local staff participate in recruitment efforts with NJ employers and farmworker organizations to recruit domestic workers. Coordinating activities with farmworker groups will maintain dialogue on job and worker availability to help increase U.S. worker participation. One-Stop Career Centers in significant agricultural areas will be provided copies of approved clearance orders that will provide all staff, including outreach workers, with current information on job availability to assist in these efforts. Assistance with pre-occupancy housing inspections for employers requesting approval for participation in intrastate and/or interstate recruitment through the Agricultural Recruitment System, and/or H-2A foreign labor certification will also be available.

## B. MARKETING THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE COMPLAINT SYSTEM TO FARMWORKERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Both farm workers and farm worker advocacy groups are provided with information throughout the year on how to utilize the Employment Service complaint system whenever Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker customers do not receive the same level of service as non-MSFWs at any of the state's One-Stop Career Centers or whenever there is an apparent violation affecting the health and safety of farmworkers. To ensure that the information pertaining to the use of the employment service complaint system is publicized, the ETA approved employment complaint poster is prominently displayed in each local One Stop, NFJP grantee local offices, and farmworker advocacy groups locations. As part of the State's Learning Management Training System, all ES staff will be trained on the employment service complaint system, including how to provide complaint system related information to farmworkers and farmworker advocacy groups. The State's Annual MSFW Training, for both OS staff and farmworker- serving organizations, will cover the employment service complaint system process. Outreach workers will be fully trained in all aspects of employment-related services to MSFWs, including taking complaints while in the field. Further, staff who observe, have reason to believe or are in receipt of information pertaining to an apparent violation of employment-related laws are required to document and refer the suspected violation to the career center manager, who is required to follow established procedures in resolving such allegations. Outreach workers are encouraged to make routine visits to worksites to observe whether field sanitation and pesticide regulations are being followed by employers. They are also trained to ask questions of the farmworkers they come into contact with to determine if violations have taken place. These systems are closely monitored by the Monitor Advocate during annual on-site quality assurance visits and quarterly desk reviews.

## C. MARKETING THE AGRICULTURAL RECRUITMENT SYSTEM FOR U.S. WORKERS (ARS) TO AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS AND HOW IT INTENDS TO IMPROVE SUCH PUBLICITY.

H-2A agricultural survey staff and outreach workers disseminate on-site information regarding the ARS to agricultural employers during field visits. In addition, NJDOL is exploring strategies to expand outreach to a broader range of employers, including enhancing the availability of information through online platforms and strengthening partnerships with farm employers.

NJDOL is developing a comprehensive marketing initiative and strategy that will include the creation of business resource marketing materials and the facilitation of workshops designed to orient staff, One-Stop partners, stakeholders, and agricultural employers to the programs, services, and resources available to support agricultural employers.

Additionally, NJDOL intends to host an annual event to recognize and highlight leading Agricultural Employers. This event will provide a forum to promote the Agricultural Recruitment System for U.S. workers to agricultural employers. The event will also emphasize networking opportunities, the sharing of best practices, and the broader promotion of resources available to employers within the Agricultural Sector.

## 6. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

### A. COLLABORATION

Describe any collaborative agreements the state workforce agency (SWA) has with other MSFW service providers including NFJP grantees and other service providers. Describe how the SWA intends to build upon/increase collaboration with existing partners and in establishing new partners over the next four years (including any approximate timelines for establishing agreements or building upon existing agreements).

New Jersey's One-Stop Career Centers, in collaboration with strategic partners and affiliated sites, will coordinate service delivery including marketing services available in the local office and providing location information for the nearest One-Stop Career Center or affiliated partner offices. The SWA will ensure that local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) partner with PathStone Inc., the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantee, in the five offices designated as Significant Offices in NJ. In May 2024, an updated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was executed between NJDOL and Path stone to memorialize roles and responsibilities and facilitate the exchange of data pertaining to services provided to MSFWs. The agreement builds upon the establish partnership by outlining the joint outreach processes, including providing required information on partner programs, and/or services, reporting activities, and conducting need gap analyses where outreach or service delivery is inadequate. Strategies will be developed to ensure service delivery collaboration exists for local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) where no MSFW outreach staff are present. This may include the use of technology and other innovative outreach protocols, as well as collaborative partnerships with other state, regional, or local social service agencies. Further collaborative efforts include working on special projects and cross training, such as the Annual MSFW training, hosted by NJDOL. PathStone and NJDOL continue to host regular meetings with a wide range of local, regional and state organizations engaged in MSFW support services, known as the Helping Hands Coalition. Local WDBs in Significant Offices areas are also expected to invite Pathstone to serve on their WIOA Youth sub-committees to ensure that policies are created reflecting strategies to serve the needs of MSFW youth, including co-enrollment into the WIOA Title I Youth Program.

In addition to continued participation in MSFW meetings, outreach service staff will participate in other local meetings (as well as other important events) conducted by farm-related agencies and organizations (as well as other important events) to promote the use of NJDOL services.

NJDOL recognizes the need to collaborate with other MSFW organizations in order to expand capacity and leverage existing resources. NJDOL will establish informal agreements with MSFW serving organizations whom are already working in partnership with NJ, including:

- CATA - The Farmworkers' Support Committee, whose mission is to educate workers about their rights and support them as they develop and exercise leadership skills in order to create a better life for themselves and their communities.
- The New Jersey Migrant Education Program (NJ MEP) is a federally funded program that supplements educational and support services for migratory children.
- Migrant Worker Outreach Organization, whose mission is to provide educational, social and recreational activities, and to offer material assistance to migrant farm workers and their families

South Jersey Legal Services, Inc. (SJLS), a non-profit organization created to provide legal representation and advocacy to low-income individuals in Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, Monmouth, Ocean and Salem Counties.

## B. REVIEW AND PUBLIC COMMENT

In developing the AOP, the SWA must solicit information and suggestions from NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations. In addition, at least 45 calendar days before submitting its final AOP, the SWA must provide a proposed plan to NFJP grantees, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other organizations expressing an interest and allow at least 30 days for review and comment. The SWA must: 1) Consider any comments received in formulating its final proposed AOP; 2) Inform all commenting parties in writing whether their comments have been incorporated and, if not, the reasons therefore; and 3) Transmit the comments and recommendations received and its responses with the submission of the AOP.

The AOP must include a statement confirming NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations have been given an opportunity to comment on the AOP. Include the list of organizations from which information and suggestions were solicited, any comments received, and responses to those comments.

The NJDOL has routinely shared draft Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker policies and procedures via e-mail with a number of South Jersey community-based organizations interested in farm worker issues, including: PathStone, Inc.; Legal Services of New Jersey/Farmworkers Project; Comité de Apoyo a Trabajadores Agrícolas (CATA); and the New Jersey Farm Bureau.

These groups are also solicited for comments whenever an updated AOP is released for public comment and respond with input. NJDOL solicited information and/or suggestions from Pathstone- the NFJP grantee, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations related to the AOP.

## C. DATA ASSESSMENT

Review the previous four years Wagner-Peyser data reports on performance. Note whether the State has been meeting its goals to provide MSFWs quantitatively proportionate services as compared to non-MSFWs. If it has not met these goals, explain why the State believes such goals were not met and how the State intends to improve its provision of services in order to meet such goals.

With guidance from the Regional Monitor Advocate, New Jersey is moving toward a two-year cycle of on-site reviews that will reach all 30 One-Stop Career Centers – particularly those that are “non-significant” offices far from the main agricultural areas – to ensure that MSFW services are on par with non-MSFW customers. These on-site reviews and presentations, which began in

January 2018, will continue to address past problems identified by New Jersey through an assessment of Equity Ratio Indicators.

New Jersey's Labor Exchange Agricultural Reporting System (LEARS) reports reflect efforts to get both the local office Employment Service staff members and the Outreach workers to increase the number of job and career guidance referrals made for the state's MSFW population. NJDOL is looking at ways to better ensure that MSFWs registered in the One-Stop case management system are receiving career and training services and that those services are recorded properly. This effort will result in improved equity indicator comparisons between MSFWs and non-MSFWs as service delivery and administrative issues are addressed such as:

- Training the outreach workers to enter all delivered services into the NJDOL AOSOS case management system;
- Encouraging outreach workers, local office staff and managers to make use of the National Monitor Advocate's easily accessible computer-based training modules;
- Offering ongoing technical assistance to managers and staff at Significant MSFW local offices; and
- Ensuring follow up with PathStone for co-enrolled MSFWs so that all career and training services delivered via PathStone are recorded in the One-Stop case management system.

#### D. ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

The plan must include an explanation of what was achieved based on the previous AOP, what was not achieved and an explanation as to why the State believes the goals were not achieved, and how the State intends to remedy the gaps of achievement in the coming year.

A review of New Jersey's Labor Exchange Agricultural Reporting System (LEARS) reports for recent program years shows significant progress in contacting an increasing percentage of Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers as part of the state's MSFW outreach efforts.

With four staff dedicated to MSFW outreach during the growing season, NJDOL is planning to reach every MSFW working in New Jersey moving forward. Key elements of the expanded MSFW outreach plan are:

- Greater use of computer-based training modules for MSFW staff for Agricultural Outreach Workers, State Monitor Advocates, and business-service units (for farm employer services);
- Greater understanding of the New Jersey's Employment Service staff's Customer Complaint Procedures, including longer time periods for non-discrimination appeals resulting from implementation of the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act;
- Increased local office engagement in job referral and career guidance for the MSFW population;
- Permanent year-round job placement for MSFW outreach workers instead of the previous practice of hiring temporary staff on a seasonal basis; and

- Higher annual goals for the number of both agricultural and non-agricultural job placements.

Ongoing efforts to increase the number of MSFW contacts and narrow service quality between MSFW and non-MSFW customers include:

- Increased staffing levels;
- Higher daily outreach goals;
- Expanded National Monitor Advocate computer-based MSFW training for local staff and Outreach workers;
- Continued case management system (AOSOS) training for Outreach workers to improve data quality on MSFW services;
- Adequate supplies of Outreach worker brochures/literature translated into Spanish and Haitian Creole (or language readily understood by the worker);
- Regular SMA participation in Monitor Advocate National Training sessions to ensure that New Jersey Outreach workers, local office staff and state WIOA partners engaged in MSFW community services are kept update on new WIOA regulations impacting MSFW services and complaints; and
- Timely training of outreach workers on key issues such as MSFW sexual harassment, complaint procedures and English language assistance.

#### E. STATE MONITOR ADVOCATE

The plan must contain a statement confirming the State Monitor Advocate has reviewed and approved the AOP.

The State Monitor Advocate has reviewed and approved this AOP, as part of New Jersey’s Combined State Plan 2024-27.

#### WAGNER-PEYSER ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service is co-located with one-stop centers or a plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time (sec 121(e)(3));	Yes
2. If the State has significant MSFW one-stop centers, the State agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111, State Workforce Agency staffing requirements;	Yes
3. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws	Yes



The State Plan must include	Include
for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser Act services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and	
<p>4. SWA officials:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Initiate the discontinuation of services;</li> <li>2) Make the determination that services need to be discontinued;</li> <li>3) Make the determination to reinstate services after the services have been discontinued;</li> <li>4) Approve corrective action plans;</li> <li>5) Approve the removal of an employer's clearance orders from interstate or intrastate clearance if the employer was granted conditional access to ARS and did not come into compliance within 5 calendar days;</li> <li>6) Enter into agreements with State and Federal enforcement agencies for enforcement-agency staff to conduct field checks on the SWAs' behalf (if the SWA so chooses); and</li> <li>7) Decide whether to consent to the withdrawal of complaints if a party who requested a hearing wishes to withdraw its request for hearing in writing before the hearing.</li> </ol>	Yes
5. The SWA has established and maintains a self-appraisal system for ES operations to determine success in reaching goals and to correct deficiencies in performance (20 CFR 658.601).	Yes

**WAGNER PEYSER PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

**Performance Goals for the Core Programs**

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the two years covered by the plan modification. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the two years of the plan modification.

While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	48.0		49.0	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	49.0		50.0	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	7700.0		7800.0	
Credential Attainment Rate	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Measurable Skill Gains	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.*

#### PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAMS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a description of the following as it pertains to adult education and literacy programs and activities under title II of WIOA, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA).

##### A. ALIGNING OF CONTENT STANDARDS (WIOA SECTION 102(B)(2)(D)(II)(I))

Describe how the eligible agency has aligned its content standards for adult education with State-adopted challenging academic content standards, as adopted under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(1)).

The College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) for adult literacy are the educational underpinning to successful programs. New Jersey Title II funded adult literacy programs are required to ensure programs of instruction are fully vetted with the CCRS in mind through program development and execution. NJ's Title II funded providers must provide DOL staff access to any new curriculum for review and approval. To ensure continuing compliance, Title II

programs are annually monitored in the areas of instruction and curriculum development by NJDOL Office of Adult Literacy (OAL) Area Coordinators to ensure ongoing consistency and full adoption of the CCRS statewide. This program review includes active classroom visitations, discussions with practitioners/staff and students, and targeted review of budgeted expenses for books, curricula, and supplies. Any new Title II providers will continue to be provided with support and training for full adoption of the CCRS within their curricula and program directors are expected to procure professional development based on the needs of staff. NJDOL Office of Adult Literacy staff is committed to continually researching the best practices of CCRS and providing ongoing professional development to Title II providers through training, curriculum review, and professional learning communities of practice.

#### B. LOCAL ACTIVITIES

Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund each eligible provider to establish or operate programs that provide any of the following adult education and literacy activities identified in section 203 of WIOA, including programs that provide such activities concurrently. The Unified or Combined State Plan must include at a minimum the scope, content, and organization of these local activities.

##### ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY ACTIVITIES (SECTION 203 OF WIOA)

- Adult education;
- Literacy;
- Workplace adult education and literacy activities;
- Family literacy activities;
- English language acquisition activities;
- Integrated English literacy and civics education;
- Workforce preparation activities; or
- Integrated education and training that—
  1. Provides adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster, and
  2. Is for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

**Special Rule.** Each eligible agency awarding a grant or contract under this section shall not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that such agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this

title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

In New Jersey, the Notice of Grant Opportunity (NGO) process provides equal access to all eligible providers in order to apply for the local activities described. All AEFLA funds will be competed in accordance with 34 CFR section 463, subpart C. Additionally, not less than 95 percent of the AEFLA award shall be expended for carrying out adult education and literacy activities, and the remaining amount, not to exceed 5 percent, shall be used for planning administration, professional development, and the activities described in paragraphs (3) and (5) of Section 232. NJDOL will allow providers to negotiate to determine adequate level of funds of non-instructional purposes when cost limits are determined to be too restrictive.

Because of disparate demographics and economic climates within the State, the resultant variety of student needs, and the dissimilar nature of the institutions and organizations through which Adult Basic Education is delivered, programs of instruction are encouraged to deliver services in the way that most effectively meets the needs of participants in their local communities. The NJDOL Office of Adult Literacy (OAL) held an WIOA Title II competition for a 5-year award for eligible providers in March 2025. The State, through the AEFLA competition, funds 8 allowable activities:

- *Adult education*
- *Literacy*
- *Workplace adult education and literacy activities*
- *Family literacy activities*
- *English language acquisition activities*
- *Integrated English literacy and civics education*
- *Workforce preparation activities; or*
- *Integrated education and training that—*
  1. *Provides adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster, and*
  2. *Is for the purpose of educational and career advancement.*

Title II Adult Literacy instruction throughout New Jersey is delivered through in-person classes, small group or 1 to 1 instruction, distance learning, hybrid courses, and tutoring.

In general:

- Instruction is delivered by eligible providers of demonstrated effectiveness at community colleges, K-12 school systems, community-based organizations, businesses, community buildings, prisons and jails, faith-based organizations, or anywhere students can be accommodated.

- Instruction is to be held year-round, from July 1 through June 30 (state fiscal year) and may include in-person instruction, hybrid instruction, or remote instruction.
- Student recruitment and retention through the use of managed enrollment, is to ensure courses which are offered during daytime, evening, and weekend hours to enable certain working adults to participate and effectively utilize available resources.

The following types of programs are provided through New Jersey's Title II funded programs:

- **Adult Basic Education (ABE):** These are classes below the high school level where the primary objective is teaching basic literacy skills. Each course of study describes the focus population; the functioning level of the learners served; the basic literacy and life skills taught; and how these skills will be integrated into a competency-based adult education program. Adult education in elementary basic skills focus on native English speakers whose inability to effectively use these basic skills constitutes a substantial impairment to either obtain or retain employment or to function in society.
- **English as a Second Language (ESL)** - now referred to as ELA (English Language Acquisition): This program of instruction is designed to help individuals of limited English proficiency achieve competence in the English language. The inability to understand, speak, read, or write the English language may constitute a substantial impairment to obtain or retain employment commensurate with their abilities, and interfere with functioning successfully in society.
- **Adult Secondary Education (ASE):** Adult secondary subjects consist of courses in mathematics, reading, history, science, government, language arts, and other courses leading to a high school diploma. The NJ Department of Education (NJDOE) has approved one high school equivalency exam, the GED, developed by Pearson Vue. GED testing in NJ is offered in NJDOE recognized testing centers and are offered in an online format; a paper-based test may be provided for those with a qualifying disability.
- **Family Literacy (ABE or ESL):** Family Literacy programs provide services of sufficient intensity and duration to promote sustainable changes in a family, and integrate all of the following activities: (1) increasing parental involvement in children's education, including helping more frequently with school activities, increasing contact with children's teachers, and being more involved in children's school activities; and (2) increasing parental involvement in children's literacy activities, including reading to children, visiting libraries and purchasing books or magazines.
- **EL Civics** - Citizenship Preparation Education and Civic Participation: This program's focus is on literacy skills and uses ESL (now ELA) methodologies and citizenship preparation material in a contextualized manner to prepare learners to take and pass the USCIS tests. The program also includes outreach services, skills assessment, curriculum development and instruction, naturalization preparation and assistance.
- **Integrated Education and Training:** An Integrated Education and Training (IET) program must meet the definition and requirements set forth in WIOA and the final regulations as established by the United States Department of Education on August 19, 2016, in the Federal Register. IET Programs utilize a service approach that provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce

preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement (§463.35). An IET program must include the following three components: adult education and literacy activities; workforce preparation activities; and workforce training (§463.36). In addition, as part of a career pathway (§463.37), the intention of an IET program should support the state workforce development plan and local Workforce Development Board plans under WIOA; the programs must align services with state and local workforce needs. Each Title II provider in New Jersey maintains a memorandum of understanding (MOU) and Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) with their local Workforce Development Board (WDB) to support alignment and coordination. All Title II providers who apply for and receive Section 243 funding for IET programs must have an OAL approved IET course which draws on regional job sector gaps and employment demands specific to the local area to be served. Additionally, Section 231 funds may also support IET programs.

The NJDOL Office of Adult Literacy held a competition for NJ AEFLA Title II funds in March 2025. This competition was for a 5-year grant award to the selected providers. Year one of the grant was July 1, 2025 and will conclude June 30, 2026. Subsequent funding for providers in other grant years is contingent on availability of federal funding and full grant contract compliance.

The content of the section 231 grant applications will address, at a minimum, the thirteen considerations and seven requirements established in Title II. Eligible providers will be required to demonstrate clear alignment of proposed activities and services to the strategies and goals of the local workforce development plans for the areas to be served. The competition will be conducted through the NJDOL system called IGX (formally SAGE) hosted by Agate. The competition will be open to all eligible providers under the law. All applicants will be required to submit evidence of demonstrated effectiveness for the application to be reviewed and considered for funding. To demonstrate effectiveness, applicants that have been funded under Title II AEFLA, as amended by WIOA, and/or state matching funds through OAL in the three program years immediately preceding the competition will be required to provide performance data under WIOA section 116 from those years. Applicants that were not previously funded by the NJDOL OAL under Title II AEFLA, as amended by WIOA, were required to submit performance data that showed past effectiveness in serving basic skills deficient eligible individuals, including evidence of success in achieving outcomes in comparable measures.

As part of the application review process, Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) were asked to review applications for alignment with their Local Plans following a standardized process developed by State Director. Eligible providers were required to submit their applications to OAL through the electronic IGX grant management system. Once the review of applicant eligibility was completed, OAL staff distributed the applications to the appropriate LWDBs for review and comment. Training, including timeline review, NGO review, and a review of the rubric was provided to all LWDBs. The State Director for Adult Education held a technical assistance meeting for LWDBs to answer any questions and address concerns. The OAL used the recommendations and results of the LWDB review when making decisions regarding grant awards and conditions.

The current NJ AEFLA award is in the first year of a 5-year grant cycle. The AEFLA grant funds are provided by the US Dept. of Education and NJ DOL utilizes American Community Survey data

in a funding formula to determine the available NJ county allocation amounts. Future grant years 2-5 will be allocated through annual funding notifications contingent on the availability of federal and any state funds. Each year's grant amounts and conditions will be based on the following criteria: contract compliance, including success in meeting contracted enrollment levels and providing the required contracted services; evidence of sufficient progress in meeting the state-imposed targets for the agency performance outcome measures; evidence of continuous program improvement; compliance with fiscal and programmatic policies and guidelines; and the amount of state and federal awards.

All funds will be used in compliance with the supplement not supplant stipulation of the law. All funded agencies must meet the requirements of 34 CFR 361.505 and 34 CFR 361.720. Agencies must enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the local Workforce Development Board and One Stop Career Center to ensure participants are co-enrolled in federal programs. AEFLA agencies are expected to include a proportionate share of local infrastructure costs based on any proportionate use of the One Stop Career Center, when applicable. The NJ State Director reviews, approves and sign off on all local MOUs as WIOA Title II is a mandated OSCC partner.

NJDOL OAL staff ensure all adult education programs funded under Section 231 offer full-service adult education programs. NJ Title II providers must deliver instruction at all six Adult Basic Education (ABE) and adult secondary education (ASE) educational functioning levels (EFLs), plus English language acquisition (ELA) activities and integrated English literacy and civics education where there is a need. Programs providing ELA and/or English literacy and Civics education must support transition of those students to ABE/ASE instruction. All programs must also prepare students for and support them in achieving successful transition to postsecondary education/training or employment. IELCE is offered as both a service (under Section 231) and a program (under Section 243) to ensure all clients are offered an opportunity for dual, contextualized training and adult basic education instruction. NJDOL uses its Title II funding to ensure the most vulnerable, including English Language Learners, have access to education and training as literacy is embedded across all programs and is beneficial to the entire workforce ecosystem. NJ Title II Programs are required to have an intake and orientation process and assigned staff which helps students and staff determine an individual's readiness for participation in the Title II program and an exit review. Programs must have attendance and other policies that are consistently enforced to help students remain successful within the Title II program and beyond. All policies are vetted by NJ OAL staff. All tests approved by the state of New Jersey for use in Adult Education and Literacy programs are selected from those approved for NRS reporting and are publicly posted in NJ's Assessment Policy which is distributed to all providers and placed on the OAL webpage. These standardized tests are designed to assess learning along a continuum from beginning literacy and English language acquisition through completion of secondary level skills. Programs should select the test instrument based on the student's goals and the instructional focus of the program. Training and test proctoring is provided annually in collaboration with OAL staff and test publishers. Staff monitor to ensure testing protocol is followed through by way of in person visits, review of staff training and files, bi-monthly testing data, and communication with test vendors.

#### C. CORRECTIONS EDUCATION AND OTHER EDUCATION OF INSTITUTIONALIZED INDIVIDUALS (WIOA SECTION 102(B)(2)(D)(II)(II)(BB))

Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund eligible providers to establish or operate programs that provide any of the following correctional educational programs identified in section 225 of WIOA:

- Adult education and literacy activities;
- Special education, as determined by the eligible agency;
- Secondary school credit;
- Integrated education and training;
- Career pathways;
- Concurrent enrollment;
- Peer tutoring; and
- Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.

Each eligible agency using funds provided under Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution must give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within 5 years of participation in the program.

In New Jersey, Title II section funding 225 is competitively procured through the NJDOL Notice of Grant Opportunity (NGO) process and all eligible providers can apply for this funding. As part of the competitive NGO process, the NJDOL publicly posts the NGO, issues the application guidelines, provides a bidder's conference and Q&A, receives all proposals for services, reviews proposals by way of a trained, non-biased panel, and makes all determinations of funding recommendations.

In New Jersey, the Notice of Grant Opportunity (NGO) process ensures accountability and equal access for all eligible providers for the local activities described. Available AEFLA funding is determined through formula grants per NJ county and determined with the most recent American Community Survey data. The last competition for AEFLA funds was held in March 2025 for a 5-year grant award for Section 231, Section 225, and Section 243 funding. Eligible providers were able to apply for all three funding streams, or only a single funding stream. All AEFLA and any state funds were competed in accordance with 34 CFR section 463, subpart C. Additionally, not less than 95 percent of the AEFLA award shall be expended for carrying out adult education and literacy activities, and the remaining amount, not to exceed 5 percent, shall be used for planning administration, professional development, and the activities described in paragraphs (3) and (5) of Section 232. NJDOL allows providers to negotiate to determine adequate level of funds of non-instructional purposes when cost limits are determined to be too restrictive. All funded providers must be included as partners in the Memorandum of Understanding and Infrastructure Agreements for their local areas and the State Director continues to review and sign off to ensure compliance.



The application for 225 funds will allow awarded providers to provide the following allowable programs within a correctional setting in New Jersey:

- Adult education & literacy activities
- Special education, as determined by eligible agency
- Secondary school credit
- Integrated education & training
- Career pathways
- Concurrent enrollment
- Peer tutoring; and
- Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.

Because of disparate demographics and economic climates within the State, the resultant variety of student needs, and the dissimilar nature of the institutions and organizations through which Adult Basic Education is delivered, programs of instruction are encouraged to deliver services in the way that most effectively meets the needs of participants in their local communities.

The New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC) is a funded Title II provider with AEFLA services throughout New Jersey jails and prisons. NJDOL Office of Adult Literacy (OAL) staff ensure that adult education and permissible activities funded with Section 225 dollars are within the guidelines allowable under AEFLA. OAL staff conduct monitoring, both onsite and virtually and review testing and curricula. NJDOC staff participate in the same professional development and training offered to all other Title II agencies throughout the state. NJDOC is held to the same performance requirements and utilizes the same data management system (LACES) as required of all other NJ Title II funded providers.

Several Title II agencies in addition to the NJDOC, also provide approved AEFLA services to those currently incarcerated in jails and prisons with Section 225 funds. The written components submitted in response to the NGO application offered strategic plans for meeting the needs of this vulnerable population with priority placed on individuals who are likely to leave a correctional institution within 5 years of participation in the program. The drawdown of these Section 225 funds is reported and tracked via budget review/reasonable/allowable monitoring of spending and through participant performance data which is entered into Table 10 in the National Reporting System (NRS). The NJ State Director is actively engaging with NJDOC to develop a policy to assure that clients who exit NJDOC and were enrolled in Title II while incarcerated are adequately captured in exit/follow-up measures.

#### D. INTEGRATED ENGLISH LITERACY AND CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAM (WIOA SECTION 102(B)(2)(D)(II)(II)(CC))

Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund eligible providers to establish or operate Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) programs under section 243

of WIOA. Describe how adult English language learners, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, are served in IELCE programs.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be offered in combination with integrated education and training activities found in 34 CFR section 463.36.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.

In New Jersey, Title II section funding 243 is competitively procured through the NJDOL Notice of Grant Opportunity (NGO) process and all eligible providers can apply for this funding. As part of the competitive NGO process, the NJDOL publicly posts the NGO, issues the application guidelines, provides a bidder's conference and Q&A, receives all proposals for services, reviews proposals by way of a trained, non-biased panel, and makes all determinations of funding recommendations.

In New Jersey, the Notice of Grant Opportunity (NGO) process provides equal access to all eligible providers for the local activities described. The latest competition for AEFLA funds was held March 2025 and this is a 5-year grant award for Section 231, Section 225, and Section 243 funding. Year one of the Section 243 funding grant is from July 1, 2025, until June 30, 2026. Available AEFLA funding for each subsequent year of the grant is contingent on availability of federal funds and each year the grant amounts are determined through formula grants per NJ county from the American Community Survey data. Applicants were able to apply for all three funding streams, or only a single funding stream. All AEFLA and any state funds were competed in accordance with 34 CFR section 463, subpart C. Additionally, not less than 95 percent of the AEFLA award shall be expended for carrying out adult education and literacy activities, and the remaining amount, not to exceed 5 percent, shall be used for planning administration, professional development, and the activities described in paragraphs (3) and (5) of Section 232. NJDOL allowed providers to negotiate to determine adequate level of funds of non-instructional purposes when cost limits are determined to be too restrictive. All funded providers must be included as partners in the Memorandum of Understanding and Infrastructure Agreements for their local areas and the State Director reviews and signs off to ensure compliance.

The content of the grant application addressed the seven requirements and thirteen considerations identified in WIOA with an emphasis on those that most directly address the goals of section 243, including the extent to which the proposed activities are responsive to local and regional needs and align with the strategies and goals identified in the Local Plans. Applicants were required to provide extensive data to demonstrate the need for and potential

for success of the proposed IELCE program and the affiliated integrated education and training (IET) activity in the proposed service area. Such data will include, but not be limited to, immigration trends, demographics of the English language learners in the area where the program will be provided, and employment and labor market statistics that show sufficient employment opportunities for students who complete the program. The NJ Office of Adult Literacy seeks to ensure that accountability, flexibility and innovation are all part of program planning and execution. The Section 243 funding application required grantees applying for IELCE funding to describe:

1. The local area demographics and need for English literacy and civics education programs for English language learners. All information must be supported with data on numbers of English language learners with degrees from other countries.
2. How the Title II funded program will prepare English language learners, including the assurances that skills to be able to work and function as parents, citizens, and as an employee are met through IECLE funded programs.
3. How the programs will adequately research in-demand industries and utilize labor market data to develop sound programs with outcomes that contribute to New Jersey employments rates over time.
4. Detailed plans on the instructional activities offered to support workforce training and how they will be contextualized for specifically identified industries and jobs.

Applicants provided evidence that they have developed or will be able to develop partnerships that support the purpose of the program. Such evidence included documentation of commitment from a training provider for the occupational training component of the IET. Applicants provided evidence of communication with and input from the local workforce board to ensure accountability by way of a form to be completed and signed by both parties attesting to the coordination and planning for IELCE activities, and if possible, to identify any local businesses/employers involved in program development. Applicants provided evidence that the occupational training provided in the IET is in in-demand industries, has the potential to lead to economic self-sufficiency, and is part of a career pathway. Applicants were encouraged to develop robust partnerships with local colleges to help broaden program options, integrate systems when able, and to develop sustainable career pathways under Workforce Pell.

Applicant agencies were required to provide assurances that the occupational training included as part of the program will be provided by qualified providers. Funds awarded under section 243 are expected to be utilized to provide a continuum of IELCE activities, including instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation, that assist English language learners to acquire the reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills necessary to transition successfully to the integrated education and training activity and to earn a high school equivalency credential, if needed. Programs must provide services to help students identify education and career goals and develop employability skills and must connect students to other services within the workforce system to meet those goals. All section 243 IELCE grantees must provide an OAL approved IET course as part of the program, and the IELCE activities must align with the content of the IET. Office of Adult Literacy staff are integral in the review and approval of IET plans.

The New Jersey Office of Adult Literacy (OAL) will continue to promote, support, and fund programs from applicants that are able to address the needs of New Jersey's large immigrant population and meet all established criteria through the publicly posted Notice of Grant Opportunity. Providers are encouraged to identify additional, alternative funding opportunities or work to develop opportunities to braid funding with other WIOA Titles or government agencies to share the costs of the occupational training component of the IET; however, use of Section 243 funds for such training will be allowable. NJDOL will not mandate a specific model for all programs that receive Section 243 funds to provide IELCE with IET but will ensure programs are in compliance. All programs receiving IELCE funding are required to:

- Use IELCE funds to serve only learners who are adult English language learners, including professionals with degrees or credentials from their native countries.
- Provide instruction and services that prepare adults who are English language learners for employment in in-demand industries and occupations which lead to economic self-sufficiency and are part of the New Jersey workforce system.
- Offer a minimum of two Integrated and Education Programs as part of the IELCE funding and follow all requirements for program development and OAL approvals.
- Ensure the IET includes adult education and literacy activities as described in 463.30, workforce preparation activities as described in 463.34, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster which can be any one of the training services defined in section 134(c)(3)(D) of the Act.
- Ensure full AEFLA program compliance including participation in trainings offered by OAL staff or OCTAE/AIR, attending conferences and utilizing best practices for all Title II funded programs.

Additional IELCE compliance activities will include:

- A model that ensures provision of all required components in compliance with WIOA and OCTAE regulations by way of the application for funding and required forms for completion with the local board.
- In cases in which the grant recipient does not provide all components itself, it will be responsible for ensuring full integration of all activities with any partner agencies.
- As part of the grant application process, all applicants submitted evidence of demonstrated effectiveness for the application to be reviewed and considered for funding. To demonstrate effectiveness, applicants that have been funded under Title II AEFLA, as amended by WIOA, and/or state matching funds through NJDOL Office of Adult Literacy in the program years immediately preceding the competition will be required to provide performance data under WIOA section 116 from those years. Applicants that were not previously funded by the NJDOL Office of Adult Literacy under Title II AEFLA, as amended by WIOA will be required to provide performance data that show their past effectiveness in serving basic skills deficient eligible individuals, including evidence of success in achieving outcomes in comparable measures. For both groups, these measures include effectiveness in helping English language learners

develop their English language skills, achieve high school equivalency, and transition into employment and postsecondary education/training.

- Eligible providers were required to submit their applications to OAL through the System of Administering Grants Electronically (SAGE) system, now called IGX. Once the review of applicant eligibility was completed, OAL staff distributed the eligible applications to the appropriate local workforce boards for review. The State Director held a virtual technical assistance meeting via Teams, and it was recorded so that all WDBs understood the expectations, process of awarding WIOA adult literacy grants, and the timeline. The Office of Adult Literacy established a timeline for the review process and provided a review/scoring rubric to all local boards, including a section in which local boards could choose to provide recommendations to improve alignment of proposed IELCE program with the local plans. OAL compiled the recommendations to review and take into consideration when making decisions regarding grant awards and conditions. Providers submitted a completed Integrated Education and Training Checklist before the grant contract was fully approved. Providers are required to submit an Integrated Education and Training Proposal form to OAL staff for review before they will be allowed to conduct the IET. OAL staff annually review the proposed credentials and certifications to ensure alignment with Industry Recognized Credentials/LM data.
- Grant funding award amounts and conditions for the remaining years of the grant cycle are based on the following criteria: contract compliance, including success in meeting contracted enrollment and providing the contracted services; evidence of sufficient progress in helping students improve English language skills and successfully enroll in the associated IET; evidence of continuous program improvement; compliance with fiscal and programmatic policies and guidelines; and the availability of funds determined by the amount of the federal award.

NJDOL OAL has policies, procedures, and guidelines in place to ensure that all eligible providers have direct and equitable access to apply via a publicly posted Notice of Grant Opportunity (NGO) found on the NJDOL website. Once the NGO is reviewed and approved by all legal and leadership teams within NJDOL, the NGO is published. All associated grant information including Technical Assistance meeting Q&A are posted to the NJDOL OAL webpage, which is accessible to the public. NJDOL conducts grant competitions by use of the SAGE (now called IGX) electronic grant management system. Through this electronic system all eligible providers have access to the same grant application for IELCE funds under section 243. In accordance with NJDOL grant guidelines, grant applications will be evaluated by teams of at least threenon-biased individuals. Team members are trained by the State Director for Adult Education and the 3- member panel may include staff from the NJDOL Workforce Development Division, the NJ Department of Education, and other state staff who are deemed subject matter experts, and/or consultants. OAL staff have created a scoring rubric specific to the section 243 IELCE grant application, which will address all items in the grant application. Panel review team members and OAL staff were trained prior to beginning evaluation and scoring of applications. Once the applications have been reviewed and scored, applications are ranked from highest to lowest scoring. The Office of Adult Literacy awarded grants to the highest scoring applicants until all applications that meet the minimum passing score have been funded.

NJ OAL requires instruction that must integrate with English language acquisition and literacy activities and should reinforce employability skills. The NJ Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education programs under section 243(a) of WIOA will be offered in combination with integrated education and training activities found in 34 CFR section 463.36 as outlined in the Notice of Grant Opportunity. All New Jersey programs funded under 243 must offer a minimum of two Integrated Education and training (IET) programs each program year. The IET programs must include:

- Adult education and literacy activities as described in 463.30;
- Workforce Preparation activities as described in 463.34;
- Workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster which can be any one of the training services defined in section 143(c) (3) (D) of the act.

NJ IET program development in tandem with other state agencies, employers, colleges, and local boards is encouraged by the State Director to ensure partnerships that affirm the viability of the program and provide supports to the NJ Title II system to ensure all three IET components are included and complete.

The NJ OAL staff review proposed IET forms submitted by providers annually to ensure programs are in compliance with AEFLA regulations and the NGO. All NJ Title II programs awarded Section 243 funding are expected to offer a minimum of two IET courses during the program year and these courses must demonstrate alignment with local WDB plans and include research of labor market data to ensure viable pathways are developed.

NJ Section 243 funded programs are monitored annually with a mixture of in-person classroom visits and targeted desk monitoring to ensure compliance with the prescribed requirement to align instruction with the CCR standards for Adult Education and/or English Language Proficiency Standards. Instruction is expected to provide contextualized instruction in literacy and English language Acquisition; the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, naturalization procedure; civic participation and integration; and United States history and government. All programs must work to incorporate instruction and activities that lead to success as demonstrated in the National Reporting System (NRS) outcomes. The goal of NJ's IET and IELCE programs are to allow for industry-driven pathways that are innovative and ensure mobility across workforce.

#### E. STATE LEADERSHIP (WIOA SECTION 102(B)(2)(D)(II)(III))

##### 1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT THE REQUIRED STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA

The NJDOL Office of Adult Literacy is building towards a stronger investment of leadership funds to better support a system of professional development and WIOA- aligned technical assistance to ensure a high-quality Adult Basic Education system that works in tandem with the goals of the state, regional, and local workforce development plans to meet the needs of workers and employers statewide. The State distributes no more than 12.5% of Title II funds allocated to the state to carry out required and permissible leadership activities, as required under Section 223. While the state reserves the right to carry out any of the permissible activities authorized under Section 223, the permissible activities listed below will be the primary focus.

Alignment is a required Leadership activity that is supported by New Jersey Office of Adult Literacy Staff. New Jersey AEFLA funding applications received by the required due date and time are reviewed by Office of Adult Literacy staff to ensure compliance. Once reviewed, the applications for each local area are submitted to and reviewed by local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs). Prior to receiving applications for review, the local WDBs are provided technical assistance by the State Director on the Notice of Grant Opportunity, which is the mechanism to apply for New Jersey AEFLA funding, all required timelines, and a review of the forms to be completed for Title II application alignment review. Local WDBs are asked to provide input on each application's alignment to the local plan and are asked to include any feedback on how to better improve alignment and support local area workforce and education needs. It should be noted that while WDB input is shared with panelists reading and scoring Title II applications, that WDB comments cannot disqualify an applicant or reduce scores. Notes to be discussed with applicant agencies who are deemed not in alignment are made and as a contract is awarded, Office of Adult Literacy Staff ensure funded Title II programs are meeting with and planning with local WDBs on a regular basis to ensure coordination and planning.

The State Director is a voting member of the State Employment and Training Commission (SETC) which is a bi-partisan rule making body aimed at improving and aligning New Jersey's workforce development system. The State Director attends bi-monthly SETC meetings to discuss AEFLA Title II programs, testing, career pathways, coordination and alignment of New Jersey's adult education system with adult education. The State Director advocates for interagency plans for co-enrollment and in working with core partner, such as the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to support and pollinate staff in the local One Stop System so that clients are receiving the maximum in wrap around services.

Establishing high quality professional development is a required Leadership activity supported by the New Jersey DOL Office of Adult Literacy. The OAL staff continue to lead a quarterly best practices online forum dedicated to researched best practices and trainings specifically related to the development of high-quality Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs. This monthly forum is developed using previous program's year's data analysis, New Jersey's participation in structured professional development called IET Design Camp, and best practices and challenges found from targeted monitoring visits.

New Jersey Office of Adult Literacy has worked with Dr. Alisa Belzer of Rutgers University to open the doors to a 4-course Adult Education certificate program open to New Jersey part time and full-time staff verified as instructing in AEFLA Title II funded programs. The Rutgers Graduate School of Education's (GSE) 12 credit certificate in Adult ESL/Literacy Education aims to better equip those instructing adult education students. *Students enrolled in the Adult and Continuing Education graduate certificate program will begin their study with an introduction to the foundational philosophical, historical, and practical underpinnings of adult education practice and/or an introduction to theories and practices specific to the teaching of adults. In alignment with the GSE's mission to Advance Excellence and Equity in Education, students will examine the nature and scope of adult education through exploration of the social contexts, including analyses related to race, class, and gender. Through a choice of courses on adult education and learning, students will have the opportunity to pursue specific interests in adult and continuing education in areas such as learning in global contexts, organizational learning, educational technology, higher education teaching, human resources development, adult ESL and literacy education, and other offerings in the Graduate School of Education. All classes are taught asynchronously, and the*

State Director believes that this pathway through adult education will better ground those currently working in the field of adult education and lend to more instructor retention and ability to move as professionals through the New Jersey adult education system. The professional development to keep staff engaged, online, and better understanding the adult education principles is paramount to ensuring high quality professional development.

NJ DOL supports Office of Adult Literacy staff professional development through attendance at the annual NJ Association for Lifelong Learning conference, the annual Garden State Employment and Training Conference, and national conferences to learn and turnkey information statewide. The State Director is planning a New Jersey Adult Education specific conference for 2026.

NJDOL Office of Adult Literacy will continue to use Technical Assistance through Leadership to support all grantees. OAL is increasing access to software aligned to the CCRS and GED. Both Aztec software and Burlington English software will continue to be a staple that Title II clients will have access. Annual training and technical assistance on how to use the platforms, how to benefit development of HSE preparation is hosted by NJ OAL staff. In addition, OAL staff reviews the monthly usage reports, determines any additional provider training needs and ensures annual required training on all State/Department issued software for all grantees.

NJ OAL disseminates instructional and programmatic practices through monthly webinars for directors and key staff in funded programs (mentioned above for IET) to ensure resources, challenges, and best practices are discussed and logged, as well as other emerging TA needs.

NJ OAL staff attend the required literacy meetings held by Title II grantees with local boards and other state agencies to weigh in on any issues and to provide technical assistance on myriad topics. Reports out to the State Director from OAL staff occur on a monthly basis.

Section 223 WIOA Leadership supports Monitoring and Evaluation of all New Jersey AEFLA funded programs. Title II data is entered into the management information system LACES in order to be in reporting compliance. All Title II funded providers must utilize this database. NJ OAL has developed policies regarding the use of LACES, timelines for data entry, and annual training requirements for all staff. Use of leadership funds support intensive, annual training for NJDOL staff and all Title II funded providers. This ongoing technical assistance and professional development work to help OAL staff provide assistance with data integrity, understanding continuous performance, and identification of any state or local areas of data weakness. The Annual Title II program and state-wide report cards are generated through LACES data compilations, is used to help inform discussions with local WDBS, and to provide best practices and statewide challenges. NJDOL OAL staff work in tandem with the NJDOL Office of Research and Information to conduct annual data validation exercises from client files and LACES in order to ensure participant data integrity.

The Office of Adult Literacy staff conduct an annual risk assessment of all grantees. Data from fiscal and performance is used in this measure along with certain verified circumstances, such as a new program director or results from an internal program audit. The results of the annual risk assessment inform the grantees which pose a high, moderate, or low risk in meeting all required grant variables per the NGO. Areas may receive full, on-site monitoring, targeted on-site monitoring, targeted virtual monitoring and also drop- in visits. All areas receive a copy of the monitoring template with an official letter for transparency prior to any visits being



scheduled. OAL staff work together to review federal and state laws to ensure the monitoring tool is compliant and will be a tool used to inform and help grantees develop stronger programs. The State Director ensures all monitoring's are closed/completed and completes an official letter attesting to the fact which is kept on file.

All NJ Title II funded program directors are expected to have an alternate director's name submitted to OAL staff in case of an emergency. Alternate directors are trained in accordance with approved program directors for continuity of program operations. Title II directors are trained on program monitoring, fiscal requirements, best practices and are provided OAL approved resources with technical assistance to develop their own internal monitoring templates for their program staff and programs. Annually all directors must submit their internal program's monitoring policies and timeline internal monitoring for the program year, followed by results of monitoring and/or audit to be kept on file for OAL request. NJDOL OAL staff will conduct a formal needs assessment with all program directors in 2026-2027 to determine ongoing challenges and areas that Leadership funds can be better positioned to support.

## 2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT PERMISSIBLE STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA, IF APPLICABLE

The NJDOL Office of Adult Literacy will continue to support the development and dissemination of curricula for all Title II programs through quarterly program staff meetings to share best practices and for OAL to share promising practices. NJ OAL staff will continue to review and approve curricula to ensure compliance with the CCR Standards, and share best practices observed from programs to ensure content standard alignment.

NJ's investment into instructional technology continues with the requirement that all NJ Title II funded providers offer fully online or hybrid options for courses in addition to year-round, in-person courses supported by use of managed enrollment. Additional state adult literacy funding has supported purchases of laptops and software to support 21st century learning styles.

During the period of this State Plan, the NJDOL Office of Adult Literacy plans to contract for an outside evaluation of the implementation of professional learning communities to determine their efficacy and the extent to which professional development is program-based and practitioner led. The quality of New Jersey's permissible activities funded with state leadership dollars will be assessed using the same methods of evaluation used for the required activities. These evaluations will be completed by participants in the activities, by the providers of professional development and technical assistance (and by OAL staff. The goal of evaluation is to support continuous improvement of these professional development activities and to improve instructional practices. Participants will complete evaluations at the end of every formal professional learning opportunity. The evaluations will follow a standard format that includes questions about participant satisfaction and impact on practice, as well as open-ended questions seeking suggestions for improvement.

The Office of Adult Literacy recognizes the hard work of literacy tutors and volunteers in New Jersey and is exploring ways to provide and support more professional development by way of

resource centers or family literacy centers embedded in community centers and public libraries so that Title II programs and participants have more wrap-around services to further rely on.

#### F. ASSESSING QUALITY (WIOA SECTION 102(B)(2)(D)(II)(V))

Describe how the eligible agency will assess the quality of providers of adult education and literacy activities under title II. Describe how the eligible agency will take actions to improve such quality, including providing the activities described in section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA. Describe how the eligible agency will use evaluations, data analysis, program monitoring, or other methods to improve the quality of adult education activities in the State.

NJDOL's Office of Adult Literacy (OAL) assess Title II funded program quality in a variety of manners. OAL staff utilizes bi-monthly desk audits of the National Reporting System (NRS) data entered into the LACES database by providers to inform on provider performance in making continuous progress towards the following approved targets which are negotiated every two years with the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE):

- Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit;
- Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit;
- Median Earnings;
- Credential Attainment;
- Measurable Skills Gains.

In coordination with the completion of an annual risk assessment, OAL staff review performance benchmark progress by programs they are assigned to in order to determine areas that are not meeting or struggling with approved targets. Webinars on NRS changes, notes from the State Director, and technical assistance is provided to Title II programs directors and staff annually.

In addition to the bi-monthly desk review of LACES data by OAL staff, OAL conducts formal ongoing monitoring, assessment, and evaluation of local programs through targeted desk monitoring and onsite monitoring visits. The completion of an annual risk assessment for all funded providers will determine the office's monitoring priorities according to the established risk levels of high, moderate, or low risk. While any Title II funded agencies can be monitored by DOL at any time, the risk assessment tool is a strong guide which informs the monitoring process. Regional coordinators keep track monthly of agency progress toward key markers of performance, such as contracted enrollment, appropriate assessments according to the NJ assessment policy, and employment outcomes using a range of tools including the Literacy, Adult and Community Education System (LACES) database. When monthly data produces areas of concern, OAL staff will contact the local program administrators to discuss the concerns and provide guidance and technical assistance. After the end of the program year, a Title II NJ statewide and local area report cards are generated. These reports are discussed by the State Director in a meeting with local directors and key staff. The goal is to showcase high performers and those areas showing continuous improvement, but to also equip local directors with a tool to help lead conversations with local partner agencies and WDBs and to ensure internal program monitoring. The report cards cover all negotiated OCTAE performance targets as well as state targets and help facilitate data-driven decision making.

In addition to monthly desk monitoring, OAL staff conducts comprehensive, on-site monitoring visits which are targeted or full, multiple day visits. All Title II program directors are provided technical assistance on how to properly monitor their own programs through round-table discussions, dissemination of best practices, and are required to complete a timeline of their own internal monitoring activities and findings and share it with OAL to keep on file. Next, all directors are provided an annual walk-through of the monitoring tools OAL utilizes. All directors, on an annual basis in July, must submit their internal program's monitoring policies, and timeline internal monitoring for the program year, followed by results of monitoring to be kept on file for OAL request.

The annual WIOA Title II risk assessment ensures all agencies are treated fairly and reviewed against the same factors. A targeted or full monitoring triggered by an audit finding or risk assessment core will include an initial letter stating purpose of visit, a technical assistance call with OAL staff regarding the tool, on-site visit via an agreed upon date (2 days minimum for high-risk), a class observation visit; discussions with key personnel including fiscal staff, program directors, and lead instructors; a review of data and student records; program compliance review and fiscal review. After the monitoring visit, the OAL will send a written monitoring report to the agency explaining all of the commendations, findings with required actions, and recommendations. The agency will submit a corrective action plan (CAP) to OAL assigned staff, which must address all findings with required actions, at a minimum. Agencies will be strongly encouraged to address recommendations as well. The regional coordinators assigned to grantees will shepherd the process and ensure the State Director is made aware of all findings and recommendations before CAP closure. The program will be required to provide a timeline of updates on progress and documentation/evidence of completed actions. Classroom observation is part of some monitoring visits and a compilation of best practices witnessed in classrooms is shared annually with directors at a quarterly meeting to showcase best practices to ensure AEFLA funded programs utilize research-based instructional strategies that are working with our students and can inform educational decisions for curricula, professional development, technology, and program purpose.

During the time of this State Plan, OAL staff will continue to track program expenditures to ensure no waste. The State Director is aware that delayed release of federal funding during fiscal year 2026 may have slowed timely expenditures and is seeking to ensure programs remain on track.

The Office of Adult Literacy staff and State Director will continue to work with grantees to evaluate professional learning needs during the start of program years and will include such topics in a monthly OAL webinar with Title II providers. OAL will assess the quality of all future professional development activities by ensuring that technical assistance and professional development focus on the required and permissible activities under WIOA Section 223 (a). OAL will also assess the quality of professional development by providing opportunity for feedback, using surveys from the field after professional development opportunities. The input from these surveys will be used to plan professional learning opportunities, including the development of a statewide Adult Education conference in future years.

**ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM CERTIFICATIONS**

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan;	Yes
2. The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program;	Yes
3. The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan;	Yes
4. All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law;	Yes
5. A State officer, specified by title in the certification, has authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the plan;	Yes
6. The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan;	Yes
7. The agency that is submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan; and	Yes
8. The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program;	Yes

**ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM ASSURANCES**

The State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The eligible agency will expend funds appropriated to carry out title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with fiscal requirements under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding the supplement-not-supplant requirement);	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
2. The eligible agency will ensure that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA;	Yes
3. The eligible agency will not use any funds made available under title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not "eligible individuals" within the meaning of section 203(4) of WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA;	Yes
4. Using funds made available under title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.	Yes
5. The eligible agency agrees that in expending funds made available under Title II of WIOA, the eligible agency will comply with sections 8301 through 8303 of the Buy American Act (41 U.S.C. 8301-8303).	Yes

AUTHORIZING OR CERTIFYING REPRESENTATIVE

**CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING**

**Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements**

The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

(2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the

undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions.

(3) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subcontracts, subgrants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly. This certification is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was made or entered into. Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required certification shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

**Statement for Loan Guarantees and Loan Insurance**

The undersigned states, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions. Submission of this statement is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

Please download and sign the forms below. Please scan and return the forms to [wioa@ed.gov](mailto:wioa@ed.gov) at the same time you submit your State Plan via the portal.

1. SF424B - Assurances – Non-Construction Programs  
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)
2. Grants.gov - Certification Regarding Lobbying  
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)
3. SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (required, only if applicable)  
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)

<b>APPLICANT'S ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>Enter information in this column</b>
Applicant's Organization	NJ Department of Labor
<b>PRINTED NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE</b>	<b>Enter information in this column</b>
First Name	Michael
Last Name	Marich
Title	Acting Commissioner
Email	michael.marich@dol.nj.gov

**GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISION ACT SECTION 427 ASSURANCE**

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to applicants for grant awards under this program. All applicants for new grant awards must include the following information in their applications to address this provision in order to receive funding under this program. (OMB Control Number 1894-0005)

The State Plan must include	Include
I assure that the proposed project complies with the requirements in section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1228a).	Yes

Compliance can be found on the following page(s) of the application:

In the application for New Jersey Title II funds, eligible providers must include a description of the steps they will take to ensure equitable access to and participation in the federally-assisted adult education program. Successful applicants enter into grant contracts with NJDOL, which include the Standard Assurances and Conditions. The NJDOL Standard Assurances and Conditions include multiple requirements for grantees to adhere to all federal and state regulations related to the funding. They also specifically cite Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended and implementing federal regulations as well as The Americans with Disabilities Act.

**ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

**Performance Goals for the Core Programs**

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the two years covered by the plan modification. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the two years of the plan modification.

While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	46.0%		47.0%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	47.0%		47.5%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter)	7,000.00		7,300.00	

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
After Exit)				
Credential Attainment Rate	38.0%		39.0%	
Measurable Skill Gains	58.0%		59.0%	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

1

*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.*

**PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION  
(COMBINED OR GENERAL)**

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA.

**A. STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL.**

1. ALL VR AGENCIES, EXCEPT FOR THOSE THAT HAVE AN INDEPENDENT CONSUMER-CONTROLLED COMMISSION, MUST HAVE A STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL (COUNCIL OR SRC) THAT MEETS THE CRITERIA IN SECTION 105 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPLICABLE, HAS:

*Select A or B:*

*(A) is an independent State commission*

*(B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council*

(B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council

2. IN ACCORDANCE WITH ASSURANCE (A)(1)(B), IF SELECTED, PLEASE PROVIDE INFORMATION ON THE CURRENT COMPOSITION OF THE COUNCIL BY REPRESENTATIVE TYPE, INCLUDING THE TERM NUMBER OF THE REPRESENTATIVE, AS APPLICABLE, AND ANY VACANCIES, AS WELL AS THE BEGINNING DATES OF EACH REPRESENTATIVE'S TERM.

Select 'Edit' to edit the narrative.

Note, please do not edit the table header or formatting. Only edit the table contents.

If you accidentally edit the table headers and structure, open this link to the blank table. You can copy and paste the table into the narrative field, and start over if needed.



Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)	1	10/21
Parent Training and Information Center	1	12/22
Consumer Assistance Program	1	2/22
Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor (Ex Officio if Employed by the VR Agency)	2	10/22
Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider	2	10/22
Business, Industry, and Labor	2	10/20, awaiting reappointment
Business, Industry, and Labor	2	6/21
Business, Industry, and Labor	2	12/22
Business, Industry, and Labor	1	6/21
Disability Advocacy Groups	6 members, 1 at Term 1, and 5 on Term 2	10/23, 10/21, 10/21, 10/22, 10/21, 10/22
Current or Former Applicants for, or Recipients of, VR services	2	2/23
Section 121 Project Directors in the State (as applicable)	N/A	
State Educational Agency Responsible for Students with Disabilities Eligible to Receive Services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	2	1/23
State Workforce Development Board	1	retired 1/24
VR Agency Director (Ex Officio)	<u>1</u>	<u>2/2025</u>

Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
Persons with Disabilities (total of 7 awaiting appointment, including 4 former DVRS consumers)		
Business, Industry and Labor (2 awaiting appt.)	4 members	6/4/2023, 10/7/2023, 10/7/2023 & 12/9/2025-All 3-Year terms
Representative from the NJ Commission of the Blind	1	10/7/2024/3 Yr Term

3. IF THE SRC IS NOT MEETING THE COMPOSITION REQUIREMENTS IN SECTION 105(B) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT AND/OR IS NOT MEETING QUARTERLY AS REQUIRED IN SECTION 105(F) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, PROVIDE THE STEPS THAT THE VR AGENCY IS TAKING TO ENSURE IT MEETS THOSE REQUIREMENTS.

The SRC Chairperson, with the support of the DVRS Director has been actively advocating for the members who have been requesting to be reappointed for their second term or for those awaiting to be appointed to their first term. This advocacy has involved ongoing and consistent outreach to the New Jersey Governor's office and associated staff responsible for coordinating council appointments. Recently, several re-appointments have been made but there are still several new appointments that need to be made. The SRC chair along with the DVRS Director will be reaching out to the new Governor to ensure these appointments are made. A focus of these appointment efforts also needs to be on bringing to the board individuals who have lived experience with disability.

4. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS IN SECTION 101(A)(21)(A)(II)(III) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, INCLUDE A SUMMARY OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT (INCLUDING HOW IT WAS OBTAINED) INTO THE STATE PLAN AND ANY STATE PLAN REVISIONS, INCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COUNCIL'S ANNUAL REPORTS, THE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER SATISFACTION AND OTHER COUNCIL REPORTS.

The New Jersey State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) provides oversight and advises the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS), the designated state unit (DSU) within the New Jersey Department of Labor (NJDOL). NJDOL is the designated state agency (DSA). The SRC is a partnership of people with disabilities, advocates, and other interested individuals who are committed to ensuring through policy development, implementation, and advocacy that New Jersey has a rehabilitation program that is not only comprehensive and consumer-responsive but also effective, efficient, and significantly funded. The SRC is dedicated to ensuring that people with disabilities receive rehabilitation services that result in gainful employment. Representing the myriads of diversities that is New Jersey, council members believe that individuals with disabilities are the "untapped resource" to the business community and assert that disability is a natural part of the human experience that in no way diminishes a person's right to fully participate in all aspects of American life. Members of the SRC in New Jersey believe in a public system of vocational rehabilitation that is responsible and accountable to those it serves and to those who fund it; they believe that competitive jobs generate tax revenue

and enable all individuals, including individuals with disabilities, to spend discretionary income which contributes to the state's economy.

Annually, DVRS and its SRC jointly develop, agree to, and review State goals and priorities. DVRS regularly consults with its SRC in the development, implementation, and revision of policies and procedures pertaining to the provision of VR Services. In the past year, one primary focus was on updating and refining an electronic customer satisfaction survey, analysis, and response system for all DVRS consumers served, and improvement of statewide collaboration efforts around transition. Since its establishment, this process has regularly been reviewed and refined with feedback formally presented twice a year to the SRC.

DVRS provides its SRC with all plans, reports, and other information required to be submitted to RSA; policies and procedures used by agency personnel in the provision of VR services; information relating to the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction data; and copies of any due process hearing decisions. The SRC regularly reviews and makes recommendations related to the comprehensive system of personnel development. The DVRS Director and staff provide regular reports to the SRC on the status and projections of the CSPD. The SRC advocates and supports agency efforts in their recruitment, preparation, and retention of optimal levels of qualified personnel needed for maximal service provision.

When the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment process begins, the SRC will be actively involved in its development and implementation with follow-up that drives the State Plan goals and strategies.

DVRS is not currently in an Order of Selection and continues to assure the SRC that DVRS will be able to serve all eligible individuals and will consult with the SRC if the Order of Selection needs to be considered in the future.

**5. PROVIDE THE VR AGENCY'S RESPONSE TO THE COUNCIL'S INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS, INCLUDING AN EXPLANATION FOR THE REJECTION OF ANY INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS.**

List each recommendation/input followed by the VR agency response

**SRC Recommendations for DVRS**

Recommendation:

The SRC understands that the job of the counselor is unique and requires knowledge of vocational rehabilitation specific to individuals with disabilities. The SRC recommends it be a requirement of the New Jersey DVRS counselor job description that applicants possess a master's degree in vocational rehabilitation or a closely related field.

Agency Response:

DVRS accepts the recommendation that DVRS counselors be required to have a master's degree in vocational rehabilitation or a closely related field. DVRS has made the request to the New Jersey Civil Service Commission to update the New Jersey DVRS counselor's educational requirements and is still awaiting their approval. DVRS intends to continue to partner with Rutgers University's Master's program in Rehabilitation Counseling by providing internships in

our local DVRS offices and recruiting candidates from this program in addition to the pursuit of other viable internship options.

Recommendation:

The SRC recommends that the DVRS program continues to educate the community and policy makers as to the services, successes, and outcomes of the state public vocational rehabilitation program, including the return on investment from using vocational rehabilitation services. The SRC also recommends that a outreach plan be developed in collaboration with the SRC Outreach Committee and presented to the SRC at a regularly scheduled meeting.

Agency Response:

DVRS accepts the recommendation to educate the community and policy makers as to the services, successes and outcomes of the public VR program and will continue to implement marketing and outreach strategies to educate the public about its services.

Recommendation:

The SRC recognizes that the DVRS program can be affected by state funding cuts. The SRC recommends that DVRS continues to identify and advocate for strategies to ensure that state matching funds will be consistently available for future fiscal years and that there is funding for maintenance of effort.

Agency Response:

DVRS accepts this recommendation. DVRS will work closely with the DOL fiscal staff and other key partners to develop key strategies and monitor this effort.

Recommendation:

The SRC recognizes that jobseekers with disabilities sometimes require innovative approaches to enhance their chance to garner gainful competitive-integrated employment. The SRC recommends that DVRS pursue strategies such as increasing the use of paid internships for qualified DVRS jobseekers and ensuring the availability of vendor training in customized employment.

Agency Response:

DVRS accepts the recommendation to develop processes that will encourage the increased use of paid internships in addition to on-the-job training opportunities for qualified DVRS jobseekers. DVRS has implemented additional paid internship opportunities to include an expansion of paid internships for youth. The DVRS Business Outreach Team is expanding their level of engagement with the National Employment Team as they continue to develop internship and On-the-Job Training opportunities for DVRS consumers. DVRS agrees to pursue customized employment training, in collaboration with the SRC, for qualified vendors.

Recommendation:

The SRC recommends DVRS develop strategies that will enhance opportunities for individuals with the most significant disabilities currently participating in segregated employment programs who, through informed choice, identify the desire to move into competitive-integrated employment. It is additionally recommended that DVRS track and report to the SRC

the number of individuals who move into competitive integrated employment from segregated employment.

Agency Response:

DVRS accepts the recommendation to enhance opportunities for individuals with the most significant disabilities currently participating in segregated employment programs who, through informed choice, identify the desire to move into competitive- integrated employment. The DVRS Community Rehabilitation (CRP) unit continues to work with the extended employment (EE) programs and local DVRS offices to identify potential DVRS consumers for the EE Hybrid program. Both the CRP Unit and local DVRS offices, through the required counseling under Section 511 of WIOA continue to identify and encourage increased referrals of EE consumers to the local DVRS offices.

Recommendation:

The SRC recognizes that public satisfaction for DVRS services is critical and that communication with consumers and vendors are a key component of that satisfaction. The SRC recommends that DVRS consider establishing individual voicemail accounts for all DVRS counselors to reduce the impact of human error and/or support staff shortages in delivering timely, accurate messages.

Agency Response:

DVRS accepts the recommendation to focus on mechanisms to improve communication pathways for consumers and vendors. DVRS will consider the use of individual voicemail accounts as a viable option. DVRS will also continue to actively recruit essential DVRS staff needed to ensure that consumers and vendors have ample opportunities to communicate with DVRS staff.

## B. COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT (CSNA).

Section 101(a)(15), (17), and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to provide an assessment of:

### 1. THE VR SERVICES NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING WITHIN THE STATE, INCLUDING:

#### A. INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES AND THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT;

DVRS is currently working on goals developed from its most recent Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), which complies with WIOA and is described below.

#### **Increase employment opportunities and career pathways for individuals with disabilities**

- Identify emerging occupations that create options for individuals with disabilities towards high quality employment opportunities, including individuals with most significant disabilities.

- Network with key stakeholders to enlist business, education, and community support to enable individuals with disabilities to secure employment within a specific occupational sector and with opportunity to advance overtime to higher levels of education or employment in that sector.
- Coordinate employer outreach initiatives led by the Business Outreach Team (BOT) to assist businesses in key industries by providing access to a pool of qualified workers;
- Develop database for employers who employ DVRS consumers and offer work-based experiences.
- Develop apprenticeship opportunities for consumers by partnering with the USDOL, NJDOL and county coordinator offices of apprenticeships.
- Collaborate with NJDOL workforce partners to explore employment opportunities, paid internships, and customized training and NJDOL On-the-Job (OJT) opportunities.
- Ensure that supported employment providers are trained on job development and employer engagement.
- Increase number of providers who offer customized employment (CE) to individuals with the most significant disabilities by funding CE training to service providers resulting in recognized ACRE accreditation.
- Increase employment outcomes of individuals with disabilities through the implementation of five Employment First Contracts which connect private business, local school districts, and community rehabilitation organizations to create systems change and support competitive integrated employment.

**Overcome barriers to accessing VR and Supported Employment Services;**

- Reduce time from interest in services (referral) to development of the IPE.
- Finding job openings closer to a consumer's place of residence and using transportation applications to increase employment opportunities for those who do not have reliable transportation.
- Create remote work opportunities for those with transportation limitations.
- The trend for entry level jobs under the title of personal care and service workers has declined over the past 3 federal fiscal years. Continue to promote job placement in higher skilled jobs.
- Maintain an accurate database of providers to ensure all VRCs have access to the options available to those served.
- Ensure a referral for supported employment is appropriate and meets the definition as having a most significant disability and related impediments to employment that require a high level of intervention and long-term support.

**B. INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES AND INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM;**

**Background:** NJ conducted the comprehensive statewide needs assessment for 2020 - 2022. The DVRS Quality Assurance Unit led the assessment in partnership with the SRC. The CSNA examined service delivery among minority groups and underserved populations during this period.

Federal Fiscal Year (FFY)	FFY 2020		FFY 2021		FFY 2022	
	Total Closed	% of Total	Total Closed	% of Total	Total Closed	% of Total
<b>Closed Rehabilitated by Ethnicity</b>	<b>2555</b>		<b>2364</b>		<b>2808</b>	
Native American / Alaskan Native	54	2.1%	56	2.4%	60	2.1%
Asian	71	2.8%	77	3.3%	81	2.9%
Black or African American	544	21.3%	455	19.2%	591	21.0%
Does not wish to self-identify	8	0.3%	10	0.4%	25	0.9%
Hispanic or Latino	344	13.5%	372	15.7%	427	15.2%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	9	0.4%	14	0.6%	10	0.4%
White	1525	59.7%	1380	58.4%	1614	57.5%

The common themes that emerged concerning barriers to employment for this subgroup included limited coordination of vocational rehabilitation services with American Job Centers, outreach to local communities and referral sources, interpersonal/social skills training, access to transportation, employer awareness of disability employment and access to translators or language tools to promote effective outreach and support for individuals who need assistance in languages other than English.

**Continuous Improvement Strategies:** DVRS recognizes that African American, in local areas of the state, and Hispanic populations throughout the state have been underserved by DVRS. DVRS is working with the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Center on Quality Employment (VRTAC-QE) to provide training to all staff so that DVRS staff may learn effective strategies to conduct outreach and provide culturally competent services to these minority groups. The goal is for this training to take place in FY 2024.

In order to better serve individual of different ethnicities and places of origin, DVRS is focused on identifying staff resources and language assistance tools to support communication. While we seek to improve our service offering, DVRS counselors are fluent in 28 languages throughout the state, including Chinese, Hindu, Creole, Russian, Polish, Ukrainian, Spanish, Portuguese, and American Sign Language (ASL). There are counselors fluent in Spanish that in many of the local offices. DVRS typically draws the bi-lingual counselor from a pool of individuals of Latinx heritage who also possess the necessary credentials in addition to speaking

fluent Spanish. DVRS also encourages opportunities for other staff members to take courses that will facilitate their communication in conversational Spanish to expand the agency's ability to serve this population of people with disabilities. DVRS strives to have counselors with multi language ability such as Slavic languages including Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian to be employed in an office where consumers need this communication. DVRS subscribes to a language line in order to effectively communicate with consumers who speak languages not fluent by counselors in a local office.

This training was initially provided in 2024, with follow-up and refresher training available through distance learning at this time.

DVRS is committed to continuous improvement and ongoing evaluation of its service delivery system to ensure equitable access and improved outcomes for underserved populations. Building upon the CSNA findings and initial implementation efforts, DVRS is advancing the following strategies:

**Coordination with Workforce System Partners:**

DVRS is strengthening collaboration with AJCs and local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) through co-location initiatives, cross-training of staff, and the development of shared referral and service coordination protocols. These efforts are designed to improve system alignment and enhance access to integrated workforce services.

**Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):**

- Increase in co-enrollment rates between DVRS and AJC programs by **10% annually**
- Number of joint staff trainings conducted per year (**minimum of 4 annually**)
- Percentage of DVRS consumers with documented AJC engagement (**target: 25%+**)

**Data-Driven Monitoring and Equity Analysis:**

DVRS utilizes data to monitor access to services and employment outcomes across demographic groups. The agency conducts ongoing analysis of application, eligibility, service utilization, and employment outcomes by race, ethnicity, and geographic region. This data informs targeted outreach and resource allocation to address identified disparities.

**Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):**

- Quarterly equity dashboard developed and reviewed
- Reduction in gap in employment outcomes between underserved populations and overall population by 5% annually
- Increase in applications from targeted underserved populations by 8% annually

**Expanded Outreach and Community Engagement:**

DVRS continues to enhance outreach efforts by strengthening partnerships with community-based organizations, advocacy groups, educational institutions, and other referral sources. Targeted outreach initiatives are conducted in underserved communities to increase awareness of VR services and improve access for individuals with disabilities.

**Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):**



- Number of outreach events conducted in targeted communities (Minimum of 12 annually)
- Increase in referrals from community-based organizations by 10% annually
- Increase in minority consumer participation rates by 8-10% annually

**Employer Engagement and Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE):**

DVRS is expanding employer engagement strategies to increase opportunities for competitive integrated employment. This includes employer education on disability inclusion, workplace accommodations, and collaboration with business partners to align job opportunities with consumer skills and labor market demand.

**Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):**

- Increase number of employer partners engaged by 10% annually
- Percentage of consumers achieving CIE outcomes (target: 65%+ of closures)
- Increase in work-based learning experiences (including Pre-ETS internships) by 12%

**Addressing Transportation Barriers:**

DVRS is working with community partners and transportation providers to explore solutions that improve access to services and employment, including travel training and alternative service delivery methods such as virtual counseling where appropriate.

**Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):**

- Percentage of consumers receiving transportation-related supports (baseline +10% increase)
- Reduction in case closures due to transportation barriers by 5% annually
- Utilization rate of virtual services delivery options (target: 20% of applicable cases)

**Enhancement of Pre-Employment and Soft Skills Training:**

DVRS continues to emphasize the development of interpersonal, communication, and workplace readiness skills through pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) and other employment readiness programming to better prepare individuals for successful employment outcomes.

**Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):**

- Percentage of consumers receiving soft skills training (target: 50%+ of active consumers)
- Measurable Skill Gains attainment rate (target 60%+)
- Successful completion rate of Pre-ETS work readiness training (target: 75% +)

**Quality Assurance and Continuous Feedback Loop:**

The DVRS Quality Assurance Unit, in collaboration with the SRC, conducts ongoing monitoring of program performance and service delivery. Consumer feedback, performance data, and

stakeholder input are used to inform continuous improvement efforts and guide future strategic planning, including subsequent CSNA cycles.

**Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):**

- Completion of Quarterly QA reviews (100% compliance)
- Implementation rate of corrective action plans (Established timelines)
- Consumer satisfaction rate (Target: 85% + positive feedback)

**C. INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM; AND**

DVRS is a core participant in the American Job Center (AJC) system and is co-located with an AJC in 17 of its 18 local offices. DVRS provides regularly scheduled operational support to the one AJC that is not co-located with DVRS. DVRS field office managers, as well as other DVRS staff, participate in the WDB Disability Committees in their respective counties or regions. In some locations, the manager (or other staff) serves as the chair of the WDB Disability Committee.

The agency maintains an active presence on the eighteen local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs), as well as on New Jersey's statewide WDB entity, The New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission (SETC). The Assistant Commissioner of Employment & Accessibility Services (EAS), which oversees DVRS, currently serves as a member of the New Jersey State Employment Training Commission. Through this appointment, DVRS continues to be an integral component of the SETC as a Title IV (Vocational Rehabilitation Program) representative.

DVRS maintains a web page within the NJDOL website that references services delivered by NJDOL core AJC partners. The AJCs are open for walk-in visits to initiate career support services. DVRS counselors take every opportunity to educate their consumers on the services available through the AJC system and to coordinate co-enrollment efforts. In addition, DVRS counselors make every effort to educate the AJC about DVRS, its services and processes, through consultation and training.

DVRS supports the goals noted in the NJDOL 2024-2027 WIOA State Plan to “align the systems and supports serving businesses and those supporting career-seekers.” The plan calls for developing a strong local system, integrating a wide range of program partners, broadening and diversifying career and training services, and using data to inform program strategies and implementation. This plan is being carried out through emphases on co-enrollment, co-location, interagency training, information sharing, and increasing employment activity collaborations to improve integration of services and provide more opportunities for career pathways development on behalf of our program participants.

**D. YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR NEED FOR PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES. INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES FOR TRANSITION CAREER SERVICES AND PRE-**

EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH SUCH SERVICES ARE  
COORDINATED WITH TRANSITION SERVICES PROVIDED UNDER IDEA.

**DVRS recognizes the need to enhance service delivery and increase referrals to DVRS for students and youth with disabilities in transition, ages 14-21 . DVRS has committed to the following:**

- Attend individualized education program meetings for students with disabilities, when invited.
- Work with the local workforce development boards, one-stop centers, and employers to develop work opportunities for students with disabilities, including internships, summer employment and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year, and apprenticeships.
- Work with schools, including those carrying out activities under section 614(d) of the IDEA, to coordinate and ensure the provision of pre-employment transition services.
- When invited, attending person-centered planning meetings for individuals receiving services under title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.)
- Develop and improve strategies for individuals with intellectual and significant disabilities to live independently, participate in postsecondary education experiences, and obtain and retain competitive integrated employment.
- Provide training to vocational rehabilitation counselors, school transition staff, and others supporting students with disabilities.
- Maintain Paid Internship programs for youth.
- Develop work-based learning experiences which are identified as the most effective service preparing students transitioning from school.
- Create co-enrollment opportunities with core partners of the American Job Center.
- Offer relevant VRC training to ensure knowledge, skills, and abilities to support transition.

2. IDENTIFY THE NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP, OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY  
REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE.

Community rehabilitation programs (CRP's) are established within the state by following the guidelines set forth in the New Jersey Administrative Code (N.J.A.C.) 12:51. DVRS Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP) Unit provides the vetting oversight, technical consultation, and assistance to vendors to ensure all requirements are met before approval, including assessment of the need for the region to be served. DVRS CRP Unit continues to assess the quality of services provided to determine whether increased requirements, including nationally recognized credentials such as The Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) Credentialed Employment Support Professional (CESP), and The Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) certifications in Employment Services for Employment Specialists and Job Coaches, may be warranted in order to increase satisfaction with outcomes from DVRS consumers. This would be either separate or in addition to the current requirements

for a CRP to have Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) or comparable accreditations.

DVRS identified the need to increase the number of CRP's who can deliver specialized services, in particular, Trial Work Experience, Community Based Work Evaluation, Internship Development and Supports, and Customized Employment (CE). DVRS continues with the goal of utilizing a nationally recognized training provider for CE such as Griffin-Hammis Associates and through DVRS funding to have this training delivered to designated CRP Vendors and DVRS Staff.

DVRS identified the need for a Career Pathway Evaluation (CPE) based on the CE Discovery Model to provide a person-centered and comprehensive assessment service provision and delivery to select DVRS consumers. The CPE continues to be piloted with the plan of expansion in 2026-2027.

### C. GOALS, PRIORITIES, AND STRATEGIES

Section 101(a)(15) and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe the goals and priorities of the State in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs. The goals and priorities are based on (1) the most recent CSNA, including any updates; (2) the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of Section 116 of WIOA; and (3) other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the SRC and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under Section 107 of the Rehabilitation Act. VR agencies must—

#### 1. DESCRIBE HOW THE SRC AND THE VR AGENCY JOINTLY DEVELOPED AND AGREED TO THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES AND ANY REVISIONS; AND

DVRS is the designated New Jersey state agency dedicated to the provision of vocational rehabilitation services under the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) on July 22, 2014. WIOA is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy.

Goals and priorities for PY 2026 and PY 2027 are based on an analysis of the following:

The 2026 DVRS State Plan goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the DVRS and the New Jersey SRC. These goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following:

- The most recent comprehensive statewide needs assessment completed.
- The public forums were held in 2024 and 2025.
- DVRS Strategic Priorities
- The performance of New Jersey DVRS standards and indicators; and
- The findings from the Corrective Action Plan of 2024 monitoring with continued monitoring by DVRS leadership.

2. IDENTIFY MEASURABLE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IN CARRYING OUT THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS AND THE BASIS FOR SELECTING THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES (E.G., CSNA, PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES, SRC RECOMMENDATIONS, MONITORING, OTHER INFORMATION). AS REQUIRED IN SECTION 101(A)(15)(D), (18), AND (23), DESCRIBE UNDER EACH GOAL OR PRIORITY, THE STRATEGIES OR METHODS USED TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL OR PRIORITY, INCLUDING AS APPLICABLE, DESCRIPTION OF STRATEGIES OR METHODS THAT—

A. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES;

B. OVERCOME BARRIERS TO ACCESSING VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

C. IMPROVE AND EXPAND VR SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE COORDINATION OF SERVICES DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF SUCH STUDENTS FROM SCHOOL TO POSTSECONDARY LIFE (INCLUDING THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES); AND

D. IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS IN ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES TO ACHIEVE QUALITY EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES.

List and number each goal/priority, noting the basis, and under each goal/priority, list and number the strategies to achieve the goal/priority

**Description of Prioritized Goals:**

**Goal 1: Accuracy of Data –**

DVRS uses the Aware Case Management Software for Vocational Rehabilitation to enter and report data with continual Aware system upgrades and monitoring by DVRS staff to ensure compliance with WIOA requirements and performance indicators.

DVRS was recently advised of ongoing data elements being reported from Aware not matching RSA 911 reporting categories correctly. DVRS uncovered the root cause of this issue and initiated resolution utilizing subject matter and technical experts who are working on matching RSA 911 data element codes in Aware to make reporting match services and spending accurately.

**(G1)-Strategy 1-DVRS/DOLWD** is advancing its plans to procure and integrate several new features with the Aware system. These enhancements include the Social Security Reimbursement (SSR) Module, which will streamline reimbursement processes; a sophisticated client communication software designed to automate outreach and case notes for vocational rehabilitation and workforce teams, thereby improving efficiency and client engagement; and an interface with the system for administering grants electronically through a leading grants management solution. This integration aims to enhance overall functionality and user experience within the Aware system.

**(G1S1) Target Output Measure 1-** Provide monthly reports to SSA

**(G1)- Strategy 2-**DVRS instituted the capability to electronically sign official documents through Aware Sign, which is similar to Adobe Docu-Sign. Vendors are able to receive an

authorization electronically through email then sign and return it for processing of payment once services have been rendered. DVRS plans to incorporate additional application features in the Aware system including Vendor and Contracts Management Portals which will expedite processing authorizations and invoices.

***(G1S2) Target Output Measure 1--*** Internal monthly reporting to validate vendor authorizations/signatures

**(G1) -Strategy 3-**The DVRS Aware Best Practices Team comprised of Central Office Management Information Systems (MIS) Unit and Field Management Staff continue to meet regularly to review upgrades and updates. DVRS staff continue to be trained by Central Office MIS Unit on all changes made to the Aware system and receive continued technical assistance. Designated DVRS staff will continue to participate in national trainings and meetings on the Aware system. Designated DVRS staff will continue to participate in national training and meetings on the AWARE system.

***(G1S3) Target Output Measure 1-***Monthly testing and validating new release data and reporting features

**Goal 2- Increase in Successful Outcomes through a Rapid and Sustained Engagement Process:**

DVRS has performance targets that are set by its federal reporting agency, the Rehabilitation Services Agency (RSA). DVRS has been meeting most of the target measures but still needs to continue to work on specific measures to ensure consistent compliance.

DVRS will coordinate training efforts with technical consultants from the Vocational Technical Center for Quality Management (VRTAC-QM). Training will be directed to field staff, highly qualified VRCs, who determine eligibility and initiate services necessary to achieve a successful employment outcome. RSA set timeframes for VRCs to determine phases and arrange services. Monthly audits indicate between 85% of consumers are determined Eligible from application, and 75% to plan from eligibility, as of fiscal year 2025.

**(G2)- Strategy 1-**DVRS will continue to empower VRCs to minimize the need for further diagnostic evaluation and use existing records to verify the individual's disability that impedes his/her ability to obtain or retain competitive integrated employment. VRCs will learn to interpret existing documentation and assess functional limitations to identify an individual's vocational needs and develop a service plan within 90 days of referral.

***(G2S1) Target Output Measure 1-*** Continuation of training sessions to all DVRS staff

***(G2S2)-Target Output Measure 2-***DVRS field leadership will monitor, supervise, and guide the VRCs in all aspects of Rapid Engagement and ensure all approvals and authorizations are written, reviewed, and initiated within guidelines set by DVRS executive leadership.

**Goal 3- Expand outreach efforts to current and potential consumers:**

**(G3)- Strategy 1-**DVRS will identify internal staff, DOL and external partners who can assist with outreach efforts.

***(G3S1)- Target Output Measure 1-*** Develop committee with SRC to strategize outreach efforts.

**(G3)- Strategy 2-** DVRS will develop with core One-Stop partners training on co-enrollment opportunities, DVRS and One-Stop referral processes, and disability related topics. Develop strategies that target populations from current and past consumers, employers, and the community at large.

**(G3S2)- Target Output Measure 1-** Implementation of initiatives with one-stop career centers and employers that lead to training sessions

**(G3)- Strategy 3-** Develop updated marketing materials in print and for the DVRS website to showcase all aspects of DVRS and its services, to include targeted marketing with DVRS partners and stakeholders. Create outreach communication materials in plain language using methods in a format that works best for the audience. Ensure the content is available in different languages and formats.

**(G3S3)- Target Output Measure 1-** Evidence of updated marketing materials that are ready for distribution

**(G3)- Strategy 4-** To increase understanding of underserved populations and minority populations, ongoing trainings will be offered to the field staff on serving individuals from Hispanic and African American communities. The training courses will offer insight into cultural norms and guidance on applying a more nuanced approach.

**(G3S4)- Target Output Measure 1-** Implementation of training sessions for DVRS staff.

**Goal 5 - Continue to support and enhance its quality assurance (QA) processes:**

**G5. Strategy 1.** Leverage data reports to assist assigned QA program staff to identify targeted areas of improvement for operational efficiency.

**(G5S1) Target Output Measure 1:** Evidence of enhanced ongoing data analysis efforts and use of Aware and Tableau Reporting

**(G5S1) Target Output Measure 2:** Evidence of enhanced ongoing development of reports and dashboards to communicate compliance with RSA/WIOA, and agency standards regarding performance metrics

**(G5S1) Target Output Measure 3:** Evidence of enhanced ongoing efforts to consistently share findings with executive field leadership and field management

**(G5) Strategy 2.** Training on existing and revised policies and procedures for all staff involved in the QA implementation;

**(G5S2) Target Output Measure 1:** Evidence of collaboration with VRTAC-QM and QE to identify and initiate policy training needs

**(G5S2) Target Output Measure 2:** Implementation of training sessions to all DVRS staff on policy

**(G5) Strategy 3.** Review of case service records of DVRS counselors

**(G5S3) Target Output Measure 1:** Implementation of case review process to determine quality of counseling services and documentation in the case file

**(G5S3) Target Output Measure 2:** Implementation of case review process to determine closures that resulted in high quality employment

**(G5) Strategy 4.** Review and refine instrumentation for conducting service record reviews

**(G5S4) Target Output Measure 1:** Development of enhanced case review instruments that determine compliance with established standards, trends, and training needs

**(G5S4) Target Output Measure 2:** Implementation of an annual case review instrument review to ensure all RSA changes are implemented as needed

**(G5) Strategy 5.** Develop mechanisms to collect and aggregate the results of the case review process and provide results to inform the design and evaluation of training

**(G5S5 Target Output Measure 1:** Establishment and implementation of a consistent reporting process for case reviews to identify trends that inform training needs and ongoing strategic planning

**(G5S5) Target Output Measure 2:** Establishment and consistent implementation of forums to share and discuss case review results

#### D. EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS

For the most recently completed program year, provide an evaluation and report of progress for the goals or priorities, including progress on the strategies under each goal or priority, applicable to that program year. Sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe—

##### 1. PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED FOR THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS;

List the goals/priorities and discuss the progress or completion of each goal/priority and related strategies

##### **Goal 1: Accuracy of Data -**

**(G1)-Strategy 1-DVRS/DOLWD** is advancing its plans to procure and integrate several new features with the Aware system. These enhancements include the Social Security Reimbursement (SSR) Module, which will streamline reimbursement processes; a sophisticated client communication software designed to automate outreach and case notes for vocational rehabilitation and workforce teams, thereby improving efficiency and client engagement; and an interface with the system for administering grants electronically through a leading grants management solution. This integration aims to enhance overall functionality and user experience within the Aware system.

**UPDATE (G1S1) This strategy is in process.** DVRS provide monthly reports to SSA.DVRS has incorporated additional application features in the Aware system including Vendor and Contracts Management Portals.

**(G1)- Strategy 2-DVRS** instituted the capability to electronically sign official documents through Aware Sign, which is similar to Adobe Docu-Sign. Vendors are able to receive an authorization electronically through email then sign and return it for processing of payment once services have been rendered. DVRS plans to incorporate additional application features in



the Aware system including Vendor and Contracts Management Portals which will expedite processing authorizations and invoices.

**UPDATE (G1S2). This strategy is achieved.** DVRS has implemented internal monthly reporting to validate vendor authorizations/signatures

**(G1) -Strategy 3-**The DVRS Aware Best Practices Team comprised of Central Office Management Information Systems (MIS) Unit and Field Management Staff continue to meet regularly to review upgrades and updates. DVRS staff continue to be trained by Central Office MIS Unit on all changes made to the Aware system and receive continued technical assistance. Designated DVRS staff will continue to participate in national trainings and meetings on the Aware system. Designated DVRS staff will continue to participate in national training and meetings on the AWARE system.

**UPDATE (G1S3) This strategy is achieved.** DVRS has implemented monthly testing and validating new release data and reporting features.

### **Goal 2- Increase in Successful Outcomes through a Rapid and Sustained Engagement Process:**

**(G2)- Strategy 1-**DVRS will continue to empower VRCs to minimize the need for further diagnostic evaluation and use existing records to verify the individual's disability that impedes his/her ability to obtain or retain competitive integrated employment. VRCs will learn to interpret existing documentation and assess functional limitations to identify an individual's vocational needs and develop a service plan within 90 days of referral.

**UPDATE (G2S1) This strategy is achieved.** DVRS has implemented continuation of training sessions to all DVRS staff. In addition, DVRS field leadership has worked to monitor, supervise, and guide the VRCs in all aspects of Rapid Engagement and ensure all approvals. The authorizations are consistently written, reviewed, and initiated within guidelines set by DVRS executive leadership.

### **Goal 3- Expand outreach efforts to current and potential consumers:**

**(G3)- Strategy 1-**DVRS will identify internal staff, DOL and external partners who can assist with outreach efforts.

**UPDATE (G3S1). This strategy is achieved.** DVRS partnered with SRC to establish a subcommittee focused on strategizing outreach efforts for DVRS statewide. The subcommittee meets quarterly and provides updates to the SRC at the regularly schedule meetings.

**(G3)- Strategy 2-** DVRS will develop with core One-Stop partners training on co-enrollment opportunities, DVRS and One-Stop referral processes, and disability related topics. Develop strategies that target populations from current and past consumers, employers, and the community at large.

**UPDATE (G3S2). This strategy is achieved.** DVRS has developed a partnership with Workforce to offer training sessions to employers. The sessions have been implemented at the One-Stop Centers.

**(G3)- Strategy 3-** Develop updated marketing materials in print and for the DVRS website to showcase all aspects of DVRS and its services, to include targeted marketing with DVRS partners

and stakeholders. Create outreach communication materials in plain language using methods in a format that works best for the audience. Ensure the content is available in different languages and formats.

**UPDATE (G3S3). This strategy is achieved.** DVRS has developed updated marketing materials and continues to do so, as needed. Brochures have been distributed in offices statewide.

**(G3)- Strategy 4-** To increase understanding of underserved populations and minority populations, ongoing trainings will be offered to the field staff on serving individuals from Hispanic and African American communities. The training courses will offer insight into cultural norms and guidance on applying a more nuanced approach.

**UPDATE (G3S4). This strategy is achieved.** DVRS has implemented annual training sessions for all staff, and field leadership continues to support regional offices in applying nuanced approaches related to cultural norms.

#### **Goal 4 - Continue to support and enhance its quality assurance (QA) processes:**

**(G4)- Strategy 1.** Leverage data reports to assist assigned QA program staff to identify targeted areas of improvement for operational efficiency.

**UPDATE (G4S1) This strategy is in progress.** DVRS is currently working with internal and external partners to have the required software to develop dashboards and reports. *We have received feedback and guidance from* executive leadership and field management to begin to develop the requirements for the contents of the dashboards and reports to improve compliance with RSA/WIOA, and agency standards regarding performance metrics.

**(G4) Strategy 2.** Training on existing and revised policies and procedures for all staff involved in the QA implementation

**UPDATE (G4S2) This strategy is achieved.** DVRS has had successful meetings with VRTAC-QM which assisted the agency in successfully revising policies. The agency has engaged in training staff members on the new revisions and provided refresher training on existing policies as needed.

**G4) Strategy 3.** Review of case service records of DVRS counselors

**UPDATE (G4S3) This strategy is in progress.** DVRS is working to continue to grow staffing and developed required materials for full case reviews that will drive improved quality and performance metrics. DVRS will continue to enhance case review processes including implementing additional targeted case reviews that will allow for a deeper dive using a larger sample of cases on a specific topic.

**G4) Strategy 4.** Review and refine instrumentation for conducting service record reviews

**UPDATE (G4S4) This strategy is in progress.** DVRS is still working on enhancing the final document for case reviews while implementing all feedback from RSA CAP monitoring.

**(G4) Strategy 5.** Develop mechanisms to collect and aggregate the results of the case review process and provide results to inform the design and evaluation of training

**UPDATE (G4S5) This strategy is in development.** DVRS is working to build reports that will help identify patterns and trends that will support strategic planning and identify evaluation

gaps to support ongoing needs for all staff as well as forums to share and discuss case review results.

DVRS identified their expected levels of performance for the WIOA performance indicators for PY 2026 and PY 2027 and made targeted efforts to ensure that it meets negotiated levels as determined in conjunction with RSA.

The VR program under the Quality Assurance unit will further develop and implement a thorough system of pertinent internal controls, policies, and procedures to make sure DVRS follows federal/state regulations.

The DVRS will continue to work on:

- Update required forms to minimize/eliminate duplication of documentation.
- Review existing policies and procedures to revise decision-making authority to levels that expedite services.
- Consider having an on-line application making the first communication between applicant and counselor the start time to determine eligibility.
- Create advisory groups that will have rotating members to provide input on best practices and policy.

The DVRS has implemented and continues efforts to:

- Improve case practices through annual reviews of the VR Policy Manual, identify, and implement updates.
- Update the internal controls manual to expand oversight beyond fiscal responsibilities including monitoring plan with a risk management component.
- Improve case review process to evaluate the quality of services, reduce RSA findings and improve consumer satisfaction.
- Develop and implement a multi-office case review process by the QA unit to ensure accuracy of local level review data and inform policy clarification and training needs.

DVRS continues regularly scheduled training opportunities for Supported Employment (SE) and Specialized Services Providers and DVRS staff. This continues to be accomplished by the Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP) Unit offering bi-annual Spring and Fall trainings and as needed or requested in the following:

CRP Unit Trainings currently include:

- Trial Work Experience
- Community Based Work Evaluations
- Customized Employment
- Internship Development and Supports
- Supported Employment and Long-Term Follow-Along (LTFA)
- System for Administering Grants Electronically (SAGE)/LTFA Billing/Reporting

- Section 511 Counseling
- Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) Training
- Extended Employment Referral Process and Procedures
- Extended Employment Required Reporting
- Extended Employment Hybrid Program
- Extended Employment Youth Referral Policy and Procedures
- Open Provider Forum
- Career Pathway Evaluation Pilot (Limited to 3 Selected Field Offices and 3 Provider Agencies)

The CRP Unit continues to utilize a formal Supported Employment and Specialized Services Monitoring process. Providers continue to be monitored by the CRP Unit as staff time and capacity permits and through ongoing coordinated Service Team Meetings. The CRP Unit is currently working on completing comprehensive updates to the DVRS Supported Employment and Specialized Services Manual in FY 2026.

2. PERFORMANCE ON THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR, REFLECTING ACTUAL AND NEGOTIATED LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE. EXPLAIN ANY DISCREPANCIES IN THE ACTUAL AND NEGOTIATED LEVELS; AND

Performance indicators under section 116(d) of WIOA reflecting negotiated and actual levels of performance:

Performance Outcomes PY2024
• Median Earnings in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit: Negotiated – \$6,400: Actual – \$6,867
• Employment Rate in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit: Negotiated – 54.6%: Actual – 51.9 %
• Employment Rate in the 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit: Negotiated – 46.9 %: Actual – 47.9 %
• Measurable Skill Gains (MSG): Negotiated – 56.6%: Actual – 31.4%
• Credential Attainment Rate: Negotiated-42.9%: Actual- 39.9%

DVRS met or surpassed the negotiated levels for PY 2024 in Median Earnings, and the Employment Rate in 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit. DVRS fell short of the Employment Rate in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit and with the Credential Attainment Rate. DVRS fell short of the Measurable Skill Gains rate, but we have identified issues with our reporting system that will help increase this number in the future.

3. THE USE OF FUNDS RESERVED FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES (SECTIONS 101(A)(18) AND 101(A)(23) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT) (E.G., SRC, SILC).

**Reservation of Funds**

Pursuant to Section 101(a)(18) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and implementing regulations at 34 CFR §361.35, the New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) reserves and uses a portion of the federal Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) funds allotted to the State under Section 110 each federal fiscal year to support Innovation and Expansion (I&E) activities.

In accordance with Section 101(a)(18)(A)(ii), reserved I&E funds are utilized to:

- Develop and implement innovative approaches to expand and improve VR services, particularly for individuals with the most significant disabilities
- Support the effective functioning of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) consistent with the SRC resource plan under Section 105
- Support the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) consistent with the SILC resource plan required under Section 704
  - Improve the coordination of VR services within New Jersey's workforce development system under WIOA

DVRS describes in the State Plan how reserved I&E funds will be used and reports annually on expenditures from the preceding federal fiscal year.

**I&E expenditures are strategically aligned with the goals and priorities outlined in New Jersey's Combined State Plan under WIOA Title IV and are designed to:**

- Improve service delivery systems
- Advance competitive integrated employment (CIE) outcomes
- Promote evidence-based and data-informed practices
- Strengthen cross-system workforce alignment
- Enhance consumer engagement, oversight, and accountability

**DVRS utilizes I&E funds as a systems-change investment mechanism to ensure initiatives are sustainable, scalable, and performance-driven. There are 7 current Innovation and Expansions that are being implemented. We describe the initiatives below:**

#### 1. Statewide Benefits Counseling Infrastructure

DVRS supports a statewide benefits counseling framework to ensure individuals receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits receive accurate, timely, and individualized work incentive planning services.

This initiative:

- Expands access to credentialed benefits planners
- Promotes informed consumer choice
- Reduces fear of benefit loss as a barrier to employment
- Supports successful transition to competitive integrated employment

By addressing benefits-related barriers, DVRS strengthens employment outcomes and supports federal WIOA performance accountability indicators.

## 2. Specialized Deaf and Hard of Hearing Employment Services

DVRS supports enhanced employment services for individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing through specialized service delivery structures that ensure linguistically and culturally appropriate access to vocational rehabilitation services.

Services include:

- Specialized vocational counseling
- Direct communication access in American Sign Language (ASL)
- Coordination of assistive technology and workplace accommodations
- Employer engagement and competitive placement support

These targeted investments promote equitable access to VR services and improve competitive integrated employment outcomes for individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

## 3. State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Support

In accordance with Section 101(a)(18) and Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act, DVRS allocates I&E funds to support the operational and administrative needs of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC).

This funding ensures:

- Meaningful consumer and stakeholder engagement
- Independent review and analysis of VR program performance
- Active participation in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the State Plan
- Ongoing collaboration between DVRS leadership and the SRC

This partnership strengthens transparency, accountability, and continuous program improvement.

## 4. Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) Support (Designated State Entity)

Consistent with Section 101(a)(18) and Section 704 of the Rehabilitation Act, DVRS supports the resource plan of the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) to ensure the Council can effectively fulfill its statutory responsibilities under the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL).

Support of the SILC resource plan promotes:

- Independent oversight and consumer-driven planning
- Coordination between the VR and Independent Living (IL) programs
- Alignment between the Combined State Plan and the SPIL

- Systems-level collaboration to advance competitive integrated employment and community living outcomes

#### 5. Coordination with Part B Funded Centers for Independent Living

DVRS collaborates with federally funded Centers for Independent Living (CILs) operating under Title VII, Part B of the Rehabilitation Act to promote cross-system alignment and improved employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Part B Centers for Independent Living are community-based, consumer-controlled, nonresidential, cross-disability organizations that provide independent living core services, including:

- Information and referral
- Independent living skills training
- Peer counseling
- Individual and systems advocacy
- Transition services, including youth transition and diversion from institutional settings

Through coordinated planning, shared initiatives, and strategic systems engagement, DVRS works with Part B Centers to strengthen pathways to competitive integrated employment and enhance community-based service delivery across New Jersey.

#### 6. Employment First and Systems Change Initiatives

DVRS leverages I&E funding to advance Employment First principles and promote competitive integrated employment as the first and preferred outcome for individuals with disabilities.

Initiatives include strategic partnerships that connect:

- Private sector employers
- Local education agencies
- Workforce Development Boards and American Job Centers
- Community rehabilitation providers
- Independent Living partners

These efforts support sustainable systems transformation and reinforce cross-agency alignment within New Jersey's workforce ecosystem.

#### 7. Model Demonstrations and Evidence-Based Practices

DVRS utilizes I&E funds to pilot innovative service delivery strategies and scale evidence-based practices that improve program effectiveness, accessibility, and employment outcomes.

All I&E initiatives are:

- Performance-monitored
- Data-informed

- Aligned with WIOA accountability indicators
- Designed for sustainability beyond initial pilot phases

(See Section c.2A for detailed fiscal allocations and expenditure strategies related to Innovation and Expansion activities.)

E. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS, AND ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES.

1. ACCEPTANCE OF TITLE VI FUNDS:

(A) VR agency requests to receive title VI funds.

2. IF THE VR AGENCY HAS ELECTED TO RECEIVE TITLE VI FUNDS, SECTION 606(B)(3) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT REQUIRES VR AGENCIES TO INCLUDE SPECIFIC GOALS AND PRIORITIES WITH RESPECT TO THE DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS RECEIVED UNDER SECTION 603 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES. DESCRIBE THE USE OF TITLE VI FUNDS AND HOW THEY WILL BE USED IN MEETING THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES OF THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM.

Funds received under section 603 of the Rehabilitation Act will be used for the provision of supported employment services, including extended services for youth, for individuals with the most significant disabilities after an individual has been placed in employment. Services provided prior to placement must be expended with VR funds under Title I. DVRS has established the following goals with respect to the distribution of Title VI funds.

Goal 1: DVRS' primary goal is to create an effective, coordinated service provision and delivery system of Supported Employment (SE) work opportunities to meet the needs of individuals with most significant disabilities. Toward this goal:

- DVRS created an internal infrastructure between the Management Information Systems (MIS) Unit and the DOLWD Office of Finance and Accounting to cross-reference expenditures from the Aware case management system and the funding source line items for adults and youth with most significant disabilities.
- DVRS maintains a current rate schedule for all services that includes the utilization and expenditure of supported employment funds through a fee-for-service billable hour model using authorizations and payment for services rendered process.
- SE funds are tracked separately to ensure accurate reporting for individuals, both adults and youth, with the most significant disabilities that are served under the SE program.

Goal 2: DVRS continues the goal of increasing the number of successful outcomes each year for individuals being served with an SE outcome. Every person, including individuals with the most significant disabilities, has the right, through informed choice, to have equal access to employment services. Towards this goal:

DVRS continues to promote continued targeted disability groups include the following:



- Individuals with significant intellectual disabilities
- Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Individuals with serious and persistent psychiatric/mental illness

Goal 3. DVRS will continue to work to ensure that 50 percent of the supported employment (SE) allotment is set aside for youth with the most significant disabilities. These funds have been identified and continue to be tracked as previously indicated. Toward this goal:

- Training will continue to be conducted for all DVRS Counselors that will emphasize that the provision of extended services for youth with the most significant disabilities, under appropriate circumstances, can be provided up to 4 years until the youth reaches age 25. It is critical that this training identifies the non-delegable nature of this new provision in WIOA.
- DVRS has developed policy that identifies this provision in WIOA and tracks youth who require extended services for a period not to exceed 4 years up to age of 25.
- DVRS receives through annual state legislation and appropriation funding for extended services for adults and youth known as the Long-Term Follow-Along (LTFA) Program.

3. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES MAY BE PROVIDED WITH TITLE 1 OR TITLE VI FUNDS FOLLOWING PLACEMENT OF INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES IN EMPLOYMENT. IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(22) AND SECTION 606(B)(3) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, DESCRIBE THE QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES; AND THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES.

Supported employment (SE) is “competitive-integrated employment, including customized employment, or employment in an integrated work setting in which individuals are working on a short-term basis toward competitive employment, that is individualized and customized consistent with the strengths, abilities, interests, and informed choice of the individuals involved, for individuals with the most significant disabilities.” (Amendments to Title IV, Sec. 401. Definitions, Rehabilitation Act, 1973).

Services provided by supported employment vendors are VR services funded with Title I funds that support the goal of supported employment on the consumer’s Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). These services as funded by Title I include job preparation, job development, and job placement activities. Once job match placement occurs, supported employment services are provided using Title VI and when these funds are expended Title 1 is utilized for up to 24 months, or longer, if needed prior to the transition to extended services (Long-Term Follow-Along).

Individuals with the most significant disabilities can benefit from these services when:

- Competitive integrated employment has not traditionally occurred
- Competitive integrated employment has been interrupted or intermittent because of significance of disability

- Due to the nature and severity of their disability, they need intensive supported employment services and extended services (Long-Term Follow-Along) in order to perform and retain competitive integrated employment

Employment First is a framework that is centered on the premise that all citizens are capable of full participation in integrated employment and community life. This initiative identified that competitive employment in an integrated setting is the preferred first choice for every individual seeking employment in New Jersey. This effort shifts assumptions about whether individuals with certain categories of disabilities can work to one of determining the supports and services necessary so that these individuals will be successful in competitive-integrated employment. DVRS adheres to the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) on July 22, 2014. An individual with a disability must express the desire and want to work in competitive integrated employment and be determined eligible for services.

DVRS has consistently encouraged the development of programs and services that meet the needs of a wide variety of individuals with the most significant disabilities based on either geographic and/or disability driven needs. Traditional community rehabilitation programs and programs for SE without traditional facility-based operations are available throughout the state.

All DVRS vendors are required to follow the same process criteria in their service provision and delivery including:

- Referral
- Intake/Assessment
- Job preparation
- Job development
- Job placement
- Time-limited or Intensive job coaching
- Extended services/Long-Term Follow-Along (LTFA)

Extended Services (LTFA) for students/youth: Supported employment services must be provided for the necessary time period needed following job placement. The movement for youth to extended services only occurs once the student/ youth has become employed in supported employment and is ready to transition into extended services.

Supported employment continues to be a valuable service and has opened doors to employment for individuals with disabilities who are now expected to work in a competitive-integrated work setting. DVRS's Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP) Unit continues to enhance the SE vendor approval process to ensure that appropriate standards are met in the vetting process. The CRP Unit in collaboration with DOLWD Office of Information Management has developed an online vendor application process located on the DVRS website.

In DVRS's effort towards ongoing quality improvement, monitoring of the SE providers is coordinated and conducted by assigned Program Planning and Development Specialists

(PPDS's) in the CRP Unit on a biennial basis, or more frequently if necessary. During this process, PPDS(s) engage in an in-depth review of the vendors' SE and Specialized Services programming, service provision and delivery as it pertains to their conformance with the New Jersey Administrative Code (N.J.A.C.) 12:51 and Supported Employment and Specialized Services Manual. This in-depth review includes dialogue with the providers Administrators and SE direct service staff, feedback from DVRS field office staff, review of clinical case files, and documentation pertaining to the programs' operations. Documentation includes most recent Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) or approved comparable accreditation report, organizational chart, staff resumes, completion of CRP Unit required and related trainings, satisfaction surveys from stakeholders, and any additional requested reporting that impacts service provision and delivery. Formal reports summarizing findings, including recommendations and any required actions are prepared and presented to providers and DVRS Field Office(s) Management. This collaborative effort between the CRP Unit, DVRS field office(s) staff and providers ensure that performance outcomes and quality standards are maintained and fosters consistency and continuity in services being provided.

DVRS continues to offer specialized services including Community Based Work Evaluations, Customized Employment, Internship Development and Supports, and Trial Work Experience to meet the needs of consumers. In addition, DVRS introduced a new evaluative service, Career Pathway Evaluation, in 2023. This service is currently being offered as a pilot program with selected field offices and providers based on region. The purpose of the pilot program is to determine the effectiveness of the new service and make any needed changes and adjustments before making the service available throughout the state. DVRS continues to encourage providers to apply to vend all specialized services offered. The CRP Unit continues to have the goal of developing Community Based Work Adjustment Training service which can be used in competitive integrated employment settings.

The CRP Unit continues to provide bi-annual Spring and Fall trainings and as needed or requested to providers and DVRS field staff on SE and all specialized services. Trainings offered by the CRP Unit includes Supported Employment and Long-Term Follow-Along, Community Based Work Evaluation, Trial Work Experience, Internship Development and Supports, Customized Employment, Competitive Integrated Employment, Career Pathway Evaluation Pilot (restricted to participating 3 Field Offices and 3 Provider Agencies), and an Open Provider Forum.

For students and youth with disabilities, in particular those with the most significant disabilities, DVRS Counselors will develop and coordinate services documented in the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) to ensure that students and youth can move from transition services to supported employment services when appropriate and not lose funding upon the end of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) entitlement.

Extended Services, known as the Long-Term Follow Along (LTFA) Program, is an annual state legislated and appropriated funded contracted service provided to consumers with less hours of intensive ongoing support once natural support, job stabilization, and fading has occurred. Annually DVRS, through its provision of LTFA, continues to fund supports to approximately 2,500 individuals with disabilities to maintain competitive integrated employment. This does not only have a significant financial and social impact on their lives, but it demonstrates that people with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities, can work and be

productive contributors in their communities. DVRS provides individualized and extensive on-the-job support or job coaching to individuals with most significant disabilities for up to 24 months. During the pre-IPE (Individualized Plan for Employment) meeting that includes the DVRS Counselor, the chosen Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) vendor, consumer, and any stakeholders determine if extended services will be needed. As each individual consumer progresses through supported employment service provision and delivery, the DVRS Counselor will ensure that the CRP vendor of choice will be available to provide Long-Term Follow-Along (LTFA) services upon job stabilization.

The CRP Unit continues to collaborate efforts of the Long-Term Follow-Along (LTFA) program to include:

- Identifying Department of Human Services, Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) eligible and DVRS mutual consumers to ensure that these consumers are receiving extended services through the appropriate funding source as stipulated in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DDD, DVRS, and Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI).
- Ensuring that the state funded contracted program of approved vendors delivers the most effective service provision to consumers
- Examining and assessing consumer cases to determine if independence has been achieved and no longer in need of the service

4. SECTIONS 101(A)(22) AND 606(B)(4) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT REQUIRE THE VR AGENCY TO DESCRIBE EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY AND ARRANGE, INCLUDING ENTERING INTO COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS, WITH OTHER STATE AGENCIES AND OTHER APPROPRIATE ENTITIES IN ORDER TO PROVIDE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES. THE DESCRIPTION MUST INCLUDE EXTENDED SERVICES, AS APPLICABLE, TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE PROVISION OF EXTENDED SERVICES TO YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH 34 C.F.R. § 363.4(A) AND 34 C.F.R. § 361.5(C)(19)(V).

Supported employment services, including extended services, are customary services occurring in New Jersey. DVRS has vendor agreements with over 65 approved supported employment service providers, mostly with nonprofit and some for-profit agencies. Service providers are entirely community-based or associated with facility-based community rehabilitation programs. All vendors receive funding based upon current rates using a fee-for-service, billable hour model for authorizations.

DVRS frequently receives phone and email inquiries and completed on-line applications by new providers to vend supported employment services. There is a vetting process in place to ensure that these potential new vendors are qualified to provide this service. In New Jersey, approval to vend supported employment services requires compliance with the New Jersey Administrative Code (N.J.A.C.) 12:51, and Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) or accepted comparable accreditation within three years of initial approval. In addition, there must be an identified need for supported employment services in the county or counties in which the

new vendor intends to operate. Field Chiefs that oversee the 18 field offices take part in the vetting review process.

New Jersey is an Employment First State, and particular attention is given to youth with the most significant disabilities who, through informed choice, wish to pursue competitive integrated employment. DVRS has approved supported employment vendors who are also approved vendors with DDD. DDD funds support coordination agencies that utilize support coordinators for their eligible participants who identify the individualized services and support needed and documented in the Individual Service Plan (ISP). DVRS Counselors collaborate with DDD support coordinators and identify mutual supported employment vendors to ensure a smooth transition of funding.

New Jersey is fortunate to have annual state legislated and appropriated funding for the extended support phase of supported employment which is referred to as the Long-Term Follow-Along (LTFA) program. LTFA contracted funding of approximately \$6,650,000.00 million went out in both FY 2024 and FY 2025 to approximately 60 supported employment programs to provide extended services.

Since individual LTFA program contracted budget ceilings are limited, a “re-stabilization and replacement fund” was also approved to handle the individualized service and support needs of consumers using additional funding. Consumers with closed cases in field offices and in need of additional services outside of LTFA are welcome to reapply to DVRS.

DVRS encourages continuing education and training in relation to the provision and delivery of supported employment services. DVRS recommends supported employment providers seek training through entities such as the Boggs Center on Disability and Human Development, Association for Persons Supporting Employment First (APSE), and the Rutgers University Integrated Employment Institute that specialize in serving consumers with mental health conditions.

The Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP) Unit develops, coordinates, and conducts training sessions specific to Supported Employment including Extended Services (LTFA), Specialized Services, and related topics on a regular basis. Training sessions are offered virtually and in-person upon request to ensure that providers and DVRS field office staff have access to attend and participate. These training sessions provide an open forum to learn about and reinforce policy and procedure including required forms, discuss experiences including success stories and challenges providing services, ask specific questions and collaborate with those involved at every level of service provision and delivery.

As DVRS continues with ongoing quality improvement, monitoring of SE Providers is coordinated and conducted by assigned PPDS(s) in the CRP Unit on a biennial basis or for an identified provider if needed. During this process, PPDS(s) engage in an in-depth review of the provider SE and Specialized Service programming, service provision and delivery as it pertains to their conformance with the N.J.A.C. 12:51 and DVRS Supported Employment and Specialized Services Manual - November 2020.

DVRS's cooperative agreement includes a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DVRS, DDD, and CBVI for the provision of Supported Employment services and Extended Services. DVRS and CBVI are the Designated State Units (DSU) for New Jersey and are committed to serving individuals with the most significant disabilities who need supported

employment services to obtain competitive integrated employment. CBVI also uses the fee-for-service billable hour model and maintains a list of approved supported employment providers throughout the state. The current MOU dated 2022 was developed in collaboration with DDD and CBVI outlines the protocols, policy, and procedures, including required forms, for the provision and delivery of supported employment services to DDD consumers by DVRS or CBVI. Extended services are funded by DDD to individuals who have been determined eligible for services. Extended services for CBVI consumers are funded by DVRS.

**F. ANNUAL ESTIMATES**

Sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require all VR agencies to annually conduct a full assessment of their resources and ability to serve all eligible individuals before the start of the Federal fiscal year. In accordance with 34 C.F.R. § 361.29(b), annual estimates must include the following projections:

**1. ESTIMATES FOR NEXT FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR—**

**A. VR PROGRAM; AND**

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<b>Priority Category (if applicable)</b>	<b>No. of Individuals Eligible for Services</b>	<b>No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under VR Program</b>	<b>Costs of Services using Title I Funds</b>	<b>No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)</b>
	7508	6197	\$18,064,200	

**B. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM.**

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Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under Supported Employment Program	Costs of Services using Title I and Title VI Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
	7508	1311	\$2,041,025	

G. ORDER OF SELECTION

1. PURSUANT TO SECTION 101(A)(5) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, THIS DESCRIPTION MUST BE AMENDED WHEN THE VR AGENCY DETERMINES, BASED ON THE ANNUAL ESTIMATES DESCRIBED IN DESCRIPTION (F), THAT VR SERVICES CANNOT BE PROVIDED TO ALL ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE STATE WHO APPLY FOR AND ARE DETERMINED ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES.

\* VR agencies may maintain an order of selection policy and priority of eligible individuals without implementing or continuing to implement an order of selection.

The VR agency is not implementing an order of selection and all eligible individuals will be served.

2. FOR VR AGENCIES THAT HAVE DEFINED PRIORITY CATEGORIES DESCRIBE—

A. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER

DVRS is not currently under an order of selection.

B. THE ORDER (PRIORITY CATEGORIES) TO BE FOLLOWED IN SELECTING ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS TO BE PROVIDED VR SERVICES ENSURING THAT INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES ARE SELECTED FOR SERVICES BEFORE ALL OTHER INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES; AND

The DVRS is currently not under an order of selection. DVRS has identified that it is able to provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act. If DVRS determines at a future date to enter into an order of selection, DVRS will ensure that priority categories will be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided VR services. This is to ensure that individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other disabilities.

**Description of Priority Categories if under an Order of Selection**

The DVRS does not rely solely on a diagnosis as a determination of significant disability but considers every disability or combination of disabilities evaluated during the assessment, to determine eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs. If the disability, or combination of disabilities, presents impairments that seriously limit at least one functional capacity (such as mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, inter-personal skills, work tolerance, or work skills), in terms of an employment outcome, and if vocational rehabilitation can be expected to

require multiple services over an extended period of time; the person will be considered to be significantly disabled.

**Priorities under Order of Selection**

Priority 1: Clients classified as individuals with a most significant disability who meet the following criteria:

- Have a significant physical or mental impairment or combination of impairments which seriously limit two or more functional capacities in terms of employment outcome; and
- Require multiple vocational rehabilitation services over an extended period of time.

Priority 2: Clients classified as individuals with a significant disability who meet the following criteria:

- Have a significant physical or mental impairment or combination of impairments which seriously limit at least one functional capacity in terms of employment outcome; and
- Require multiple vocational rehabilitation services over an extended period of time.

Priority 3: All other eligible individuals, who do not meet the criteria for Priority Category 1 or Priority Category 2, but.

- Have a physical or mental impairment which limits employment in a functional capacity area; and,
- Are not expected to require multiple vocational rehabilitation services over an extended period of time.

The Order of Selection shall not preclude:

- Diagnostic services necessary to establish a client’s eligibility; and
- Information and referral services.

The DVRS will first serve in the order of selection Priority 1 followed by Priority 2 then Priority 3.

C. THE VR AGENCY’S GOALS FOR SERVING INDIVIDUALS IN EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, INCLUDING HOW THE AGENCY WILL ASSIST ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS ASSIGNED TO CLOSED PRIORITY CATEGORIES WITH INFORMATION AND REFERRAL, THE METHOD IN WHICH THE VR AGENCY WILL MANAGE WAITING LISTS, AND THE PROJECTED TIMELINES FOR OPENING PRIORITY CATEGORIES. NOTE: PRIORITY CATEGORIES ARE CONSIDERED OPEN WHEN ALL INDIVIDUALS IN THE PRIORITY CATEGORY MAY BE SERVED.

Not applicable since DVRS is not currently under an order of selection.

3. HAS THE VR AGENCY ELECTED TO SERVE ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS OUTSIDE OF THE ORDER OF SELECTION WHO REQUIRE SPECIFIC SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT?

Yes

H. WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS.



The State plan shall be in effect in all political subdivisions of the State, however, the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (Commissioner) may waive compliance with this requirement in accordance with Section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and the implementing regulations in 34 C.F.R. § 361.26. If the VR agency is requesting a waiver of statewideness or has a previously approved waiver of statewideness, describe the types of services and the local entities providing such services under the waiver of statewideness and how the agency has complied with the requirements in 34 C.F.R. § 361.26. If the VR agency is not requesting or does not have an approved waiver of statewideness, please indicate “not applicable.”

Not applicable

#### I. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT.

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act, the VR agency must develop and maintain annually a description (consistent with the purposes of the Rehabilitation Act) of the VR agency’s comprehensive system of personnel development, which shall include a description of the procedures and activities the State VR agency will undertake to ensure it has an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessionals that provides the following:

1. ANALYSIS OF CURRENT PERSONNEL AND PROJECTED PERSONNEL NEEDS INCLUDING—

A. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL CURRENTLY NEEDED BY THE VR AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY; AND

B. THE NUMBER AND TYPE OF PERSONNEL THAT ARE EMPLOYED BY THE VR AGENCY IN THE PROVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES, INCLUDING RATIOS OF QUALIFIED VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELORS TO CLIENTS;

C. PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY, WHO WILL BE NEEDED BY THE VR AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES IN 5 YEARS BASED ON PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED, INCLUDING INDIVIDUALS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL EXPECTED TO RETIRE OR LEAVE THE FIELD, AND OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS.

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***A. The number of personnel currently needed by the VR agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category:- See Table Below.***

***B. The number and type of personnel that are employed by the VR agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, including ratios of qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors to consumers.***

See Table Below. The current ratio of counselors to consumers (including VR and PE cases) is 1:147.

***C. Projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the VR agency to provide VR services in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.***

See Table Below

<b>Job Title</b>	<b>No. of Personnel Employed</b>	<b>No. of Personnel Needed</b>	<b>No. of Personnel needed over the next 5 years</b>
<b>Director</b>	1	1	1
<b>Assistant Director</b>	2	3	3
<b>Chief</b>	6	7	7
<b>Manager</b>	16	17	17
<b>Program Planning &amp; Development Specialist</b>	16	17	21
<b>Supervising Rehabilitation Counselor</b>	19	23	23
<b>Administrative Analyst 4</b>	2	2	3
<b>Administrative Analyst 3</b>	2	3	6
<b>Administrative Analyst 2</b>	1	1	1
<b>Rehabilitation Aides</b>	3	22	22
<b>Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors</b>	131	151	160
<b>Administrative (Clerical)</b>	85	105	105

**D. RATIO OF QUALIFIED VR COUNSELORS TO CLIENTS:**

Factoring the anticipated succession of the lower levels into higher positions and retirements leaves the DVRS with the task of replacing approximately twenty-five (25) percent of the counseling staff within the next five years.

NJDOL routinely publishes an employee roster, which is reviewed against budget information to determine the most up-to-date number of employees actively serving the agency. A recent analysis of the DVRS human resources needs and available budget has revealed that it can function with a total of 352 staff members (284 current employees and 68 current vacancies), which will ensure that there are at least 151 counselors and adequate supervisory, management and administrative support. A recent analysis of counseling staff in the 18 Field offices has identified the need for additional counselors due to the increase in PE cases in the agency, therefore increasing our caseload ratio. DVRS will look to hire 9 additional counselors in the coming year. This number is reflected in the 5-year section of the above table.

The agency currently serves approximately 15,616 individuals (inclusive of all case status categories) with an average caseload level of 147. Therefore, the ratio of VR counselors to consumers is 1:147. Caseloads that become “vacant” due to a staff member leaving are being maintained by a supervising rehabilitation counselor or manager who is providing services to ensure case success. Some offices have multiple vacant caseloads, which the supervising rehabilitation counselor or manager covers. The anticipated level set at 151 counselor positions would result in reduced caseload size. DVRS is currently authorized to have 151 total counselor positions, however there are currently 20 vacancies. DVRS is working to fill these positions as a priority.

#### E. PROJECTED NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED IN 5 YEARS:

DVRS anticipates that the number of eligible individuals who will be served under an Individualized Plan for Employment for each of the next five consecutive fiscal years (FFY2025-FFY2029) to be at minimum as follows: **6,233** FY 2025; **6,856** FY 2026; **7,541** FY 2027, **8,295** FY 2028, **9,124** FY 2029. These numbers represent a 10 percent historical increase in plans each year.

## 2. DATA AND INFORMATION ON PERSONNEL PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT, RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION, AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:

A. A LIST OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE THAT ARE PREPARING VR PROFESSIONALS, BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED AT EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS, BROKEN DOWN BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; AND THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED DURING THE PRIOR YEAR FROM EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS WITH CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, OR WITH THE CREDENTIALS FOR CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, BROKEN DOWN BY THE PERSONNEL CATEGORY FOR WHICH THEY HAVE RECEIVED, OR HAVE THE CREDENTIALS TO RECEIVE, CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE.

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Institute of Higher Education	Type of Program	No. of Students Enrolled	No. of Prior Year Graduates
Rutgers University	Masters of Rehabilitation Counseling	110	44
Rutgers University	Undergraduate in Rehabilitation Counseling (Bachelors and Associates Programs)	35	22
Rutgers University	Post-master's Certificate in Rehabilitation Counseling	4	0

**B. THE VR AGENCY'S PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL, WHICH ADDRESSES THE CURRENT AND PROJECTED NEEDS FOR QUALIFIED PERSONNEL; AND THE COORDINATION AND FACILITATION OF EFFORTS BETWEEN THE VR AGENCY AND INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS TO RECRUIT, PREPARE, AND RETAIN PERSONNEL WHO ARE QUALIFIED, INCLUDING PERSONNEL FROM MINORITY BACKGROUNDS AND PERSONNEL WHO ARE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.**

DVRS and CBVI negotiated with administrators at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ) School of Health-Related -Professions to develop a means to assist in meeting the CSPD standards for the state. The results of the collaborative efforts were the development of a state standard in keeping with the national competency movement and federal mandates, and a masters-level program in Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling within the School for Health-Related Professions (SHRP). Since 2013, this program has been delivered by Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey and is available in both North and South New Jersey, as well as online. This is the sole graduate program in New Jersey devoted to training rehabilitation counselors and is CACREP accredited. All the Rutgers graduates are eligible for national certification for the CRC credential as well as for the National Counselor Examination (NCE), required for state licensure, upon graduation.

Guidelines have been provided by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the New Jersey Civil Service Commission on hiring policies and terms of employment. Projections were made based on the current number of employees regarding their age, length of service, education, and availability of training resources.

Staff members from the administrative teams of both DVRS and CBVI are members of the advisory board for the Rehabilitation Counseling program. That staff stays in contact with key university staff throughout the year to continue the collaborative working relationship and to provide information to both students and university staff about practicum and internship

placements as well as careers with state VR agencies. That staff also monitors staff professional development in conjunction with the agency's training unit.

In New Jersey, DVRS counselors are still required to meet the highest CSPD standards. Due to the need to replace a high level of management, supervisory, and VR counselor positions over the next 5 years, the agency has increased the pool of applicants, as permitted by the WIOA amendments to Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, to meet the demand for agency personnel. To meet the needs of the agency, DVRS had incorporated into the original Civil Service requirements a substitution clause to allow for a bachelor's degree with the requisite experience.

DVRS works closely with Rutgers University to ensure that their graduates are well prepared to begin entry level counseling positions in our agency. DVRS is located within the New Jersey Department of Labor, who ensures fair hiring practices under Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion guidelines. DVRS ensures that candidates for positions who have disabilities and/or are veterans receive a mandatory interview for open positions. DVRS must adhere to New Jersey Civil Service Guidelines for our hiring practices.

C. DESCRIPTION OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND ACTIVITIES THAT ENSURE ALL PERSONNEL EMPLOYED BY THE VR AGENCY RECEIVE APPROPRIATE AND ADEQUATE TRAINING AND CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS:

I. PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO ASSESSMENT, VOCATIONAL COUNSELING, JOB PLACEMENT, AND REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING TRAINING IMPLEMENTED IN COORDINATION WITH ENTITIES CARRYING OUT STATE PROGRAMS UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998; AND

II. PROCEDURES FOR THE ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION OF SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE FROM RESEARCH AND OTHER SOURCES TO VR AGENCY PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS AND FOR PROVIDING TRAINING REGARDING THE AMENDMENTS TO THE REHABILITATION ACT MADE BY THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT.

DVRS supports its staff through multiple continuing education opportunities and provides in-house training on a regular basis. The New Jersey Rehabilitation Association, the Garden State Employment and Training Association, and the Association for Persons Supporting Employment First each sponsor continuing education credits with their respective yearly conferences, and DVRS supports a significant number of counselors for these conferences yearly. Each DVRS counselor is evaluated annually, and the achievement of the graduate credential is monitored.

DVRS recognizes the need for ongoing and progressive training to upgrade skills, increase the knowledge and maximize the performance of personnel employed by the DVRS who provide vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities.

DVRS has utilized the training and consultation provided by the RSA sponsored VR Technical Assistance Centers to include:

- National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT:C) DVRS works collaboratively with the Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired (CBVI) and the

New Jersey Department of Special Education on the development and implementation of transition services and implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding.

- Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management (VRTAC-QM) and the Vocational rehabilitation Center for Quality Employment (VRTAC-QE)- DVRS staff have participated in training modules offered by the VRTAC QM and VRTAC-QE as well as receiving targeted technical assistance. DVRS staff are also involved in the TACs community of practices for supported employment and quality assurance.
- DVRS staff receive training on assistive technology through The Richard West Assistive Technology Advocacy Center (ATAC) of Disability Rights New Jersey (DRNJ) ATAC functions as New Jersey's federally funded assistive technology center. Its purpose is to make assistive technology more accessible to individuals with disabilities throughout the state of New Jersey in addition to providing training for consumers as well as VR staff.
- DVRS program unit staff members in addition to field management function as subject matter experts in several areas to meet training needs pertinent to DVRS field staff and useful to the practice of vocational rehabilitation. In-House training provided to field staff includes but is not limited to case-management practices, competitive-integrated employment, pre-employment transition services, supported employment and vehicle modifications.
- DVRS staff receive a variety of training offered through the New Jersey Civil Services Commission (CSC) Learning Management System (LMS). Online training is offered through this system and CSC also offers in person training in areas related to management and supervision.
- DVRS collaborates with the Division of Developmental Disabilities in providing cross-training for staff of both agencies.
- DVRS staff are also provided with training opportunities offered through outside entities such as the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE), the National Rehabilitation Association (NRA), and the Garden State Employment and Training Association (GSETA).

DVRS conducts training needs assessments that reflect several areas and methods such as:

- Priorities outlined in the current state plan; and
- Staff development issues culled from individual development plans as a part of the performance evaluation system; and
- Polling managers and supervisors; and
- Conducting quarterly all agency member meeting and soliciting input and advise from our employees through surveys and bright ideas suggestions; and
- Scanning the environment for issues related to current legislation, trends, and advances in the practice of vocational rehabilitation.

DVRS revises policies that reflect best practices and recommendations from the RSA. RSA provides oversight and technical assistance to the division. Once new information regarding policy changes or new technology is identified, the division will issue administrative memorandums and then update our written policies. All policies are available to our staff on our internal intranet. In addition, all new memorandums, policies, and directives are sent to all personnel via email. Supervisors are directed to ensure that their staff is trained in all new policies and procedures. In addition, division-wide meetings are held on a quarterly basis to discuss all new policies and procedures with our staff.

NJDOL offers tuition reimbursement for employees who wish to obtain an advanced degree. DVRS monitors the educational progress of each employee and require the completion of the degree before being eligible for promotion for positions requiring the advanced degree.

3. DESCRIPTION OF VR AGENCY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF PERSONNEL STANDARDS CONSISTENT WITH SECTION 101(A)(7)(B) TO ENSURE THAT VR AGENCY PROFESSIONAL AND PARAPROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL ARE ADEQUATELY TRAINED AND PREPARED, INCLUDING—

A. STANDARDS THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH ANY NATIONAL OR STATE-APPROVED OR -RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATION, LICENSING, REGISTRATION, OR OTHER COMPARABLE REQUIREMENTS THAT APPLY TO THE PROFESSION OR DISCIPLINE IN WHICH SUCH PERSONNEL ARE PROVIDING VR SERVICES; AND

B. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(7)(B)(II) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, TO ENSURE THAT THE PERSONNEL HAVE A 21ST CENTURY UNDERSTANDING OF THE EVOLVING LABOR FORCE AND THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, mandates that states develop and implement strategies for the hiring or retraining of personnel to meet standards or qualifications based on the highest requirements in the state for the counseling profession. The Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, the general VR agency in New Jersey, negotiated with administrators at the Rutgers' School of Health-Related Professions to develop a means to assist in meeting the Comprehensive Systems of Personnel Development (CSPD) standards; as noted above, this program is now delivered through Rutgers University. The results of the collaborative efforts were the development of a state standard in keeping with the national competency movement and federal mandates, and a master-level program in Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling. As part of the curriculum, all students complete 60 credits of course work and Practicum and Internship experience to practice and integrate counseling skills learned during course work. The program has been accredited by CORE (Council on Rehabilitation Education) and CACREP (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs) meeting national standards for quality education in rehabilitation and counseling education and all graduates from the program qualify for credentialing as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (the national certification). All degrees/certifications are issued by Rutgers University. Rutgers is the only

institution of higher learning in the state to offer graduate degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling.

To ensure future VR staff meet the needs of an evolving labor force, training is sponsored through the DVRS Community Rehabilitation Unit, Human Resource Development Institute, DVRS Program unit, and external vendors. VR staff routinely participate in the training and are awarded Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) credits when available.

DVRS maintains education and experience requirements for all our counselors. In New Jersey, DVRS counselors are still required to meet the highest CSPD standards. To be eligible to be hired by DVRS, the candidate must meet educational and experience requirements as defined in the job specifications issued by our Civil Service Commission (CSC).

VR counselors were provided with modular training; The training was prepared and presented by the San Diego State University. This was vigorous training session and each module concentrated on counselors' essentials like Consumer choice, Ethics, Eligibility, Comprehensive Assessment, Order of Selection, case management to name a few. This was provided in September and October of 2024.

#### 4. METHOD(S) THE VR AGENCY USES TO ENSURE THAT PERSONNEL ARE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE IN APPROPRIATE MODES OF COMMUNICATION WITH OR IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGE OF APPLICANTS OR ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE LIMITED ENGLISH SPEAKING ABILITY.

DVRS has been consistent with the Rehabilitation Act in meeting the requirements of offering appropriate communication solutions to those individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing. All the current rehabilitation counselors for the Deaf are certified through a test known as the Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI). If counselors wish to enhance or improve their skills in American Sign Language (ASL), the DVRS will utilize Title I funds to further classes in ASL. The agency also invites counselors to participate in ASL training programs, which are typically offered at the community college level. Deaf Language specialists are available in every local office to meet the needs of individuals who use ASL. They could also be used to assist in any employment interview if needed.

DVRS typically draws the bi-lingual counselor from a pool of individuals of Latinx heritage who also possess the necessary credentials in addition to speaking fluent Spanish. DVRS also encourages opportunities for other staff members to take courses that will facilitate their communication in conversational Spanish to expand the agency's ability to serve this population of people with disabilities.

DVRS makes efforts to serve individuals from underserved minority populations; DVRS assesses the demographics of the state and deploys staff where there is the greatest need. DVRS also accommodates a person's language by an informal interpreter or the Language Line and their coordinated community-based or faith-based organization that can best serve them. DVRS is currently participating in the statewide "Vital Document Project" to provide the primary written documents of the agency in the languages identified in the 2020 Census as of demand in New Jersey, i.e., Spanish, Portuguese, Korean, Chinese (both simplified and traditional), Gujarati, Arabic, and Haitian Creole.



5. AS APPROPRIATE, DESCRIBE THE PROCEDURES AND ACTIVITIES TO COORDINATE THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT WITH PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT.

DVRS maintains an ongoing relationship with the NJ Department of Education Offices of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to share information and ensure that the staff of the DVRS is aware of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Staff development activities include:

Training sessions per year for the DVRS lead transition counselors. All the DVRS counselors are responsible for maintaining a relationship to the school districts within their local area; however, these lead counselors are responsible for acting as a resource to school personnel. The approximately 600 public school districts are diverse throughout the state, so these training sessions are essential to maintain a roster of promising practices for the agency.

DVRS has a seat on the State Special Education Advisory Council (SSEAC) and OSEP has one on the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). The information gathered at the meetings is shared when appropriate.

OSEP and the CBVI representatives meet monthly and participate in conferences and technical consultation with different technical assistance groups. This collaboration fosters interagency communication and improves best practices to assist transition students in being referred for pre-ETS services as well as needed services to transition from school to postsecondary training and education and/or employment.

In their ongoing relationship the DVRS relies on the independent living community to establish and maintain linkages with students in transition by helping them to seek strategies for self-advocacy and empowerment. The DVRS supports the independent living mission along with the SILC to promote independent living as a part of the transition process from school to work.

#### J. COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS.

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(11)(D) of the Rehabilitation Act—

1. DESCRIBE PLANS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATION BETWEEN THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATION OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PUBLIC EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, THAT ARE DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF THE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM THE RECEIPT OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES IN SCHOOL TO THE RECEIPT OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES.

DVRS understands the critical relationship that exists among education and employment that in turn affects independence and quality of life. Transition from school to adult life for youth with disabilities is a top priority for DVRS.

Each local DVRS office has Lead Transition Counselors (LTC) to work with school districts within the county. The LTC provides consultation and technical assistance and assists with the referral of students for services while in school and after exiting high school. In addition, DVR services are offered to every local education agency throughout the state.

The DVRS statewide coordinators for Pre-ETS and Transition services meet regularly with the counterpart for this position in the Office of Special Education and Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. They provide cross training and technical consultation on the MOU (Interagency Agreement) between DVRS, DOE and CBVI.

DVRS, CBVI, DOE, and CIL received Federal funding from RSA to develop an innovative model of collaboration and partnership with coordination of funding with a seamless system of services under the NJ Collaboration and Transition (NJCIT) grant.

DVRS does not have formal agreements with local school districts. The 605 school districts in the state of New Jersey are autonomous. Accordingly, districts provide special education to students with disabilities in unique ways. It is virtually impossible to pursue LEA agreements with every district. There are 21 counties in New Jersey; the New Jersey Department of Education employs a county Special Education Specialist to supervise the LEAs in each county.

School districts work collaboratively with DVRS counselors to provide consultation and/or Pre-ETS services with students as early as age 14.

**2. DESCRIBE THE CURRENT STATUS AND SCOPE OF THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE VR AGENCY AND THE STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY. CONSISTENT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT PURSUANT TO 34 C.F.R. § 361.22(B), PROVIDE, AT A MINIMUM, THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ABOUT THE AGREEMENT:**

**A. CONSULTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, WHICH MAY BE PROVIDED USING ALTERNATIVE MEANS FOR MEETING PARTICIPATION (SUCH AS VIDEO CONFERENCES AND CONFERENCE CALLS), TO ASSIST EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES IN PLANNING FOR THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO POST-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES AND OTHER VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES;**

**B. TRANSITION PLANNING BY PERSONNEL OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCY PERSONNEL FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES THAT FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS (IEPS) UNDER SECTION 614(D) OF THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT;**

**C. THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, OF EACH AGENCY, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR DETERMINING STATE LEAD AGENCIES AND QUALIFIED PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSITION SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES;**

**D. PROCEDURES FOR OUTREACH TO AND IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO NEED TRANSITION SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES. OUTREACH TO THESE STUDENTS SHOULD OCCUR AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE DURING THE TRANSITION PLANNING PROCESS AND MUST INCLUDE, AT A MINIMUM, A DESCRIPTION OF THE PURPOSE OF THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM, ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS, APPLICATION PROCEDURES, AND SCOPE OF SERVICES THAT MAY BE PROVIDED TO ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS;**

E. COORDINATION NECESSARY TO SATISFY DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS SET FORTH IN 34 C.F.R. PART 397 REGARDING STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE SEEKING SUBMINIMUM WAGE EMPLOYMENT; AND

F. ASSURANCE THAT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH 34 C.F.R. § 397.31, NEITHER THE SEA NOR THE LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY WILL ENTER INTO A CONTRACT OR OTHER ARRANGEMENT WITH AN ENTITY, AS DEFINED IN 34 C.F.R. § 397.5(D), FOR THE PURPOSE OF OPERATING A PROGRAM UNDER WHICH YOUTH WITH A DISABILITY IS ENGAGED IN WORK COMPENSATED AT A SUBMINIMUM WAGE.

The Division had a long-standing formal interagency agreement for transition from school to adult life for youth with disabilities. This agreement among DVRS, the Office of Special Education (NJOSE) in the New Jersey Department of Education, and the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI) in the New Jersey Department of Human Services, was updated in 2019. The updated Interagency Agreement is pending State legal review; projected finalization in next four to five months as of 3/24.

The interagency agreement is to facilitate and coordinate services needed by students with disabilities to successfully transition from school to employment or other post- secondary activities leading to employment.

The requirements of Section 511 of Rehabilitation Act as they pertain to students and youth are outlined in the interagency agreement. 14(c) businesses referred to as "employers" are prohibited from employing any individual with disabilities who is 24 years of age or younger at subminimum wage, unless the individual has received documentation from DVRS or CBVI and has completed the required activities per CFR 397.20, and as outlined in the interagency agreement. This includes:

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) that are available to the student under section 113, or transition services under the IDEA, Application for VR services with the result that the individual was determined- Ineligible for VR services, or Eligible for VR services, had an approved IPE that included a specific employment goal consistent with competitive integrated employment, and the individual was unable to achieve an employment outcome in competitive integrated employment despite working toward the employment outcome with reasonable accommodations and appropriate supports and services, including supported employment services and customized employment services, for a reasonable period of time, and his/her case was closed; and

DVRS or CBVI provided career counseling and information and referral services to federal and state programs and other resources that offer employment-related services and supports designed to enable the individual to explore, discover, experience and attain competitive integrated employment, and the counseling and information and referrals were not for employment at subminimum wage.

Types of activities and methods used by DVRS to provide the local education agency with consultation and technical assistance include the following:

DVRS promotes VR services to students and families by providing materials to the Local Education Agencies (LEA) to distribute, such as referral forms, flyers, and other information

about DVRS- PE and VR services, providing presentations to educators and groups of students and their families when requested, and maintaining useful resources on the DVRS website.

DVRS provides consultation (information and advice) for individual students aged 14 through 21, their families, and educators as requested.

DVRS processes all student referrals for pre-ETS and other traditional VR services in a manner consistent with requirements in WIOA.

DVRS requests access to student records and/or documentation from the LEA for students seeking to participate in VR services and uses this documentation in the determination process for student eligibility or potential eligibility for VR services in a timely manner consistent with WIOA regulations.

DVRS staff, when invited may attend, and participate in the IEP meeting. This may occur when DVRS is expected to provide or fund transition services (pre-ETS and/or traditional vocational rehabilitation services) for a student.

The DVRS VR counselor at the local DVRS office where this process occurs, will maintain the documentation of the above required activities, and provide a copy to the individual pursuing employment compensated at a subminimum wage during the timelines identified and specified under 34 CFR 397.

The New Jersey Office of Special Education (NJOSE) will share the information and requirements of the interagency agreement with all New Jersey Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and will ask them to share this information and requirements with all participants during Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings that include transition planning and where students with disabilities may choose to seek employment compensated at a subminimum wage. LEAs will provide DVRS or CBVI with documentation that the student has received transition services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20U.S.C. 1400et seq.), such as transition services available to the individual under section 614(d) of that Act (20 U.S.C. 1414(c)).

WIOA requires that Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) be offered to all students with disabilities. This includes students in school who are under the entitlement to special education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), or who have a disability for purposes of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. In New Jersey, transition begins in the school year in which a student turns 14 and ends with IDEA maximum age of entitlement, 21. DVRS has an identified program development specialist (PPDS) who is the statewide transition coordinator and lead for pre-ETS planning. Goals have been developed to ensure appropriate services are offered. In order to meet the WIOA requirement DVRS established an identified Lead Transition Counselor (LTC) VR Counselor in each local field office. The PPDS meets with all the Lead Transition Counselors on a quarterly basis to provide updated information, discuss programmatic issues, and to address any pertinent areas of concern. The Lead Transition Counselors coordinate required activities to ensure consistent delivery of pre-ETS services throughout the state. Pre-ETS counselors contact all LEAs to coordinate the following:

Identification of all students with disabilities.

Timely submission of relevant documents to the local office that will establish eligibility for students, through informed choice, when they turn 14.

Parental agreement for the student to receive pre-ETS services; and

Development of appropriate Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) or provision of pre-ETS.

The pre-ETS requirement requires DVRS to provide five specific activities to all students with disabilities; the law is not meant to supplant entitled transition services through IDEA.

Procedures have been developed to make sure there is a coordinated strategy with defined roles and responsibilities between LEAs and DVRS.

There are over 96,000 students with disabilities ages 14 – 21 in New Jersey's public schools. In addition, DVR services are offered to every local education agency throughout the state.

DVRS provides consultation and TA that assists LEAs to plan for the transition of students with disabilities. Counselors provide information about services in a variety of ways, including distribution of brochures about services, classroom visits to discuss services, and evening sessions with families. Additionally, each local Workforce Development Board has a disability subcommittee that includes the DVRS manager and the county Special Education Specialist. County-wide transition fairs are common throughout the state and counselors participate in them.

Lead Transition Counselors provide technical assistance to Child Study Teams (CST) that help in the development and implementation of IEPs. While many high schools take advantage of the counselor's expertise in vocational rehabilitation, Lead Transition Counselors provide information to families in a variety of ways, including presentations at conferences sponsored by New Jersey's Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN), and other disability-specific organizations such as Autism New Jersey.

DVRS participates in annual student conferences sponsored by the Offices of Special Education Programs. The DVRS transition coordinators (PPDS) and other designated DVRS personnel also participate in interagency county-based transition committees and forums as a means to increase awareness of the DVRS services and provide information about the agency.

The LEA Child Study Team (CST) case manager takes the lead in transition planning in New Jersey. DVRS counselors provide consultation and technical assistance and referrals for DVRS funded pre-ETS services, but do not fund any of the entitlement services provided under IDEA.

DVRS helps to identify approved vendors for pre-ETS services and job coaching in circumstances requiring that service. This ensures effective service delivery of pre-ETS services during high school as well as a smooth transition of services upon graduation. The Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) may include funding for services, such as paid internships, that are not entitled services under IDEA.

There are currently thirty-seven approved statewide Fee-For-Service Pre-ETS providers and an additional 21 contracted providers and three comprehensive Deaf/Hard of Hearing Pre-ETS contracts. The Program Unit in the Central Office provides training and consultation for all providers as well as providing consultation to the DVRS Field staff.

Lead Transition Counselors reach out to local education agencies to establish communication and relationships with CST members responsible for transition in the student's IEP. Counselors are responsible for developing these relationships to ensure that students with disabilities who need transition services are given the opportunity to learn about DVRS services. Each local

office tracks the number of transition meetings and consultations provided by the counselor; the PPDS keeps record for the state.

The Division has had a long-standing formal interagency agreement for transition from school to adult life for youth with disabilities. This agreement among DVRS, the Office of Special Education (NJOSSE) in the New Jersey Department of Education, and the CBVI in the New Jersey Department of Human Services.

The services described in the interagency agreement include Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for students aged 14-21 in a secondary education program, home schooled or in an alternative secondary school or juvenile justice program. Pre-Employment Transition Services do not require an application to the VR program, but students have to be "known" to VR. The DVRS local office must receive a Confidential Student Referral Form found on the department's website at:

<https://www.nj.gov/labor/career-services/special-services/individuals-with-disabilities/>

Students receiving pre-ETS services do not require Eligibility or an Individual Plan for Employment as these services are introductory employment services to prepare students for competitive, integrated employment. In the continuum of pre-ETS services, DVRS also provides transition services and vocational rehabilitation services.

These three types of services: Pre-Employment Transition Services, Transition Services and Vocational Rehabilitation Services are to be provided to students who demonstrate a need for services and are eligible for special education and related services under the IDEA, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, students with a 504 plan and other students with disabilities who are eligible or potentially eligible for VR services.

All three agencies are responsible for providing Pre-ETS Services to students.

New Jersey Office of Special Education provides the general supervision, administration, funding and professional development for staff in special education programs and services provided by LEAs for children with disabilities from ages 3-21. A free appropriate public education (FAPE) is provided by LEAs to eligible children according to federal statute and regulations, state statute, administrative rules and departmental procedures.

DVRS partners with contracted vendors through contracts and fee for service arrangements to provide pre-ETS to those students in need of such services, as well as other VR services, including transition services. The purpose of VR services is to prepare eligible students with disabilities for competitive, integrated employment outcomes and independence where there has not been any demonstrated provision of these services previously.

CBVI has dedicated VR Counselors to work with students with visual impairments, currently enrolled in a secondary education program, including those who are home-schooled. These VR Counselors, called Transition Counselors, are the primary workers responsible for providing and coordinating pre-ETS to potentially eligible consumers. In addition to serving those who are potentially eligible for pre-ETS, they are also responsible for providing VR services and pre-ETS services to high school students with disabilities who choose to apply for VR services.

Determining eligibility, assessing consumer needs and evaluating and making referrals to appropriate CBVI and contracted services and programs. Transition Counselors work closely with the student, parents, school personnel, CBVI Teachers of the Visually Handicapped,

community rehabilitation providers and other relevant entities to provide consultation, information, coordination and services to enable a student's successful transition from school to post-school activities.

DVRS provides pre-ETS services to students who have not received these services through their local education agencies.

The Lead Transition Counselor also collects and disseminates program specific statistical data to the Program Planning & Development Specialist (PPDS) to aid in statewide data collection on a monthly and yearly basis on service delivery.

Responsibilities of the DVRS Lead Transition Counselor are:

1. Maintain a caseload of Most Significantly Disabled transition students of between 50 – 100 cases. Manager/supervisor will determine procedures to determine if additional cases should be assigned to pre-ETS counselors. The VRC will report to the unit supervisor but needs to have a direct link with office manager to review transition activities of pre-ETS counselor.
2. Conducts regular meetings with the VR counselors to scan the environment of the area served to determine the office's history of connections with the local school districts.
3. Evaluates the effectiveness of school districts with DVRS by assessing the number of referrals/technical consultations/invitations to IEP meetings.
4. Establishes a relationship with each designated Transition Coordinator in the county by: Compiling a list of the Coordinators and CST Directors, distributes a letter co-signed by the local office Manager outlining pre-ETS DVRS services, meets with transition coordinators and directors to offer training and technical assistance of pre-ETS services identified in the letter.
5. Participates in Quarterly meetings led by the central office PPDS to: share progress, create best practices, develop a pre-ETS service delivery system, track statistics.
6. Is the office point of contact for school districts, child study teams etc. who are requesting information about pre-ETS services.
7. Develop and facilitate an annual conference/information session to discuss transition initiatives and provide information to stakeholders in each county. Pre-ETS Counselor will coordinate conference to facilitate the collaboration with Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in the county. County stakeholders should be invited to provide resource material to attendees.
8. Initiate and maintain relationships with local Employment Service office personnel that coordinate youth programming in the county.
9. Develop 2 youth recruitment events each year to promote pre-employment transition services and competitive employment opportunities.
10. Participate in Employment Service initiatives such as, Youth in transition & Disability Sub-committees.
11. Act as a consultant to the Project Search initiative attached to the local offices.

12. Acts as liaison to One Stop partners and stakeholders on transition matters.
13. In conjunction with the DVRS Business Unit, facilitates county business partnerships in order to establish, increase and maintain a pre-ETS relationship which will aide in providing job sampling, internship, externship and paid employment opportunities, etc. for students.
14. Identify and connect students to Deaf Language Specialists (DLS) and Spanish counselors as appropriate for Pre-employment transition services.
15. At manager discretion, Pre-ETS Counselor's will make school presentations as required.
16. Provides monthly reports to the manager/supervisor tracking all contacts and citing important issues that can be shared with the PPDS. These reports will be included in the managers' report to the field chief.
17. Collects, reviews, interprets and compiles a variety of administrative and/or technical Pre-ETS & WIOA data for reports.

When a student is referred to DVRS for Pre-ETS, DVRS will schedule a meeting with the school, the student, and parents/guardians to discuss and determine which pre-ETS are needed by the student, and using the following criteria when needed, which entity (either DVRS or the school) will be responsible for providing and paying for each one of the needed pre-ETS.

1. The purpose of the service. Is it related more to an employment outcome or education? That is, is the service usually considered a special education or related service, such as transition planning necessary for the provision of a free appropriate public education?
2. Customary Services. Is the service one that the school customarily provides under part B of the IDEA? For example, if the school ordinarily provides job exploration counseling or work experiences to its eligible students with disabilities, the mere fact that those services are now authorized under WIOA aspre-ETS does not mean the school should cease providing them and refer those students to the VR program. However, if summer work experiences are not customarily provided by a school, NJDVRS and the school may collaborate to coordinate and provide summer work-based learning experiences.
3. Eligibility. Is the student with a disability eligible for transition services under the IDEA? The definition of a "student with a disability" under WIOA and its final regulations is broader than under the IDEA because the definition in WIOA includes those students who are individuals with disabilities under section 504 of the Act. It is possible that students receiving services under section 504 do not have IEPs under the IDEA because they are not eligible to receive special education and related services under the IDEA. As a result, NJDVRS is authorized to provide transition services under the VR program to a broader population under WIOA than schools are authorized to provide under the IDEA.

Outreach to students with disabilities:

DVRS employs master's level counseling staff in each DVRS office. There is a DVRS counselor assigned to each school district and a Lead Transition Counselor (LTC) in each DVRS office. The



LTCs attend quarterly networking meetings with the Program Planning & Development Specialist who manages the DVRS Transition Program. The LTCs are responsible for providing technical assistance to other counselors as well as schools, local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs), One-Stop Career Center personnel, community partners and other stakeholders within the county.

In addition, there is a DVRS counselor assigned to every public high school in New Jersey. Counselors reach out to their assigned schools to establish communication and relationships with CST members responsible for transition in the student's IEP. Counselors are responsible for developing these relationships in order to ensure that students with disabilities who need transition services are given the opportunity to learn about DVRS services. Each local office tracks the number of transition meetings and consultations provided by the counselor; the PPDS keeps records for the state.

DVRS also participates in annual student conferences sponsored by the Offices of Special Education Programs. The DVRS transition coordinator (PPDS) and other designated DVRS personnel also participate in inter-agency county-based transition committees and forums to increase awareness of the DVRS services and provide information about the agency.

The interagency agreement between DVRS, CBVI and OSEP is to facilitate and coordinate services needed by students with disabilities to successfully transition from school to employment or other post- secondary activities leading to employment.

The requirements of Section 511 of Rehabilitation Act as they pertain to students and youth are outlined in the interagency agreement. 14(c) businesses referred to as "employers" are prohibited from employing any individual with disabilities who is 24 years of age or younger at subminimum wage, unless the individual has received documentation from DVRS or CBVI and has completed the required activities per CFR 397.20, and as outlined in the interagency agreement. This includes:

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) that are available to the student under section 113, or transition services under the IDEA, Application for VR services with the result that the individual was determined- Ineligible for VR services, or Eligible for VR services, had an approved IPE that included a specific employment goal consistent with competitive integrated employment, and the individual was unable to achieve an employment outcome in competitive integrated employment despite working toward the employment outcome with reasonable accommodations and appropriate supports and services, including supported employment services and customized employment services, for a reasonable period of time, and his/her case was closed; and

DVRS or CBVI provided career counseling and information and referral services to federal and state programs and other resources that offer employment-related services and supports designed to enable the individual to explore, discover, experience and attain competitive integrated employment, and the counseling and information and referrals were not for employment at subminimum wage.

Types of activities and methods used by DVRS to provide the local education agency with consultation and technical assistance include the following:

DVRS promotes VR services to students and families by providing materials to the Local Education Agencies (LEA) to distribute, such as referral forms, flyers, and other information about DVRS- PE and VR services, providing presentations to educators and groups of students and their families when requested, and maintaining useful resources on the DVRS website.

DVRS provides consultation (information and advice) for individual students aged 14 through 21, their families, and educators as requested.

DVRS processes all student referrals for pre-ETS and other traditional VR services in a manner consistent with requirements in WIOA.

DVRS requests access to student records and/or documentation from the LEA for students seeking to participate in VR services and uses this documentation in the determination process for student eligibility or potential eligibility for VR services in a timely manner consistent with WIOA regulations.

DVRS staff, when invited may attend, and participate in the IEP meeting. This may occur when DVRS is expected to provide or fund transition services (pre-ETS and/or traditional vocational rehabilitation services) for a student.

The DVRS VR counselor at the local DVRS office where this process occurs, will maintain the documentation of the above required activities, and provide a copy to the individual pursuing employment compensated at a subminimum wage during the timelines identified and specified under 34 CFR 397.

The New Jersey Office of Special Education (NJOSE) will share the information and requirements of the interagency agreement with all New Jersey Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and will ask them to share this information and requirements with all participants during Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings that include transition planning and where students with disabilities may choose to seek employment compensated at a subminimum wage. LEAs will provide DVRS or CBVI with documentation that the student has received transition services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20U.S.C. 1400et seq.), such as transition services available to the individual under section 614(d) of that Act (20 U.S.C. 1414(c)).

In accordance with 34 CFR 397.31, NJOSE will neither enter into a contract nor any other arrangement with an entity holding a special wage certificate under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act for the purpose of operating a program under which a youth with a disability is paid a subminimum wage, including nonpaid work. NJOSE will advise LEAs to contract with, or refer students to, only those services and programs that pay the greater of the prevailing minimum wage or the state/federal minimum wage. DVRS and CBVI will obtain from all community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) that are approved to provide extended employment (sheltered workshops), statements of assurances, to be renewed every three years, that state that the CRPs are in full compliance with section 511 of Rehabilitation Act, and that they do not have any contracts or other arrangements with LEAs or the NJOSE for the purpose of operating a program for an individual who is age 24 or younger under which work is compensated at a subminimum wage, including nonpaid work.

#### K. COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(11)(E) of the Rehabilitation Act, describe how the VR agency will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of VR services; and transition services for youth and students with disabilities, including pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities.

DVRS has coordinated activities with employers for students through Pre-ETS and Out of School Youth through various program development. DVRS continues to fund the DAWN STEP-UP program which has grown in its success every year since starting the program in 2018. The most recent cohort had 29 student intern placements in a variety of well-developed internship sites across the northern region of the state with unique placements including the Morris County Historical Society, Code Ninjas, Boonton Coffee, Ace Hardware, and Mt. Pleasant Animal Shelter.

DVRS has a partnership with Greens Do Good, a hydroponic farm, which was developed out of the local Bergen County office. REED Autism Services, Greens Do Good's parent company, offers Work Based Learning Experiences to Pre-ETS participants utilizing best practices based on ABA for assessment, instruction, and measuring outcomes. Greens Do Good, a working farm, also trains adults with autism and provides additional internship opportunities.

DVRS has awarded 20 vendors covering the whole state a three-year contract for a paid internship program. The Paid Internship is to assist all eligible NJ DVRS consumers with obtaining career exploration opportunities, gaining meaningful work experience to explore career pathways, enhancing resumes, improving soft skills, increasing workforce marketability. Vendors awarded the Paid Internship contract work with the interns to identify employers that match their skills, abilities, interests, and develop internship sites based on their agreed vocational goal. The internships developed are unique and not typical retail positions.

DVRS has a growing Project SEARCH program within New Jersey. The Project SEARCH High School Transition Program is a unique, business led, one-year school-to-work program that takes place entirely at the workplace. Total workplace immersion facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and hands-on training through worksite rotations. Project SEARCH currently operates in the following host businesses: Overlook Medical Center, Bergen County offices, Holy Name Medical Center, New Bridge Medical Center, Jefferson Health Cherry Hill, Jefferson Health Stratford, TD Bank, Jersey City Medical Center, Double Tree Hilton Hotel and Suites Jersey City, Hudson County offices, Hudson County Community College, Newton Medical Center, Hackettstown Medical Center, Novo Nordisk Pharmaceuticals, Community Medical Center, Monmouth Medical Center, and Jefferson Washington Township Hospital.

#### L. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(11)(C) and (K), describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce development system to develop opportunities for community-based employment in integrated settings, to the greatest extent practicable for the following:

1. STATE PROGRAMS (DESIGNATE LEAD AGENCY(IES) AND IMPLEMENTING ENTITY(IES))  
CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

DVRS works in collaboration with Disability Rights New Jersey (DRNJ) as the grantee that coordinates programs under the Assistive Technology Act of 1998. DVRS is a member of DRNJ's Assistive Technology Council to ensure that appropriate assistive technology assessments, equipment, and support are done in a timely manner for DVRS consumers. DVRS also contracts with three Deaf centers at three sites, that have established equipment libraries to show assistive technology to individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Late Deafened adults, and individuals with cochlear implants.

2. PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT BY THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;

The southern part of New Jersey works with Agrability to ensure that farmers who have become disabled have the opportunity for rehabilitation services. There is currently no formal agreement with the US Department of Agriculture.

3. NON-EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH;

DVRS collaborates with the Centers for Independent Living throughout the state. Many IL centers contract with their local workforce areas and provide services to out-of-school youth. DVRS also works in partnership with the court system, with efforts to help youth with substance abuse histories to obtain employment. Counselors in the local offices also participate in faith-based efforts to reach out-of-school youth to provide services to youth with disabilities. One-Stop Centers and DVRS Field Offices collaborate with serving this population through various programs offered through the county. Programming for Paid Internships for out-of-school youth to assist this population with gaining experience for Competitive Integrated Employment.

4. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS;

The DVRS state director is a voting member on the Commodities and Exchange Commission; this is the entity that directs the state's set-aside program for state use contracts. State use employment is not considered to be competitive-integrated employment as currently defined by WIOA. DVRS cannot open a case for individuals working at one of these programs, unless the individual wants to move into competitive-integrated employment. DVRS counselors are aware of state use contracted work and may provide individuals with information about such programs when an individual has expressed an interest in this type of work.

5. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR ADMINISTERING THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN UNDER  
TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT (42 U.S.C. 1396 ET SEQ.);

A revised 5 year MOU was executed on July 1, 2015 by DVRS, CBVI, and the Division of Developmental Disabilities within the New Jersey Department of Human Services with the objective to define the roles and responsibilities of State agencies primarily involved in assisting individuals with disabilities in finding and maintaining competitive integrated employment and to assist the State agencies to operate in an efficient and successful manner to improve employment outcomes for individuals with developmental disabilities by operating consistently across agencies ensuring quality service provision. This MOU was updated at the end of 2021 and it is anticipated to be finalized by April of 2022.

During the course of 2021, DVRS Director has met with the leadership of DDD to discuss the development of a Career Pathway Navigation Model. This model would allow for greater access for DDD consumers to be referred to DVRS and be supported in their chosen career pathway. DVRS and DDD staff will be jointly participating in trainings offered through the Institute for Community Inclusion and will use this training as a based to form a statewide collaborative with agency staff and providers.

Areas of collaboration need to be explored for the programming and funding of services that support entry into competitive-integrated employment as well as its sustainability. This may include prevocational services, internships such as Project SEARCH and Customized Employment.

There has been no interagency agreement or collaboration established with the state office of Medicaid. DVRS continues to explore if such an MOU is needed.

There is currently no MOU in effect with the Division of Mental Health & Addiction Services (DMHAS), though there has been one in the past. DVRS intends to reach out to DMHAS to re-establish a relationship and explore how both agencies can effectively work together to serve individuals with significant mental illness and substance use disorders.

#### 6. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES;

A revised 5 year MOU was executed on December 5, 2022 by DVRS, CBVI, and the Division of Developmental Disabilities within the New Jersey Department of Human Services with the objective to define the roles and responsibilities of State agencies primarily involved in assisting individuals with disabilities in finding and maintaining competitive integrated employment and will assist the State agencies to operate in an efficient and successful manner to improve employment outcomes for individuals with developmental disabilities by operating consistently across agencies ensuring quality service provision. The agreement is in alignment with the New Jersey's Employment First initiative proclaimed by the Governor on April 19, 2012.

#### 7. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES; AND

There is currently no MOU in effect with the Division of Mental Health & Addiction Services (DMHAS), though there has been one in the past. DVRS intends to reach out to DMHAS to re-establish a relationship and explore how both agencies can effectively work together to serve individuals with significant mental illness and substance use disorders. For example, Rutgers University is collaborating with DVRS to develop training sessions to ensure that agencies/providers have pertinent information to assist with effective service delivery for youth with disabilities. DVRS is working to engage Division of Mental Health & Addition Services (DMHAS) to also participate in the development of this series. The training sessions will be focused on assisting team members with addressing coping mechanism and long-term rehabilitation resources. Additionally, the trainings will touch on how to manage the complexity of the chemical imbalance caused by mental health and substance abuse.

#### 8. OTHER FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS OUTSIDE THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM.

The New Jersey Department of Labor and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) believes that collaboration with stakeholders is essential to assisting people with

disabilities to successfully become employed. Such an ongoing effort maximizes resources and addresses the quality of life issues that can impact the ability of a person with a disability to obtain and maintain employment.

The DVRS is part of the Workforce Development Division within NJDOL and is a strong partner with the One-Stop Career Center System throughout the state. The agency also enjoys a cooperative relationship with state and community-based agencies to collaborate on programs that promote the empowerment and economic independence of individuals with disabilities in an effort to encourage employment.

The agency arranges memoranda of understanding (MOUs) for the purpose of carrying out activities that require a formalized response or protocol in the delivery of services.

### **Memoranda of Understanding and Collaboration with State Partners**

Over the course of this plan, DVRS intends to explore updating or creating the following MOUs:

- The New Jersey Department of Education (DOE), DVRS and the New Jersey Commission for the Blind (CBVI) entered into an updated formal interagency agreement in 2019. WIOA requires the state VR agencies and the state education agency (NJDOE) to enter into a formal agreement to facilitate and coordinate services needed by students with disabilities to successfully transition to employment.

The purpose of the interagency agreement is to facilitate and coordinate **services** needed by students with disabilities to successfully transition from school to employment or other post-secondary activities leading to employment.

These services include:

- Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)
- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services
- VR Transition Services
- The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) – DVRS and the Commission for the Blind (CBVI) entered into a formal MOU with DDD in FFY 2015. The MOU outlines the process for DDD consumers who are interested in competitive integrated employment to access VR services. DVRS met with DDD and CBVI throughout 2021 and is the process of finalizing an updated MOU.
- Department of Children and Families (DCF) – DVRS continue to explore a collaboration with DCF as it relates to students with disabilities that are under their system of care. This includes students with intellectual and developmental disabilities under the age of 21 as well as students with disabilities with significant and pervasive psychiatric and behavioral health needs who are being served by DCF.
- Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) – DVRS had a MOU with DMHAS that ended in 2014. DVRS will reach out to DMHAS to explore opportunities to collaborate in areas such as cross training of staff and referrals of mutual consumers.

### **The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)**

The DDD serves individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, who meet the functional criteria of having a developmental disability, are eligible for and maintain Medicaid eligibility, and are at least 18 years of age at the time of application and 21 years of age to receive services. Conditions generally considered developmental disabilities include intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, spina bifida, and autism. Part of DDD's implementation of the Employment First Initiative includes an annual discussion with individuals served, family members, and Support Coordinators providing care management services to identify each individual's current employment status and identify how to assist the individual in reaching his/her employment outcomes. In addition, an employment-related outcome is required within the Individualized Service Plan (ISP) of every individual served through DDD. When an individual is not pursuing employment, a statement explaining why the individual is not pursuing employment at that time is included in the ISP. When an individual is in need of employment services to assist him/her in obtaining and/or maintaining employment, he/she must seek those services through DVRS initially. DDD provides other needed services while the eligibility determination is being made with DVRS or in addition to the employment services provided through DVRS. Once an eligibility determination is made with DVRS, DDD is able to provide employment services not available through DVRS, as well as the other services that are available through DDD.

### **The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education**

In order to define the most appropriate resource to cover expenses such as interpreter services, personal care attendants and other accessibility areas while an individual with a disability participates in a school program, the division has agreements with all four-year state colleges and all county colleges in New Jersey.

### **The Division of Wage and Hour Compliance**

In conjunction with community-based rehabilitation programs, the DVRS maintains an MOU with the CBVI, the DDD, and the Division of Wage and Hour, which outlines the criteria for an employment relationship under New Jersey Wage and Hour Law in such a way that vocational rehabilitation activities may take place in community settings without undue restriction. Consequently, situational assessments and similar "on-the-job" work experiences may take place without violating employment law.

### **Coordination with Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) and Centers for Independent Living (CIL)**

In New Jersey, a SILC member has a seat on the SRC and the DVRS supports the SILC through its active participation at their meetings and in the preparation of the state plan for independent living (SPIL) and the Administration for Community Living (ACL) Section 704 Report.

The state currently has eight federally funded centers for independent living (CILs). The DVRS expanded the network through the ACL Part B grant and a line item in the state budget to add five CILs to the group. The DVRS has dedicated a program specialist to offer the CILs consultation and technical assistance. The DVRS feels that these centers offer a dynamic that is necessary for individuals with disabilities before, during, and after their employment experience.

The reauthorization of WIOA transferred the Independent Living program to the Administration for Community Living (ACL) from the U.S. Department of Education. The Statewide Independent Living Councils (SILC), along with the IL directors in each state were given the authority to choose the designated state entity (DSE) to administer the state program. The New Jersey SILC required interested agencies to apply. DVRS was chosen to remain the DSE and will continue to administer the IL programs in New Jersey.

The DVRS continues to value the partnership that exists (with the CILs) who provide pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities and Prevocational services to youth and adults.

#### 9. OTHER PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.

Cooperative agreements with private nonprofit vocational rehabilitation service providers are established and maintained in a variety of ways including issuing contracts, program approvals, MOUs, technical assistance workshops and ongoing monitoring.

When funding becomes available for new vocational rehabilitation projects and services, the availability of those funds is posted as a Notice of Opportunity to apply for a contract (NCO) on the Department website and also communicated to providers statewide. The NCO will describe the purpose of the funding, the providers that are eligible to apply for the funding, the necessary programmatic requirements, expected outcomes and time frame for the service provision. A technical assistance workshop is held thereafter to explain and clarify the intent of the NCO. Applications are then reviewed for adherence to the NCO specifications and the funds are awarded accordingly. The awards, in turn, are transitioned into contracts. Each provider is assigned a program planning and development specialist (PPDS) to monitor the expenditures and programmatic results of the contract.

Providers may also have their contract (or cooperative agreement) renewed on an annual basis, depending upon the type of service, when the service was established, or when the service last underwent the NCO process. As the contract's end date comes to a close, the previous year's results are reviewed, and the contractual relationship is re-established. The contract specifications are reiterated and any changes or modifications to the contract are incorporated therein.

The DVRS also receives requests from new providers to vend an existing service and enter into a cooperative agreement by which the DVRS purchases services from them. Existing providers may also request to expand their services or the counties that they serve, and thereby modify their cooperative agreement.

Most frequently, the DVRS is approached by a new provider to vend supported employment services. It is important to note that most of the services that a private, nonprofit organization would provide to the DVRS are subject to New Jersey Administrative Code 12:51, "Rules and Regulations Governing Community-Based Rehabilitation Organizations." The purpose of this code is to "define the criteria for operation of a program which is eligible to vend specific service to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and to ensure the provision of quality services to persons with disabilities." This code was last updated in 2007 and is consistent with good practice and applicable federal regulation. Consequently, the DVRS has a process in place to vet new vendors and enter into cooperative agreements or not based on providers' adherence to the N.J.A.C. 12:51. Providers are required to have standard business



documentation and structure, and the credentials, experience, training and organizational capacity necessary to provide the service they wish to vend. They are also required to maintain national accreditation in order to vendor services with the DVRS. Once providers are approved to enter the cooperative relationship with the DVRS as a vendor of services, they receive further information and training from the DVRS' community rehabilitation programs unit and receive ongoing monitoring and technical assistance from their assigned PPDS. Approved providers that request to vend new services or expand their services to additional counties undergo a similar vetting process, depending on the request, and must demonstrate that they have been providing quality services in the counties in which they are already operating. New Jersey Administrative Code 12:51, "Rules and Regulations Governing Community-Based Rehabilitation Organizations" although still applicable in some areas is in need of updates to reflect updated requirements of WIOA.

MOUs are another vehicle by which the DVRS enters into cooperative agreements with private non-profit service providers. Most often, these types of MOUs would be with affiliated agencies that provide support services to the DVRS' clients or interface with the DVRS but are not vendor/providers. For example, a substance abuse treatment center and the DVRS may wish to provide the relationship with additional structure, such as delineates the referral process and memorialize various roles and responsibilities when working together. Oftentimes, private nonprofits will request MOUs with the DVRS to fulfill their own accreditation requirements. This type of MOU is distinct from the type of MOU that the DVRS may have with a large public agency.

#### ASSURANCES

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner, that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances:

**The VR agency must select the "Edit" button to review and agree to the VR State plan Assurances.**

The State Plan must include
1. Public Comment on Policies and Procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.
2. Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement: The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a Unified State plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission

The State Plan must include
of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.
3. Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan: The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:
3.a. the establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.b. either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.c. consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.d. the financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3).
3.e. as applicable, the local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.f. as applicable, the shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.g. statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.h. the requirements for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.i. all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.j. the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.k. the compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.l. the reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities as set forth in section 101(a)(18)(A).
3.m. the submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services: The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:

The State Plan must include
4.a. comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(E) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.b. impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.c. provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services or, if implementing an order of selection, in accordance with criteria established by the State for the order of selection as set out in section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.d. determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.e. comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.f. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act
4.g. provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.h. comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by sections 101(a)(14) and 511 of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.i. meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs.
4.j. With respect to students with disabilities, the State,
4.j.i. has developed and will implement,
4.j.i.A. strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and
4.j.i.B. strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and
4.j.ii. has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15), 101(a)(25) and 113).
4.j.iii. shall reserve not less than 15 percent of the allocated funds for the provision of pre-employment transition services; such funds shall not be used to pay for the administrative costs

The State Plan must include
of providing pre-employment transition services.
5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement to the State plan:
5.a. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act.
5.b. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.
6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program (Title VI):
6.a. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(H) and (I) of the Rehabilitation Act.
6.b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act.
7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:
7.a. The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act.
7.b. The designated State agency assures that the comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act an individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(7)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act.

Do you attest that these assurances will be met?

Yes

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL) CERTIFICATIONS

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

1. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE,) IS AUTHORIZED TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 (REHABILITATION ACT), AS AMENDED BY TITLE IV OF WIOA[1], AND ITS STATE PLAN SUPPLEMENT UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT;

[1] Public Law 113-128.

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE

NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOL) - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS)

2. IN THE EVENT THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY IS NOT PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH VOCATIONAL AND OTHER REHABILITATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY MUST INCLUDE A DESIGNATED STATE UNIT FOR THE VR PROGRAM (SECTION 101(A)(2)(B)(II) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT). AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES, THE (DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WHEN THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY HAS A DESIGNATED STATE UNIT)[2] AGREES TO OPERATE AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[3], THE REHABILITATION ACT, 34 CFR 361.13(B) AND (C), AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[4], POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE TO STATES UNDER SECTION 111(A) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

[2] All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

[3] No funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[4] Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76, 77, 79, 81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3474; and the State VR Services program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 361.

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY

NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOL) - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS)

3. AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, THE DESIGNATED STATE

AGENCY, OR THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WHEN THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY HAS A DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AGREES TO OPERATE AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[5], THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[6], POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER TITLE VI ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

[5] No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supported employment supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[6] Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 4, as well as Supported Employment program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 363.

4. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT OR, IF NOT APPLICABLE, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO PERFORM THE FUNCTIONS OF THE STATE REGARDING THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH 34 CFR 361.13(B) AND (C);

5. THE STATE LEGALLY MAY CARRY OUT EACH PROVISION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

6. ALL PROVISIONS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT ARE CONSISTENT WITH STATE LAW.

7. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO RECEIVE, HOLD, AND DISBURSE FEDERAL FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT;

ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Dr. Felicia Hopson, State Director of NJDOL Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

8. THE (ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND THE SUPPLEMENT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

State Director of NJDOL Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

9. THE AGENCY THAT SUBMITS THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT HAS ADOPTED OR OTHERWISE FORMALLY APPROVED THE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

#### FOOTNOTES

[1] Public Law 113-128.

[2] All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

[3] No funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[4] Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76, 77, 79, 81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3474; and the State VR Services program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 361.

[5] No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supported employment supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[6] Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 4, as well as Supported Employment program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 363.

#### CERTIFICATION SIGNATURE

**To review and complete the Certification section of the VR portion of the State plan, please select the "Edit" button.**

Note, please do not edit the table header or formatting. Only edit the table contents.

If you accidentally edit the table headers and structure, open this link to the blank table. You can copy and paste the table into the narrative field, and start over if needed.

Signatory information	Enter Signatory information in this column
<b>Name of Signatory</b>	Dr. Felicia Hopson
<b>Title of Signatory</b>	State Director of DVRS
<b>Date Signed</b>	3/18/2026

#### VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Each State VR program must submit expected levels of performance in its Unified or Combined State Plan and in the two-year modification of that plan. Expected levels of performance for the first two years of a state plan must be submitted in the initial submission of the Unified or Combined State Plan and in the initial submission of the two-year modification of that Plan, for years three and four, as described in 34 CFR § 361.170(a). Expected levels of performance must be stated to the nearest tenth of a percent (XX.X %) or to the nearest whole dollar for median earnings. State VR programs are reminded that the expected levels of performance must be published for public comment prior to plan submission in accordance with state law, regulation, and policy.

The submission of expected levels is the first step in the negotiations process. Once the expected levels of performance have been submitted, State VR programs may begin negotiations with RSA's State Monitoring and Program Improvement Division. Each State VR program must reach agreement with RSA on the negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the Unified or Combined State Plan (or for the third and fourth years of the

Unified or Combined State Plan during the required two-year modification process) in accordance with 116(b)(3)(A)(iv).

RSA will use its statistical adjustment model to derive pre-program year estimated levels of performance for each indicator. Each State VR program and RSA will consider the negotiation factors outlined in WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(v) during the negotiation process. Once negotiated levels of performance are agreed upon, each State VR program must incorporate the negotiated levels of performance into the Unified or Combined State Plan and the two-year modification of that plan prior to the plan’s approval (section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv) of WIOA).

**Effectiveness in Serving Employers (ESE)**

The ESE indicator has been defined in the ESE final rule and PY 2024 was the first year of data for the newly defined performance indicator. However, a minimum of at least two baseline years of data must be collected to support a statistical adjustment model that could produce sufficiently reliable estimates for the purposes of performance negotiations and state performance assessments. The Departments, in accordance with 20 CFR § 677.190(c)(4) and 34 CFR §§ 361.190(c)(4) and 463.190(c)(4), will collect and monitor state ESE performance results for at least PY 2024 and PY 2025 to establish a credible baseline and provide technical assistance. After PY 2025 data are collected the Departments will develop a statistical adjustment model for ESE in accordance with section 116(b)(3)(A)(viii) of WIOA. Since the ESE indicator is a statewide measure that reflects a combined result across WIOA titles I, II, III, and IV programs, the Departments will jointly engage in negotiations with state representatives from all core programs when feasible. While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	50.0		50.5	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	51.0		52.6	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	6,600		6,700	
Credential Attainment Rate	43.9		44.0	
Measurable Skill Gains	57.8		58.5	



Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

1

*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.*

**GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISION ACT SECTION 427 ASSURANCE - VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION**

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to applicants for grant awards under this program. All applicants for new grant awards must include the following information in their applications to address this provision in order to receive funding under this program. (OMB Control Number 1894-0005)

The State Plan must include	Include
I assure that the proposed project complies with the requirements in section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1228a).	Yes

Compliance can be found on the following page(s) of the application:

n

**GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISION ACT SECTION 427 ASSURANCE - SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT**

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to applicants for grant awards under this program. All applicants for new grant awards must include the following information in their applications to address this provision in order to receive funding under this program. (OMB Control Number 1894-0005)

The State Plan must include	Include
I assure that the proposed project complies with the requirements in section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1228a).	Yes

Compliance can be found on the following page(s) of the application:

n

**PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (BLIND)**

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA.

A. STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL.

1. ALL VR AGENCIES, EXCEPT FOR THOSE THAT HAVE AN INDEPENDENT CONSUMER-CONTROLLED COMMISSION, MUST HAVE A STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL (COUNCIL OR SRC) THAT MEETS THE CRITERIA IN SECTION 105 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPLICABLE, HAS:

Select A or B:

*(A) is an independent State commission*

*(B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council*

(B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council

2. IN ACCORDANCE WITH ASSURANCE (A)(1)(B), IF SELECTED, PLEASE PROVIDE INFORMATION ON THE CURRENT COMPOSITION OF THE COUNCIL BY REPRESENTATIVE TYPE, INCLUDING THE TERM NUMBER OF THE REPRESENTATIVE, AS APPLICABLE, AND ANY VACANCIES, AS WELL AS THE BEGINNING DATES OF EACH REPRESENTATIVE'S TERM.

Select 'Edit' to edit the narrative.

Note, please do not edit the table header or formatting. Only edit the table contents.

If you accidentally edit the table headers and structure, open this link to the blank table. You can copy and paste the table into the narrative field, and start over if needed.

Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) - Don Campbell	1st term	1/1/2026
Parent Training and Information Center - Nicole Pratt	1st term	1/1/2026
Client Assistance Program - Gwen Orłowski	1st term	1/1/2026
Qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor with knowledge of and experience with vocational rehabilitation programs who serves as an ex officio, nonvoting member of the Council if employed by the designated State agency (Ex-Officio) - Dawn Corbett	1st term	1/1/2025

Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
Qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor with knowledge of and experience with vocational rehabilitation programs who serves as an ex officio, nonvoting member of the Council if employed by the designated State agency (Ex-Officio) - Felica Hopson	1st term	1/1/2025
Community Rehabilitation Program Service Providers - William Schuldt finishing out term for Lauren Weishaar ( <b>not appointed yet</b> )	1st term	3/1/2021
Business, Industry and Labor - <b>VACANT</b>	Vacant	N/A
Business, Industry and Labor - Steven McCoy Brown	1st term	1/1/2025
Business, Industry and Labor - James Good	1st term	1/1/2025
Business, Industry and Labor - Gary Robinson	1st term	1/1/2025
Current or former applicants for, or recipients of, vocational rehabilitation services - Joseph Zesski	1st term	1/1/2026
Current or former applicants for, or recipients of, vocational rehabilitation services - Alice Eaddy	1st term	12/1/2024
Current of former applicants for, or recipients of, vocational rehabilitation services - Siobhan Leahy	1st term	1/1/2025
State educational agency responsible for the public education of students with disabilities who are eligible to receive services under this part	1st term	12/1/2024

Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
and part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act - Sarah Schiffelbein		
Representative of the State workforce development board - <b>VACANT</b>	Vacant	N/A
Director of the designated state unit as an ex-officio, nonvoting member of the council - Dr. Bernice Davis	Ex-Officio	12/1/2024
Employee of the designated State agency Ex-Officio - Charles P. McKenna	Ex-Officio	12/1/2024
Disability Advocacy Group representing individuals who are blind - Anthony Lanzilloti finishing term for Wanda Williford <b>(not appointed yet)</b>	2nd term	9/26/2024
Disability Advocacy Group representing individuals who are blind - John O'Connell	2nd term	12/1/2024
Disability Advocacy Group representing individuals who are blind - Linda Melendez	1st term	1/1/2025
Representative of an individual who is blind, has multiple disabilities, and has difficulty representing himself or herself or is unable due to disabilities to represent himself or herself - Breeanna Douglas	1st term	1/1/2026
Representative of an individual who is blind, has multiple disabilities, and has difficulty representing himself or herself or is unable due to disabilities to represent himself or herself - Vito DeSantis	1st term	12/1/2024

3. IF THE SRC IS NOT MEETING THE COMPOSITION REQUIREMENTS IN SECTION 105(B) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT AND/OR IS NOT MEETING QUARTERLY AS REQUIRED IN SECTION 105(F) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, PROVIDE THE STEPS THAT THE VR AGENCY IS TAKING TO ENSURE IT MEETS THOSE REQUIREMENTS.

The Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI) and its SRC continue to maintain a strong relationship and partnership on behalf of individuals who are blind, deaf-blind, and visually impaired.

The functions of the SRC are to:

- Review, analyze, and advise CBVI regarding performance of its responsibilities of the agency as per the Rehabilitation Act amendments of 2014
- Assist CBVI with the development of State goals and priorities, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the Vocational Rehabilitation program
- Advise and assist CBVI with the preparation of the State Plan and amendments to the Plan, applications, reports, needs assessments, and evaluations required under the Rehabilitation Act amendments of 2014
- Conduct a review and analysis of the effectiveness of, and consumer satisfaction with, Vocational Rehabilitation services
- Prepare and submit an annual report to the Governor and the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) on the status of Vocational Rehabilitation programs operated within the State, and to make the report available to the public
- Coordinate with other councils within the State, including the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)
- Establish successful working relationships between CBVI, the Statewide Independent Living Council, and Centers for Independent Living within the State; and
- Perform other functions consistent with the purpose of this title, as the SRC determines to be appropriate

CBVI is working on identifying candidates to sit in the seats Business and Industry and the State Workforce Development Board. The agency hopes to make those appointments within the next month or two.

The meeting schedule for 2026 is as follows:

Friday, February 6, 2026

Friday, June 5, 2026

Friday, October 2, 2026

Friday, December 4, 2026

All meetings run from 9:30 A.M. to 12:00 P.M. and are in-person at the Joseph Kohn Training Center as well as virtually over Zoom.

4. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS IN SECTION 101(A)(21)(A)(II)(III) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, INCLUDE A SUMMARY OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT (INCLUDING HOW IT WAS OBTAINED) INTO THE STATE PLAN AND ANY STATE PLAN REVISIONS, INCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COUNCIL'S ANNUAL REPORTS, THE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER SATISFACTION AND OTHER COUNCIL REPORTS.

CBVI's SRC was very involved in the development of the goals and priorities for the agency through quarterly meetings, reviewing SRC Annual reports and analyzing consumer satisfaction. The Administration solicited feedback and recommendations from the SRC through regular Council meetings, as well as stakeholder meetings, to develop goals, priorities, and state strategies for the PY 2024 Combined State Plan. Administrative staff presented to the SRC membership the proposed goals and priorities, state strategies for the PY 2024 Combined State Plan for review and comment. The SRC supported the agencies initiatives and priorities. One of the continuing initiatives is for the SRC and CBVI to expand outreach efforts to further educate agencies and the general public about blindness and vision impairment. The SRC also praised CBVI for maintaining communication with consumers, understanding their needs, developing initiatives to address their needs and open up employment opportunities. CBVI accepted all the recommendations.

Below are the SRC Recommendations for CBVI.

1. The Combined State Plan must be relevant for all workforce partners. It needs to detail points of congruence and differences, with the goal of achieving the outcome of competitive, integrated employment.
2. Continued collaboration and access at the One-Stop Career Centers and other workforce partners, to ensure that all programs, services, and facilities are accessible to individuals who are blind, deaf-blind, and visually impaired.
3. Continue to identify points of alignment through interagency cooperative agreements to define relationships and establish employment opportunities for the populations served.
4. Continue to develop additional training opportunities related to the improvement of service for individuals who are Blind, Deaf-Blind, and Visually Impaired.
5. Develop career pathways for appropriate consumers who wish to progress from education/training to Competitive Integrated Employment leveraging such opportunities as apprenticeship programs.
6. Continued development and implementation of activities under the interagency cooperative agreement between DVRS and Department of Education for the provision of transition and pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities, ages 14-21.

7. Develop and enhance programs targeted toward the training and adjustment of blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind individuals between the ages of 25 and 54 so that the resulting developed skills may lead to employment.
8. The development of transition programs, serving students 14 through 21, who are Deaf-Blind.
9. CBVI and DVRS shall continue to target jobs that are above minimum wage, while continuing to operate programs that provide a supported work environment for those who require such assistance.
10. Increase the availability of outcome and satisfaction data through formal reporting requirements for vendors. Making such data available to CBVI consumers will enhance informed choice.
11. Evaluate and improve community rehabilitation provider services and programs, particularly those providing employment services, such as job development, placement, and supported employment and time-limited job coaching.
12. Continued and enhanced outreach to businesses, through relationship building across public and private sectors. This will include workforce partners, private industry partnerships, post-secondary education providers, and industry organizations.
13. In order to better serve and advise CBVI, the SRC will be developing and implementing training opportunities to enhance the knowledge base of the SRC membership.

5. PROVIDE THE VR AGENCY'S RESPONSE TO THE COUNCIL'S INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS, INCLUDING AN EXPLANATION FOR THE REJECTION OF ANY INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

List each recommendation/input followed by the VR agency response

**SRC Recommendations for CBVI**

1. The Combined State Plan must be relevant for all workforce partners. It needs to detail points of congruence and differences, with the goal of achieving the outcome of competitive, integrated employment. **CBVI accepts the recommendation and has detailed points of congruence and differences with workforce partners in the combined state plan, for the goal of achieving the outcome of competitive, integrated employment.**
2. Continued collaboration and access at the One-Stop Career Centers and other workforce partners, to ensure that all programs, services, and facilities are accessible to individuals who are blind, deaf-blind, and visually impaired. **CBVI accepts this recommendation and will continue collaboration through Memorandums of Understanding for access at the One-Stop Career Centers and other workforce partners, to ensure that all programs, services and facilities are accessible to individuals who are blind, deaf-blind, and visually impaired.**

3. Continue to identify points of alignment through interagency cooperative agreements to define relationships and establish employment opportunities for the populations served.**CBVI accepts this recommendation and will continue identifying points of alignment and define relationships to establish employment opportunities for the populations served through interagency cooperative agreements with interested parties.**
4. Continue to develop additional training opportunities related to the improvement of service for individuals who are Blind, Deaf-Blind, and Visually Impaired.**CBVI accepts this recommendation and will continue develop training opportunities for employees and community rehabilitation partners related to the improvement of services for individuals who are blind, deaf-blind and visually impaired.**
5. Develop career pathways for appropriate consumers who wish to progress from education/training to Competitive Integrated Employment leveraging such opportunities as apprenticeship programs.**CBVI accepts this recommendation and will look into developing career pathways for appropriate consumers who wish to progress from education/training to Competitive Integrated Employment through apprenticeship programs.**
6. Continued development and implementation of activities under the interagency cooperative agreement between DVRS and Department of Education for the provision of transition and pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities, ages 14-21.**CBVI accepts this recommendation and will continue to enhance collaboration with the NJ Department of Education, as well as local education entities, through the developed inter-agency cooperative agreements to support transition for youth to adult outcomes, including an emphasis on post-secondary education and employment.**
7. Develop and enhance programs targeted toward the training and adjustment of blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind individuals between the ages of 25 and 54 so that the resulting developed skills may lead to employment.**CBVI accepts this recommendation and will continue to provide high-quality VR services to blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind consumers to promote positive employment outcomes for the consumers its serves, including a focus on enhancing group programs and training for individuals ages 25-54.**
8. The development of transition programs, serving students 14 through 21, who are Deaf-Blind.**CBVI accepts this recommendation and will look into developing additional transition programs, serving students aged 14-21 who are deaf blind.**
9. CBVI and DVRS shall continue to target jobs that are above minimum wage, while continuing to operate programs that provide a supported work environment for those who require such assistance.**CBVI accepts this recommendation to target jobs for consumers with disabilities that are above minimum wage and to assist consumers in supported work environments to transition to integrated settings with competitive wages**
10. Increase the availability of outcome and satisfaction data through formal reporting requirements for vendors. Making such data available to CBVI consumers will enhance



informed choice. **CBVI accepts this recommendation and will asks vendors to provide outcome and satisfaction data through formal reporting. Data will be made available to consumers who are interested in the reports.**

11. Evaluate and improve community rehabilitation provider services and programs, particularly those providing employment services, such as job development, placement, and supported employment and time-limited job coaching. **CBVI accepts this recommendation and will continue evaluating community rehabilitation provider services and programs and requesting improvement when needed for those who provide employment services, such as job development, placement, supported employment and time-limited job coaching.**
12. Continued and enhanced outreach to businesses, through relationship building across public and private sectors. This will include workforce partners, private industry partnerships, post-secondary education providers, and industry organizations. **CBVI accepts this recommendation to enhance and expand outreach and partnerships to facilitate engagement with the business community, so as to open doors to competitive, integrated employment, through training, consultation, and other business-focused services.**
13. In order to better serve and advise CBVI, the SRC will be developing and implementing training opportunities to enhance the knowledge base of the SRC membership. **CBVI accepting this recommendation and will accept SRC training opportunities to enhance the knowledge base of the SRC membership.**

**CBVI does not reject any of the recommendations of the SRC.**

#### B. COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT (CSNA).

Section 101(a)(15), (17), and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to provide an assessment of:

##### 1. THE VR SERVICES NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING WITHIN THE STATE, INCLUDING:

###### A. INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES AND THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT;

In the 2023 CSNA, The New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI), the State Rehabilitation Council, and the University of Wisconsin–Madison Wisconsin Center for Education Research jointly conducted the assessment of vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with blindness and visual impairments residing in New Jersey. The intent of the assessment was to obtain information on these needs, services gaps, and agency strengths/areas of improvement. The SRC was actively involved in the process, including the development of assessment methods and served as an active partner in conducting the assessment activities with the agency.

The assessment efforts yielded quantitative and qualitative data on the employment needs of this population from various sources. The information gleaned from these assessment activities

will be used by the agency to further develop goals, objectives, and strategies that will improve outcomes for those that receive vocational rehabilitation services from the agency and to improve outreach efforts to unserved or underserved populations.

Four important service themes highlighted by constituents included (1) technology and related instruction, (2) training, (3) career and employment focused counseling and supports, and (4) community awareness.

To get a better sense of consumers' experiences, focus group respondents were asked to reflect on what they felt CBVI is doing well and should continue to build upon. Five key themes were identified including (1) technology and related training, (2) CBVI staff, (3) programs such as Employment, Development, Guidance, and Engagement (EDGE), (4) a variety and range of services, and (5) continued expansion of community partnerships.

Focus group respondents were asked to think about areas that CBVI should improve upon, and seven themes were summarized: (1) transportation, (2) timeliness and access to services, (3) staff hiring and retention, (4) outreach about CBVI services, (5) communication, (6) streamline administrative processes and procedures, and (7) addressing populations not currently being served.

Ten key recommendations are presented to CBVI based on the RSA-911 data, survey data, and focus groups. These recommendations include (1) EDGE, (2) technology and training for blind and deaf-blind consumers, (3) general and targeted outreach, (4) mobile outreach unit, (5) transportation, (6) improve administrative efficiencies, (7) access to interpreters, (8) CBVI staff, (9) staff training and technical assistance, and (10) diversity and cultural competency training. The next CSNA will be conducted in 2026.

The process that was developed for conducting the needs assessment involved four primary data-gathering approaches:

- Focus groups conducted with consumer groups, staff, parent's/family members of youth, consumer advocacy boards and stakeholder groups. The focus was on students and youth, deaf-blind consumers, and general VR consumers.
- Electronic surveys conducted with the following: CBVI staff and service providers focusing on students and youth, deaf-blind consumers, and individuals with the most significant disabilities
- Analysis of a variety of existing demographic and case service data relevant to blind, deaf-blind, and visually impaired individuals.
- An assessment of the Joseph Kohn Training Center, including a physical assessment of the building for the identification of capital projects, and a strategic plan for programmatic improvement.

The next Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) will be conducted in 2026.

### **Data Collection from National Databases**

Data sources used for this report include:

- 2022 Disability Status Report for New Jersey from Cornell University’s Employment and Disability Institute
- U.S. Census Bureau’s 2022 American Community Survey (ACS)
- The American Foundation for the Blind-Prevalence Rates of Visual Loss (September 2020)
- The National Research and Training Center on Blindness & Low Vision at Mississippi State University
- National Center on Deafblindness. 2022 National deafblind child count report. <https://ncdb-childcount-2022.netlify.app>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Population Health. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System 2022. Prevalence & Trends Data BRFSS Prevalence & Trends Data: Explore by Topic | DPH | CDC

### **Blindness & Visual Impairment**

New Jersey | American Foundation for the Blind ([afb.org](http://afb.org))

Survey data on overall prevalence rates of vision loss across all age groups was available at the American Foundation for the Blind (updated September 2020) and indicates that approximately 167,689 New Jersey residents are blind or visually impaired, a prevalence rate of .019 percent of the general population.

Data Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Population Health. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System 2022. Prevalence & Trends Data BRFSS Prevalence & Trends Data: Explore by Topic | DPH | CDC

When defined more broadly to include functional disability, as defined as “blind or serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses” in the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (2022) conducted by the CDC, 5.4 percent of adults of all ages, races and ethnicities in NJ reported having a functional visual disability, while the national average sits at 5.3 percent. When broken down by age in NJ, 9.6 percent of individuals 18-44 and 13.5 percent of individuals age 45-64 identify as having a vision disability. For Individuals who identified as Black, non-Hispanic, (7.3 percent) and Hispanic (8.7 percent) reported having a vision disability at a much higher rate than those who identified as White, non-Hispanic (3.5 percent).

### **Deaf-Blindness**

Data source: National Center on Deafblindness. 2022 National deafblind child count report. <https://ncdb-childcount-2022.netlify.app>

Data from the National Center on Deafblindness; National deafblind child count report, indicates that less than 1 percent of the U.S. population experiences both vision and hearing loss. However, of that 1%, 30.9% of working-age adults were employed and 15.6% were unemployed. Amongst young adults, employment rates range from 30%-37%. Within the 30% of employed young adults who are deaf-blind, 30% were earning below minimum wage and did

not receive health insurance or benefits from work. The unemployment rate for deaf-blind adults is more than twice that of the general population, 15.6 percent compared to 3.8 percent.

The Commission contracts for all core supported employment services through a fee-for-service arrangement and maintains a list of approved supported employment providers throughout the state. The Commission currently utilizes the same fee structure and approval process as that which is in place for the DVRS.

A MOU was developed in coordination with the DDD and the DVRS which outlines the protocols and procedures for the collaborative provision of supported employment services to Commission consumers. The MOU defines and delineates the procedures to be followed by the respective agencies in order to ensure maximum effectiveness and delivery of services. The MOU also outlines the roles and responsibilities of each agency as they apply to providing efficient and effective supported employment services. DDD and CBVI have also provided cross-training on employment-related services to agency staff and support coordinators, to ensure that direct service personnel from each respective agency are aware of the services and most appropriate funding source available to consumers, with the goal of maximizing services and not duplicating efforts of the other agency.

Additionally, under a MOU with The College of New Jersey's Center for Complex and Sensory Disabilities, a pilot program called Youth Employment Solutions (YES) was initiated to facilitate competitive, integrated employment outcomes for youth with the most significant disabilities who have exited the secondary school system. This program utilized the Customized Employment model to engage the youth in the Discovery Process, and, in partnership with a supported employment service provider and the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, develops a Customized Employment placement. Once an employment placement has been achieved, the identified supported employment service provider takes over with providing on-the-job supports. CBVI will be working to continue this program with another 3rd party community rehabilitation provider in the summer of 2026, as our contract with TCNJ came to an end.

CBVI will be looking to expand upon this program, as it has demonstrated successful supported employment outcomes at a higher level than typically seen with traditional methods for CBVI consumers with the most significant disabilities. Extended services are available to individuals who have been determined eligible for services by the DDD. CBVI may also make available extended services for up to four years to youth with the most significant disabilities until a youth reaches the age of 25, if a more appropriate funding source is not yet available.

#### **B. INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES AND INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM;**

CSNA Respondents were asked to select from a checklist which populations they felt were unserved or underserved by the CBVI. 23.61 percent selected Non-English-Speaking populations, 12.5 percent selected disability types, 15.28 percent selected geographic areas, 8.33 percent selected race/ethnicity, 15.28 percent selected age groups, 5.56 percent selected LGBTQIA+ populations, 1.39 percent selected other types, and 18.06 percent selected none.

To address verbal language barriers, CBVI has implemented the use of the Corporate Translation Services Incorporated (CTS) / Language Link, which enables VRC's to communicate with consumers in over 240 languages and dialects. CBVI has also increased the procurement and use of bi-lingual outreach materials/agency forms with approval from DHS.

CBVI continues to develop relationships with CRP's and outside agencies to increase referrals/services for consumers. If a consumer is seeking services outside the scope of CBVI services, we will assist through providing a resource.

CBVI VRC's are itinerant workers who meet consumers in various locations to provide services. To increase the efficiency of reaching consumers in underserved geographical locations, CBVI has hired two transportation supervisors to coordinate the schedules of agency drivers who drive blind and/or visually impaired VRC's.

Outreach efforts in the community continue to reach individuals who feel they are underserved and make them aware of the CBVI services. Cultural competence training will continue including awareness of LGBTQIA+ community culture.

Through prior CSNAs, feedback from stakeholders and staff and CRP's, CBVI has identified that consumers who are minorities, as well as those who are economically disadvantaged, may face additional challenges in accessing services due to language and other non-disability related barriers. The agency has taken steps to address these barriers by maintain social workers (including those who are bilingual). Social workers help to facilitate information and referral to appropriate local community and governmental agencies. The agency will continue identifying and expanding the agency's list of interpreting vendors to ensure they are readily available for VRC use.

#### C. INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM; AND

SRC, consumer and stakeholder feedback has previously identified a need to enhance cooperation and collaboration with other workforce partners. In addition, accessibility for blind, deaf-blind, and visually impaired consumers was also identified. CBVI continues to work on this, as required under WIOA. During CSNA cycles, informational interviews were conducted with the Local Workforce Development Boards and One-Stops. CBVI's will continue to contribute within the local area MOUs and IFAs throughout the state.

#### D. YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR NEED FOR PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES. INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES FOR TRANSITION CAREER SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH SUCH SERVICES ARE COORDINATED WITH TRANSITION SERVICES PROVIDED UNDER IDEA.

CBVI has struggled historically with obtaining feedback from students and their parents on the need to improve, enhance, or create additional Transition and Pre-Employment Transition Services. This challenge was also reflected in CBVI's experience during the last CSNA cycle.

CBVI staff working with students and youth, have identified the need for additional options for students with disabilities that may not be interested in the agency's existing programs. When CBVI staff and counselors were asked what additional Pre-ETS services are needed, three responses were provided:

- "More ADL hands on programs"
- "Parent training to help to motivate and improve usage of transitional trainings or exposures"

- “Real-time work experience, job coaches on board, blind/visually impaired staff on board for inspiration, assistive technology education/training, more internship opportunities”.

CBVI plans to continue conducting focused outreach to transition-age youth and their families to increase future participation in the CSNA. The focus groups will help to identify areas of priority to our students, youth with disabilities and their families. A RFI (Request for Information), will also obtain feedback from stakeholders and CRPs on enhancing the provision of work-based learning experiences to students and youth with disabilities. Finally, CBVI will be issuing more RFP’s (Request for Proposal), to identify additional vendors. Vendors will be expected to provide short-term and targeted topic Pre-ETS services to supplement our more comprehensive summer and year-round Pre-ETS programs.

Since its inception, CBVI has assisted school districts in providing education programs that address the unique needs of children with vision impairments, blindness, and deaf-blindness. In 1993, this partnership was formalized with local school districts through provider service agreements. The agreements identify the specific level of services that the Commission will provide for each child in the school district. These services are tiered according to individual student needs and are provided by Commission staff within the Education Service Unit. In 2016, CBVI revised its Blindness Education program delivery to more closely align with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA). Its focus was now specifically tailors service delivery individually to students based on their specific needs, and provides service reports to school districts in greater alignment to the requirements under the IEP. Since CBVI serves as the primary provider of blindness education services in the state through its provider service agreements with local school districts; nearly all students identified with visual impairments in New Jersey are known to the Commission. When students reach the age of fourteen, the Commission’s Teachers for the Blind and Visually Impaired refer all these students to one of the nine transition counselors who work in the Statewide Transition / Vocational Rehabilitation Unit.

In 2024, CBVI renewed its Memorandum of Agreement with the NJ Department of Education’s Office of Special Education and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services for the implementation of Pre-ETS and Transition Services. CBVI plans to continue conducting additional assessments with the Local Education Agencies as needed, to further assess and coordinate the Pre-ETS services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

## 2. IDENTIFY THE NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP, OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE.

### **Community Rehabilitation Providers**

Community providers and partners play a vital role within the field of VR by offering specialized services, resources, and expertise that complement and assist in the efforts of VR agencies. Providers have a deep understanding of local needs, specific populations, and industry trends

which makes them essential partners in creating holistic and effective VR programs. Community partners were asked if there is a need to develop new community partners. 25 respondents (73.53%) indicated yes, while nine (25.47%) indicated no. When asked if there is a need to improve existing community partners; 27 respondents (75%) indicated yes, while nine (25%) indicated no.

Building strong relationships with community providers can foster a collaborative environment where consumers receive comprehensive support that addresses their unique needs and goals.

Participant feedback in the Blindness Learning Community (BLC) that was implemented in 2017 indicated that it was much needed. In 2017, the BLC provided targeted blindness-specific training with a select group of CRPs and the response was positive. However, given the large number of potential CRPs, as well as the observed turnover in the field resulting in the required re-training of staff since; CBVI issued a Request for Information in 2020 from stakeholders and CRPs providing pre-placement activities and job coaching, including supported employment. Specifically, CBVI requested feedback on the challenges faced by CRPs in regard to capacity, staff retention, CBVI role and supports, fee schedules, and facilitating high quality employment outcomes. In a review of the responses, three primary themes came out as needing attention which CBVI agreed with and continues to improve on moving forward in order to continue providing this service:

1. Fee schedule, payment structure, and billing and payment delays.
2. Enhanced information, communication, and coordination processes with CBVI staff
3. A need for CBVI-provided training on serving individuals who are blind, deaf-blind, and visually impaired.

In our quest to receive high quality deliverables and outcomes, CBVI developed a Request for Proposal to recruit additional qualified providers, enabling consistent referrals and enhancing effective communication strategies. This would allow vendors to receive technical assistance and targeted training on serving the blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind population, including those with the most significant disabilities so they can achieve competitive, integrated employment. CBVI will continue to revise the fee schedule, voucher, and payment process which facilitates the CRPs ability to recruit and retain highly skilled staff. This will also encourage high quality deliverables and outcomes.

To address the fee schedule, payment structure and billing and payment delays, CBVI will update our fee schedule so that the amounts that we pay is more consistent with industry baseline. Thereby, making working with CBVI more appealing to service providers. We will continue looking at internal processes, identifying and eliminating inefficiencies, and working with Fiscal directly to review and enhance invoice reconciliation. An enhanced fee schedule will facilitate the recruitment of highly qualified service contractors.

To enhance information, communication, and coordination processes with CBVI staff, we will continue asking our VRC's to directly refer appropriate and ready consumers to CRP's. As a result, we anticipate an increase in participation of our CRP's. CBVI personnel also maintain a regular presence at CRP events and consistently provide valuable feedback for review in an effort to establish best practices.

To address a need for CBVI-provided training on serving individuals who are blind, deaf-blind, and visually impaired, the agency will continue offering training on best practices for the effective engagement of the blind, deaf-blind and visually impaired populations. In addition, blindness education training and technology training as requested/needed.

CBVI has developed CRP relationships and is working to improve current programming and establish new programming.

With Vision Loss Alliance NJ (VLANJ) we look forward to the continuation of the annual Fellowship program, which focuses on advocacy and mentoring. We are also interested in developing additional opportunities for consumers such as a new program with an emphasis on independent travel skills.

With Arc of Ocean, we are continuing to improve and expand both EDGE 1.0 and EDGE 2.0, which both run annually, with a focus on the transition population and Pre-Ets services.

With Sky's the Limit, CBVI's annual Promoting Academic & Student Success (PASS) Program has been expanded to include college students aged 18-21. This program under the ACE Academy umbrella, focuses on advocacy, work readiness and mentoring. We look forward to incorporating an additional PASS program in 2024 to capture more consumers who may be interested in the program.

The Learning Independence for Future Employment (LIFE) 101 and Pre High-School Upwardly Mobile (PUMP) programs will continue on an annual basis. Life 101 is a two-week pre-employment transition services program designed for ninth and tenth grade students. The PUMP program is a one-week program for youth grades 7 and 8 who will be transitioning to high school focusing on self-advocacy, independence, and celebrating oneself.

### **State-run Training Center**

CBVI owns and operates the Joseph Kohn Training Center (JKTC), which provides Vocational Rehabilitation and Independent Living skills training to VR consumers. The goal is to help prepare them for successful outcomes in achieving competitive, integrated employment.

Through the implementation of an assessment and strategic planning process for the Joseph Kohn Training Center, multiple areas were identified as needing improvement, including programmatic changes, training needs, and capital improvement projects.

To identify the areas for continued improvement in the JKTC program, a number of feedback and development identification opportunities have been implemented. These include direct observation of JKTC instruction, exit interviews conducted at the conclusion of the JKTC Program, and a secondary exit interview conducted three to six months after graduation to collect additional information pertaining to the consumer's reintegration to their home environment. Additionally, consumer conference meetings are conducted throughout the 20-week period to enable an ongoing dialog pertaining to progress, and potential challenges.

From this ongoing collection of feedback and data, several priorities related to collaboration with outside entities and partners have been identified. By the end of 2026, CBVI will create,



implement, and evaluate initiatives to address these priorities, and improve services and outcomes of the JKTC.

The Joseph Kohn Training Center opened in 1988 and has aged considerably over the past 36 years. A physical assessment of the building in 2022 has identified that it will require numerous building upgrades and system replacements by 2029 to deal with normal wear and tear, in addition to meeting current safety and building code requirements. The remaining include:

- Complete Design / Engineering of the Heating & Cooling System which includes:
  - New Chiller and Condenser Plant
  - New Computerized Automatic Temp and Motor Control System
  - Energy management system
  - Replacement of room heat /units
- New Lighting and Ceiling including grid supports
- Upgrade / redesign Security Cameras for basement and 2<sup>nd</sup> floor
- Patio Awning
- Upgrade Generator for full building
- New Cafeteria tables and chairs

**The following have been completed from 2022-2024:**

- Upgraded/redesigned security cameras for the 1<sup>st</sup> floor
- Replaced vinyl wall covering throughout the building
- Sidewalks were brought up to city codes
- Weather stripping and re-caulking windows (front of building and cafeteria)
- Replaced carpeting throughout the entire building
- Water proofed foundation completed for the full building
- Update elevator computer controls
- Added an FM Induction Loop system in basement conference rooms

**Deaf-Blind Services**

Given the concerns some providers and community partners expressed about services provided to the deaf-blind community, the responses of deaf-blind participants on the consumer survey were examined as compared to respondents who did not check that they were deaf-blind.

A substantial number of deaf-blind consumers reported that the CBVI staff treated them with courtesy and respect and were concerned about their needs. However, deaf-blind consumers generally reported a lower level of satisfaction than consumers who were not deaf-blind. The satisfaction gap was most pronounced in the questions regarding communication.

In addition to the feedback received from, and regarding services for our deaf-blind consumers, CBVI has also experienced challenges with consistently identifying vendors to provide ASL interpreting services; particularly for consumers requiring tactile ASL. CBVI will continue working to identify additional providers of deaf-blind interpreter services. CBVI has dedicated a staff to the task of scheduling deaf-blind interpretation services. This staff will partner with the community to enhance the skill and knowledge of ASL interpreters and build capacity in New Jersey to provide interpreter services and work with deaf-blind individuals.

### C. GOALS, PRIORITIES, AND STRATEGIES

Section 101(a)(15) and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe the goals and priorities of the State in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs. The goals and priorities are based on (1) the most recent CSNA, including any updates; (2) the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of Section 116 of WIOA; and (3) other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the SRC and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under Section 107 of the Rehabilitation Act. VR agencies must—

#### 1. DESCRIBE HOW THE SRC AND THE VR AGENCY JOINTLY DEVELOPED AND AGREED TO THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES AND ANY REVISIONS; AND

The following CBVI goals and priorities were developed based on the consultations with the SRC membership and based on data obtained from the 2023 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, as well as the CSNA activities completed in 2020. The goals and priorities below also reflect feedback provided by the Rehabilitation Services Administration during the agency's Federal Monitoring in FY 2018.

The SRC has consistently provided the agency's administrative staff with valuable feedback on establishing goals and priorities which reflect the Council's commitment to promote quality employment outcomes for individuals with vision loss. SRC members took an active role in development and implementation of assessment activities performed during the needs assessment in FY 2018, and the last completed CSNA in 2023. The selection of the goals and priorities and any revisions was a collaborative effort between the SRC and CBVI.

The 2026 modification goals and priorities remain the same as they were for the 2024 State plan submission because those areas are still of import. Given changes with RSA guidelines, changes in CRPs, consistent changes in outreach modality, updates in interagency MOAs and MOUs, these goals are still relevant. In addition, they remain in line with our agency mission.

The following are the strategic initiatives connected with vocational rehabilitation services that will drive agency priorities:

GOAL 1: Service Delivery Program Improvement:

CBVI will develop and improve internal controls and procedures, to ensure timely and quality service provision and documentation. Internal controls and procedures will be in alignment with federal requirements and facilitate consumer satisfaction.

**GOAL 2: Development and Improvement of Quality Career and Employment Programs:**

CBVI will evaluate current services and programs, including those offered by Community Rehabilitation Providers, and enhance and/or develop new programs and services, in response to needs identified in the comprehensive needs assessment. The new programs/services will connect with meeting performance indicators and quality employment outcomes.

**GOAL 3: External Partnerships, Resources and Alliances:**

CBVI will focus on growing external partnerships, resources, and alliances to support consumer services and outcomes, across state and local agencies, as well as private sector partnerships.

**GOAL 4: Communications, Public Information, and Community Outreach:**

CBVI will continue to enhance external communication strategies and community outreach to increase awareness of the agency and to inform the general public about the diverse capabilities of blind and vision-impaired people.

**GOAL 5: Access to ASL and Language Interpretation Services:**

CBVI will focus on growing access to ASL and language interpretation services to improve communication with consumers and enhance services in response to needs identified in the comprehensive needs assessment.

2. IDENTIFY MEASURABLE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IN CARRYING OUT THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS AND THE BASIS FOR SELECTING THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES (E.G., CSNA, PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES, SRC RECOMMENDATIONS, MONITORING, OTHER INFORMATION). AS REQUIRED IN SECTION 101(A)(15)(D), (18), AND (23), DESCRIBE UNDER EACH GOAL OR PRIORITY, THE STRATEGIES OR METHODS USED TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL OR PRIORITY, INCLUDING AS APPLICABLE, DESCRIPTION OF STRATEGIES OR METHODS THAT—

- A. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES;
- B. OVERCOME BARRIERS TO ACCESSING VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;
- C. IMPROVE AND EXPAND VR SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE COORDINATION OF SERVICES DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF SUCH STUDENTS FROM SCHOOL TO POSTSECONDARY LIFE (INCLUDING THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES); AND
- D. IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS IN ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES TO ACHIEVE QUALITY EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES.

List and number each goal/priority, noting the basis, and under each goal/priority, list and number the strategies to achieve the goal/priority

**GOAL 1: Service Delivery Program Improvement:** CBVI will develop and improve internal controls and procedures, to ensure timely and quality service provision. Internal controls and procedures will be in alignment with federal requirements and facilitate consumer satisfaction.

Basis: CSNA, monitoring and SRC recommendation

Strategies:

1. CBVI will maintain the federal requirements of eligibility and IPE plan development at 90% or higher on a quarterly basis. This will be monitored by quality assurance
2. CBVI will collect consumer satisfaction surveys every CSNA and maintain an 85% or high satisfaction rate with consumers.

**GOAL 2: Development and Improvement of Quality Career and Employment Programs:** CBVI will evaluate current services and programs provided by Community Rehabilitation Providers and enhance services where needed.

Basis: CSNA and SRC recommendation

Strategies:

1. CBVI will evaluate all Community Rehabilitation Provide programs on a quarterly basis and keep reports on meeting outcomes to address changes and improvements to programs
2. CBVI will ensure consumers are receiving Pre-Ets services through CRP's and reports are provided with deliverables

**GOAL 3: External Partnerships, Resources and Alliances:** CBVI will focus on growing external partnerships, resources, and alliances to support consumer services and outcomes, across state and local agencies, as well as private sector partnerships.

Basis: SRC recommendation

Strategies:

1. Business relations unit will increase number of employer relationships by a minimum of 5 annually
2. Business relations unit will assist a minimum of 5% of job ready consumers with obtaining competitive integrated employment

**GOAL 4: Communications, Public Information, and Community Outreach:** CBVI will continue to enhance external communication strategies and community outreach to increase awareness of the agency and to inform the general public about the diverse capabilities of blind and vision-impaired people.

Basis: SRC recommendation and CSNA

Strategies:

1. CBVI will commit to attending a minimum of 10 Outreach events per year to increase agency awareness

2. CBVI will organize and execute a minimum of 2 Community Outreach events on an annual basis to increase agency awareness

**GOAL 5: Access to ASL and Language Interpretation Services:** CBVI will focus on growing access to ASL and language interpretation services to improve communication with consumers and enhance services in response to needs identified in the comprehensive needs assessment.

Basis: CSNA and Deaf-Blind consumers

Strategies:

1. CBVI will develop an ASL best practices memo for VRC use to identify ASL interpreters to facilitate communication with consumers who utilize ASL
2. CBVI will hire an additional staff who is skilled in the area of ASL interpretation to provide VR services to deaf-blind consumers

#### D. EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS

For the most recently completed program year, provide an evaluation and report of progress for the goals or priorities, including progress on the strategies under each goal or priority, applicable to that program year. Sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe—

##### 1. PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED FOR THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS;

List the goals/priorities and discuss the progress or completion of each goal/priority and related strategies

**GOAL 1: Service Delivery Program Improvement: CBVI will develop and implement new internal controls and procedures, to ensure timely and quality service provision and documentation, in alignment with federal requirements and to facilitate consumer satisfaction.**

Strategies:

1. CBVI will maintain the federal requirements of eligibility and IPE plan development at 90% or higher on a quarterly basis. This will be monitored by quality assurance
  - a. **UPDATE:** CBVI did not meet the IPE plan development requirement at 90% or higher in PY24 Q1 and Q2. Those scores were 78% and 89% respectively. CBVI had several vacant VRC positions during that time which contributed to not meeting the 90% IPE plan development rating for those two quarters. Those positions are now filled and CBVI will strive to ensure we have a 90% or higher rating for IPE plan development in every quarter. CBVI met the 90% eligibility requirement for all quarters.
2. CBVI will collect consumer satisfaction surveys every CSNA and maintain an 85% or higher satisfaction rate with consumers.

- a. **UPDATE:** CBVI's last CSNA was completed on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 and is not due until October 1, 2026. As a result, I am providing the 2023 CSNA satisfaction survey results. CBVI has a satisfaction rate of 85.86% with consumers following the 2023 CSNA. We will gain more data in our 2026 CSNA in terms of consumer satisfaction.

In terms of service delivery program improvement, the following will continue:

- CBVI's Quality Assurance Coordinator monitors the timeliness and efficacy of service provision. Audits of 60-day eligibility determination, 90-day plan development, quarterly successful closures, quarterly plans and other reports as needed are completed to ensure we are following federal requirements and meeting consumer satisfaction.
- The executive management team meets on a monthly basis to discuss agency operations in order to identify, improve and implement additional internal controls to be overseen by the Quality Assurance Coordinator
- The executive management team and agency supervisors meet on a bi-monthly basis to update each other on unit changes and discuss improvement strategies in consumer service and changes in federal requirements.
- Regional offices hold bi-monthly meetings to ensure operational problems are addressed and to discuss best practices in handling difficult cases through sharing ideas without divulging consumer information.
- VRC's hold quarterly meetings to obtain training on changes in policies and federal regulations

**GOAL 2: Development and Improvement of Quality Career and Employment Programs: CBVI will evaluate current services and programs, including those offered by Community Rehabilitation Providers, and enhance and/or develop new programs and services, in response to needs identified in the comprehensive needs assessment and connected with meeting performance indicators and connected with quality employment outcomes.**

Strategies:

1. CBVI will evaluate all Community Rehabilitation Provide programs on a quarterly basis and keep reports on meeting outcomes to address changes and improvements to programs**UPDATE:** CBVI host quarterly meetings with CRP's and keeps reports on each meeting. At quarterly meetings, CBVI and CRP partners discuss how programs are going, changes that can improve service delivery and satisfaction, and ensure CRP's have all needs met to efficiently provide services. In addition, CBVI attends CRP led programs to monitor programs quarterly.
2. CBVI will ensure consumers are receiving Pre-Ets services through CRP's and reports are provided with deliverables.**UPDATE:** For every consumer receiving pre-ets services through CBVI CRP partners, a comprehensive report is provided detailing how the consumer is doing at the program and areas in which they can improve. Recommendations are also provided. The deliverables provide insight into additional needs the consumer may have.

The following will continue:

- CBVI evaluates the programs in place, has made and will continue to make improvements. For the enhancement of EDGE, a RFP was sent out and the program was picked up by Arc of Ocean. We will continue to monitor the program through monthly meetings and routine attendance at EDGE events. In 2026, a new RFP will be sent out for the program to ensure we are working with the best possible option for quality services to our consumers.
- Request for Information and Proposals to redesign and/or improve agency career and employment services provided by CRPs, including Pre-ETS and transition services for youth will continue. The last RFP was completed in 2025 for CBVI's Summer programming. We are currently reviewing proposals to choose a new CRP to run the program.
- CBVI continues its relationships with CRPs who are committed to providing high-quality services to consumers who are blind, deaf-blind and visually impaired; including those who have and are willing to maintain knowledge and skills specific to serving those with vision loss, deaf and hard of hearing or those with the most significant disabilities. Those CRPs include the Arc of Ocean, Sky's the Limit, Hudson Enterprises, VLANJ and more. We are always looking build relationships with additional CRP's where needed.
- CBVI's ASPIRE program, a statewide system of peer mentoring groups for individuals who are 55 and older, now includes groups dedicated to serving individuals who are 21-54 years old.

**GOAL 3: External Partnerships, Resources and Alliances: CBVI will focus on growing external partnerships, resources, and alliances to support consumer services and outcomes, across state and local agencies, as well as private sector partnerships.**

Strategies:

1. Business relations unit will increase number of employer relationships by a minimum of 5 annually **UPDATE:** CBVI developed and is keeping relationship and communication open with the following employers: IFP Solutions, American Foundations for the Blind, Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Spoken Heroes, Cintas Corporation, Mathematica, New Jersey State office of Innovations and more. These partners were employers in BRU's Virtual Job Fair hosted in 2025. Consumers were able to navigate virtual rooms, discuss job opportunities and learn more about these individual companies and their vacant positions during the job fair.
2. Business relations unit will assist a minimum of 5% of job ready consumers with obtaining competitive integrated employment. **UPDATE:** The business relations unit continues to provide consumers with job fair opportunities, resources and open positions as they are made aware. In developing relationships with employers, BRU is opening the door for blind and visually impaired job ready consumers to step through. BRU has served consumers through the organization and hosting of a virtual job fair preparation event, the virtual job fair, organizing and hosting a Dining in the Dark event (an event to try and remove some of the mystery, reluctance and hesitation about hiring someone who is blind or visually impaired and to show employers the advantages of

hiring someone with a disability) and providing Blindness Etiquette to employers who are looking to and have hired someone who is blind or visually impaired. Currently, the Business Relations Unit serves over 125 consumers, which is more than 5% of the job ready VR consumers. The following will continue:

- CBVI is continuing collaboration with workforce partners through participating in the development and updating of MOU's within each local area, developing resources and fostering alliances with all partners within those MOUs.
- CBVI's Business Relations Unit (BRU) is continuing to grow and build external partnerships with businesses to increase competitive, integrated employment for our consumers.

**GOAL 4: Communications, Public Information, and Community Outreach: CBVI will continue to enhance external communication strategies and community outreach to increase awareness of the agency and to inform the general public about the diverse capabilities of blind and vision-impaired people.**

Strategies:

1. CBVI will commit to attending a minimum of 10 Outreach events per year to increase agency awareness **UPDATE:** CBVI was represented at over 100 outreach opportunities on an annual basis. This includes presentations at LEA's, group homes, job fairs, across businesses and individual outreach events throughout the state. Itinerant staff, the business relations staff, human resources, outreach specialist, Project BEST and supervisors all take part in community outreach. If someone is interested in a presentation, a staff will provide a presentation on CBVI services. All CBVI staff were trained in outreach etiquette and provided with best practices and tools required to present on CBVI services in early 2025. Outreach event occurred in the following: CNA of Camden, CNA of Union, Senior Law Day, NJ Council of the Blind, Mercer County of the Blind, Covering the Bases, National Health Center Week, Veterans Outreach Fair in Bordentown, Project Self Sufficiency Community Health Fair, Women's Health Fair in Hackensack and more.
2. CBVI will organize and execute a minimum of 2 Community Outreach events on an annual basis to increase agency awareness **UPDATE:** CBVI hosted its annual Blindness Awareness Month (BAM) event in October of 2025. BAM is a full-day outdoor event that featured informative CBVI outreach information and engaging activities that promote blindness awareness. The event aims to bridge the community and reinforce our mission to educate the public about eye disease and eye care, as well as address the rising trend of blindness and severe vision loss. This event was held in the Cheesequake State Park and provided information, resources, exhibits, interactive demonstrations, and more from CBVI and partnering agencies. CBVI hosts its monthly Community Connections Call run by our Community Outreach unit. The monthly event is designed as a strategic platform to foster connection, disseminate valuable resources, engage with consumers, agency staff, service providers and community partners. Each session is carefully curated to highlight CBVI programs, present success stories from current and former consumers, and feature presentations by professional staff. CBVI hosted its



annual Night out at the ballpark with the Trenton Thunder baseball team in July 2025, to promote full community inclusion, to present privately funded college scholarship awards to CBVI students and acknowledge the achievements of other individuals who are blind. The initial purpose of the event is to promote full community inclusion and awareness of the potential and achievements of CBVI consumers, and provide an enjoyable evening for our guests which include past and present consumers, their family members, DHS and CBVI staff, and others from the blindness community. The following will continue:

- Through inclusion in the interagency MOA, CBVI has a working relationship with DOE and DOL to increase awareness of agency services throughout the state.
- CBVI has also hired a Community Outreach Specialist and who has maintained tracking to monitor the impact and effectiveness of outreach strategies.
- In 2023 we filled a Community Outreach Supervisor position who along with our community outreach specialist is responsible for conducting community education and outreach activities, presentations and events
- CBVI's Outreach Initiative implemented sending letters of introduction and CBVI information packages to directors of social services, health services, senior services, offices of disabilities and libraries for all 21 counties and several municipalities. Responses included requests for speakers, additional outreach materials for distribution in the community and requests to schedule eye screenings.
- CBVI has sent electronic copies of agency literature along with introductory emails to over 900 apartment complexes, assistive living residences, all 21 county NJ independent living centers and day programs for individuals age 60 plus.
- The e-blast initiative provided a noticeable increase in calls to our main number and regional offices. In addition, our "ASKCBVI" email saw an increase in communication with social service, family members, medical professionals and individuals seeking CBVI services.
- In October 2023, the agency held its second "Blindness Awareness Community Outreach Event" which targeted the community at large and was successful. This event continued for a 3rd and 4th time in October of 2024 and 2025 respectively.
- CBVI has worked with DHS public affairs unit to create a "comprehensive agency overview" power-point presentation and agency logo. This power point is in continuous use agency wide.
- Spanish and English agency documentation have also been created and approved including:
  - General information flyer
  - Outreach postcards
  - ASPIRE flyer
  - LEAP flyer

- BRU Brochure
  - Simple do's and don'ts
  - Guide for Healthcare Workers
  - Teacher of the Visually Impaired Recruitment
  - Orientation and Mobility Specialists recruitment
  - EDGE Flyer
  - 10 Tips for Eye Health
  - Project Best: Diabetic Eye Disease Detection
- CBVI is currently working with DHS on translating vital documents and information into the seven languages most commonly spoken by individuals with limited English proficiency in New Jersey.

**GOAL 5: Access to ASL and Language Interpretation Services:** CBVI will focus on growing access to ASL and language interpretation services to improve communication with consumers and enhance services in response to needs identified in the comprehensive needs assessment.

Strategies:

1. CBVI will develop an ASL best practices memo for VRC use to identify ASL interpreters to facilitate communication with consumers who utilize ASL. **UPDATE:** VRC's were trained on how to access, schedule, cancel and pay interpreting services for consumers who require them. The ASL best practices memo was created but is currently under review. CBVI has expanded and improved access to ASL interpreting services, to better meet the needs of our deaf-blind consumers seeking vocational rehabilitation services through assigning a Vocational Assistant with finding ASL interpretation services and keeping track of available vendors. This list is shared with VRC's who have a need for interpreting services. CBVI also continues to develop additional ASL services providers, such as ASL Interpreter Referral Services Inc., Helen Keller National Center, Division of Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and Integrity interpreting services among others.
2. CBVI will hire an additional staff who is skilled in the area of ASL interpretation to provide VR services to deaf-blind consumers. **UPDATE:** CBVI hired a new VRC, who is deaf, adding to the previous two deaf VRC's in the deaf-blind unit. Professional development is currently being provided to a VRC in the deaf-blind unit, which will improve her ASL skills so she can better communicate with her consumers. In addition, another deaf VRC will be attending the ADARA (American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association) conference for professional development. This conference will help her to identify new skills and training strategies that can be applied to working with deaf-blind consumers.

**2. PERFORMANCE ON THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR, REFLECTING ACTUAL AND NEGOTIATED LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE. EXPLAIN ANY DISCREPANCIES IN THE ACTUAL AND NEGOTIATED LEVELS; AND**

All five of the CBVI's overarching goals contribute to ensuring compliance with, and successful achievement of, the reporting of the performance measures under Section 116 of WIOA.

Based on the WIOA Performance Assessment results for PY2024, the rates were as follows:

WIOA Performance Indicators	Negotiated Level	Actual Level	Actual level/Adjusted level
Employment Rate Q2 (%)	54.6	51.9	98.0
Employment Rate Q4 (%)	46.9	47.8	100.1
Median Earnings (\$)	6,400	6,867	109.5
Credential Rate (%)	42.9	39.9	99.6
Measurable Skill Gains (%)	56.6	31.4	56.4

We outperformed the negotiated performance levels for each performance indicator with the exception of Measurable Skill Gains. This may have occurred due to failure to collect or record documentation such as transcripts and test scores because they were not submitted in time to record. In addition, CBVI's current system (System 7) has made recognizing and entering milestones such as Educational functioning levels, training milestones and completing semesters difficult to document. Most importantly, CBVI consumers are typically enrolled in long-term programs that do not produce a MSG within the reporting year or they submit documentation after the reporting period. CBVI will work diligently to ensure VRC's are following up more frequently with consumers who are not submitting documentation necessary to record a MSG within the appropriate quarter.

In response to an evaluation of data from the agency's federal reports, and regulatory and sub-regularly guidance, the agency has developed, and continues to increase and improve, activities that: increase collaboration with workforce partners, address counselor knowledge, improve data quality, enhance internal controls, and evaluate program outcomes.

### 3. THE USE OF FUNDS RESERVED FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES (SECTIONS 101(A)(18) AND 101(A)(23) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT) (E.G., SRC, SILC).

CBVI did not use Innovation and Expansion funds to support the State Rehabilitation Council.

Innovation and Expansion funds were utilized by CBVI in several ways:

In PY2022, CBVI's Blindness Learning Community (BLC) was established in partnership with The College of New Jersey Center for Sensory and Complex Disabilities (CCSD). The BLC focused on preparing and offering training to interested Supported Employment Providers/ CRP's on how to more effectively serve individuals who are blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind and require supported employment services in order to obtain and maintain employment. Currently, this program will continue on a quarterly but will include the sharing of resources and strengthening the relationship between CBVI and its partners for better service provision to our consumers.

The BLC will continue to provide targeted training and coaching on evidence-based, non-visual methods of instruction for individuals with low or no vision. Blindness-specific training topics include dispelling misconceptions about blindness, training in alternative/non-visual techniques, accessing technology, travel techniques and strategies. Further topics include Person-Centered Planning/Discovery, Collective Impact Strategies, Customized Employment, and Business Engagement. Additional follow-up support and training will be provided to participating organizations by request.

CBVI used funds to foster the Youth Employment Solutions (YES) program in partnership with The College of New Jersey's Center for Complex and Sensory Disabilities. YES, was developed to facilitate competitive, integrated employment outcomes for youth with the most significant disabilities who have exited the secondary school system, and who will benefit from supported employment services. The program works with students who have completed the STEPS (Successful Transition Experiences Preparing Students) Program. STEPS is an annual summer pre-employment, transition services program provided to students who are blind, visually impaired, and/or deaf-blind, who also have multiple disabilities, including intellectual and developmental disabilities. YES, utilized the Customized Employment model to engage the youth in the Discovery Process. In partnership with a supported employment services provider and the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, a Customized Employment placement was developed. Once an employment placement has been achieved, the identified supported employment service provider takes over with providing on-the-job supports.

In PY2024, nine individuals participated in the YES program, and none obtained competitive, integrated employment. Of the nine, seven continue the search for competitive integrated employment. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the program was not able to be held in person, however we kept participants engaged in the program virtually. The pandemic also interrupted the availability of job coaches/supportive employment providers who are skilled in working with the blind and low vision consumers. High turnover rate has continued through 2024. This continues to have a profound effect on the outcome of competitive, integrated employment for consumers with most significant disabilities.

In PY2025, CBVI will continue to expand and improve programs in the future to raise the success rate utilizing innovation and expansion funds. This includes finding and training more supportive employment agencies willing to work with individuals who are blind and/or visually impaired with most significant disabilities. In addition, CBVI is piloting a supported employment internship opportunity for a youth with a most significant disability in summer of 2026 at Will's Cafeteria. If this proves, successful, CBVI would like to expand this program to other locations throughout the state.

In PY2024, Innovation and expansion funds were used to expand the Skies the Limit Communication's "ACE academy program" to now include college freshmen and sophomores. It's a pre-ETS program that focuses on areas of leadership, communication, self-advocacy, career exploration and succeeding in the post-secondary environment. During the three-day weekend, they utilize a holistic approach to adulting by incorporating basic independent living skills training into their programs. A transition-based component will also be added for PY2025. This will be a weekend for transition aged students to obtain pre-ets services focused on leadership, AI, communication, job exploration, work-based learning experiences, self-advocacy and more.

E. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS, AND ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES.

1. ACCEPTANCE OF TITLE VI FUNDS:

(A) VR agency requests to receive title VI funds.

2. IF THE VR AGENCY HAS ELECTED TO RECEIVE TITLE VI FUNDS, SECTION 606(B)(3) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT REQUIRES VR AGENCIES TO INCLUDE SPECIFIC GOALS AND PRIORITIES WITH RESPECT TO THE DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS RECEIVED UNDER SECTION 603 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES. DESCRIBE THE USE OF TITLE VI FUNDS AND HOW THEY WILL BE USED IN MEETING THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES OF THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM.

CBVI accepts Title VI funds annually, we did not utilize funds for the provision of supported employment services in the last year. General VR funds were used to provide supported employment services. However, if we were to use Title IV 6 they would be used in this fashion.

CBVI services youth with disabilities who are in need of supported employment services and will make Title IV funds available to assist individuals with most significant disabilities, including youth with most significant disabilities, who require supported employment services following job placement. Supported employment services would be provided for no more than 24 months (unless agreed by the consumer and their counselor to extend) for individuals placed in competitive integrated employment or those in an integrated setting where the individual is working towards competitive, integrated employment on a short-term basis. Ongoing services such as those needed to maintain stability, provision of job trainers, training in social skills and follow-up services would be provided.

CBVI is aware that funds can only be used to provide extended services for youth with most significant disabilities for a period of time not to exceed 4 years or until such time that a youth reaches the age of 25 and no longer meets the definition of youth with a disability – whichever comes first. CBVI and DVRS have an active MOU with Department of Development Disabilities (DDD) which identifies that resources to expand extended services and supported employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities, will be allocated for youth being served by DDD.

Under the MOU with The College of New Jersey's Center for Complex and Sensory Disabilities, the Youth Employment Solutions (YES) was initiated to facilitate competitive, integrated employment outcomes for youth with the most significant disabilities who have exited the secondary school system. This program utilized the Customized Employment model to engage the youth in the Discovery Process, and, in partnership with a supported employment provider and the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, develops a Customized Employment placement. Once an employment placement has been achieved, the identified supported employment service provider will take over with providing on-the-job supports. In 2025, this contract came to an end. As a result, CBVI has developed, and plans to pilot a Supported Employment internship opportunity for one youth in Summer of 2026 at Will's Cafeteria.

In addition, interested youth can participate in Project Search. Project Search allows a student with a most significant disability total immersion in the workplace for a full academic year, individualized skill building and employment planning through interagency collaboration with their high school, CBVI and DVRS. Students will rotate through three internships where they learn various skills while also attending class. Afterwards, they are placed in competitive integrated employment.

The goal is to meet the needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities so they can attain competitive, integrated employment. CBVI will provide a match of 10% of non-federal expenditures and not use more than 2.5% of funds on administrative costs. CBVI will also reserve and expend 50% of supported employment funds on youth with disabilities.

3. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES MAY BE PROVIDED WITH TITLE 1 OR TITLE VI FUNDS FOLLOWING PLACEMENT OF INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES IN EMPLOYMENT. IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(22) AND SECTION 606(B)(3) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, DESCRIBE THE QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES; AND THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES.

Supported employment means competitive work within integrated work settings where individuals are working and earning at least minimum wage. Individuals with the most significant disabilities can benefit from these services when:

- Competitive employment has not traditionally occurred;
- Competitive employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability; and
- As a result of the nature and severity of their disability, intensive supported employment services are needed in order to perform such work.

New Jersey became the 14th state to embrace the concept of Employment First (EF) in April 2012. EF is a framework that is centered on the premise that all citizens are capable of full participation in integrated employment and community life. This initiative identified that competitive employment in an integrated setting is the preferred first choice for every individual seeking employment in New Jersey. This effort shifts assumptions about whether individuals with certain categories of disabilities can work, into one of determining the supports and services necessary so that these individuals will be successful in competitive employment. CBVI adheres to the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. An individual with a disability must want and qualify for the services.

Additionally, the New Jersey CBVI remains committed to increasing the quality, scope and extent of supported employment services to eligible consumers who are blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired and also may have additional disabilities. The Commission's Title VI Part B funding is generally inadequate to support the full scope of Supported Employment services. However, in the absence of Title VI funds, the Commission does use Title I funds to ensure that adequate services are provided.

There are presently an approved cadre of community providers throughout the state who provide supported employment services on a fee-for-service basis. As noted earlier, CBVI is still evaluating its supported employment program to develop a smaller group of providers who are committed to providing services to blind, deaf-blind, and visually impaired individuals. The Commission continues to make use of time limited job coaching services to address the needs of consumers who are chronically unemployed, present with issues of mental health or who are otherwise ineligible for services from the DDD. The Commission has traditionally placed approximately four to five percent of all successful rehabilitations into supported employment.

A MOU regarding supported employment is currently in effect between the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, the DDD, and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services. The MOU delineates the procedures and protocols that define the provision of supported employment services within and between these three agencies. An ongoing training program has been developed and delivered to the appropriate staff in the three agencies.

Excluding youth with disabilities for who cannot receive extended services from other sources, CBVI may provide extended services for a period of up to four years until the youth reaches age 25. It should be noted that the Commission does not fund Extended Services for individuals other than youth. Extended Services are provided by the DDD and/or other identified sources. The previously mentioned MOU includes a (F-3) form that is completed at the appropriate time, as defined by the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) and consumer's progress at the work site, which then moves an eligible consumer into an extended services status. The transition to Extended Services must occur no later than twenty-four (24) months after placement in supported employment, unless a longer period is established in the IPE and only if the individual has made substantial progress toward obtaining the employment goal listed in the IPE.

4. SECTIONS 101(A)(22) AND 606(B)(4) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT REQUIRE THE VR AGENCY TO DESCRIBE EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY AND ARRANGE, INCLUDING ENTERING INTO COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS, WITH OTHER STATE AGENCIES AND OTHER APPROPRIATE ENTITIES IN ORDER TO PROVIDE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES. THE DESCRIPTION MUST INCLUDE EXTENDED SERVICES, AS APPLICABLE, TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE PROVISION OF EXTENDED SERVICES TO YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH 34 C.F.R. § 363.4(A) AND 34 C.F.R. § 361.5(C)(19)(V).

CBVI is committed to the needs of individuals who may require supported employment services. The Commission contracts for all core supported employment services through a fee-for-service arrangement and maintains a list of approved supported employment providers throughout the state. The Commission currently utilizes the same fee structure and approval process as DVRS.

A MOU was developed in coordination with the DDD and the DVRS which outlines the protocols and procedures for the collaborative provision of supported employment services to Commission consumers. The MOU defines and delineates the procedures to be followed by the respective agencies in order to ensure maximum effectiveness and delivery of services. The MOU also outlines the roles and responsibilities of each agency as they apply to providing efficient and effective supported employment services. DDD and CBVI have also provided cross-training on employment-related services to agency staff and support coordinators, to ensure that direct service personnel from each respective agency are aware of the services and most

appropriate funding source available to consumers. The goal being to maximize services and not duplicate efforts of the other agency.

Under a MOA with The College of New Jersey's (TCNJ) Center for Complex and Sensory Disabilities (CCSD), the Youth Employment Solutions (YES) program was initiated to facilitate competitive, integrated employment outcomes for youth with the most significant disabilities who have exited the secondary school system. This program utilized the Customized Employment model to engage the youth in the Discovery Process. In partnership with the consumer, their family, VR counselor and DDD Support coordinator and supported employment service provider (SSP), youth are able to find competitive, integrated employment or choose higher education in lieu of employment. Once an employment placement has been achieved, the identified supported employment service provider takes over with providing on-the-job supports.

CBVI's MOA with TCNJ's CCSD resolved in 2025. It demonstrated in the past, successful supported employment outcomes at a higher level than typically seen with traditional methods for CBVI consumers with the most significant disabilities. Following the covid pandemic, those numbers began to decline. Currently, CBVI has developed a supported employment internship opportunity for youth with a most significant disabilities. This program will pilot in Summer of 2026 at Will's Cafeteria. If successful, CBVI will look into offering this program on a larger scale at differing locations for youth with a most significant disability.

Extended supported employment services are available to CBVI consumers who have been determined eligible for services by the DDD. CBVI may also make available extended services for up to four years to youth with the most significant disabilities, if a more appropriate funding source is not yet available.

## F. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

Sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require all VR agencies to annually conduct a full assessment of their resources and ability to serve all eligible individuals before the start of the Federal fiscal year. In accordance with 34 C.F.R. § 361.29(b), annual estimates must include the following projections:

### 1. ESTIMATES FOR NEXT FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR—

#### A. VR PROGRAM; AND

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Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under VR Program	Costs of Services using Title I Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
	2,576	2,060	17,345,000	

**B. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM.**

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Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under Supported Employment Program	Costs of Services using Title I and Title VI Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
	125	40	336,796	

**G. ORDER OF SELECTION**

1. PURSUANT TO SECTION 101(A)(5) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, THIS DESCRIPTION MUST BE AMENDED WHEN THE VR AGENCY DETERMINES, BASED ON THE ANNUAL ESTIMATES DESCRIBED IN DESCRIPTION (F), THAT VR SERVICES CANNOT BE PROVIDED TO ALL ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE STATE WHO APPLY FOR AND ARE DETERMINED ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES.

\* VR agencies may maintain an order of selection policy and priority of eligible individuals without implementing or continuing to implement an order of selection.

The VR agency is not implementing an order of selection and all eligible individuals will be served.

2. FOR VR AGENCIES THAT HAVE DEFINED PRIORITY CATEGORIES DESCRIBE—

**A. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER**

CBVI is not implementing an order of selection.

B. THE ORDER (PRIORITY CATEGORIES) TO BE FOLLOWED IN SELECTING ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS TO BE PROVIDED VR SERVICES ENSURING THAT INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES ARE SELECTED FOR SERVICES BEFORE ALL OTHER INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES; AND

CBVI does not have an order of selection or priority categories. This is not applicable.

C. THE VR AGENCY'S GOALS FOR SERVING INDIVIDUALS IN EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, INCLUDING HOW THE AGENCY WILL ASSIST ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS ASSIGNED TO CLOSED PRIORITY CATEGORIES WITH INFORMATION AND REFERRAL, THE METHOD IN WHICH THE VR AGENCY WILL MANAGE WAITING LISTS, AND THE PROJECTED TIMELINES FOR OPENING PRIORITY CATEGORIES. NOTE: PRIORITY CATEGORIES ARE CONSIDERED OPEN WHEN ALL INDIVIDUALS IN THE PRIORITY CATEGORY MAY BE SERVED.

CBVI does not have an order of selection or priority categories. This is not applicable.

3. HAS THE VR AGENCY ELECTED TO SERVE ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS OUTSIDE OF THE ORDER OF SELECTION WHO REQUIRE SPECIFIC SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT?

No

H. WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS.

The State plan shall be in effect in all political subdivisions of the State, however, the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (Commissioner) may waive compliance with this requirement in accordance with Section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and the implementing regulations in 34 C.F.R. § 361.26. If the VR agency is requesting a waiver of statewideness or has a previously approved waiver of statewideness, describe the types of services and the local entities providing such services under the waiver of statewideness and how the agency has complied with the requirements in 34 C.F.R. § 361.26. If the VR agency is not requesting or does not have an approved waiver of statewideness, please indicate "not applicable."

CBVI is not requesting a waiver of statewideness for services for individuals who are blind and visually impaired.

I. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT.

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act, the VR agency must develop and maintain annually a description (consistent with the purposes of the Rehabilitation Act) of the VR agency's comprehensive system of personnel development, which shall include a description of the procedures and activities the State VR agency will undertake to ensure it has an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessionals that provides the following:

1. ANALYSIS OF CURRENT PERSONNEL AND PROJECTED PERSONNEL NEEDS INCLUDING—

A. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL CURRENTLY NEEDED BY THE VR AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY; AND

B. THE NUMBER AND TYPE OF PERSONNEL THAT ARE EMPLOYED BY THE VR AGENCY IN THE PROVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES, INCLUDING RATIOS OF QUALIFIED VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELORS TO CLIENTS;

C. PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY, WHO WILL BE NEEDED BY THE VR AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES IN 5 YEARS BASED ON PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED, INCLUDING INDIVIDUALS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL EXPECTED TO RETIRE OR LEAVE THE FIELD, AND OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS.

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Personnel Category	No. of Personnel Employed	No. of Personnel Currently Needed	Projected No. of Personnel Needed in 5 Years
Administrative Staff	11	12	12
Supervising Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors	4	4	4
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors 1 and 2	34	36	36

D. RATIO OF QUALIFIED VR COUNSELORS TO CLIENTS:

A member of the administrative staff overseeing the Vocational Rehabilitation Program at CBVI is responsible for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on the qualified personnel needs for the agency. The information is gathered in collaboration with the Human Resources, Fiscal, and Training units at the agency.

The following staff members are those that are full time equivalent, in the capacity of administration or provision of vocational rehabilitation services. The agency uses an itinerant

model of service provision to meet the needs of the consumers it serves in all twenty-one counties in the state.

The agency divides the state into three regions, Northern, Central, and Southern. The agency maintains three regional offices in Newark, Freehold, and Cherry Hill with a satellite office in Atlantic City.

A Statewide (Transition, College and Deaf-Blind Services) Unit is overseen by a single supervisor, with specialized VR Counselors located in the three regional offices. The specialized counselors provide services to transition-age students, college students and consumers with dual sensory impairments throughout the state.

The Joseph Kohn Training Center (JKTC) is a residential training center, serving consumers statewide, who wish to participate in an intensive course of training during a twenty-week period. Referrals to JKTC are made by VR counselors from the regional offices and/or the Statewide unit.

The Business Relations Unit (BRU) addresses the need for VR agencies to provide services to businesses as a dual customer. The BRU is made up of two VR Counselors and one supervisor, who provide services statewide.

The agency serves approximately 2,500 blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired consumers who are seeking employment annually. Services can be provided from birth to senior services, allowing for a seamless transition between each service unit. The agency serves approximately 9,000 blind, visually impaired, or deaf-blind New Jerseyans annually across all service units. In addition, the agency provides eye screening services to targeted populations that are traditionally underserved. Eye screen services have been provided for approximately 25,000 New Jerseyans annually.

NJ-CBVI provides vocational rehabilitation services to approximately 2,500 individuals annually, and has 36 qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor, 12 administrative staff and 4 vocational rehabilitation supervisor positions. Of these positions, there is a vacancy for vocational rehabilitation counselor and 1 vacancy for an administrative staff.

There is a ratio of 1 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to every 69 clients (1: 69) when all 36 positions are filled. With two vacancies in the vocational rehabilitation counselor title, the current ratio is 1 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to every 73 clients (1:73).

E. PROJECTED NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED IN 5 YEARS:

CBVI is projecting to serve 3,011 consumers in 5 years.

3,011.

Job Title	Total Positions	Current Vacancies	Projected Vacancies over the next 5 years

Job Title	Total Positions	Current Vacancies	Projected Vacancies over the next 5 years
<b>Supervising Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors</b>	4	0	2
<b>Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors</b>	36	2	5

2. DATA AND INFORMATION ON PERSONNEL PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT, RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION, AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:

A. A LIST OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE THAT ARE PREPARING VR PROFESSIONALS, BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED AT EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS, BROKEN DOWN BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; AND THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED DURING THE PRIOR YEAR FROM EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS WITH CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, OR WITH THE CREDENTIALS FOR CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, BROKEN DOWN BY THE PERSONNEL CATEGORY FOR WHICH THEY HAVE RECEIVED, OR HAVE THE CREDENTIALS TO RECEIVE, CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE.

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Institute of Higher Education	Type of Program	No. of Students Enrolled	No. of Prior Year Graduates
Rutgers University, School of Health Professions	Masters of Rehabilitation Counseling	110	44

B. THE VR AGENCY'S PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL, WHICH ADDRESSES THE CURRENT AND PROJECTED NEEDS FOR QUALIFIED PERSONNEL; AND THE COORDINATION AND FACILITATION OF EFFORTS BETWEEN THE VR AGENCY AND INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS TO RECRUIT, PREPARE, AND RETAIN PERSONNEL WHO ARE QUALIFIED,

INCLUDING PERSONNEL FROM MINORITY BACKGROUNDS AND PERSONNEL WHO ARE  
INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

DVRS and CBVI negotiated with administrators at the Rutgers University, School of Health Professions (formerly University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ) School of Health-Related Professions) to develop a means to assist in meeting the CSPD (Comprehensive System of Personnel Development) standards for the state. The results of the collaborative efforts were the development of a state standard in keeping with the national competency movement and federal mandates, and a masters-level program in Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling within the School of Health Professions. This is the sole graduate program devoted to training rehabilitation counselors in New Jersey and is CORE and CACREP accredited. All of the Rutgers graduates are eligible for national certification upon graduation.

Guidelines have been provided by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the New Jersey Civil Service Commission on hiring policies and terms of employment. Projections were made based on the current number of employees in regard to their age, length of service, education and availability of training resources.

A staff person from the administrative teams of both DVRS and CBVI are members of the advisory board for the Rehabilitation Counseling program. That staff person stays in contact with key university staff throughout the year to continue the collaborative working relationship. That staff person also monitors staff professional development in conjunction with the agency's training unit.

CBVI continues its coordination with post-secondary programs that offer graduate degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling as a source of qualified personnel. The program of study offered at Rutgers University is the only accredited program in Rehabilitation Counseling in New Jersey and its staff actively recruits students from Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York. Rutgers recruitment efforts benefit the agency by increasing the pool of qualified candidates who meet the CSPD standard. The agency will continue its cooperative efforts with Rutgers University, to use as a viable source for addressing future staffing needs. An agency administrative staff person is an active member of the Advisory Council. The agency has expanded its recruitment efforts by forwarding all open-competitive job postings for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor positions to the seven (7) accredited universities in Pennsylvania and New York with the goal of increasing the pool of qualified candidates for future job vacancies.

CBVI falls under the umbrella of the Department of Human Services (DHS) and all Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors must meet the education and experience requirements set in our job specifications. The requirements are issued by NJ Civil Service Commission which honor New Jersey SAME (State as a Model Employer)/ Schedule B Letter.

In January 2022, the State of New Jersey adopted legislation to develop and implement the "State as a Model Employer of People with Disabilities" (SAME) program. As New Jersey's largest employer, the State should promote awareness of persons with disabilities as a valued employee resource, as well as work to attract, engage and retain persons with disabilities in the State workforce. The State's current workforce is comprised of 10.8% of employees who have self-identified as a person with disabilities.

The Affirmative Action Officer of each State implements and oversees the SAME program for that State.

C. DESCRIPTION OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND ACTIVITIES THAT ENSURE ALL PERSONNEL EMPLOYED BY THE VR AGENCY RECEIVE APPROPRIATE AND ADEQUATE TRAINING AND CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS:

I. PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO ASSESSMENT, VOCATIONAL COUNSELING, JOB PLACEMENT, AND REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING TRAINING IMPLEMENTED IN COORDINATION WITH ENTITIES CARRYING OUT STATE PROGRAMS UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998; AND

II. PROCEDURES FOR THE ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION OF SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE FROM RESEARCH AND OTHER SOURCES TO VR AGENCY PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS AND FOR PROVIDING TRAINING REGARDING THE AMENDMENTS TO THE REHABILITATION ACT MADE BY THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT.

**RSA VR Technical Assistance Centers**

CBVI has utilized the expertise and resources made available by a number of the Technical Assistance Centers sponsored by the Rehabilitation Services Administration, to advance agency knowledge, programs, and performance under WIOA. CBVI received Intensive Technical Assistance to establish their Business Relations Unit with the Job-Driven Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center and increase counselors' knowledge and use of Labor Market Information as a counseling tool with consumers identifying vocational goals and services. A three-day training on Business Engagement was provided to all VR Counselors and Supervisors by the National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision at Mississippi State University. CBVI participated in an Intensive Technical Assistance project with the Target Communities Technical Assistance Center to enhance service provision and partnerships. The goal was to better serve consumers from underserved communities and received trainings around issues related to the intersection of poverty, disability, employment and VR services. The administration also regularly distributes additional resources and opportunities for attending webinars. In addition, participation in communities of practice implemented by other technical assistance centers, such as the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) and Youth Technical Assistance Center (Y-TAC) is ongoing. Some Co-Ops include Pre-ETS for the Blind, Statewide Systems of Professional Development, Youth and Family Engagement and more.

**Tuition Reimbursement**

The Office of Workforce Development and Training's (OWDT) Department of Human Services (DHS), oversees and supervises the administration of the current Tuition Reimbursement Program (TRP). The program will assist employees in broadening their knowledge, skills, and contributions to the Department through continued learning and professional growth. This program reimburses State employees for eligible tuition expenses, up to a maximum of \$2,000 per fiscal year. In order for staff to be considered, they must complete an application which also serves as an agreement to all of the requirements outlined in the Tuition Reimbursement Guidelines. A supervisor's signature is required and the course must be related to their current/planned job responsibilities.

**Civil Service Commission (CSC)**

The CSC Center for Learning and Improving Performance (CLIP) is currently responsible for the design, development and delivery of a variety of training programs designed to enhance public employees' performance at any stage in their career. Areas of focus can be computers, government and policy, management and supervision, process and organizational management, and professional development. In addition, each new supervisor completes the CLIP's Supervisor Success Series. This three-day series is designed to help supervisors support employees in meeting job performance criteria. This is done through assessing employee knowledge, skills, and abilities in relation to the mission and set standards of the organization. The classes in this series include: Critical Conversations, Performance Management and Performance Challenges, and Documentation and Discipline. CSC uses an online system called Learning Management System (LMS) to faster administer State mandated and some elective trainings as an alternative to a classroom setting. Civil Service Commission also offers instructor-led trainings at one of the available county colleges. Employees are encouraged to attend courses pertinent to their job duties and responsibilities.

### **Agency Sponsored - In-Service Training**

In-Service training provides staff the opportunity to upgrade professional knowledge and skills, and to keep current in changes in the field of vocational rehabilitation and the workforce environment. The Commission has developed in-house subject matter experts. These staff provide training and consultation to other agency staff in areas of their expertise, such as assistive technology, independent living skills, education issues, deaf-blindness, and medical aspects of blindness.

The Commission encourages staff to attend training, seminars, and workshops appropriate to their job duties and responsibilities. In addition, if limited staff are approved to attend a conference, the agency utilizes a train-the-trainer model so that staff in attendance can share information with their colleagues.

### **3. DESCRIPTION OF VR AGENCY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF PERSONNEL STANDARDS CONSISTENT WITH SECTION 101(A)(7)(B) TO ENSURE THAT VR AGENCY PROFESSIONAL AND PARAPROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL ARE ADEQUATELY TRAINED AND PREPARED, INCLUDING—**

**A. STANDARDS THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH ANY NATIONAL OR STATE-APPROVED OR -RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATION, LICENSING, REGISTRATION, OR OTHER COMPARABLE REQUIREMENTS THAT APPLY TO THE PROFESSION OR DISCIPLINE IN WHICH SUCH PERSONNEL ARE PROVIDING VR SERVICES; AND**

**B. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(7)(B)(II) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, TO ENSURE THAT THE PERSONNEL HAVE A 21ST CENTURY UNDERSTANDING OF THE EVOLVING LABOR FORCE AND THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.**

CBVI continues to be committed to a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) to ensure that highly qualified individuals provide services to agency consumers. The CSPD standard for the agency is based upon the degree requirements of the national certification,



Certified Rehabilitation Counselor or CRC. The standard requires a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to have graduated from an accredited college or university with a master's degree in vocational Rehabilitation Counseling; or have a current and valid CRC regardless of degree; or possess the education and experience as outlined in categories A through R promulgated by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC).

**Currently, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor qualification requirements are:**

Graduation from an accredited college or university with a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, Education, Social Work, Counseling, Special Education, School Guidance, or Psychology, and successful completion of one (1) graduate course in Theories and Techniques of Counseling

or

A current and valid certification as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor issued by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification may be substituted for the master's degree

or

A Bachelor's degree in in Rehabilitation Counseling, Education, Social Work, Counseling, Special Education, School Guidance, Psychology, Business Administration, Human Resources, or Economics and two (2) years of professional work experience with individuals with disabilities or performing direct counseling or advocacy activities for individuals with disabilities in a rehabilitation agency, facility or other social program designed to increase the employability of persons with disabilities, may be substituted for the above education.

CBVI is maintaining the education and experience requirements for VRC's through job specifications issued by the NJ Civil Service Commission (CSC), which must be met in order to meet eligibility requirements for hiring.

**Components of the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development - National Certification:**

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, mandates that states develop and implement strategies for the hiring or retraining of personnel to meet standards or qualifications based on the highest requirements in the state for the counseling profession. The Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (the general VR agency in New Jersey), negotiated with administrators at Rutgers University School of Health Professions (formerly the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey) to develop a means to assist in meeting the CSPD standards. The results of the collaborative efforts were the development of a state standard in keeping with the national competency movement and federal mandates. In addition, a masters-level program in Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling. As part of the curriculum, all students complete 60 credits of course work along with Practicum and Internship experience, to practice and integrate counseling skills learned during course work. The program has been accredited by CORE (Council on Rehabilitation Education) and CACREP (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs). It meets national standards for quality education in rehabilitation and counseling education and all

graduates from the program qualify for credentialing as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (the national certification). Rutgers is the only institution of higher learning in the state to offer graduate degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling.

### **Master's Program in Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling:**

Though CBVI is no longer able to directly provide financial support for staff to pursue coursework in the Master's or Post-Master's program in Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling at Rutgers University, the Department of Human Services' Office of Workforce Development and Training (OWDT) oversees and supervises the administration of the current Tuition Reimbursement Program (TRP), which provides tuition reimbursement for eligible employees of the Department. Through this program, staff who do not currently meet the CSPD may pursue additional coursework to meet the requirements of the CRC.

There are presently thirty-four (34) full time vocational rehabilitation counseling staff members at the agency. As of 2025, twenty-nine (29) staff members met the CSPD Standard, an 85 percent rate of compliance. One (1) additional staff member was in plan to achieve compliance. Eighty-five percent of CBVI staff met the CPSD standard or were in plan to achieve compliance. There were three (4) staff members who were not under plan to achieve compliance with CSPD standards. Those staff members were not permitted to perform non-delegable work functions until they developed with administration a defined plan to obtain the necessary education and/or certification to be in compliance with CSPD standards for the agency. The Commission will continue to annually review staff credentials to assess the level of progress in procuring the education to meet the standards of the national certification, i.e., CRC.

#### **4. METHOD(S) THE VR AGENCY USES TO ENSURE THAT PERSONNEL ARE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE IN APPROPRIATE MODES OF COMMUNICATION WITH OR IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGE OF APPLICANTS OR ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE LIMITED ENGLISH SPEAKING ABILITY.**

The CBVI employs vocational rehabilitation staff members who are bilingual through utilizing civil service titles with variants requiring staff to have bilingual abilities in Spanish and English or American Sign Language and English (Deaf-Language Specialist and Deaf-Blind Specialist). Spanish has been identified as the most frequently used language in New Jersey, second only to English. Many of the agency's staff are bilingual, including staff in the Project BEST Unit, Technological Support Services, and Independent Living Skills Unit. The State of New Jersey has a large influx of immigrants from all over the world and it is estimated that over 50 languages and dialects are spoken in the state. The agency utilizes interpreter services from various community based agencies on a fee-for-service basis to help increase language access. Each regional office maintains a list of agencies that provide translation services for a wide range of languages. If translation services are unavailable, then CBVI makes every reasonable effort to gain assistance from family members or other members of that community to facilitate effective communication. Collaborative relationships have also been developed with community agencies such as the Puerto Rican Association for Human Development to foster greater access to the Hispanic/Latino communities. In addition, the agency utilizes the services of Corporate Translation Services Incorporated (CTS Language Link), which enables VRC's to communicate with consumers in over 240 languages and dialects.

5. AS APPROPRIATE, DESCRIBE THE PROCEDURES AND ACTIVITIES TO COORDINATE THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT WITH PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT.

The CBVI works collaboratively with the New Jersey Department of Education (NJ DOE) to provide quality services to New Jersey's students with disabilities under the auspices of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). CBVI and NJ DOE have an ongoing working relationship, as outlined in three Memoranda of Understanding. The first fulfills the requirement under WIOA to implement a cooperative agreement between VR and Education systems around the implementation of transition services to students with disabilities, which remains current. The second and third enable school districts to sign service provider agreements with CBVI for the provision of blindness education services to students with visual impairments, and to arrange for professional development for school district personnel (teachers, paraeducators, and administrators). Under both agreements, CBVI will provide professional development and technical assistance to local education agencies to better serve students who are blind, deaf-blind, and visually impaired.

The Commission also worked with TCNJ administrators to develop a Teacher of the Blind/Visually Impaired program in the School of Education's Department of Special Education. Initially, the program offered courses as continuing education credits but has now established a master's program that prepares teachers for NJ State Licensure as Teachers of the Visually Impaired. This is the only program in New Jersey to prepare teachers to work in this capacity. The Commission seeks to prepare the next generation of teachers who will have an impact on students who are blind, deaf-blind, and visually impaired.

J. COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS.

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(11)(D) of the Rehabilitation Act—

1. DESCRIBE PLANS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATION BETWEEN THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATION OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PUBLIC EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, THAT ARE DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF THE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM THE RECEIPT OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES IN SCHOOL TO THE RECEIPT OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES.

CBVI, since its inception, has assisted school districts in providing education programs that address the unique needs of children with visual impairments, blindness, and deaf blindness. In 1993, this partnership was formalized with local school districts through provider service agreements, which identify the specific level of services that the Commission will provide for each student with a disability in the school district.

A Student with a Disability is an individual with a disability who either is

(1) in a secondary, postsecondary, or other recognized education program and has an IEP that addresses transition to adult life, or is age 14 through 21 and is a student who is an individual with a disability for purposes of section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, or

(2) age 14 through 21, home-schooled, and has a medically documented disability that presents a barrier to competitive integrated employment. (Section 7(37) of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended by WIOA, and 34 C.F.R. § 361.5(c) (51)).

Services are tiered according to individual student needs and are provided by Commission staff within the Education Service Unit. CBVI, employs over fifty Teachers of the Visually Impaired, to provide itinerant based services to children throughout the state.

When students reach the age of fourteen, the Commission's Teachers for the Blind and Visually Impaired refer all these students to one of the nine transition counselors who work in the Vocational Rehabilitation Unit (seven transition counselors assigned to the agency's service centers and four Deaf-Blind Specialists). In addition, Commission staff participate in transition fairs developed by Local Educational Agencies (LEA).

For potentially eligible, and eligible students not receiving services from CBVI's Education Services Unit, school districts are encouraged to reach out and directly facilitate a referral to CBVI for Pre-ETS and Transition Services. CBVI will also continue providing additional training and outreach activities to LEAs to increase local school districts' knowledge of CBVI's Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), Transition Services, and VR Services, to facilitate referrals for any students not already identified through CBVI's Education Unit. Resources and informational materials will be provided to LEAs for distribution to appropriate parents and students about referral and services.

The Commission maintains, in conjunction with the DVRS and Department of Education's Office of Special Education, a Memorandum of Understanding for the provision of Pre-ETS and Transition services, in compliance with WIOA. Under this agreement, additional outreach, training, and technical assistance will be provided to Local Education Agencies, to facilitate collaboration and understanding of the Commission's services and programs.

The transition counselors at the agency can directly provide or arrange for the provision of the full range of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for potentially eligible high school students. Information and referral services are provided to the students, their parents/guardians, and their school district to assist in the transition process from secondary education to adult outcomes. In addition, assessment activities occur to assist in the process to determining eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services for students who choose to apply for VR services. When the student is determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, the transition counselor will begin a process of comprehensive assessment to determine services needs that will inform the development of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) around the specific needs of the student as well as specialized techniques and training in career awareness, college admission procedures, job seeking activities, etc.

For students not planning to pursue competitive, integrated employment upon graduation, CBVI makes available resources and guidance for these students and their families on how to access the adult services and supports they may require, including through the Division of Developmental Disabilities, Social Security and Medicaid, and legal considerations, such as guardianship. A referral to CBVI's Independent Living Unit can also be made upon graduation for students not pursuing employment, but who wish to receive additional IL services, such as Orientation and Mobility, Eye Health, and other blindness skills instruction.

Throughout the transition process, contact with the Local Educational Agency (LEA) and the Teacher of the Blind and Visually Impaired at the agency remains constant. The need for specialized training, specific programs and assistive technology are addressed as part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and are also developed more fully in the Transition IPE.

Technical consultation begins in the earlier grades with the Teacher of the Blind and Visually Impaired is continued through the transition process, and the transition counselor actively seeks participation in the development of IEPs. The transition counselors may also begin evaluative activities at age fourteen that ultimately lead to development of the IPE and continue to play an organizational role with technical consultations and through their active participation in school-to-work activities, task force memberships, career fairs, etc. At various points during the transition process, students are evaluated and presented with opportunities to participate in specific programs funded by the Commission. These programs are continuously evaluated for areas of improvement, and to meet the evolving transition needs of students with disabilities. These commission-run programs include:

Employment, Development, Guidance, and Engagement (EDGE) 1.0, a year-round program targeted to high school-aged blind, deaf-blind, and visually impaired consumers that focuses on development of work readiness and blindness-specific skills of independence, mentorship and instruction in self-advocacy from blind and visually impaired role models, and a work-based learning opportunity in an integrated setting.

Life 101, a two-week summer program for Freshman and Sophomores in high school to focus on acquisition of Pre-Employment Transition Services, including core blindness-specific skills of independence, job exploration counseling, including counseling on post-secondary education opportunities and work readiness training, provided in a residential environment at the Commission's Joseph Kohn Training Center.

The Students Understanding College and Career Expectation for Excellence in School (SUCCESS) Program, dedicated to providing blind, deaf-blind, and visually impaired students likely to seek post-secondary education with the necessary skills to succeed in a higher education environment, including post-secondary enrollment counseling, job exploration counseling, self-advocacy skills instruction, and work readiness skills.

Employment, Development, Guidance, and Engagement (EDGE) 2.0, an extension of EDGE 1.0, that serves to assist undergraduate college students in successfully making the transition from a secondary to post-secondary academic setting and facilitates the development of work readiness and self-advocacy skills, ongoing post-secondary enrollment counseling, job exploration counseling, and work-based learning through internships and other work experiences.

Successful Transition Experiences Preparing Students (STEPS) program, a two-week summer program for blind, deaf-blind, and visually impaired students, possessing additional complex disabilities, that delivers workplace readiness and self-advocacy skills instruction through hands-on activities and work-based learning opportunities.

Career Research Exploration and Awareness for Transition to Employment (CREATE) program, a residential summer program for older students with disabilities, focusing on hands-on work-based learning experiences, work readiness skills, job exploration, and self-advocacy. This program seeks to meet the needs of students who are unsure or uninterested in seeking post-secondary education, and intend to pursue competitive, integrated employment after high school, providing an opportunity to explore potential career goals, gain experience and exposure to work, and enhance their independence and self-advocacy skills.

CBVI continues to formally and informally assess the unmet needs and sub-populations of students with disabilities served by the agency. As a result of this assessment, new services and programs are being developed to enhance and complement those already being offered.

One such program is the Supported Employment Internship opportunity that CBVI will pilot in summer of 2026. This program will provide a student with a most significant disability, the ability to internship at Will's Cafeteria. The student will work with their job coach to identify and find solution to any obstacles while on the job. Each student will be paid above minimum wage, for up to 20 hours per week for the summer.

In addition to enhancing and expanding its existing program offerings, CBVI is also working to create a list of approved Pre-ETS and Transition programs currently being offered outside New Jersey, that may benefit consumers who may have unique needs and supports unmet by the agency's programs and services. The establishment of partnerships and relationships will also be sought after to identify additional CRPs outside and within New Jersey that are best suited to provide a range of Pre-ETS services, so that the agency may expand its programmatic offerings.

On a state level, the Executive Director of CBVI is a member of the State Special Education Advisory Council convened by the NJ Department of Education, with the goal of promoting additional collaboration between programs under IDEIA and WIOA to promote successful transition to adult outcomes for students with disabilities.

2. DESCRIBE THE CURRENT STATUS AND SCOPE OF THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE VR AGENCY AND THE STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY. CONSISTENT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT PURSUANT TO 34 C.F.R. § 361.22(B), PROVIDE, AT A MINIMUM, THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ABOUT THE AGREEMENT:

A. CONSULTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, WHICH MAY BE PROVIDED USING ALTERNATIVE MEANS FOR MEETING PARTICIPATION (SUCH AS VIDEO CONFERENCES AND CONFERENCE CALLS), TO ASSIST EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES IN PLANNING FOR THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO POST-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES AND OTHER VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES;

B. TRANSITION PLANNING BY PERSONNEL OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCY PERSONNEL FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES THAT FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS (IEPS) UNDER SECTION 614(D) OF THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT;

C. THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, OF EACH AGENCY, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR DETERMINING STATE LEAD AGENCIES AND QUALIFIED PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSITION SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES;

D. PROCEDURES FOR OUTREACH TO AND IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO NEED TRANSITION SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES. OUTREACH TO THESE STUDENTS SHOULD OCCUR AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE DURING THE TRANSITION PLANNING PROCESS AND MUST INCLUDE, AT A MINIMUM, A DESCRIPTION OF

THE PURPOSE OF THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM, ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS, APPLICATION PROCEDURES, AND SCOPE OF SERVICES THAT MAY BE PROVIDED TO ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS;

E. COORDINATION NECESSARY TO SATISFY DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS SET FORTH IN 34 C.F.R. PART 397 REGARDING STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE SEEKING SUBMINIMUM WAGE EMPLOYMENT; AND

F. ASSURANCE THAT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH 34 C.F.R. § 397.31, NEITHER THE SEA NOR THE LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY WILL ENTER INTO A CONTRACT OR OTHER ARRANGEMENT WITH AN ENTITY, AS DEFINED IN 34 C.F.R. § 397.5(D), FOR THE PURPOSE OF OPERATING A PROGRAM UNDER WHICH YOUTH WITH A DISABILITY IS ENGAGED IN WORK COMPENSATED AT A SUBMINIMUM WAGE.

Through the memorandum of agreement, signed by CBVI, DVRS, and the NJ Department of Education's Office of Special Education (NJOSE), roles and responsibilities were outlined for each agency in the provision of transition services. The current MOA has an expiration date of 2029.

**A. Consultation and technical assistance, which may be provided using alternative means for meeting participation (such as video conferences and conference calls), to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including pre-employment transition services and other vocational rehabilitation services.**

NJCBVI, NJDVRS and NJOSE will provide ongoing consultation and technical assistance to local VR offices, VR vendors, and LEAs either in person or through alternative means such as conference calls, webinars, and online meetings to assist in planning for the transition of students from school to post-school activities, including integrated competitive employment and postsecondary education and training that leads to employment. **This work continues.**

- NJDVRS, NJCBVI and NJOSE will collaborate on the development and use of all training and resource materials such as presentations, handouts, webpages, flyers, and memorandum on the implementation of WIOA requirements and regulations. **This work continues.**
- For students with disabilities who have IEPs and other members of their IEP teams when requested, NJDVRS and NJCBVI will provide individualized consultation and technical assistance beginning when transition to adult life is first addressed in students' IEPs, through to when students exit high school by graduating or other means. **This work continues.**

**B. Transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency personnel for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs (IEPs) under Section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.**

NJDVRS, NJCBVI, and LEAs will identify and implement effective transition services to achieve the goals and intended outcomes of this MOU.

- NJDVRS and NJCBVI Transition Counselors in each NJDVRS local office and NJCBVI regional service center will establish protocols with all applicable LEAs on how they will work together in the facilitation and development of students' IEPs and IPEs. **Currently VRC's ask to be invited and are invited to IEP and IPE meetings to ensure all partners are on the same page with service provision.**
- NJDVRS, NJCBVI, and NJOSE will collaboratively develop and promote the use of sample protocols by LEAs and each NJDVRS local office and NJCBVI regional service center. **Individual protocols are currently promoted and in use in each CBVI regional service center for each LEA.**
- NJDVRS and NJCBVI, in collaboration and consultation with LEAs, will make available the following Pre-ETS for any student with a disability in need of such services beginning when transition to adult life is first addressed in their IEPs, or if they do not have an IEP, at age 14 through 21, when identified and referred by the LEA or other persons. These services will not be duplicated if provided by the LEA. **This work continues.**
  - Job Exploration Counseling;
  - Counseling on enrollment opportunities in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education;
  - Work based learning experiences;
  - Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living skills; and
  - Instruction in Self-Advocacy and Peer Mentoring.
- NJDVRS and NJCBVI will, on at least an annual basis, jointly determine whether there are sufficient funds available within the 15% reserve of federal funds to pay for and provide authorized Pre-ETS (as described in the definitions section) in addition to the required Pre-ETS and coordination activities. **Authorized Pre-ETS services are provided on an individual and group basis.**

**C. The roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services and pre-employment transition services.**

LEAs working collaboratively with NJDVRS and NJCBVI will be encouraged to use the following criteria when determining who is responsible, both financially and for providing, a Pre-ETS:

1.
  - a. The purpose of the service. Is it related more to an employment outcome or education? That is, is the service usually considered a special education or related service, such as transition planning necessary for the provision of a free appropriate public education?
  - b. Customary Services. Is the service one that the LEA customarily provides under part B of the IDEA? For example, if the LEA ordinarily provides job exploration



counseling or work experiences to its eligible students with disabilities, the mere fact that those services are now authorized under WIOA as Pre-ETS does not mean the LEA should cease providing them and refer those students to the VR program. However, if summer work experiences are not customarily provided by a LEA, NJDVRs and/or NJCBVI and the LEA may collaborate to coordinate and provide summer work-based learning experiences.

- c. Eligibility. Is the student with a disability eligible for transition services under the IDEA? The definition of a “student with a disability” under WIOA and its final regulations is broader than under the IDEA because the definition in WIOA includes those students who are individuals with disabilities under section 504 of the Act. It is possible that students receiving services under section 504 do not have IEPs under the IDEA because they are not eligible to receive special education and related services under the IDEA. As a result, NJDVRs and NJCBVI are authorized to provide transition services under the VR program to a broader population under WIOA than LEAs are authorized to provide under the IDEA.

**D. Procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services and pre-employment transition services. Outreach to these students should occur as early as possible during the transition planning process and must include, at a minimum, a description of the purpose of the vocational rehabilitation program, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and scope of services that may be provided to eligible individuals.**

Provide outreach to identify students with disabilities and assessment of their potential need for Pre-ETS and other VR services.

- NJDVRs and NJCBVI Transition Counselors in each DVRS local office and NJCBVI regional service center will establish protocols with all applicable LEAs on how to share outreach materials and event announcements with all students with disabilities beginning when transition to adult life is first addressed in their IEPs, or if they do not have an IEP, at age 14 through 21, and their families.

Outreach information will include at a minimum:

- A description of the purpose of the VR program;
  - A description of each Pre-ETS;
  - A description of the scope of other VR services available to eligible individuals;
  - Eligibility requirements for Pre-ETS and other VR services; and
  - Procedures for requesting Pre-ETS and applying for eligibility for other VR services.
1. NJDVRs, NJCBVI, and NJOSE will collaboratively develop and promote the use of sample protocols by LEAs and each DVRS local office and NJCBVI regional service center.
  1. NJDVRs, NJCBVI, and NJOSE will pursue and coordinate resource acquisition that maximizes opportunities to achieve outcomes associated with this MOU.

2. NJDVRS, NJCBVI, and NJOSE will promote and encourage coordinated transition services at the state & local levels working in collaboration with employers, community partners and stakeholders.
3. NJDVRS, NJCBVI, and NJOSE will provide training and professional development opportunities for staff in local VR offices, VR vendors, and LEAs to assist in planning for the transition of students from school to post-school activities.
4. NJDVRS, NJCBVI, and NJOSE will share responsibility for training, publication, dissemination and explanation of this MOU.

**MOA partners have created a power point presentation which is used to promote pre-ets services from all three agencies. Presentations are provided in-person and virtually with LEA's as needed. MOA partners are always looking to connect with LEA's to provide training on how to obtain pre-ets services.**

**E. Coordination necessary to satisfy documentation requirements set forth in 34 C.F.R. part 397 regarding students and youth with disabilities who are seeking subminimum wage employment; and**

While the parties to this agreement share a common vision and goal to increase the number of transition age students with disabilities to successfully transition from school to competitive integrated employment, the agencies recognize that some individuals with disabilities may choose to seek employment compensated at a subminimum wage. Under Section 511 of Rehabilitation Act, 14(c) businesses referred to as “employers” are prohibited from employing any individual with disabilities who is 24 years of age or younger at subminimum wage, unless the individual has received documentation from NJDVRS or NJCBVI upon completion of all of the following activities as per 34 C.F.R. §397.20:

1.
  - a. Pre-ETS that are available to the individual under section 113, or transition services under the IDEA.
  - b. Application for VR services with the result that the individual was determined-
    - i.
      1. Ineligible for VR services, or
      2. Eligible for VR services, had an approved IPE that included a specific employment goal consistent with competitive integrated employment, and the individual was unable to achieve an employment outcome in competitive integrated employment despite working toward the employment outcome with reasonable accommodations and appropriate supports and services, including supported employment services and customized employment services, for a reasonable period of time, and their case was closed; and

iii. NJDVRS or NJCBVI provided career counseling and information and referral services to federal and state programs and other resources that offer employment-related services and

supports designed to enable the individual to explore, discover, experience and attain competitive integrated employment, and the counseling and information and referrals were not for employment at subminimum wage.

**F. Assurance that, in accordance with 34 C.F.R. § 397.31, neither the SEA nor the local educational agency will enter into a contract or other arrangement with an entity, as defined in 34 C.F.R. § 397.5(d), for the purpose of operating a program under which youth with a disability is engaged in work compensated at a subminimum wage.**

ASSURANCE:

1. In accordance with 34 C.F.R. 397.31, NJOSE will neither enter into a contract nor any other arrangement with an entity holding a special wage certificate under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act for the purpose of operating a program under which a youth with a disability is paid a subminimum wage, including nonpaid work.
2. NJOSE will advise LEAs to contract with, or refer students to, only those services and programs that pay the greater of the prevailing minimum wage or the state/federal minimum wage.
3. NJDVRs and NJCBVI will obtain from all community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) that are approved to provide extended employment (sheltered workshops), statements of assurances, to be renewed every three years, that state that the CRPs are in full compliance with section 511 of Rehabilitation Act, and that they do not have any contracts or other arrangements with LEAs or the NJOSE for the purpose of operating a program for an individual who is age 24 or younger under which work is compensated at a subminimum wage, including nonpaid work.

**All assurances above are completed and continue to be as the MOA is current.**

#### K. COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(11)(E) of the Rehabilitation Act, describe how the VR agency will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of VR services; and transition services for youth and students with disabilities, including pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities.

CBVI has a Business Relations Unit to strengthen the relationships with employers as a secondary customer of the VR program. In addition, the BRU will coordinate efforts with the larger employment engagement developed for the Workforce Development system in New Jersey. The members of the unit will work with employers throughout the state to assist in addressing their need for qualified candidates to fill critical vacancies in their workforce, and to provide education on disability-related topics. Services provided by the Business Relations Unit can include, but are not limited to, consultation and evaluation around assistive technology and accessibility issues; disability awareness training; recruitment for internships and employment vacancies; and targeted hiring events. CBVI's Business Relations Unit also seeks opportunities for consumers to engage in career exploration activities with business partners, such as informational interviews, job shadowing, and work experiences.

In 2021, CBVI was also selected by the Institute for Community Inclusion to participate in the Scale Up Progressive Employment Project, funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research. Through this project and the associated learning collaborative, CBVI is creating and implementing a progressive employment initiative. The goal is to increase consumer opportunities for learning and employment, and enhance services offered to CBVI consumers and business partners. This project was piloted with a focus on the southern region of New Jersey, however due to unsatisfactory initial results, the pilot was relocated to JKTC. Through the work experience program offered at JKTC, the progressive employment model has proven effective. We are exploring, expanding and perfecting our progressive employment model implementation leading to the goal of statewide implementation.

Through CBVI's Pre-Ets programs and in collaboration with CRP's, employers provide work-based learning experiences in the form of paid or unpaid internships, workplace tours and other services to students and youth with disabilities. The Business Relations Unit evaluates business partners' interest in participating in career explorations activities such as informational interviews, job shadowing, work-based learning opportunities and networking events for students and youth with disabilities. Interested employers who meet the criteria, provide these Pre-Ets and transition services to CBVI consumers.

CBVI's Business Relations Unit continues seeking to partner with agencies and organizations that support, serve, or represent the business community including, but not limited to local workforce development boards' disability issues committees, local area One-Stop Career Centers, human resources professional organizations (such as SHRM), and community rehabilitation providers serving dual customers of VR consumers and businesses. The Business Relations Unit regularly attends job fairs and networking events that facilitate business engagement and connections. Additionally, CBVI is also a member of the National Employment Team, a subsidiary of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), and a national network of business consultants within VR that facilitates a coordinated approach to serving regional and/or national businesses.

#### L. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(11)(C) and (K), describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce development system to develop opportunities for community-based employment in integrated settings, to the greatest extent practicable for the following:

##### 1. STATE PROGRAMS (DESIGNATE LEAD AGENCY(IES) AND IMPLEMENTING ENTITY(IES)) CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

CBVI administers a comprehensive Assistive Technology program to help blind, visually-impaired, and deaf-blind consumers secure employment and to simply live independently in a twenty-first century world. These services are provided to consumers of all ages, from educational students through a program specifically targeting the Older Blind population, defined in Federal law as fifty-five and older. These services may be provided on an individual basis or in classroom-type settings.

CBVI also collaborates with staff at the Richard West Assistive Technology Advocacy Center (ATAC) of Disability Rights New Jersey (DRNJ). The ATAC is New Jersey's federally funded assistive technology project. The ATAC assists individuals with disabilities in overcoming barriers in the system and making assistive technology more accessible. The ATAC also maintains a robust advisory council with a broad representation from the disability community and providers of Assistive Technology devices and services. The ATAC Advisory Council provides recommendations and guidance to the ATAC team. Its membership includes state agency officials, representatives from community organizations such as centers for independent living, advocates with disabilities and family members of people with disabilities. Council members have assisted ATAC in networking, advising on our small grants initiative, and in helping facilitate training and speaking opportunities. A member of the Commission's executive leadership team overseeing Assistive Technology serves as a member of the advisory council.

## 2. PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT BY THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;

The southern part of New Jersey works with Agrability to ensure that farmers who have become disabled have the opportunity for rehabilitation services. There is currently no formal agreement with the US Department of Agriculture, however we are open to developing that relationship.

## 3. NON-EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH;

CBVI has a Memorandum of Understanding with DVRS (the general VR agency), and the DDD (Division of Developmental Disabilities). DDD is a sister agency within the New Jersey Department of Human Services and an agency that provides a full array of services for youth exiting secondary education including employment supports for individuals with a wide array of developmental disabilities. DDD's service delivery system allows for self-direction in developing community based supports. Individuals with developmental disabilities may apply for an eligibility determination at age 18 and are eligible for services at age 21 when they exit secondary education. CBVI's VR Transition Counselors provide information to families about DDD services while in high school, and VR Counselors working with out-of-school youth communicate with the DDD Support Coordinators to facilitate collaborative services for supports.

## 4. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS;

The Commission does not utilize any State Use programs.

## 5. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR ADMINISTERING THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN UNDER TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT (42 U.S.C. 1396 ET SEQ.);

CBVI is looking to establish an MOU with the Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services (DMAHS) within the New Jersey Department of Human Services. DMAHS is the lead agency administering Medicaid Waivers, serves more than 1,000,000 people, with a staff of over 500 people who work both in Trenton and in Medical Assistance Customer Centers (MACCs) throughout the state.

## 6. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES;

A MOU was executed and is currently in place. It includes DVRS, CBVI, and the Division of Developmental Disabilities within the New Jersey Department of Human Services. The objective is to define the roles and responsibilities of State agencies primarily involved in assisting individuals with disabilities in finding and maintaining competitive integrated employment. The MOU will also assist the State agencies in operating in an efficient and successful manner to improve employment outcomes for individuals with developmental disabilities by operating consistently across agencies and ensuring quality service provision. The MOU will be reviewed and updated for renewal.

#### 7. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES; AND

The commission is looking to identify sources of collaboration, including the ability to access long-term follow along services for individuals with serious psychiatric illness, and supports for blind, deaf-blind, and visually impaired consumers with mental illness. DMHAS (The Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services) and CBVI currently collaborate to bring cross-training opportunities to each of the divisions' staff.

#### 8. OTHER FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS OUTSIDE THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM.

### **The Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI)**

The Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI or Commission) is the primary agency responsible for delivering high-quality services to consumers who are blind, deaf-blind, and visually impaired. Consistent with the requirements of WIOA, CBVI is committed through its array of programming to helping its consumers to secure integrated, competitive employment.

The size of the population served by the New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired as well as the complexity of services required by consumers who are blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired necessitates that the agency develops cooperative relationships with organizations and service providers that facilitate and enhance the ability to deliver targeted, high quality services. The Commission has cooperative agreements and/or strong working relationships with the following agencies and organizations which are not required partners of the Statewide Workforce Development System:

Cooperative agreements/partnerships with other divisions within the Designated State Agency (DSA):

Division of Aging Services: Services to support senior citizens in the community.

Division of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing: sign language interpreter referral program; field services to connect with community services.

Division of Developmental Disabilities: Supported Employment services coordination including Extended Services. A full range of support services to assist individuals with developmental disabilities integrate into their communities, including assistance with supported, community-based housing.

Division of Disability Services: Personal assistance/care services to individuals who are disabled, and information and referral services on a wide range of services. The Commission has

also partnered with this agency to provide fiscal intermediary services through a contract with a community provider for consumers of the Support Service Provider-New Jersey program.

Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services - Full range of mental health and addiction recovery services offered in the community and training on these services to staff at the agency.

Cooperative agreements/partnerships with other departments within the State of New Jersey:

Department of Education, Offices of Special Education: Technical assistance with implementation of education and transition services under IDEA. Contact system to provide itinerant education services to children who are blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind via the Local Educational Agencies in New Jersey. CBVI provides comprehensive educational services to children that are blind, deaf-blind, and visually impaired.

Department of Children and Families: Protection services for vulnerable children and families.

Department of Health: Coordination of early intervention services and the Diabetic Eye Disease Detection Program.

New Jersey Transit-Accessible Transportation Services: Training on accessible transportation resources.

Talking Book and Braille Center: Computer/Printer/Closed Circuit Television loaner and distribution program

Additional cooperative agreement:

Programs and services administered by CBVI not carrying out services under the Workforce Development System:

CBVI is the designated State Licensing Agency to administer the Federal Randolph-Sheppard program. It's an entrepreneurial program for qualified, legally blind candidates, who are interested in operating and managing businesses on Federal, State, and municipal properties. Cooperative partnerships exist with Federal, State, municipal buildings, and private businesses, to bid, establish, and implement the facilities at each of these locations.

CBVI administers a comprehensive Assistive Technology program to help blind, deaf-blind, and visually impaired consumers secure employment and to simply live independently in a twenty-first century world. These services are provided to consumers of all ages, from children in the primary education system through a program specifically targeting the Older Blind population, defined in Federal law as fifty-five and older.

CBVI administers an Independent Living and an Independent Living—Older Blind program for blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind consumers, age fifty-five and over. Services are for consumers who are not interested in, or able to, engage in work. Consumers are provided instruction in blindness skills which are delivered via its itinerant teaching staff.

Additional specialized programs include:

The NJ Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (iCanConnect) which distributes telecommunication and internet access equipment to individuals who are deaf-blind and meet FCC eligibility requirements.

A week-long Senior Hands-On Retreat Experience (SHORE), offered twice per year in different areas of the state, for adults age 55 and older who are interested in a more intensive instructional program.

Lessons in assistive technology are provided both individually and in a classroom environment in cooperation with the New Jersey State Library – Talking Book & Braille Center, called the Library Equal Access Program (LEAP).

A state-wide peer support group network, called the Assistive Support Program for Individual Renewal, and Education (ASPIRE), which currently has 58 active groups in all 21 counties is dedicated to assisting this constituency with adjustment to blindness. The ASPIRE program was expanded in 2020 to include two deaf-blind specific groups, as well as a group targeting individuals who are 24-54 years old.

### **The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)**

The DDD serves individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, who meet the functional criteria of having a developmental disability, are eligible for and maintain Medicaid eligibility, are at least 18 years of age at the time of application and 21 years of age to receive services. Conditions generally considered developmental disabilities include intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, spina bifida, and autism. When an individual is in need of employment services to assist him/her in obtaining or maintaining employment, he/she must seek those services through DVRS or CBVI initially. DDD provides other needed services while the eligibility determination is being made with DVRS or CBVI, or in addition to the employment services provided through the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program. Once an eligibility determination is made with DVRS or CBVI, DDD is able to provide employment services not available through VR, and other support services that are available through DDD.

### **The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education**

In order to define the most appropriate resource to cover expenses such as interpreter services, personal care attendants and other accessibility areas while an individual with a disability participates in a school program, the division has agreements with all four-year state colleges and all county colleges in New Jersey. These MOUs have been in place for many years and CBVI seeks to update these MOUs continually.

### **The Division of Wage and Hour Compliance**

In conjunction with community-based rehabilitation programs, the DVRS maintains an MOU with the CBVI, the DDD, and the Division of Wage and Hour. This MOU outlines the criteria for an employment relationship under New Jersey Wage and Hour Law in such a way that vocational rehabilitation activities may take place in community settings without undue restriction. Consequently, situational assessments and similar “on-the-job” work experience may take place without violating employment law.

## **9. OTHER PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.**



The New Jersey CBVI is structured in a manner that facilitates the provision of a full range of services to all age groups, from early childhood to senior populations. The Commission's organizational structure contains distinct units that provide the aforementioned services. Consequently, the Commission has not found it to be necessary to outsource many of its vocational rehabilitation services to private, non-profit providers. The Commission has several contractual and/or cooperative agreements with vocational rehabilitation service providers and with providers of services that contribute, in some form, to the vocational rehabilitation process. In addition to the providers listed below, the Commission maintains close relationships with many of the Centers for Independent Living.

The agency maintains performance based contracts with the following private, non-profit providers. These contracts are reviewed annually, and performance standards are tracked by administrative staff at the agency:

- Community Health Law Project (Advocacy/Legal)
- Pathways to Independence, Crafters Guild (Recreation/Micro-Enterprises)
- Advancing Opportunities (Assistive Technology Evaluation and Training)
- Family Resource Network (Transition program for students with disabilities)
- Center for Vocational Rehabilitation (Community-based work experiences as part of training at the Joseph Kohn Training Center)
- Cumberland County Office on Aging and Disabled (Social/Recreation, Peer Support)
- Family Services of Morris County (Volunteer matching)
- Puerto Rican Association for Human Development (Eye Health Service and Treatment)

The agency works to provide information and referral to eligible consumers for the following organizations which hold contracts with the Social Security Administration to conduct Work Incentives Planning and Assistance projects. Through the WIPA project, these organizations provide free, in-depth, benefits counseling to eligible individuals receiving Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) based on a disability, to make informed choices about work.

- Goodwill Industries of Greater NY and Northern NJ – Covering Bergen, Essex, Hudson, and Union Counties.
- Family Resource Network – NJ Work Incentives Network Support (NJWINS) – Covering Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Ocean, Passaic, Salem, Somerset, and Warren Counties.

The agency also works collaboratively with the following organizations:

- National Federation of the Blind and state affiliates
- American Council of the Blind and state affiliates
- American Association of the Deaf-Blind

- Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (Parent Information and Training Center in New Jersey)
- Vision Loss Alliance of New Jersey
- Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR)
- National Employment Team (NET) - a sub-division within CSAVR
- National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB)
- Deaf-Blind League of New Jersey

### ASSURANCES

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner, that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances:

**The VR agency must select the “Edit” button to review and agree to the VR State plan Assurances.**

The State Plan must include
1. Public Comment on Policies and Procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.
2. Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement: The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a Unified State plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.
3. Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan: The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:
3.a. the establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.b. either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act.

The State Plan must include
3.c. consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.d. the financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3).
3.e. as applicable, the local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.f. as applicable, the shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.g. statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.h. the requirements for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.i. all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.j. the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.k. the compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.l. the reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities as set forth in section 101(a)(18)(A).
3.m. the submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services: The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:
4.a. comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(E) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.b. impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.c. provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services or, if implementing an order of selection, in accordance with criteria established by the State for the order of selection as set out in section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act.

The State Plan must include
4.d. determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.e. comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.f. comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.g. provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.h. comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by sections 101(a)(14) and 511 of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.i. meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs.
4.j. with respect to students with disabilities, the State:
4.j.i. has developed and will implement,
4.j.i.A. strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and
4.j.i.B. strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and
4.j.ii. has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15), 101(a)(25) and 113).
4.j.iii. shall reserve not less than 15 percent of the allocated funds for the provision of pre-employment transition services; such funds shall not be used to pay for the administrative costs of providing pre-employment transition services.
5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement to the State plan:
5.a. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act.
5.b. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals

The State Plan must include
receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.
6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program (Title VI):
6.a. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(H) and (I) of the Rehabilitation Act.
6.b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act.
7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:
7.a. The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act.
7.b. The designated State agency assures that the comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act an individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(7)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act.

Do you attest that these assurances will be met?

Yes

### VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (BLIND) CERTIFICATIONS

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

1. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE,) IS AUTHORIZED TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 (REHABILITATION ACT), AS AMENDED BY TITLE IV OF WIOA[1], AND ITS STATE PLAN SUPPLEMENT UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT;

[1] Public Law 113-128.

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE

Department of Human Services - NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

2. IN THE EVENT THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY IS NOT PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH VOCATIONAL AND OTHER REHABILITATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY MUST INCLUDE A DESIGNATED STATE UNIT FOR THE VR PROGRAM (SECTION 101(A)(2)(B)(II) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT). AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES, THE (DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WHEN THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY HAS A DESIGNATED STATE UNIT)[2] AGREES TO OPERATE AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[3], THE REHABILITATION ACT, 34 CFR 361.13(B) AND (C), AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[4], POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE TO STATES UNDER SECTION 111(A) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

[2] All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

[3] No funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[4] Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76, 77, 79, 81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3474; and the State VR Services program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 361.

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY

Department of Human Services - NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

3. AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY, OR THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WHEN THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY HAS A DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AGREES TO OPERATE AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[5], THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[6], POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER TITLE VI ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

[5] No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supported employment supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[6] Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 4, as well as Supported Employment program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 363.

4. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT OR, IF NOT APPLICABLE, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO PERFORM THE FUNCTIONS OF THE STATE REGARDING THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH 34 CFR 361.13(B) AND (C);

5. THE STATE LEGALLY MAY CARRY OUT EACH PROVISION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

6. ALL PROVISIONS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT ARE CONSISTENT WITH STATE LAW.

7. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO RECEIVE, HOLD, AND DISBURSE FEDERAL FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT;

ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Dr. Bernice Davis - Executive Director of NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

8. THE (ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND THE SUPPLEMENT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Executive Director of NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

9. THE AGENCY THAT SUBMITS THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT HAS ADOPTED OR OTHERWISE FORMALLY APPROVED THE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

[1] PUBLIC LAW 113-128. [2] ALL REFERENCES IN THIS PLAN TO "DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY" OR TO "THE STATE AGENCY" RELATE TO THE AGENCY IDENTIFIED IN THIS PARAGRAPH. [3] NO FUNDS UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT MAY BE AWARDED WITHOUT AN APPROVED VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT. [4] APPLICABLE REGULATIONS, IN PART, INCLUDE THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS (EDGAR) IN 34 CFR PARTS 76, 77, 79, 81, AND 82; 2 CFR PART 200 AS ADOPTED BY 2 CFR PART 3474; AND THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM REGULATIONS AT 34 C.F.R. PART 361. [5] NO FUNDS UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT MAY BE AWARDED WITHOUT AN APPROVED SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 606(A) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT. [6] APPLICABLE REGULATIONS, IN PART, INCLUDE THE CITATIONS IN FOOTNOTE 4, AS WELL AS SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM REGULATIONS AT 34 C.F.R. PART 363.

[1] Public Law 113-128.

[2] All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

[3] No funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[4] Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76, 77, 79, 81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3474; and the State VR Services program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 361.

[5] No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supported employment supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[6] Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 4, as well as Supported Employment program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 363.

CERTIFICATION SIGNATURE

**To review and complete the Certification section of the VR portion of the State plan, please select the "Edit" button.**

Note, please do not edit the table header or formatting. Only edit the table contents.

If you accidentally edit the table headers and structure, open this link to the blank table. You can copy and paste the table into the narrative field, and start over if needed.

Signatory information	Enter Signatory information in this column
<b>Name of Signatory</b>	Dr. Bernice Davis
<b>Title of Signatory</b>	Executive Director
<b>Date Signed</b>	03/10/2026

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Each State VR program must submit expected levels of performance in its Unified or Combined State Plan and in the two-year modification of that plan. Expected levels of performance for the first two years of a state plan must be submitted in the initial submission of the Unified or Combined State Plan and in the initial submission of the two-year modification of that Plan, for years three and four, as described in 34 CFR § 361.170(a). Expected levels of performance must be stated to the nearest tenth of a percent (XX.X %) or to the nearest whole dollar for median earnings. State VR programs are reminded that the expected levels of performance must be published for public comment prior to plan submission in accordance with state law, regulation, and policy.

The submission of expected levels is the first step in the negotiations process. Once the expected levels of performance have been submitted, State VR programs may begin negotiations with RSA's State Monitoring and Program Improvement Division. Each State VR program must reach agreement with RSA on the negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the Unified or Combined State Plan (or for the third and fourth years of the



Unified or Combined State Plan during the required two-year modification process) in accordance with 116(b)(3)(A)(iv).

RSA will use its statistical adjustment model to derive pre-program year estimated levels of performance for each indicator. Each State VR program and RSA will consider the negotiation factors outlined in WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(v) during the negotiation process. Once negotiated levels of performance are agreed upon, each State VR program must incorporate the negotiated levels of performance into the Unified or Combined State Plan and the two-year modification of that plan prior to the plan’s approval (section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv) of WIOA).

**Effectiveness in Serving Employers (ESE)**

The ESE indicator has been defined in the ESE final rule and PY 2024 was the first year of data for the newly defined performance indicator. However, a minimum of at least two baseline years of data must be collected to support a statistical adjustment model that could produce sufficiently reliable estimates for the purposes of performance negotiations and state performance assessments. The Departments, in accordance with 20 CFR § 677.190(c)(4) and 34 CFR §§ 361.190(c)(4) and 463.190(c)(4), will collect and monitor state ESE performance results for at least PY 2024 and PY 2025 to establish a credible baseline and provide technical assistance. After PY 2025 data are collected the Departments will develop a statistical adjustment model for ESE in accordance with section 116(b)(3)(A)(viii) of WIOA. Since the ESE indicator is a statewide measure that reflects a combined result across WIOA titles I, II, III, and IV programs, the Departments will jointly engage in negotiations with state representatives from all core programs when feasible. While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	50.0		50.5	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	51.0		52.6	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	6,600.0		6,700.0	
Credential Attainment Rate	43.9		44.0	
Measurable Skill Gains	57.8		58.5	

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

1

*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.*

**GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISION ACT SECTION 427 ASSURANCE - VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION**

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to applicants for grant awards under this program. All applicants for new grant awards must include the following information in their applications to address this provision in order to receive funding under this program. (OMB Control Number 1894-0005)

The State Plan must include	Include
I assure that the proposed project complies with the requirements in section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1228a).	Yes

Compliance can be found on the following page(s) of the application:

B (1) b, B (1)c, C (2), I (4) and L (1-9)

**GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISION ACT SECTION 427 ASSURANCE - SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT**

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to applicants for grant awards under this program. All applicants for new grant awards must include the following information in their applications to address this provision in order to receive funding under this program. (OMB Control Number 1894-0005)

The State Plan must include	Include
I assure that the proposed project complies with the requirements in section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1228a).	Yes

Compliance can be found on the following page(s) of the application:

B (1) a, C (2), D (1), E (1), E (2-4), J (2), and L (1-9)

**VII. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS**

States choosing to submit a Combined State Plan must provide information concerning the six core programs—the Adult program, Dislocated Worker program, Youth program, Wagner-Peyser Act program, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program, and the Vocational Rehabilitation program— and also submit relevant information for any of the eleven partner programs it elects to include in its Combined State Plan. When a State includes a Combined State Plan partner program in its Combined State Plan, it need not submit a separate plan or application for that particular program. 24 If included, Combined State Plan partner programs are subject to the “common planning elements” in Sections II-IV of this document, where specified, as well as the program-specific requirements for that program.

[24] States that elect to include employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.) under a Combined State Plan would submit all other required elements of a complete CSBG State Plan directly to the Federal agency that administers the program. Similarly, States that elect to include employment and training activities carried by the Department of Housing and Urban Development would submit all other required elements of a complete State Plan for those programs directly to the Federal agency that administers the program.

## JOBS FOR VETERANS' STATE GRANTS

(OMB Control Number: 1293-0017)

### **Components of the Jobs for Veterans State Grants State Plan**

Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) recipients must provide a four-year state plan as a condition for the receipt of annual funding in accordance with 38 U.S.C. § 4102A(c). This plan must include responses to each of the components below.

#### **A. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE INTENDS TO PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND JOB PLACEMENT SERVICES TO VETERANS AND ELIGIBLE PERSONS UNDER THE JVSG PROGRAM (I.E., VIRTUALLY AND IN-PERSON).**

NJDOL will promote the hiring of military service veterans using staff, technology, and state leadership that support the goal of full employment for military service veterans. One-Stop Career Center and NJDOL management staff work with both veteran jobseekers and employers. Serving the workforce directed needs of New Jersey's veterans is a responsibility shared by all One-Stop Career Center staff.

#### *Jobseekers:*

Upon intake into the One-Stop Career Center system, jobseekers are given a veteran eligibility screening tool developed by the Veteran Committee of the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA). This one-page form is designed to assist staff with determining if a job seeker is eligible for veteran services offered by DVOP staff. The job seeker is also provided a registration form that is designed to quickly identify the best career or training services options for that individual. Veteran's status and eligibility for Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) services are determined during this initial assessment. Based on this intake, veterans connect with targeted opportunities.

The criteria used for deciding whether to refer a veteran or other eligible person to JVSG or non-JVSG staff is based on VPL 05-24 and other guidance, which includes in priority order special disabled veterans, other disabled veterans, and other eligible veterans and persons, in accordance with the priorities determined by the Secretary of the US Department of Labor. Effective intake and customer flow procedures, staff training, technical assistance/reinforcement, and monitoring contribute to ensuring that only a subset of eligible veterans and other eligible persons are served by the DVOP. All veterans served by the DVOP will be assessed and have an employability plan that directs the delivery of individualized career and training services.

Veterans interested in federal employment opportunities receive preference based on the conditions of their military service and the presence of a service-connected disability. Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists will work with veterans and eligible persons who have significant barriers to employment. One-Stop Career Center staff will work with all veterans to provide them with information on the federal application process and how to locate and apply for federal job opportunities using [usajobs.gov](http://usajobs.gov).

With the average age of New Jersey's state employee workforce continuing to increase, employment opportunities for veterans will likely occur in significant numbers. Veterans having served during specific time periods are given advantages over non-veterans in hiring and promotion by New Jersey's civil service system. Local government agencies, whether operating under the state's civil service system or not, also provide opportunities for veterans to secure career service employment.

Federal contractors and sub-contractors provide another avenue for veterans looking for well-paying jobs leading to economic self-sufficiency. Federal contractors are required to post their job openings with New Jersey's labor exchange system.

Veterans participating in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) Program are dual-enrolled customers. In accordance with USDOL- VETS guidance, NJDOL observes the National Memorandum of Understanding with the US Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training Service (US DOL/VETS) and the VA/VR&E program that delineates roles and responsibilities for staff in the partner agencies. NJDOL's primary role is to provide priority job search assistance for those veterans who are completing their VR&E Program. All partner agencies are involved in a quarterly review of VR&E customers and their progress in reaching their career goals. NJDOL has assigned non-JVSG staff to co-monitor the [ISC@dol.nj.gov](mailto:ISC@dol.nj.gov) mailbox. The staff are responsible for eligibility screening and assignment of any non-eligible Veterans to a non-JVSG staff member for services.

#### *Employer and Industry Connections*

DVOP and non-JVSG One-Stop staff communicate to Veterans Business Representatives (VBRs, New Jersey's term for LVER) the skills, education, work history, aptitudes, and career aspirations of the veterans they are serving to help direct employer outreach efforts. VBRs, likewise, communicate to One-Stop staff working with jobseekers the needs of employers in the local area to assist with the preparation of veterans for job placement. The role of the Veterans Business Representative is consistent with 38 U.S.C. 4104(b). Since 2014, VBRs have been aligned with NJDOL's existing business services team in order to focus their job duties exclusively on businesses outreach, with the goal of identifying job opportunities for veterans as

well as marketing the benefits of hiring veterans to employers. This alignment also ensures efficiencies in sharing effective practices and accessing the latest market intelligence for the benefit of New Jersey's veterans.

VBRs and other non-JVSG business outreach staff, who will continue to organize and promote to employers hiring events such as job fairs and targeted recruitment efforts and conduct periodic business seminars/presentations to employer membership groups such as the New Jersey Business & Industry Association and chambers of commerce. Technology, including NJDOL's online labor exchange system and website, automated mass call telephone messaging system, and ability to blast e-mail announcements to targeted veterans will help NJDOL create a more efficient and transparent market for employers and jobseekers. State leadership will continue to be an important component for keeping the focus on the hiring of military service veterans through special initiatives. Current efforts include the VETeach program within the NJ Department of Education. The program aims to fast track the teacher certification of veterans and enhance a high-quality teacher workforce. NJDOL actively recruits qualified veterans interested in pursuing a NJ teacher certification for this special initiative.

NJDOL anticipates employers will continue to develop formal military veterans' recruitment programs. Several large New Jersey employers have committed to hiring more veterans by setting numerical targets, designing media outreach programs, working closely with One-Stop Career Center staff on posting job orders, organizing hiring events, and dedicating company staff to veterans' recruitment activities. NJDOL is working with a number of NJ based employers that have joined the Veteran Job Mission initiative that is dedicated to providing employer resources to hire and retain veterans. The coalition began with 11 companies committed to hiring 100,000 veterans. It now boasts over 315 employers nationwide, with a goal of placing two million veterans and 200,000 military spouses in jobs. Merck, Amtrak, and Allied Universal are companies included in this network of employers that work directly with NJDOL to hire veterans. A complete list of Veteran Jobs Mission employers is available on their website: <https://veteranjobsmission.com/>.

### *Technology and Processes*

New Jersey has embraced technology tools for targeting veterans for services based on their needs. As an example, unemployment insurance claimants are assigned a probability of exhaustion score upon filing for benefits. The score is determined by the personal characteristics of the claimant by looking primarily at the education and work history. Depending on the score, claimants can be directed to self-service tools and Jersey Job Club workshops designed to assist them secure employment. Veterans applying for unemployment benefits are automatically registered for One-Stop Career Center services. NJ has implemented a single-sign-on method of registration that allows veterans access to the comprehensive menu of services available through NJ's workforce development system. This virtual triaging allows for quicker and more coordinated service delivery to the veteran population seeking job search assistance.

Ensuring that every veteran conducts a focused, determined and robust job search has been greatly enhanced by the introduction of the online labor exchange system.

New Jersey implemented Salesforce as an online business customer management tool. Salesforce helps coordinate services within each region and manage business outreach efforts.

All partners have access to the system to help coordinate service and avoid duplicating efforts. It also helps tighten the process of job orders by having one representative handle business outreach and efforts to refer clients to these businesses, instead of splitting these duties across multiple representatives.

Additionally, the Jersey Job Club aims to create a backbone for service delivery. Jersey Job Club standardizes service delivery across the One-Stop Career Center system. Jersey Job Club offers three types of service workshops:

- Core workshops – résumé writing, interview skills, social media training.
- Enrichment workshops – networking, industry specific workshops (beneficial for mass hiring efforts); and
- Specific workshops based on population.

**B. LIST THE POPULATIONS TO BE SERVED BY DISABLED VETERANS' OUTREACH PROGRAM (DVOP) AND CONSOLIDATED POSITION STAFF, INCLUDING THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR REFERRAL FOR DVOP SERVICES.**

New Jersey has expanded the definition of dislocated workers to include military spouses consistent with WIOA. Military spouses who have lost employment as a direct result of a relocation to accommodate a permanent change in duty station of the spouse, if family income is significantly reduced because of a deployment, a call to active duty, a permanent change of station, or the service-connected death or disability of a service member, or if they are unemployed or underemployed and are experiencing difficulty in obtaining or upgrading employment.

Military service members preparing to return to civilian life will also be afforded the opportunity to receive training and services under WIOA Adult and/or Dislocated Worker by discounting military pay that would otherwise disqualify them for program eligibility. NJDOL has a long-standing relationship with the military leaders at Joint Base Maguire-Dix-Lakehurst. While state staff no longer deliver Transition Assistance Program (TAP) workshops, staff of nearby One-Stop Career Centers have established and maintained relationships with JBMDL and Naval Weapons Station Earle Tap site staff. They regularly visit the Joint Base as appropriate during TAP sessions to communicate the services offered through New Jersey's One-Stop Career Center system during breaks and allow Transitioning Service Members to understand the steps needed to avail themselves of those services. The goal is to provide a seamless transition from military to civilian life with little or no intervening period of unemployment during the transition period. A tangible example of New Jersey's efforts to ensure a seamless transition is the Military Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Skills Waiver Program. The New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission is helping military personnel transition their military driving experience into civilian employment. By waiving the CDL Skills Test (behind-the-wheel exam) qualified military applicants will no longer have to provide a commercial vehicle in order to obtain a New Jersey CDL license.

New Jersey will continue to distinguish military service veterans according to USDOL guidance primarily to determine eligibility for DVOP services. Covered persons must be given priority of service which means they go to the front of the line for all One-Stop services including employment, training, and placement services. In some limited cases, a spouse of a veteran can

be classified as a covered person and must be given priority of service. Only covered persons who are also defined as “eligible” and are identified as having a Qualifying Employment Barrier (QEB) should be referred to the DVOP consistent with VPL 05-24 or current guidance. DVOPS will also provide services to additional populations as outlined in VPL 05-24 or current guidance.

An eligible veteran meets one or more of the following:

- Served on active duty for a period of more than 180 days and was discharged or released with other than a dishonorable discharge;
- Was discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability;
- Was a member of a reserve component under an order to active duty pursuant to section 12301(a), (d), or (g), 12302, or 12304 of title 10, served on active duty during a period of war or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge is authorized and was discharged or released from such duty with other than a dishonorable discharge; and/or
- Was discharged or released from active duty by reason of a sole survivorship discharge.

Special disabled/disabled are those eligible veterans who are entitled to compensation (or who but for the receipt of military retired pay would be entitled to compensation) under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans’ Affairs or who were discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability.

Veterans participating in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program are a priority order customer for services. In accordance with most current guidance, NJDOL has a state level Memorandum of Understanding with the US Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training Service (US DOL/VETS) and the VA/VR&E program that delineates roles and responsibilities for staff in the partner agencies. NJDOL’s primary roles are to provide workforce information to veterans who are entering a VR&E Program and to provide priority job search assistance for those veterans who are completing their VR&E Program. All partner agencies are involved in a quarterly review of VR&E customers and their progress in reaching their career goals. NJDOL has assigned a VR&E Intensive Services Coordinator (ISC) from among the DVOP specialists assigned to the Newark One-Stop Career Center. The staff is stationed at the VA/VR&E office at 20 Washington Place in Newark. While New Jersey recognizes three American Indian tribes – Ramapough Lenape Indian Nation, Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Tribal Nation, and the Powhatan Renape Nation – but there are no designated tribal lands or individuals living on tribal lands.

**C. DESCRIBE THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES ASSIGNED TO DISABLED VETERANS’ OUTREACH PROGRAM (DVOP) SPECIALISTS, LOCAL VETERANS’ EMPLOYMENT REPRESENTATIVE (LVER) STAFF, AND CONSOLIDATED DVOP/LVER POSITIONS BY THE STATE. THESE MUST BE CONSISTENT WITH 38 U.S.C. 4103A AND 4104.**

JVSG staff are deployed with clearly delineated distinct duties for the DVOP specialist and LVER. These include the delivery of individualized career services and facilitating placement to eligible populations by the DVOP specialist. Outreach to the employer community and facilitation of employment, training, and placement services within the state’s employment service delivery

system is by the VBR (Veterans Business Representative, New Jersey's term for LVER). DVOP specialists and VBRs provide specialized services that complement and add value to One-Stop Career Centers' veteran services. DVOP specialists and VBRs do not duplicate services provided by other labor exchange staff.

To maximize the return on investment that this specialized staff contributes, NJDOL will work to fill vacancies incorporating New Jersey's veteran population by county, emphasizing those economically or educationally disadvantaged.

NJDOL assigns Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) funded staff members to One-Stop Career Centers where they can best serve veteran populations that have been targeted for specialized services. DVOP specialists and VBRs are assigned geographically based on the concentration of eligible veterans and demographic factors that would suggest a greater need for services such as local unemployment rates, proximity to military bases, high poverty areas, and areas with returning ex-offender populations.

Once a veteran is referred to a DVOP specialist, staff complete a comprehensive assessment, document barriers, discuss job readiness, offer career advice/planning, and develop with the veteran an employability plan that may include barrier reduction strategies, referral to basic and/or occupational skills training, job search assistance through the Jersey Job Club, and referral to Vocational Rehabilitation or the Veterans Administration. Once a veteran successfully achieves the employment goal, staff are available to provide post-employment coaching as an employment retention strategy. Three elements of case management are followed during this process: comprehensive assessment, employment plan, and consistent contact.

NJDOL now observes the National Memorandum of Understanding with the US Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training Service (US DOL/VETS) and the VA/VR&E program that delineates roles and responsibilities for staff in the partner agencies. NJDOL's primary roles is to provide priority job search assistance for those veterans who are completing their VR&E Program. All partner agencies are involved in a quarterly review of VR&E customers and their progress in reaching their career goals. NJDOL has assigned non-JVSG staff to co-monitor the [ISC@dol.nj.gov](mailto:ISC@dol.nj.gov) mailbox. The staff are responsible for eligibility screening and assignment of any non-eligible Veterans to a non-JVSG staff for services.

DVOP specialists are expected to provide intensive case management services for the VR&E customers which include a comprehensive assessment and Individual Employment Plan based upon the employment plan provided by the VA while keeping consistent contact. The goal is to provide the VR&E veterans with the tools to be successful in the job search such as an effective résumé, career guidance, and job search assistance.

DVOP specialists will provide weekly job search services including job matching and referrals. In addition, DVOPs will engage business outreach staff to place customers by communicating characteristics of the veterans' population such as a general sense of their skills, education, experience, and career aspirations. VBRs and non-JVSG business outreach staff will use this information to communicate the value of the labor pool more effectively to employers.

DVOP specialists are stationed at One-Stop Career Centers where there are veterans that might benefit from intensive services.



LVERs in New Jersey are called Veteran Business Representatives (VBRs) and are aligned with the business services team in order to keep their focus on employer engagement. Jobseeker staff communicate on a regular basis with the VBRs to ensure they are generating job orders consistent with the skills, education and aptitude of the veterans being served.

VBRs play a critical role in promoting the employment of veterans to the business community. VBRs have been fully integrated into the Business Services team and possess the same toolbox as other Business Representatives, which includes on-the-job training grant funds, navigational assistance for the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), knowledge of other state and local programs for defraying the extraordinary costs of hiring and training new workers. VBRs work closely with the One-Stop Managers and DVOPs to target their outreach efforts to employers based on the skills and career aspirations of the veteran looking for employment. VBRs and DVOPs meet monthly to case conference.

VBRs are assigned duties that promote to employers, employer associations, and business groups the advantages of hiring veterans. VBRs will do this in conjunction and as active members of the business services team. VBRs advocate for all veterans served by the One-Stop with business, industry, and other community-based organizations by participating in appropriate activities such as:

- Planning and participating in job and career fairs;
- In conjunction with employers, conducting job searches and workshops, and establishing job search groups;
- Coordinating with unions, apprenticeship programs and businesses or business organizations to promote and secure employment and training programs for veterans;
- Informing federal contractors of the process to recruit qualified veterans;
- Promoting credentialing and licensing opportunities for veterans; and
- Coordinating and participating with other business outreach efforts.

VBRs are also responsible for facilitating employment, training, and placement services furnished to veterans in New Jersey under the One-Stop service delivery systems. USDOL-VETS defines this facilitation duty as the act of capacity building within the state's employment service delivery system to ensure easier access to the appropriate employment and training services for job-seeking veterans. VBRs will play an important role in assisting with the development of the service delivery strategies for veterans in their assigned One-Stop, as well as educating all One-Stop partner staff with current employment initiatives and programs for veterans.

NJDOL concentrates VBR staff efforts on targeted job development services for veterans, particularly veterans determined to be job ready after receipt of individualized career services from a DVOP specialist. These measures will assist NJDOL in enhancing existing processes and oversight to ensure DVOP specialists provide individualized career services for veterans with employment barriers, including homeless veterans, veterans with disabilities, and the other service categories listed in more recent guidance.

D. DEMONSTRATE THE MANNER IN WHICH DVOP, LVER AND CONSOLIDATED DVOP/LVER STAFF ARE INTEGRATED INTO THE STATE'S EMPLOYMENT SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEMS OR AMERICAN JOB CENTER (AJC). THIS DEMONSTRATION SHOULD SHOW ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN JVSG AND OTHER AJC STAFF, SUCH AS THROUGH PARTICIPATION IN STAFF MEETINGS AND CROSS-TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES.

New Jersey's workforce development system recognized that a one-size fits all approach to labor exchange services is not a viable strategy for meeting the needs of jobseekers and employers. JVSG staff are critical to this effort. JVSG funded staff are fully integrated into New Jersey's One-Stop Career Center system. Opportunities for collaboration and coordination of services to veterans are realized by supporting a fully integrated workforce development system.

Veterans entering the system are assigned the level of service that they need to be successful in their employment efforts. On average, 80 percent of veterans registering with the One-Stop can be served through self-service and/or non-JVSG staff-assisted (e.g. Jersey Job Club, Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment/Worker Profiling programs, one-on-one job search assistance) services. The characteristics of this 80 percent group are very similar to non-veterans served – good employment history, possession of an educational credential, labor demand skills, and desire to work. Similarly, there is a component of the One-Stop customer base that has qualifying employment barriers, including little or no work history, homelessness, alcohol, drug, or legal issues, lack of a high school diploma, low income, and mental or physical problems. If members of this latter group are eligible veterans, they can best be served by the DVOP specialist. By focusing on veterans with qualifying employment barriers, DVOP specialists can provide the time-intensive quality services that this subset of veterans needs to overcome their barriers and secure employment. This approach also allows for quicker and more seamless access to supportive services and other resources.

NJDOL will continue to conduct activities that promote job training and employment opportunities for veterans, working with partner agencies to leverage resources. These activities include Job Fairs, Veterans Information Fairs, Vocational Rehabilitation, WIOA, Senior Community Service Employment Program (55+), state Workforce Development Partnership programs including Workforce Learning Link and WIOA Title II for low literate veterans, Opportunity Partnership industry supported training, NJ BUILD for veterans who are women and/or minorities, Helmets to Hardhats, Troops to Teachers, On-the-Job Training Grants, GI Bill, Tuition Waiver program for state and county college courses, and Registered Apprenticeship training programs.

DVOP specialists concentrate on the delivery of individualized career services to veterans with qualifying employment barriers to employment as defined in USDOL guidance using a case management approach. Subsequent guidance with additional eligibility categories will not substantially impact service delivery. In a fully integrated environment where resources are leveraged to maximize efficiency and positive outcomes, the DVOP specialist is not personally delivering all of the career services but is managing the customer toward employment based on the outcome of an assessment and employment plan.

For example, the delivery of individualized career services is often managed by the DVOP using a case management approach where the delivery of those services to the veterans is shared by

the DVOP specialist and others. New Jersey developed the Jersey Job Club to assist jobseekers including veterans with workshops on job search basics, résumé writing, interviewing skills, industry specific seminars, using social networking and other 21st century job search tools, and veterans' specific topics. The Jersey Job Clubs are staffed with One- Stop Career Center (OSCC) employees funded under Wagner-Peyser, WIOA Dislocated Worker (25 percent funds), TANF/GA/FS, and smaller miscellaneous funds.

To support this partnership and service integration, NJDOL leverages technology and other resources. The DVOP records case management in the NJDOL America's One-Stop Operating System (AOSOS) case management system under the DVOP specialist's account. To help ensure that accountability information is recorded in a consistent manner that reflects the level of effort by the DVOP, NJDOL has created a custom tab in the AOSOS case management system specifically for the DVOP specialist. Management exception reports have also been developed to identify issues in near real-time. Unlike traditional, after- the-fact, reports that provide summary tabulations, exception reports provide actionable information from individual customer records that can be run on a regular or ad-hoc basis to identify potential mistakes, oversights, or need for customer follow-up. Items on the exception report include whether the customer is an eligible veteran, whether they have received an individualized career service, whether they are in case management, and whether they have qualifying employment barriers. A JVSG visual dashboard was created using Microsoft Power BI to assist with better managing this information.

NJDOL works closely with other agencies such as the NJ Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to ensure that all staff serving veterans are aware of the myriad of resources available to veterans. Strategies include providing partner links on web sites and joint participation in informational programs targeted to veterans and veteran service providers. The One-Stop Career Center is a primary point of contact for employers, non-profit agencies, educational and training institutions, and other service providers who are interested in recruiting or serving veterans. These contacts are shared with other One-Stop partners to promote linkages at the local level.

Outreach activities to identify and assist veterans in need of intensive services have fostered additional relationships: with the Lyons Campus of the VA New Jersey Health Care System in Lyons, Fort Monmouth Shelter in Freehold, NJ Department of Military and Veterans Affairs at multiple locations, Lunch Break in Red Bank (homeless veterans), MOCEANS (homeless, low income, and educationally deficient veterans) in Long Branch, and the Veterans Transitional Housing Program (Veterans Haven) in Winslow.

Outreach efforts are designed to engage and provide intensive services to disabled veterans and /or veterans with qualifying employment barriers, especially homeless veterans and the other categories defined in USDOL-VETS guidance. In order to maximize services to those veterans the impact of the system of supports, NJDOL actively works with the following types of organizations and services:

- Veteran Service Organizations: An organization whose charter and purpose are to provide goodwill to veteran members and to serve the needs of veterans and the community at large.
- VA Outpatient Clinics: Clinics that offers comprehensive primary care and behavioral health services.

- **Faith-Based Organizations:** Organizations that typically delivers a variety of services to the public.
- **Homeless Shelters:** Shelters that are temporary residences for homeless people. Usually located in urban neighborhoods, they are similar to emergency shelters.
- **Community-Based Organizations:** An organization that is representative of a community or significant segments of a community and provides educational or related services to individuals in the community.
- **Veteran Service Officers:** An employee of the state/county who is tasked with ensuring that veterans within the state and county receive their entitled benefits.
- **Supportive Service Organizations:** Part of a coordinated system of services designed to help maintain the independence of the participant.
- **One-Stop Career Center Personnel:** Qualified professionals who can assist with obtaining employment or the training needed to meet the demands of New Jersey's workforce.
- **NJ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation:** One-Stop partner agency providing work-directed assistance to veterans with disabilities.
- **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I:** One-Stop partner agency providing basic and occupational skills training to veterans.
- **State and County College Network:** Partner agencies providing educational credentials and job search assistance to veterans.
- **Military Installations:** A facility directly owned and operated by or for the military or one of its branches that shelters military equipment and personnel and facilitates training and operations.

Active referrals of veterans to and from these partner organizations are made based on pre-assessments and the assessment and employability plans developed by the DVOP specialists and other One-Stop Career Center staff.

JVSG presence in the One Stop also contributes to successful industry partnerships. Informing the workforce system of the particular needs of different industries (employers in retail trade, for instance, look for customer service skills while an employer in the advanced manufacturing industry may be looking for analytical skills) was the impetus for creating New Jersey Industry Partnerships. These Industry Partnerships were created for each of New Jersey's key industries and are designed to develop strategies to meet the skill needs of business and facilitate the development of career pathways with varying access points. Industry Partnerships gather industry intelligence directly from businesses to better inform workforce and education investments. This intelligence informs and assists New Jersey's K-12 and higher education systems, and training providers, with the development of programs that meet the skills and credentials demands of employers. New Jersey Industry Partnerships will continue to be important partners in helping Veteran Business Representatives better understand employer requirements and help VBRs more effectively connect to employers for promoting veterans for employment.

More and more employers are requesting VBR assistance to conduct veteran recruitments. A prime example is the Troops to Energy Jobs initiative. Public Service Enterprise Group (PSEG), one of the largest employers in NJ has connected with this national initiative to provide resources to connect veterans to rewarding careers in energy. PSEG posts their positions in the National Labor Exchange online job board to ensure that NJ veterans are apprised of the different career opportunities with their company. VBRs work directly with PSEG to facilitate hiring events and source these open positions.

Instead of organizing a multi-employer, traditional job fair, interested veterans are pre-screened by One-Stop Career Center staff to see if they meet the minimum requirements for energy sector positions with PSEG. One-Stop staff conduct targeted outreach efforts and assist veteran jobseekers navigate pre-employment requirements such as an Energy Management Professional certification. Unlike traditional events where successful employment outcomes are often anecdotal, events coordinated for single employers present a better opportunity for measuring return on investment through hiring feedback from the employer.

E. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PERFORMANCE INCENTIVE AWARD PROGRAM TO ENCOURAGE INDIVIDUALS AND/OR EMPLOYMENT SERVICE OFFICES TO IMPROVE AND/OR ACHIEVE EXCELLENCE IN THE PROVISION OF SERVICES TO VETERANS, INCLUDING:

1. THE NOMINATION AND SELECTION PROCESS FOR ALL PERFORMANCE INCENTIVE AWARDS TO INDIVIDUALS AND/OR OFFICES;

State Workforce Agencies are mandated to include in their JVSG State Plans a program of performance incentive awards in accordance with 38 U.S.C. § 4112. NJDOL has developed an Incentive Award plan that has been approved by the NJ Civil Service Commission and NJDOL Executive Management team. The incentive awards plan is consistent with the requirements outlined in Veteran Program Letter 01-24, Attachments #1, #3, and #5, and GO Memorandum 02-22.

The incentive award program is established to:

- Encourage the improvement and modernization of employment, training, and placement services for veterans; and
- Recognize eligible employees and employment service offices for excellence in the provision of such services or for having made demonstrable improvements in the provision of services to veterans.

Per 38 U.S.C. § 4102A(c)(7), NJ will designate one-percent of its JVSG annual allocation for cash performance incentive awards for eligible employees and employment services office.

Beginning in FY24, NJDOL will award six annual cash performance incentive awards.

There will be two separate categories for the veteran incentive awards:

1. Office Awards (Nominate multiple staff members from an individual One-Stop office).
2. Individual Awards (Nominate an individual staff member for outstanding service)

Eligibility for individual awards will be limited to those persons who meet eligibility criteria under 38 U.S.C. § 4112. Office awards may include offices with employees funded under other WIOA titles or supported by additional funding providing employment, training, and placement services to veterans.

The dates of activity that will be evaluated for the FFY 2024 awards will be October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024. Nominations are open to all One-Stop Career Center staff that serve veterans. This includes State, County, and Municipal employees.

These performance incentive awards will be presented to the individual staff members, and local area One-Stop Career Centers, that best demonstrate excellence and dedication in the provision of quality employment, training, and placement services to U.S. Veterans and other eligible persons.

**Nominations for the office awards will be evaluated by the following criteria:**

*Quantitative:*

Veterans' Entered Employment Rate (VEER) – Of those veterans and other eligible persons who were not employed at program entry: The number of veterans and eligible persons who are employed in the first quarter after the exit quarter divided by the number of veterans and eligible persons who exit during this quarter. Offices will be ranked in the order of their VEER scores. Higher ranking offices will be favored.

*Qualitative:*

- Local office best practices that resulted in system improvements that positively impacted the services provided to veterans.
- Outstanding case management services provided to eligible veterans.
- Outreach to employers and veteran job seekers.
- Collaborative success in providing services to veterans. This may include partnerships with Veterans Readiness and Employment, WIOA and other partner agencies.
- Efforts to assist hard-to-place populations (e.g., veterans experiencing homelessness).
- Exceptional performance beyond job requirements or outside of established performance goals. Innovative veteran-related activity.
- Support letters from veteran customers that received direct service from One-Stop staff.

**Nominations for the individual incentive awards will be evaluated by the following criteria:**

Individual incentive awards will be based on objective data collected from NJDOL's electronic case management system of record America's One-Stop Operation System and a subjective nomination.

*Objective:*

- Number of veterans served.

- Outreach to veteran job seekers.
- Completed veteran Comprehensive Assessments.
- Completed veteran Individual Employment Plans.
- Documented labor Market Information activities provided.
- Veterans case managed.
- Veteran customers matched to open job orders.
- Veteran business outreach conducted.

*Subjective:*

A subjective analysis of the narrative section of each application. The same criteria listed in the qualitative section for the office award will be considered for the individual award.

NJDOL has designed the JVSG Incentive Award to communicate and promote those staff actions that lead to positive employment outcomes for veteran and eligible customers.

2. THE APPROXIMATE NUMBER AND VALUE OF CASH AWARDS USING THE ONE PERCENT INCENTIVE AWARD ALLOCATION;

Beginning in FY24, NJDOL will award six annual cash performance incentive awards.

There will be two separate categories for the veteran incentive awards:

- Office Awards (Nominate multiple staff members from an individual One-Stop office).
- Individual Awards (Nominate an individual staff member for outstanding service)

For Office Awards, NJDOL will recognize **three One-Stop offices annually**. One-Stop office incentive award recipients will receive an equal share of the total JVSG grant incentive award funds, and awards will be 1% of NJDOL's annual JVSG award program funds minus the \$4,500 allotted for three individual incentive awards. Employees *listed* on the One-Stop office nominations for the three chosen One-Stops will receive a share of the award. The award amount is calculated by dividing the balance of 1% of NJDOL's total JVSG award after the allotment of the individual awards are paid (4,500) by the *total number of nominees listed* on all three winning nominations submitted for that program year. The cash award will be divided by the number of employees listed on the winning nominations, so each member receives the same amount.

An example: If 15 employees are listed on the first winning nomination, five on the second, and ten on the third, the total incentive award amount will be divided by the total number of nominees listed on all three winning nominations. In this example, the incentive award allotment would be divided by 30. Each awardee would receive an equal share, and the incentive would be paid through the payroll system for state merit employee awardees; for non-state merit employees, a separate payroll check will be issued.

**Individual Awards:** NJDOL will provide **three individual employee incentive awards per year: Platinum (\$2,000), Gold (\$1,500), and Silver (\$1,000)**. The total allotment for

individual awards (\$4,500) will be subtracted from the set-aside incentive awards funds first, with the balance of the incentive awards funds expended on the three One-Stop office awards. The individual award amounts will not change unless a modification is submitted and approved by NJDOL leadership and the Veterans' Employment and Training Services (VETS).

**3. THE GENERAL NATURE AND APPROXIMATE VALUE OF NON-CASH PERFORMANCE INCENTIVE AWARDS TO BE CHARGED TO THE BASE ALLOCATION; AND**

New Jersey does not intend to make non-cash performance incentive awards.

**4. ANY CHALLENGES THE STATE MAY ANTICIPATE TO CARRYING OUT A PERFORMANCE INCENTIVE AWARD PROGRAM AS MANDATED BY 38 U.S.C. § 4102A(C). THIS SHOULD INCLUDE ANY STATE LAWS OR POLICIES THAT PROHIBIT SUCH AWARDS, IF APPLICABLE. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S EFFORTS IN OVERCOMING THOSE CHALLENGES.**

New Jersey does not anticipate any challenges to carrying out its performance incentive award.

**F. LIST THE PERFORMANCE TARGETS FOR DIRECT SERVICES TO VETERANS PROVIDED BY JVSG STAFF, AS MEASURED BY PARTICIPANTS':**

- employment rate in the second quarter after exit from the program;
- employment rate in the fourth quarter after exit; and
- median earnings in the second quarter after exit.

JVSG Performance Measures	PY24	PY25
Employment Rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	49.2%	50.2%
Employment Rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit	43.2%	44.2%
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	\$8,231	\$8,331

**SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (SCSEP)**

(OMB Control No. 1205-0040)

**A. ECONOMIC PROJECTIONS AND IMPACT**

**1. DISCUSS LONG-TERM PROJECTIONS FOR JOBS IN INDUSTRIES AND OCCUPATIONS IN THE STATE THAT MAY PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER WORKERS. (20 CFR 641.302(D)) (MAY ALTERNATIVELY BE DISCUSSED IN THE ECONOMIC ANALYSIS SECTION OF STRATEGIC PLAN.)**

Governor Sherrill's vision for a stronger and fairer New Jersey underscores the administration's commitment to serving all residents, with a particular focus on empowering older workers. This vision includes a steadfast dedication to helping older workers secure employment and achieve self-sufficiency. To realize this goal, the state is prioritizing the use of data-driven insights to



guide investments and develop innovative strategies. By fostering closer collaboration with employers, New Jersey aims to enhance its support for older workers and expand their employment opportunities.

The chart below highlights industries in New Jersey that are projected to offer promising employment prospects for older workers. These industries have been identified based on their potential to accommodate and benefit from the unique skills and experiences that older workers bring to the workforce. Through strategic partnerships and targeted initiatives, the state is working to ensure these opportunities are accessible and sustainable, reinforcing New Jersey's commitment to a more inclusive and equitable job market for all its residents.

New Jersey Workers by Industry Sector	Total Workers	Workers Age 55 and Over	Percent Age 55 and Over
<b>All NAICS Sectors</b>	3,653,958	1,001,470	27.4%
<b>Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting</b>	9624	3,099	32.2%
<b>Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction</b>	1498	459	30.6%
<b>Utilities</b>	15945	4,186	26.3%
<b>Construction</b>	159944	46,000	28.8%
<b>Manufacturing</b>	256290	86,364	33.7%
<b>Wholesale Trade</b>	211498	66,672	31.5%
<b>Retail Trade</b>	436174	111,958	25.7%
<b>Transportation and Warehousing</b>	240322	60,242	25.1%
<b>Information</b>	79272	20,061	25.3%
<b>Finance and Insurance</b>	192091	55,081	28.7%
<b>Real Estate and Rental and Leasing</b>	61597	20,850	33.8%
<b>Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services</b>	337761	87,987	26.1%
<b>Management of Companies and Enterprises</b>	81781	21,661	26.5%
<b>Administrative and</b>	286570	82,126	28.7%

New Jersey Workers by Industry Sector	Total Workers	Workers Age 55 and Over	Percent Age 55 and Over
<b>Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services</b>			
<b>Educational Services</b>	97516	24,691	25.3%
<b>Health Care and Social Assistance</b>	661924	184,216	27.8%
<b>Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation</b>	71249	14,721	20.7%
<b>Accommodation and Food Services</b>	315544	69,790	22.1%
<b>Other Services (except Public Administration)</b>	137358	41,304	30.1%

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau - Local Employment Dynamics Quarterly Workforce Indicators, Emp Q1, 2025 (most recent data), Private Ownership*

*Prepared by: NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Office of Research and Information, Bureau of Labor Market Information February 2026*

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is focused on enhancing training and increasing unsubsidized employment opportunities for older workers by targeting employers within four key industries in New Jersey:

**1. Health Care Industry:**

- a. Contributed over \$52.8 billion to New Jersey's Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2024, representing approximately 7.8 percent of the state's total output.
- b. Added 268,400 new jobs from 1990 to 2024, making up a significant portion of the 535,900 total private sector job gains during this period.
- c. Projected to create more than 68,700 jobs from 2020 through 2030, reflecting an annual growth rate of 1.3 percent.
- d. Paid \$40.2 billion in total wages in 2024, accounting for about 13 percent of all wages distributed statewide.

**2. Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics:**

- a. Jobs totaled 447,500 in 2024, which is 12.2 percent of all jobs in New Jersey.
- b. Contributed over \$69 billion to the state's Real GDP in 2024.

- c. Paid \$38.4 billion in total wages in 2024.
- d. New Jersey is strategically positioned with access to the nation's freight rail network and hosts several key transportation facilities, including top-ranking seaports and two major international airports.

**3. Leisure and Hospitality:**

- a. Jobs in this sector numbered 402,600 in 2024, accounting for 10.9 percent of all jobs statewide.
- b. Paid over \$14.5 billion in total wages in 2024, or 4.7 percent of the state's total wages, with an average annual wage of \$36,097.
- c. Projected to grow by 27,100 jobs from 2020 to 2032.

**4. Retail:**

- a. Totaled 427,520 jobs in 2024, making up 11.6 percent of all jobs in the state.
- b. Paid \$19.4 billion in wages during 2024, representing 6.3 percent of the state's total wages, with an average annual wage of \$45,379.
- c. Retail employment is heavily concentrated in Bergen, Middlesex, and Monmouth counties, which collectively account for three out of every ten jobs in the industry.

Through targeted efforts in these industries, SCSEP aims to improve employment prospects for older workers, leveraging the economic impact and growth potential of these sectors to foster a more inclusive and robust workforce.

**2. DISCUSS HOW THE LONG-TERM JOB PROJECTIONS DISCUSSED IN THE ECONOMIC ANALYSIS SECTION OF STRATEGIC PLAN RELATE TO THE TYPES OF UNSUBSIDIZED JOBS FOR WHICH SCSEP PARTICIPANTS WILL BE TRAINED AND THE TYPES OF SKILL TRAINING TO BE PROVIDED. (20 CFR 641.302(D))**

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is committed to preparing participants for unsubsidized employment by offering specialized training that aligns with current labor market trends. This initiative relies on comprehensive labor market analysis to identify the types of jobs and skills that are in high demand. SCSEP staff are actively working to expand partnerships with host agencies that provide essential training opportunities in key sectors such as healthcare, transportation, hospitality, and retail.

In the healthcare sector, participants are trained for vital roles such as Home Health Aide and Certified Nurse Aide. The transportation industry offers training for positions like bus aide and bus driver, ensuring participants can meet the growing demands of this field. In the hospitality sector, the program offers certifications and training in areas like ServSafe, housekeeping, and valet services. For those interested in the retail industry, specialized training in customer service and cashier roles is provided to enhance employability.

The New Jersey Department of Labor (NJDOLE) provides invaluable support by offering guidance to ensure that participants are well-informed about the in-demand occupations within their specific counties. Participants work closely with Regional Coordinators to develop Individual Employment Plans (IEPs) that address personal employment barriers and outline customized training plans that lead to careers in high-demand fields.

To further bolster these efforts, SCSEP program staff are continuously forming partnerships with host agencies to develop community service assignments. These assignments are strategically designed to provide participants with practical, on-the-job training and skill development, significantly enhancing their chances of securing unsubsidized employment. While many participants have foundational work skills, there is often a need for enhanced literacy and computer skills to thrive in New Jersey's competitive job market. The state is steadfast in its commitment to broadening training opportunities, enabling SCSEP participants to achieve meaningful employment and attain economic self-sufficiency.

3. DISCUSS CURRENT AND PROJECTED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE STATE (SUCH AS BY PROVIDING INFORMATION AVAILABLE UNDER §15 OF THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT (29 U.S.C. 491-2) BY OCCUPATION), AND THE TYPES OF SKILLS POSSESSED BY ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS. (20 CFR 641.325(C))

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) remains committed to collaborating with One-Stop Career Centers to provide senior participants with comprehensive access to a wide range of services. This partnership ensures that seniors receive the most up-to-date information on employment opportunities and the skills needed to thrive in New Jersey's evolving job market.

To support this effort, detailed charts have been developed to showcase projected employment opportunities in New Jersey through 2026. These projections serve as valuable tools in identifying emerging sectors and job roles that may be well-suited for senior workers.

Moreover, New Jersey's Pre-Apprenticeship, Apprenticeship, and Industry Partnership initiatives play a crucial role in shaping the future workforce landscape. These initiatives not only create new employment opportunities but also establish specific skill requirements that help guide SCSEP's work with seniors. By aligning training programs with these emerging needs, SCSEP aims to equip participants with the skills necessary to seize these opportunities, thereby enhancing their employability and fostering economic self-sufficiency.

Through these strategic efforts, SCSEP is dedicated to empowering senior participants to successfully navigate the job market, ultimately leading to rewarding careers and improved quality of life.

Occupations Projected to Add the Most Jobs	Employment		Change 2022-2032	
	2022 Actual	2032 Projected	Number	Percent
<b>Total, All Occupations</b>	4,491,700	4,707,800	216,100	4.8

Occupations Projected to Add the Most Jobs	Employment		Change 2022-2032	
	2022 Actual	2032 Projected	Number	Percent
<b>Home Health and Personal Care Aides</b>	94,150	115,050	20,900	22.2
<b>Packers and Packagers, Hand</b>	82,800	97,150	14,350	17.3
<b>Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand</b>	102,750	115,900	13,150	12.8
<b>Software Developers</b>	54,050	64,450	10,400	19.2
<b>Stockers and Order Fillers</b>	84,400	92,750	8,350	9.9
<b>Cooks, Restaurant</b>	23,550	30,250	6,700	28.5
<b>Fast Food and Counter Workers</b>	72,350	78,950	6,600	9.2
<b>Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers</b>	54,100	59,300	5,200	9.6
<b>Registered Nurses</b>	81,500	86,650	5,150	6.3

Occupations Projected to Grow the Fastest	Employment		Change 2022-2032	
	2022 Actual	2032 Projected	Number	Percent
<b>Total, All Occupations</b>	4,491,700	4,707,800	216,100	4.8
<b>Nurse Practitioners</b>	6,800	10,250	3,450	50.6
<b>Physician Assistants</b>	4,800	6,450	1,650	34.1

Occupations Projected to Grow the Fastest	Employment		Change 2022-2032	
	2022	2032	Change	% Change
<b>Physical Therapist Assistants</b>	1750	2350	600	33.9
<b>Cooks, Restaurant</b>	23,550	30,250	6,700	28.5
<b>Medical and Health Services Managers</b>	17450	22350	4900	28.3
<b>Data Scientists</b>	3,100	4,000	900	28.3
<b>Solar Photovoltaic Installers</b>	1,150	1,450	300	27.3
<b>Exercise Trainers and Group Fitness Instructors</b>	10,700	13,350	2,650	24.8
<b>Information Security Analysts</b>	5,700	7,100	1400	24.4
<b>Massage Therapists</b>	3,650	4,500	850	23.6

*Source: NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development Office of Research and Information, February 2026*

The skill profiles for SCSEP participants per QPR Q2 PY 2025 indicate the following:

Many SCSEP participants face significant challenges in securing unsubsidized employment in New Jersey's competitive job market due to educational, technological, and language barriers.

**Educational Challenges:** A large proportion of SCSEP participants have limited formal education, which poses a substantial barrier to employment. Specifically, 50 percent of participants hold only a high school diploma or equivalent, while 12 percent have completed education between the 9th and 11th grades. This lack of advanced educational credentials makes it difficult to compete in a job market that increasingly demands higher levels of education and specialized skills.

**Digital Literacy Gaps:** In addition to educational barriers, many participants struggle with computer literacy. They either lack basic computer skills or possess outdated skills acquired

before recent technological advancements. Enhancing or updating these digital skills is crucial for participants to secure and retain employment in an increasingly digital workplace.

**Language Barriers:** Language proficiency further complicates participants' ability to access training and employment opportunities. Fourteen percent of participants have limited English proficiency, which hinders their ability to read, write, and speak English fluently—skills that are often essential for many positions in New Jersey.

In response to these challenges, the New Jersey SCSEP is committed to implementing targeted strategies to enhance participants' employability:

- **Skill and Interest Assessment:** Conduct thorough assessments of participants' skills and interests to place them in relevant training programs that align with their career goals.
- **Targeted Employer Engagement:** Focus on identifying senior-friendly host sites and employers who value the experience and potential of older workers.
- **Job and Training Identification:** Identify available jobs, training programs, and certifications that are suitable and accessible for senior participants.
- **On-the-Job Experience Promotion:** Encourage on-the-job experience (OJE) opportunities to provide participants with practical work experience and increase their employment prospects.
- **Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship Opportunities:** Expand pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs to offer structured learning and skill development pathways.

By addressing these areas, NJ SCSEP aims to break down barriers and enhance the career prospects of older workers, leading to greater economic independence and job satisfaction.

## B. SERVICE DELIVERY AND COORDINATION

### 1. A DESCRIPTION OF ACTIONS TO COORDINATE SCSEP WITH OTHER PROGRAMS. THIS MAY ALTERNATIVELY BE DISCUSSED IN THE STATE STRATEGIES SECTION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN, BUT REGARDLESS OF PLACEMENT IN DOCUMENT, MUST INCLUDE:

#### A. PLANNED ACTIONS TO COORDINATE ACTIVITIES OF SCSEP GRANTEEES WITH WIOA TITLE I PROGRAMS, INCLUDING PLANS FOR USING THE WIOA ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM AND ITS PARTNERS TO SERVE INDIVIDUALS AGED 55 AND OLDER. (20 CFR 641.302(G), 641.325(E))

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) will continue to be expertly managed by New Jersey's Department of Labor and Workforce Development, specifically within the Division of Workforce. This Division is dedicated to delivering seamless, comprehensive services to both job seekers and employers, ensuring that SCSEP remains a pivotal component of the state's workforce development strategy. SCSEP will maintain its full integration within the One-Stop Career Center system, which serves as a centralized hub for employment-related services.

To optimize service delivery, all SCSEP participants will be registered in the Automated One-Stop Operating System (AOSOS), facilitating their co-enrollment in the Workforce Innovation

and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I and Adult programs. This strategic registration process ensures participants have access to a broad spectrum of resources. Based on their Individual Employment Plans (IEPs), participants will receive targeted referrals to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and be awarded Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) to enhance their skills and qualifications.

The integration within the One-Stop Career Center system offers older workers a comprehensive suite of services, including job placement assistance, vocational counseling, career exploration, and job search support. Participants also gain access to foundational skill development, occupational training, and a wide array of supportive services designed to eliminate barriers and expand employment opportunities.

Co-enrollment in WIOA is strongly encouraged to ensure that participants receive an extensive range of wrap-around services. In addition to career services and training, participants will benefit from supportive services, job coaching, and mentoring. These resources are designed to not only increase participants' chances of securing employment but also to enhance their job retention, ultimately contributing to long-term career success and economic stability.

#### B. PLANNED ACTIONS TO COORDINATE ACTIVITIES OF SCSEP GRANTEE WITH THE ACTIVITIES BEING CARRIED OUT IN THE STATE UNDER THE OTHER TITLES OF THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT (OAA). (20 CFR 641.302(H))

As New Jersey's senior population continues to grow, SCSEP is dedicated to developing comprehensive strategies that address workforce needs through effective planning, advocacy, public awareness, and collaboration with key organizations committed to the well-being of older workers. Recognizing the invaluable contributions of reliable older workers, the state is committed to expanding employment opportunities that promote self-sufficiency and economic independence.

SCSEP places a strong emphasis on reinforcing partnerships with programs authorized by the Older Americans Act (OAA) that operate within New Jersey. This includes working closely with state, county, and local agencies such as the NJ Division of Human Services Office of Aging, One-Stop Career Centers, Workforce Development Boards, and the NJ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Through these collaborations, SCSEP aims to coordinate a range of services that not only facilitate employment but also support the health, wellness, and independence of seniors.

Furthermore, NJDOL is committed to leveraging robust partnerships with state agencies, community groups, and faith-based organizations to enhance skill development and expand employment opportunities for participants. By upskilling seniors and providing them with the necessary resources, SCSEP seeks to empower older workers to thrive in the job market and lead fulfilling, independent lives.

Through these strategic efforts, New Jersey is poised to create a more inclusive workforce that values the experience and potential of its senior population, ultimately fostering a community where older individuals can achieve both professional success and personal well-being.

#### C. PLANNED ACTIONS TO COORDINATE SCSEP WITH OTHER PRIVATE AND PUBLIC ENTITIES AND PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE SERVICES TO OLDER AMERICANS, SUCH AS COMMUNITY



AND FAITH- BASED ORGANIZATIONS, TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS, AND PROGRAMS FOR THOSE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS OR DISABILITIES. (20 CFR 641.302(I))

SCSEP is committed to strengthening its collaboration with national grantees to ensure comprehensive service delivery to participants across New Jersey. To facilitate this, SCSEP will organize quarterly meetings aimed at addressing key issues and concerns, ensuring equitable distribution of resources, and enhancing participant outreach, training, employment, and retention efforts. In cases where national grantees are uncooperative, SCSEP will escalate the matter to the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) for resolution.

SCSEP staff are also focused on reinforcing partnerships with a diverse array of organizations, including community-based and faith-based groups, community colleges, and government entities. These collaborations are crucial for expanding participants' access to training programs, transportation options, and essential services. The program will continue to maintain a strong relationship with One-Stop Career Centers, working diligently to improve participant access to training and transportation solution, such as bus schedules and passes, and to increase opportunities for unsubsidized employment across the state.

Below is a chart highlighting organizations that have successfully partnered with SCSEP, consistently providing valuable services and training to participants. These partnerships are instrumental in empowering participants to gain the skills and opportunities needed for meaningful employment and self-sufficiency.

Agency	Services/ Training
Area Agencies on Aging/Aging and Disability Resource Connection	Provide in-home support, legal assistance, home repairs, housekeeping, friendly visits, telephone reassurance, transportation, and home delivered and congregate meals.
Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program	Deliver fruits, vegetables, and Nutrition Education Training.
Food Banks Statewide	Provide food weekly and Safe-Serve Training. Serve as a host agency.
Dress for Success	Provide clothing, accessories, shoes, and Soft-skills Training.
Image and Attitude	Provide professional etiquette training and Soft-skills Training.
Housing Authority	Provide Housing and Financial Literacy Training. Serve as host agency.
Catholic Charities	Provide emergency housing, clothing, and furniture vouchers. Serve as a host agency.
Libraries	Provide free access to computers and basic computer, social media, and digital literacy

Agency	Services/ Training
	training. Serves as host agency.
Community Colleges	Provide training classes, counseling services and conference rooms for training + meetings.

SCSEP is dedicated to supporting participants with special needs or disabilities by continuing its valuable partnership with the New Jersey Department of Labor's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS). This collaboration ensures that participants undergo thorough evaluations and receive essential supportive services, including dental and medical care, to facilitate their journey towards employment and self-sufficiency. The dual enrollment system effectively leverages funding, allowing eligibility for supportive services to extend beyond the typical duration limits for participants. This successful partnership has led to numerous participants receiving training and securing employment directly through DVRS.

In its ongoing commitment to equitable service delivery across New Jersey, SCSEP will continue to bolster its collaboration with national grantees. This partnership aims to ensure the fair distribution of program slots statewide. Regular meetings will be held to address and resolve issues related to equitable distribution, enabling grantees to review and adapt slot allocations as necessary. By strategically assessing slot distribution, SCSEP grantees can determine if reallocating slots between counties is required to optimize resource utilization and ensure comprehensive participant services throughout the state.

Through these strategic efforts, SCSEP remains focused on providing tailored support to participants with special needs while maintaining a robust statewide presence that guarantees equitable access to opportunities for all seniors seeking employment and self-sufficiency.

**D. PLANNED ACTIONS TO COORDINATE SCSEP WITH OTHER LABOR MARKET AND JOB TRAINING INITIATIVES. (20 CFR 641.302(J))**

The program is dedicated to enhancing training and employment opportunities for its participants through strategic coordination with various programs, initiatives, and entities within NJDOL. A key component of this effort involves collaboration with the Office of Research Information (ORI) to access comprehensive labor market data. This valuable information highlights statewide occupational and employment growth trends, allowing SCSEP staff to identify and target employers who are actively seeking to hire in these expanding sectors.

By leveraging this labor market intelligence, SCSEP aims to align its participant placement strategies with the demands of the evolving job market, ensuring that participants are positioned for success in high-growth occupations. Furthermore, SCSEP staff are committed to facilitating participant enrollment in Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship programs. These initiatives provide structured pathways for skill development and career advancement, equipping participants with the competencies needed to thrive in their chosen fields.

Through these coordinated efforts, SCSEP is focused on maximizing opportunities for participants, empowering them to secure meaningful employment and achieve economic independence. By continuously adapting to labor market trends and fostering partnerships with

key NJDOL programs, SCSEP is paving the way for a brighter future for New Jersey's senior workforce.

E. ACTIONS TO ENSURE THAT SCSEP IS AN ACTIVE PARTNER IN THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM AND THE STEPS THE STATE WILL TAKE TO ENCOURAGE AND IMPROVE COORDINATION WITH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM. (20 CFR 641.335)

NJ SCSEP is deeply integrated within the One-Stop system, ensuring that participants receive a comprehensive suite of services designed to enhance their employability and support their personal well-being. Participants benefit from a range of offerings, including targeted training, supportive services, and robust job placement and retention assistance.

To maximize these benefits, SCSEP program staff are committed to ongoing collaboration with the One-Stop system to facilitate co-enrollment and expand participants' access to essential resources. This collaboration aims to:

- Enhance access to basic skills education, ensuring that participants have the foundational knowledge necessary for career advancement.
- Provide increased opportunities for occupational training, aligning participant skills with market demands.
- Expand employment opportunities through participation in employer job fairs and recruitment events, directly connecting participants with potential employers.
- Offer referrals to supportive services, including housing, medical care, safety services, and specialized Veteran Services when applicable, to address participants' diverse needs.

SCSEP staff actively participate in monthly and quarterly Workforce Development Board partner meetings to ensure seamless collaboration and coordination of services for program participants. Additionally, they engage in forums and meetings held by other state partners, continuously working to encourage and improve the integration and efficiency of programs and services.

Through these strategic efforts, SCSEP is dedicated to creating a supportive environment that empowers participants to achieve meaningful employment and long-term self-sufficiency, while also fostering a collaborative network of resources across New Jersey.

F. EFFORTS TO WORK WITH LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICES IN RURAL LOCATIONS.

SCSEP staff are committed to actively engaging with key economic development partners across New Jersey, encompassing both urban and rural areas. By attending meetings and forums with these partners, as well as with Chambers of Commerce and other business associations, SCSEP aims to effectively market and promote the program to a wide array of employers.

This strategic outreach effort is designed to raise awareness about the benefits of hiring SCSEP participants, highlighting their potential as valuable contributors to the workforce. By showcasing the program's ability to provide skilled and experienced workers, SCSEP seeks to foster partnerships that lead to meaningful employment opportunities for its participants.

In addition to these efforts, the New Jersey Department of Labor's Business Service Representatives play a crucial role in extending the program's reach. These representatives are tasked with marketing the SCSEP program to the business community, with a particular focus on rural locations and statewide initiatives. Their involvement ensures that SCSEP's message is effectively communicated to potential employers, enhancing the program's visibility and impact.

Through these coordinated marketing and promotional activities, SCSEP is dedicated to building strong relationships with the business community, ultimately expanding employment opportunities for participants and contributing to the economic vitality of New Jersey.

## 2. THE STATE'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR ENGAGING EMPLOYERS TO DEVELOP AND PROMOTE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE PLACEMENT OF SCSEP PARTICIPANTS IN UNSUBSIDIZED EMPLOYMENT. (20 CFR 641.302(E)) (MAY ALTERNATIVELY BE DISCUSSED IN THE STATE STRATEGIES SECTION OF STRATEGIC PLAN.)

The Senior Community Service Employment Program is dedicated to enhancing strategies that boost unsubsidized employment opportunities for seniors throughout New Jersey. Central to this effort is the effective use of participant Individual Employment Plans (IEPs), which are tailored to each individual's skills, interests, and employment goals. By integrating these personalized plans with comprehensive labor market data, SCSEP program staff are well-equipped to proactively seek out job openings that align with the unique strengths and capabilities of older workers.

To further expand employment opportunities, SCSEP engages in ongoing marketing and outreach initiatives. These efforts are designed to raise awareness about the program and its participants among potential employers and the broader business community. By fostering strong partnerships with employers, economic development partners, Chambers of Commerce, business associations, and other economic development groups, SCSEP is able to create a network of opportunities across the state.

Through these collaborative efforts, SCSEP not only increases the visibility of older workers but also highlights their valuable contributions to the workforce. By aligning participant skills with market demands and building strategic relationships within the business community, SCSEP is committed to facilitating meaningful employment opportunities that promote the economic independence and well-being of New Jersey's senior population.

## 3. THE STATE'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR SERVING MINORITY OLDER INDIVIDUALS UNDER SCSEP. (20 CFR 641.302 (C))

In New Jersey, the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is committed to serving the most vulnerable and at-risk populations, including low-income minority older workers, through strategic collaboration with One-Stop Career Centers and a wide array of community-based and faith-based organizations. These partnerships are crucial for effective outreach and service delivery, ensuring that those most in need receive comprehensive support.

SCSEP staff are dedicated to continuously analyzing participant demographics to identify underserved or under-represented groups within the senior workforce. By closely examining these statistics, SCSEP can tailor its outreach strategies to effectively reach and support these populations.

To maintain and enhance outreach efforts to low-income minority seniors, SCSEP will persist in partnering with key community-based and faith-based organizations. Collaborations with groups such as the Puerto Rican Community for Progress, Hispanic Family Centers, and Family Success Centers are instrumental in extending the program's reach. These organizations play a vital role in connecting SCSEP with minority older worker populations, facilitating access to essential resources and services.

By leveraging these partnerships and conducting thorough demographic analyses, SCSEP aims to ensure that all seniors, regardless of their background, have access to the opportunities and support needed for economic self-sufficiency and well-being. Through these efforts, SCSEP is committed to fostering an inclusive workforce that values the contributions and potential of every older worker in New Jersey.

**4. A LIST OF COMMUNITY SERVICES THAT ARE NEEDED AND THE PLACES WHERE THESE SERVICES ARE MOST NEEDED. SPECIFICALLY, THE PLAN MUST ADDRESS THE NEEDS AND LOCATION OF THOSE INDIVIDUALS MOST IN NEED OF COMMUNITY SERVICES AND THE GROUPS WORKING TO MEET THEIR NEEDS. (20 CFR 641.330)**

New Jersey seniors face a range of challenges, including the high cost of living, economic and housing insecurity, and frequent health and transportation issues. Addressing these concerns requires a coordinated effort among various state agencies and partners. The following organizations, as outlined in the chart below, collaborate with SCSEP to deliver essential community programs and services that are crucial to supporting seniors throughout the state:

SCSEP Community Partners	
COMMUNITY SERVICE NEEDS	NJ PARTNER AGENCIES THAT PROVIDE SERVICE(S)
Quality Health Care & Supportive Services (such as long-term care, prescription drug programs, rehabilitation services, disease prevention education)	NJ Department of Human Services/Division of Aging Services Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged and Disabled (PAAD)  <a href="https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/doas/">https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/doas/</a>
Mental Health	NJ Department of Human Services Mental Health  <a href="https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/dmhas/home/">https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/dmhas/home/</a>
Disability Awareness & Treatment	NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development  Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services  <a href="https://nj.gov/labor/career-services/special-services/individuals-with-disabilities/index.shtml">https://nj.gov/labor/career-services/special-services/individuals-with-disabilities/index.shtml</a>

SCSEP Community Partners	
Housing Assistance	NJ Housing Resource Center  <a href="https://www.nj.gov/njhrc/">https://www.nj.gov/njhrc/</a>
Utility Assistance Programs	Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)  <a href="https://www.payingforseniorcare.com/resources/liheap_financial_aid">https://www.payingforseniorcare.com/resources/liheap_financial_aid</a>
Transportation	NJ Find a Ride  <a href="https://nj211.org/transportation-options-in-new-jersey">https://nj211.org/transportation-options-in-new-jersey</a>
Financial Literacy	NJ Organizations Promoting Financial Literacy  <a href="https://nj211.org/programs-and-tools-to-foster-financial-stability">https://nj211.org/programs-and-tools-to-foster-financial-stability</a>
Food Banks/ Farm Fresh Foods/ Nutritional Education	NJ Department of Health Senior Nutrition  <a href="https://www.nj.gov/health/fhs/wic/senior-nutrition/senior-farmers/">https://www.nj.gov/health/fhs/wic/senior-nutrition/senior-farmers/</a>
Consumer Fraud & Protection Services (identity theft)	NJ Consumer Affairs Senior Protection Program  <a href="https://www.njconsumeraffairs.gov/News/Brochures/Senior-Fraud-Education-and-Protection-Program-Fedup-Handbook.pdf">https://www.njconsumeraffairs.gov/News/Brochures/Senior-Fraud-Education-and-Protection-Program-Fedup-Handbook.pdf</a>
Computer and Career Connections Training	NJ State Libraries  <a href="https://www.njstatelib.org/services-for-libraries/">https://www.njstatelib.org/services-for-libraries/</a>
Literary, Occupational and Vocational Training, Job Preparation and Readiness Skills	NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development One-Stop Career Centers  <a href="https://www.nj.gov/labor/career-services/contact-us/one-stops/index.shtml">https://www.nj.gov/labor/career-services/contact-us/one-stops/index.shtml</a>
Service of CAP NJ	Community Action Partnership of NJ  <a href="https://www.capnj.org/index.php">https://www.capnj.org/index.php</a>
NJ Services for Seniors Website	Website of all Senior Services

SCSEP Community Partners	
	<a href="https://www.care.com/c/landing-page/senior-care-seeker/">https://www.care.com/c/landing-page/senior-care-seeker/</a>

5. THE STATE'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY TO IMPROVE SCSEP SERVICES, INCLUDING PLANNED LONG-TERM CHANGES TO THE DESIGN OF THE PROGRAM WITHIN THE STATE, AND PLANNED CHANGES IN THE USE OF SCSEP GRANTEES AND PROGRAM OPERATORS TO BETTER ACHIEVE THE GOALS OF THE PROGRAM. THIS MAY INCLUDE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT AS APPROPRIATE. (20 CFR 641.302(K))

The state's long-term strategies to enhance SCSEP services are designed to expand access, improve participant experience, and strengthen program resilience in the face of unforeseen challenges, such as national pandemics. These strategies include:

1. **Expansion of Virtual Training Opportunities:** SCSEP plans to significantly increase virtual training options aimed at upskilling participants, thereby enhancing their employability. By offering diverse online courses, the program seeks to encourage higher enrollment and successful completion of training, ultimately increasing employment opportunities for older workers.
2. **Enhancement of Virtual Platforms:** The program will continue to refine its digital infrastructure to transition all files to electronic formats, improve the security of Personally Identifiable Information (PII), facilitate online registration and training, and boost participants' computer literacy. These efforts are intended to streamline operations and improve accessibility for participants, especially in a digital age.
3. **Implementation of the Buddy System:** NJDOL has fully implemented a participant buddy system, pairing individuals to foster interaction and strengthen engagement within SCSEP. This approach not only enhances communication and participant involvement but also aids in promptly identifying and addressing any issues or concerns that may arise.

These strategies are designed to ensure the continuity of SCSEP services during unexpected events like the COVID-19 pandemic, minimizing disruptions and maintaining support for participants. National grantees are encouraged to adopt these strategies to safeguard participant services during such crises.

SCSEP program staff are prepared to partner with One-Stops, supported by NJDOL's established protocols requiring all program areas, including SCSEP, to read, review, and sign Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs). This ensures consistent delivery of SCSEP services across the state.

SCSEP program staff are dedicated to providing exceptional services to older workers, successfully integrating SCSEP into the One-Stop delivery system. The program has earned a positive reputation among employers, who consistently report high satisfaction with SCSEP participants entering employment. NJDOL's long-term strategy focuses on continually upskilling older workers to expand career pathways that lead to employment, retention, and self-sufficiency.

Finally, NJDOL recommends that USDOL implements a comprehensive electronic case management tool. Such a tool would allow for the seamless uploading of participant documents,

entry of case notes, and consolidation of information in a single location, enhancing efficiency and accuracy in case management.

6. THE STATE'S STRATEGY FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN THE LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE FOR SCSEP PARTICIPANTS' ENTRY INTO UNSUBSIDIZED EMPLOYMENT, AND TO ACHIEVE, AT A MINIMUM, THE LEVELS SPECIFIED IN OAA SECTION 513(A)(2)(E)(II). (20 CFR 641.302(F))

To enhance service delivery and expand unsubsidized employment opportunities for participants, SCSEP is committed to reinforcing the effectiveness of participant Individual Employment Plans (IEPs). Our strategy includes the following key initiatives:

1. **Comprehensive Assessment of Needs and Goals:** We will refine IEPs to accurately identify each participant's training needs and employment goals, ensuring personalized pathways to success.
2. **Enrollment in Targeted Training Programs:** Participants will be enrolled in career services and occupational training tailored to their unique aspirations and market demands.
3. **Access to Supportive Services:** We will actively refer participants to supportive services aimed at overcoming employment barriers, facilitating a smoother transition into the workforce.
4. **Provision of Job Coaching and Mentorship:** Through dedicated job coaching and mentoring, participants will receive guidance and support in their professional development.
5. **Informed Career Decision-Making:** We will empower participants by helping them utilize labor market information, enabling informed decisions about their career trajectories.

To ensure participants receive diverse and effective work-based training, we will rigorously recruit and monitor host agencies, fostering environments that enhance skill development and employment prospects.

Moreover, SCSEP will deepen its collaboration with the Department of Labor's workforce development system, including Business Services, Industry Partnerships, Customized Training, Apprenticeships, the Office of Research Information, and One-Stop Career Centers. This partnership will facilitate co-enrollment, granting participants access to a wide array of programs, services, training, and employment opportunities, thereby supporting the program's continued success in achieving its unsubsidized employment targets.

In our commitment to continuous improvement and data accuracy, SCSEP will enhance its electronic platform to effectively collect all necessary participant forms and data. Program staff will maintain the use of an Excel tracking mechanism to accurately capture and track data related to unsubsidized employment. Regular reviews of data validation and collection handbooks will ensure that all staff are well-informed about new protocols and procedures, maintaining the highest standards of data integrity.

C. LOCATION AND POPULATION SERVED, INCLUDING EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION



1. A DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCALITIES AND POPULATIONS FOR WHICH PROJECTS OF THE TYPE AUTHORIZED BY TITLE V ARE MOST NEEDED. (20 CFR 641.325 (D))

**Areas of Persistent Unemployment**

New Jersey’s population will continue to become older and racially and ethnically more diversified from 2022 to 2032. The counties/localities with the greatest projected need for SCSEP services are:

County	Population	Rationale
Atlantic	274,704	Atlantic County has 94,385 age 55+. It averaged 5.7% unemployment in 2024. Due to casino closings in Atlantic City, the economy has experienced job loss that impacted many older workers.
Camden	524,042	Camden County has 154,372 age 55+ households. It averaged 5.0% unemployment in 2024. Camden City within the county experiences higher unemployment.
Cape May	95,236	Cape May has 43,331 age 55+ households. It averaged 8.0% unemployment in 2024. Seniors are negatively impacted by the large number of seasonal rather than full-time permanent jobs in the county, and access to public transportation is limited.
Cumberland	152,915	Cumberland County has 42,700 age 55+ households. It averaged 7.0% unemployment in 2022. This is a rural county which has limited access to public transportation.
Essex	854,130	Essex has 223,888 age 55+ households. It averaged 5.5% unemployment in 2024. Seniors are negatively impacted by the county’s high cost of living. The City of Newark also has higher

County	Population	Rationale
		unemployment in the county.
Hudson	710,478	Hudson County has 165,828 age 55+ households. It averaged 4.2% unemployment in 2024. Many Seniors are negatively impacted by the county's high cost of living and must compete for employment in a highly skilled job market.

Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2024 1-year estimates S0101

Prepared by: NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development Office of Research and Information, Bureau of Labor Market Information, February 2026

2. LIST THE CITIES AND COUNTIES WHERE THE PROJECT WILL BE CONDUCTED. INCLUDE THE NUMBER OF SCSEP AUTHORIZED POSITIONS AND INDICATE WHERE THE POSITIONS CHANGED FROM THE PRIOR YEAR.

See SCSEP authorized positions per chart below:

County	NJDOLPY24/PY25	Easter Seals PY24/PY25	NCOA PY24/PY25	NULPY24/PY25
<b>Atlantic County</b>	33/32	0/0	14/12	0/0
<b>Bergen County</b>	0/0	99/97	0/0	0/0
<b>Burlington County</b>	0/0	0/0	41/41	0/0
<b>Camden County</b>	12/12	0/0	62/61	0/0
<b>Cape May County</b>	*9/8	0/0	7/7	0/0
<b>Cumberland County</b>	21/21	0/0	6/6	0/0
<b>Essex County</b>	*37/36	0/0	0/0	107/107
<b>Gloucester County</b>	11/11	0/0	20/18	0/0
<b>Hudson County</b>	47/47	74/74	0/0	0/0
<b>Hunterdon</b>	0/0	0/0	10/10	0/0

County	NJDOLPY24/PY25	Easter Seals PY24/PY25	NCOA PY24/PY25	NULPY24/PY25
<b>County</b>				
<b>Mercer County</b>	0/0	0/0	47/47	0/0
<b>Middlesex County</b>	19/18	67/65	0/0	0/0
<b>Monmouth County</b>	13/13	0/0	55/55	0/0
<b>Morris County</b>	0/0	0/0	0/0	41/36
<b>Ocean County</b>	0/0	0/0	81/78	0/0
<b>Passaic County</b>	0/0	0/0	0/0	76/76
<b>Salem County</b>	0/0	0/0	11/11	0/0
<b>Somerset County</b>	0/0	0/0	27/27	0/0
<b>Sussex County</b>	9/9	0/0	5/5	0/0
<b>Union County</b>	*21/20	42/40	0/0	0/0
<b>Warren County</b>	0/0	0/0	14/14	0/0
<b>TOTALS</b>	232/227	282/276	400/392	224/219

There were three changes in Authorized Positions for PY 2024 - PY 2025, with reductions in Cape May (-1), Essex (-1), and Union (-1). The number of Modified Positions decreased as a result of the increase in New Jersey's minimum wage. Consequently, program slots continue to decline due to the state's annual minimum wage increases.

**3. DESCRIBE CURRENT SLOT IMBALANCES AND PROPOSED STEPS TO CORRECT INEQUITIES TO ACHIEVE EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION.**

SCSEP staff are committed to maintaining a rigorous and proactive approach to ensuring that all county slots within the program are consistently filled. To achieve this, staff will conduct weekly reviews of the Grant Performance Management System (GPMS), meticulously tracking exits that occur due to factors such as durational limits, breaks, and employment transitions. This vigilant monitoring is essential for achieving and maintaining equitable distribution of program slots across the state.

In instances where over-enrollment is identified, staff will respond by intensifying employer outreach efforts. By leveraging business intelligence tools, they aim to expand both training and employment opportunities for participants, thereby aligning available resources with participant needs. This strategic approach not only addresses over-enrollment but also enhances the overall effectiveness of the program.

Furthermore, SCSEP staff will convene quarterly meetings with national grantees to review progress and discuss strategies for ensuring equitable distribution on a statewide scale. These meetings provide a forum for collaboration and strategic planning, reinforcing a shared commitment to equitable access and the continuous improvement of the program's reach and impact.

#### 4. THE STATE'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR ACHIEVING AN EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF SCSEP POSITIONS WITHIN THE STATE THAT:

##### A. MOVES POSITIONS FROM OVER-SERVED TO UNDERSERVED LOCATIONS WITHIN THE STATE IN COMPLIANCE WITH 20 CFR 641.365.

The Program Manager will maintain a close collaborative relationship with New Jersey national grantees to ensure the equitable distribution of program slots across the entire state. This partnership is crucial for addressing and resolving any challenges related to equitable distribution, thereby ensuring that participants have fair access to opportunities regardless of their location. Regular grantee meetings serve as a vital platform for discussing and collectively resolving issues concerning the distribution of slots, fostering a cooperative environment for decision-making.

Any proposed changes to slot allocations are subject to thorough review and consensus among all grantees, reflecting a commitment to transparency and shared responsibility. Once decisions are made, the state will promptly inform the USDOL of any proposed slot adjustments through detailed narrative reports and equitable distribution documentation. This proactive communication ensures that changes align with federal guidelines and support the overarching goal of equitable access to program benefits statewide.

##### B. EQUITABLY SERVES RURAL AND URBAN AREAS.

The Senior Community Service Employment Program will remain accessible to all eligible participants throughout the state, ensuring that individuals from both urban and rural areas can benefit from its services. The state's long-term strategy focuses on expanding and enhancing program offerings by fostering partnerships with a diverse array of organizations, including One-Stop Career Centers, libraries, county colleges, and both faith-based and community-based organizations. These collaborations aim to broaden the reach and impact of the program, ensuring that training and services are readily available to participants regardless of their location. SCSEP grantees are committed to working collectively to guarantee that all participants are served equitably, thereby addressing the unique needs of both rural and urban communities across the state.

##### C. SERVES INDIVIDUALS AFFORDED PRIORITY FOR SERVICE UNDER 20 CFR 641.520. (20 CFR 641.302(A), 641.365, 641.520)

When selecting eligible individuals for participation in the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), priority will be given to those who meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Are 65 years of age or older
- Have a disability

- Have limited English proficiency
- Have low literacy skills
- Reside in a rural area
- Are veterans (or eligible spouses of Veterans)
- Have low employment prospects
- Have failed to find employment after using services provided under WIOA
- Are homeless or are at-risk of homelessness
- Are formerly incarcerated or on supervision from release from prison or jail within five years of the date of initial eligibility determination

By focusing on these priority groups, SCSEP aims to support individuals most in need, enhancing their access to training, employment opportunities, and resources necessary for achieving long-term economic self-sufficiency.

5. THE RATIO OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS IN EACH SERVICE AREA TO THE TOTAL ELIGIBLE POPULATION IN THE STATE. (20 CFR 641.325(A))

The table below shows the number of citizens age 55 and older in each county compared to the number of citizens residing in each county statewide.

County	NJ Total Population Estimate	NJ Population 55+
Atlantic	274,704	94,385
Bergen	954,717	306,758
Burlington	464,226	151,738
Camden	524,042	154,372
Cape May	95,236	43,331
Cumberland	152,915	42,700
Essex	854,130	223,888
Gloucester	304,504	93,014
Hudson	710,478	165,828
Hunterdon	129,448	48,537
Mercer	383,286	110,312
Middlesex	861,535	248,522
Monmouth	643,615	220,939
Morris	510,375	167,447

County	NJ Total Population Estimate	NJ Population 55+
Ocean	646,434	231,758
Passaic	518,289	147,080
Salem	64,973	21,857
Somerset	346,203	109,174
Sussex	145,117	50,956
Union	572,549	160,178
Warren	110,238	39,035
Statewide Total	9,267,014	2,831,809

Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2024 1-year estimates S0101

Prepared by: NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Office of Research and Information, Bureau of Labor Market Information, February 2026

#### 6. THE RELATIVE DISTRIBUTION OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO:

##### A. RESIDE IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS WITHIN THE STATE

The table below shows the number of citizens age 55 and older residing in rural areas by county compared to the number of citizens age 55 and older residing in rural areas by county statewide.

County	Estimated 55+ Population Living in Urban Areas	Estimated 55+ Population Living in Rural Areas
Atlantic	80,288	14,097
Bergen	306,387	371
Burlington	136,914	14,824
Camden	152,353	2,019
Cape May	35,273	8,058
Cumberland	32,242	10,458
Essex	223,857	31
Gloucester	82,488	10,526
Hudson	165,828	0
Hunterdon	20,217	28,320
Mercer	104,710	5,602

County	Estimated 55+ Population Living in Urban Areas	Estimated 55+ Population Living in Rural Areas
Middlesex	246,095	2,427
Monmouth	209,607	11,332
Morris	153,122	14,325
Ocean	223,199	8,559
Passaic	142,916	4,164
Salem	10,238	11,619
Somerset	100,952	8,222
Sussex	26,173	24,783
Union	160,178	0
Warren	22,164	16,871

Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2024 1-year estimates S0101 and US Census Bureau urban and rural population designations

Prepared by: NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Office of Research and Information, Bureau of Labor Market Information, February 2026

New Jersey counties/cities that have the persistent unemployment, greatest economic and social need, limited English proficiency are:

Atlantic

Cape May

Cumberland

Essex

New Jersey is one of the most diverse states in the nation across all generations. According to the Census, a small number of New Jersey counties are rural. Most New Jersey seniors and participants reside in urban/suburban areas. New Jersey SCSEP grantees work with One-Stop Career Centers statewide to provide services to all participants.

#### B. HAVE THE GREATEST ECONOMIC NEED

The 2022 New Jersey Elder Economic Security Standard Income report underscores the growing economic challenges faced by older adults in the state, revealing where the greatest economic need exists. As living expenses rose sharply from 2020 to 2022, these challenges have become more pronounced, particularly among different household types and racial demographics within the senior community.

Older adults who are renters—both single and married—are particularly vulnerable. Although they generally face lower living costs compared to homeowners with mortgages, a significant

70.9% of single renters and 37.8% of married or cohabiting renters have incomes below the cost of living. This indicates a substantial economic need among older adults in the rental market, highlighting the necessity for targeted support and resources. In contrast, financial insufficiency affects 49.3% of single homeowners and 15.7% of married homeowners.

Racial disparities further illustrate the economic challenges faced by older adults. Hispanic retirees (46.6%) and Black retirees (41.9%) often fail to meet retirement sufficiency standards, compared to 26.3% of White retirees and 23.7% of Asian retirees. These disparities emphasize the critical need for financial interventions aimed at supporting minority groups among the older adult population.

Additionally, 370,571 older adults in New Jersey, or 28.5% of those aged 65 and older, fall below the Elder Index income threshold, highlighting the widespread economic need among seniors. While New Jersey performs slightly better than the national average—85.1% of individuals aged 60 and older have incomes at or above 150% of the poverty level, compared to 81.6% nationally—certain areas remain concerning. For instance, Hudson County has the highest percentage of older adults living below 100% of the poverty level, at 18%.

*Source: New Jersey State Plan on Aging, October 1, 2025*

### C. ARE MINORITIES

New Jersey is renowned as one of the most densely populated and diverse states in the nation across all generations, and this diversity is clearly reflected in its senior population. According to data from the American Community Survey covering the five-year period from 2019 to 2023, the demographic composition of New Jersey's residents aged 60 and above reveals distinct differences from national averages. In this age group, 67.8% identified as White, non-Hispanic or Latino, which is notably lower than the national average of 75.5%.

The state's diversity is further highlighted by the representation of Black or African American individuals among its seniors, with 10.4% identifying as such, compared to 9.9% at the national level. Similarly, Asian seniors in New Jersey make up a larger portion of the older population at 7.7%, in contrast to the national figure of 4.8%.

Additionally, the Hispanic or Latino population of any race among New Jersey's seniors is 12.4%, significantly exceeding the national average of 9.7%. These statistics underscore the richly diverse demographic profile of New Jersey's older adult population, reflecting the state's broader patterns of ethnic and racial diversity.

*Source: New Jersey State Plan on Aging, October 1, 2025*

### D. ARE LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT

In New Jersey, the varied language landscape among the senior population presents unique challenges and opportunities for caregivers and service providers. According to 2023 data from the U.S. Census, 14.5% of New Jerseyans aged 60 and over reported having limited English proficiency, speaking English less than "very well." This figure is significantly higher than the national average of 8.8% for the same age group, reflecting the state's broader language diversity, where over 32% of all residents speak a language other than English at home. Certain counties in New Jersey exhibit even higher proportions of seniors with limited English



proficiency. Hudson County leads with 38.1% of its older population experiencing language barriers, followed by Passaic County at 28.6%, and Union County at 24%.

*Source:* New Jersey State Plan on Aging, October 1, 2025

#### E. HAVE THE GREATEST SOCIAL NEED. (20 CFR 641.325(B))

The demographic composition and health needs of New Jersey's older adult population reveal significant trends that underscore the greatest social needs within this community. Among residents aged 60 and older, 57.3% are married, while 19.6% are widowed, and a notable 39.1% live alone. These living arrangements point to potential social isolation issues, highlighting a critical area of social need that requires targeted interventions to foster connection and support.

Gender disparities further illuminate the social challenges faced by New Jersey's seniors. Women account for 55.3% of those aged 60 and older and represent an even larger share, 65.9%, of those aged 85 and above.

Disability prevalence among older adults is another indicator of social and health needs. Between 2015 and 2019, approximately 20.4% of the non-institutionalized population aged 65-74 reported having a disability, a figure that rises sharply with age to affect 41.1% of men and 47.2% of women in the 75+ age group.

The increasing utilization of home and community-based services (HCBS) through New Jersey FamilyCare, the state's Medicaid program, reflects the growing social need for comprehensive elder care solutions. As of April 2021, over 61,400 individuals were enrolled in Medicaid long-term care, with approximately 37,740 receiving HCBS. The reliance on these services underscores the importance of continued investment in community-based supports that enable seniors to live independently and remain engaged in their communities.

*Source:* NJ State Strategic Plan on Aging, October 2021

#### F. FORMERLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS, AS DEFINED IN TEGL 17-20

To enhance outreach and enrollment efforts for incarcerated individuals, the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) will collaborate with several key New Jersey entities, including:

- Parole
- Probations/Recovery Courts
- Department of Corrections
- Office of the Attorney General

Furthermore, individuals involved with the justice system will be actively recruited and co-enrolled in specific New Jersey Department of Labor (NJDOL) programs, such as:

- Pathways to Recovery (P2R)
- Job Opportunities for Building Success (JOBS)

Below, we provide data on the number of individuals aged 55 and older who are under parole supervision, categorized by county.

County	NJ Individuals Under State Parole Age 55+	Percentage of NJ Individuals Age 55+ Under State Parole by County
Atlantic	163	4.51%
Bergen	141	3.9%
Burlington	135	3.73%
Camden	352	9.73%
Cape May	58	1.6%
Cumberland	154	4.26%
Essex	697	19.27%
Gloucester	101	2.79%
Hudson	250	6.91%
Hunterdon	32	0.88%
Mercer	212	5.86%
Middlesex	264	7.3%
Monmouth	209	5.78%
Morris	74	2.05%
Ocean	205	5.67%
Passaic	222	6.14%
Salem	50	1.38%
Somerset	57	1.58%
Sussex	27	0.75%
Union	158	4.37%
Warren	56	1.55%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,617</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Prepared by NJ State Parole Board May 2024

**Prison Complex Incarcerated Persons Age 55+**

County	Institution	Total	55-59 Years	60-64 Years	65+ Years
Burlington	Midstate	459	22	17	4
		100%	5%	4%	1%
Cumberland	Bayside	1,316	51	37	11
		100%	4%	3%	1%
Cumberland	South Woods	3,118	185	140	173
		100%	6%	4%	6%
Essex	Northern State	1,863	105	68	50
		100%	5%	3%	2%
Hunterdon	Edna Mahan Prison	396	17	18	13
		100%	4%	5%	3%
Mercer	NJ State Prison	1,358	128	92	119
		100%	9%	7%	9%
Middlesex	East Jersey	1,049	109	90	90
		100%	10%	9%	9%
Middlesex	ADTC	430	37	31	37
		100%	9%	7%	9%
Statewide	Total Prison Complex	11,166	661	496	498
		100%	6%	4%	4%

Source: Incarcerated Individuals January 2025

*\*The above data set was organized to align with the counties*

7. A DESCRIPTION OF THE STEPS TAKEN TO AVOID DISRUPTIONS TO THE GREATEST EXTENT POSSIBLE, WHEN POSITIONS ARE REDISTRIBUTED, AS PROVIDED IN 20 CFR 641.365; WHEN NEW CENSUS OR OTHER RELIABLE DATA BECOME AVAILABLE; OR WHEN THERE IS OVER-ENROLLMENT FOR ANY OTHER REASON. (20 CFR 641.325(I), 641.302(B))

To ensure a seamless transition when positions are redistributed, resulting in the transfer of participants, SCSEP program staff will implement a series of strategic steps designed to minimize disruption and maintain continuity of services:

1. **Individual Consultations:** Each participant will be scheduled for a one-on-one session to receive a comprehensive overview of the program. During this meeting, they will complete intake and payroll paperwork, with a detailed explanation of the payroll process to prevent any disruptions in payments or services. Participants will be reassured that they will remain at their current host sites, with no immediate changes anticipated.
2. **File Exchange and Continuity of Services:** Participant files will be systematically exchanged among grantees to ensure the seamless continuation of supportive services, training, and the achievement of goals outlined in their Individual Employment Plans (IEPs). Participants will be informed about the supportive services offered by their new grantee and any applicable durational limits.
3. **Informational Sessions:** SCSEP will organize informational sessions for participants, where grantees will clarify the transfer process and address any questions or concerns. These sessions will also confirm that there will be no disruption in services. Field staff responsible for participant support will be present to introduce themselves and affirm their commitment to providing ongoing assistance.
4. **Over-Enrollment Considerations:** Over-enrollment will only be pursued when a significant amount of unobligated program funds can be reallocated to the participant wages and fringe benefits category of the budget. This ensures that additional enrollments are financially sustainable. Any extra enrollments will be distributed according to the principles of Equitable Distribution and aligned with the percentage of older workers in each county.

By implementing these measures, SCSEP aims to provide participants with stability and assurance during the transition process, ensuring that their employment journey remains uninterrupted and that their needs continue to be met effectively.

## PERFORMANCE INDICATOR APPENDIX

### ALL WIOA CORE PROGRAMS

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

### ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES - ADULT PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

#### Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the two years covered by the plan modification. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the two years of the plan modification.

While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	62.0		63.0	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	64.0		65.0	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	6900.0		7000.0	
Credential Attainment Rate	57.0		58.0	
Measurable Skill Gains	67.0		68.0	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.*

**ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES - DISLOCATED PROGRAM  
PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

**Performance Goals for the Core Programs**

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the two years covered by the plan modification. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the two years of the plan modification.

While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	59.0		60.0	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	61.0		62.0	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	9700.0		9800.0	
Credential Attainment Rate	60.0		61.0	
Measurable Skill Gains	75.0		76.0	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.*

#### ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES - YOUTH PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

##### **Performance Goals for the Core Programs**

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the two years covered by the plan modification. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the two years of the plan modification.

While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
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Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	53.0		54.0	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	52.0		53.0	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	3600.0		3700.0	
Credential Attainment Rate	45.0		46.0	
Measurable Skill Gains	71.0		72.0	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

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*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.*

#### WAGNER-PEYSER ACT - WAGNER PEYSER PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

##### **Performance Goals for the Core Programs**

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the two years covered by the plan modification. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the two years of the plan modification.

While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	48.0		49.0	
Employment	49.0		50.0	

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
(Fourth Quarter After Exit)				
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	7700.0		7800.0	
Credential Attainment Rate	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Measurable Skill Gains	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

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*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.*

**ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM - ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

**Performance Goals for the Core Programs**

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the two years covered by the plan modification. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the two years of the plan modification.

While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	46.0%		47.0%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	47.0%		47.5%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter	7,000.00		7,300.00	



Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
After Exit)				
Credential Attainment Rate	38.0%		39.0%	
Measurable Skill Gains	58.0%		59.0%	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

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*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.*

#### VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM (COMBINED OR GENERAL) - VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Each State VR program must submit expected levels of performance in its Unified or Combined State Plan and in the two-year modification of that plan. Expected levels of performance for the first two years of a state plan must be submitted in the initial submission of the Unified or Combined State Plan and in the initial submission of the two-year modification of that Plan, for years three and four, as described in 34 CFR § 361.170(a). Expected levels of performance must be stated to the nearest tenth of a percent (XX.X %) or to the nearest whole dollar for median earnings. State VR programs are reminded that the expected levels of performance must be published for public comment prior to plan submission in accordance with state law, regulation, and policy.

The submission of expected levels is the first step in the negotiations process. Once the expected levels of performance have been submitted, State VR programs may begin negotiations with RSA's State Monitoring and Program Improvement Division. Each State VR program must reach agreement with RSA on the negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the Unified or Combined State Plan (or for the third and fourth years of the Unified or Combined State Plan during the required two-year modification process) in accordance with 116(b)(3)(A)(iv).

RSA will use its statistical adjustment model to derive pre-program year estimated levels of performance for each indicator. Each State VR program and RSA will consider the negotiation factors outlined in WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(v) during the negotiation process. Once negotiated levels of performance are agreed upon, each State VR program must incorporate the negotiated levels of performance into the Unified or Combined State Plan and the two-year modification of that plan prior to the plan's approval (section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv) of WIOA).

#### **Effectiveness in Serving Employers (ESE)**

The ESE indicator has been defined in the ESE final rule and PY 2024 was the first year of data

for the newly defined performance indicator. However, a minimum of at least two baseline years of data must be collected to support a statistical adjustment model that could produce sufficiently reliable estimates for the purposes of performance negotiations and state performance assessments. The Departments, in accordance with 20 CFR § 677.190(c)(4) and 34 CFR §§ 361.190(c)(4) and 463.190(c)(4), will collect and monitor state ESE performance results for at least PY 2024 and PY 2025 to establish a credible baseline and provide technical assistance. After PY 2025 data are collected the Departments will develop a statistical adjustment model for ESE in accordance with section 116(b)(3)(A)(viii) of WIOA. Since the ESE indicator is a statewide measure that reflects a combined result across WIOA titles I, II, III, and IV programs, the Departments will jointly engage in negotiations with state representatives from all core programs when feasible. While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	50.0		50.5	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	51.0		52.6	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	6,600		6,700	
Credential Attainment Rate	43.9		44.0	
Measurable Skill Gains	57.8		58.5	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.*

#### VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM (BLIND) - VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Each State VR program must submit expected levels of performance in its Unified or Combined State Plan and in the two-year modification of that plan. Expected levels of performance for the

first two years of a state plan must be submitted in the initial submission of the Unified or Combined State Plan and in the initial submission of the two-year modification of that Plan, for years three and four, as described in 34 CFR § 361.170(a). Expected levels of performance must be stated to the nearest tenth of a percent (XX.X %) or to the nearest whole dollar for median earnings. State VR programs are reminded that the expected levels of performance must be published for public comment prior to plan submission in accordance with state law, regulation, and policy.

The submission of expected levels is the first step in the negotiations process. Once the expected levels of performance have been submitted, State VR programs may begin negotiations with RSA’s State Monitoring and Program Improvement Division. Each State VR program must reach agreement with RSA on the negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the Unified or Combined State Plan (or for the third and fourth years of the Unified or Combined State Plan during the required two-year modification process) in accordance with 116(b)(3)(A)(iv).

RSA will use its statistical adjustment model to derive pre-program year estimated levels of performance for each indicator. Each State VR program and RSA will consider the negotiation factors outlined in WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(v) during the negotiation process. Once negotiated levels of performance are agreed upon, each State VR program must incorporate the negotiated levels of performance into the Unified or Combined State Plan and the two-year modification of that plan prior to the plan’s approval (section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv) of WIOA).

**Effectiveness in Serving Employers (ESE)**

The ESE indicator has been defined in the ESE final rule and PY 2024 was the first year of data for the newly defined performance indicator. However, a minimum of at least two baseline years of data must be collected to support a statistical adjustment model that could produce sufficiently reliable estimates for the purposes of performance negotiations and state performance assessments. The Departments, in accordance with 20 CFR § 677.190(c)(4) and 34 CFR §§ 361.190(c)(4) and 463.190(c)(4), will collect and monitor state ESE performance results for at least PY 2024 and PY 2025 to establish a credible baseline and provide technical assistance. After PY 2025 data are collected the Departments will develop a statistical adjustment model for ESE in accordance with section 116(b)(3)(A)(viii) of WIOA. Since the ESE indicator is a statewide measure that reflects a combined result across WIOA titles I, II, III, and IV programs, the Departments will jointly engage in negotiations with state representatives from all core programs when feasible. While states are not required to submit expected levels of performance for Effectiveness in Serving Employers for PY 2026 and PY 2027 all of core programs are expected to collect data and report as a shared indicator (as directed in guidance) for these years.

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	50.0		50.5	

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	51.0		52.6	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	6,600.0		6,700.0	
Credential Attainment Rate	43.9		44.0	
Measurable Skill Gains	57.8		58.5	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

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*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2026 and 2027.*

#### ADDITIONAL INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Additional Indicators of Performance

Additional Performance Measures for WIOA Title I and WIOA Title II:

- Number of program participants served by the program
- Number of program participants exited from the program
- Percentage of program participants served with barriers to employment as follows:
  - Disability

- Ex-offender
- No high school diploma
- Previously or currently in foster care
- Homeless
- Limited English Proficiency or Low Level Literacy
- Long-Term Unemployed (continuously unemployed for at least 12 consecutive months)
- Public Assistance customer
- Percentage of program participants responding to survey who are satisfied with their training/counseling after exiting from the program

With regard to these measures WIOA for Titles I and II, the state continues to collect baseline data in an effort to examine yearly changes and make comparisons across program years. Additionally, we are exploring specific measures around co-enrollment and will update this plan when any indicators are identified.

For WorkFirst New Jersey (WFNJ) customers, NJDOL is coordinating with NJ Department of Human Services (NJ DHS) to explore ways for further data collection in support of performance measurement aligned with federal guidelines and to maximize alignment with WIOA as much as possible.

NJDOL and the SETC will work with our LWDBs to set specific targets for co-enrollment across WFNJ and WIOA Title I Adult services. This offers our system an opportunity to expand and increase the success of low-income individuals in gaining access to career pathway opportunities and ultimately, “good jobs.”

As with Title II, we are exploring specific measures around co-enrollment and will update this plan when any indicators are identified.

#### OTHER APPENDICES

All relevant information is linked to resources throughout the plan.