

# PY 20 LOCAL PLAN

## Chapter 4

### CHAPTER 4: OPERATING SYSTEMS AND POLICIES – LOCAL COMPONENT

This chapter provides an overview of all the operating systems and policies within the Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIAs). LWIAs must incorporate key documents into the plan that describe the one-stop delivery system and the services that are provided by the workforce partners.

A. Coordination of Planning Requirements: The plan will incorporate the Memorandum of Understanding and Service Integration Action Plan and include the following statements in this chapter:

- The Local Workforce Innovation Area #4 **Memorandum of Understanding** provides a description of the one-stop delivery system, and other information that is essential to the establishment and operation of effective local workforce development systems as required by the WIOA Rule (20 CFR Part 678.705). The Memorandum of Understanding and any subsequent modifications is incorporated by reference into this plan

The Local Workforce Innovation Area #4 Service Integration Action plan provides a description of how local workforce partners will align and coordinate services are required by the State of Illinois Service Integration Policy (WIOA Policy Chapter 1, Section 13). Information from the Initial Service Integration Action Plan is included below. Any subsequent modifications to the Service Integration Action Plan are incorporated by reference to this plan.

B. Provide information regarding the use of technology in the one-stop delivery system, including a description of:

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

The comprehensive center located in Ottawa houses IDES and Title I on a full-time basis, and Tri-County Opportunities Council (CSBG) on a part-time basis. In addition, Title IV is available by appointment, and Adult Education staff do TABE testing twice a month unless needed in between visits. Their presence at the Center provides these partners with the opportunity to easily share information such as job opportunities, employer fairs, common applications, and partner orientations that are done in conjunction with the Re-Employment Services Eligibility Assessment Workshop, all contributing to the first step towards service integration. With the completion of the Services Integration Self-Assessment activity, the team will look at Uniform policies and procedures for referral and follow up, putting together a Program Service Team (PST) of front line staff across partners to strategically align programs and services without duplication. We will be looking into an electronic referral form to streamline and ensure follow up is being met consistently. As outlined in the LWIA #4's Self-Assessment Implementation Plan, the PST and the leadership team will develop an evaluation tool to show effectiveness of referral and follow up processes and procedures which will be shared with the NCI Works Oversight Committee and the full workforce board as well.

Partners who have no presence at the Center provide their services and programs through direct linkage, as described in the MOU.

Also, as stated in Section 3 of the MOU, the partners in LWIA #4 agree that the greatest challenge to successfully achieving the goals identified in this MOU, and maintaining a high quality workforce system, is the lack of a shared common data base system for capturing information on both job-seeking/individual customers and businesses. Therefore, they fully support BEST, Inc.'s response to the Services Integration Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) on behalf of NCI Works to design an on-line resource that would address this issue, and could also be used as a best practice for other local areas experiencing the same challenge to achieving their goals.

- How the Local Board will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system, including in remote areas, through the use of technology and other means (§ 679.560(b)(5)(ii)).

LWA #4 covers over 5,300 square miles. It is rural in nature, and although all eight (8) counties have some type of public transportation system, service to the workforce partner offices is somewhat limited. NCI Works members live and work in these rural communities and fully understand that decisions regarding access to services and programs must be made with these challenges in mind. For example, Board members along with our Chief Elected Officials (CEOs) strongly encourage the use of formal and informal arrangements with the public transportation systems as an affordable means to get to the Center and program offices. Furthermore, the LWIB voted to recognize all partner program offices located in LWIA #4 as access sites which will provide access to numerous points of entry into the workforce system throughout the region. And finally as a point of information, most partner offices have SKYPE availability for walk-ins as a visual face-to-face contact electronically completed instead of in person to the outside agencies.

NCI Works takes special care to make sure their policies and initiatives do not limit access to programs and services, especially for residents in the smaller towns and villages. For example one of NCI Works' initiatives, its featured industry panel presentations, not only uses technology to expand access to information and data, but also supports 3 of the strategies laid out in the Unified State Plan: supporting employer-driven regional sector initiatives; providing career pathways information creating economic advancement opportunities for all populations; and, promoting improved data-driven decision-making regarding careers in all industries in the Northwest Central area. Through this initiative, NCI Works board members along with other members of the community representing a featured industry sector present information about career opportunities, trends in the industry, challenges facing their specific companies, and the education and training required for in-demand occupations. This information is then disbursed through our Industry Briefs to all schools, libraries, chambers of commerce, partner agencies, community colleges and elected officials via traditional mail service, but is also accessible on the NCI Works website and through the podcasts we do after each industry sector presentation to allow for even greater access. This use of technology allows us to reach our residents regardless of where they live.

Additionally, one of the priorities included in the Self-Assessment Implementation Plan is to increase the Board's knowledge of the local workforce system, and to more actively engage in dialog with our partner PST and BST members. This will provide a great opportunity for board members to fully understand how their actions and policies affect the delivery of programs and services to our job seeking customers and to our business customers. It should be noted that NCI Works aggressively worked with its State legislators to successfully have the Illinois Open Meetings Act amended to allow local workforce boards to meet electronically at different locations and have all members in attendance at each site count towards the quorum. Not only has this made it more convenient for

board members to actively engage in NCI Works and committee meetings, but it also allows members of the general public, which could include WIOA business and individual customers, better access to Board initiatives and policy decisions that could have an impact on how they access programs and services through the one-stop delivery system.

- As part of the 2022 modification, describe how lessons learned about the remote delivery of services during the COVID-19 National Health Emergency will be adapted into operations over the next two years.

Lessons learned from local workforce area #4 partners regarding technology both for individual programs and partner services through Integrated Services first stemmed from open lines of communication. Each partner has adopted to virtual or hybrid services that will continue to be offered during the next two years. Program services as well as business services took on a new form but services were never halted for either customer.

One area that received a lot of attention was online and virtual case management for all partners. Staff became familiar and proficient with different video conferencing capabilities and this will be something in our large rural area that will continue for the foreseeable future. Intake, career counseling, eligibility, assessment and other past in-person workshops were adapted to the virtual world. Program such as Docusign, YouTube, Facebook and other social media avenues were utilized to ensure timely enrollments as well as supportive service payments, outreach and delivery of program services. Also supported electronics includes laptop computers and smart phones.

Another lesson that will continue on after the pandemic would be on-line learning options for students interested in continuing their education. This will continue as it is an alternate option to in-person learning.

Because of the access that the IL Dept. of Vocational Rehabilitation has to up-to-date computer technology, and assistive technology for those staff with disabilities requiring this accommodation, we have been able to maintain and even improve services to our customers. The use of Web-Based Meeting Platforms, cell phones and having increased access to online forms, training, etc., enabled us to continue services without interruption or delays.

- C. Describe how the Local Board will support the strategies identified in the Unified State Plan and work with entities carrying out core programs, including a description of the following, noting significant implications of the COVID-19 National Health Emergency where applicable (§ 679.560(b)(1)(ii)):

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

Four of LWIA #4's priorities identified in its MOU and Self-Assessment Implementation Plan as referenced in Chapter 4, Section A (Communication Occurs across One-Stop Partners, Processes are streamlined and aligned, Staff Collaborate on Customer Assessment, and, Customer Information is Shared), bring partner staff together through its PST to effectively, efficiently and consistently provide employment, training, education and supportive services to all eligible individuals, particularly those with barriers to employment.

Knowledge of the resources each partner brings to the system is shared at meetings, and included in electronic and printed manuals for staff reference and/or training as needed.

Also, as a more innovative approach to expanding access to services, the Partner Leadership Team proposed revamping the workshops that are provided to dislocated workers at Rapid Response events to include representatives from all workforce partners. Currently, only BEST, Inc. and IDES representatives attend these workshops and share information on resources available through their programs. However, Team members suggested that there are many other valuable resources, programs, and services that other partners offer that should be included as part of a full menu of services to help dislocated workers begin an appropriate career paths and/or get back into the workforce more quickly. Other Partners are now being invited to participate in the Rapid Response events. Because of the diversity found in today's more modern workforces, this would also better guarantee that those who are being impacted by the lay-off or closing and who have specific barrier to employment would get the programs and services they need in a more expeditious manner. PST, BST and Leadership Team members will begin working on this as soon as possible.

- Scaling up the use of Integrated Education and Training models to help adults get their GED and work on other basic skills and English language acquisition while earning credentials and industry-recognized credentials that lead to in-demand occupations;

NCI Works, the local workforce board, and the Business Employment Skills Team, Inc., the Title 1B partner, are essential partners and supporters of the Integrated Education and Training (IET) Model or Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System (ICAPS) Healthcare Model at Illinois Valley Community College (IVCC) and Sauk Valley Community College (SVCC). The goal is to help Adult Education students obtain a High School Equivalency while seeking an industry recognized credential for occupations that are in high demand. IVCC's and SVCC's Adult Education programs have created several career pathways for stackable credentials in healthcare. A universal referral process between Title I and Title II is already in place to help identify common customers that would benefit from this partnership. Following common career pathways throughout the partners make this transition a smooth link between education and self-sufficient employment.

A career navigator will focus on individual's needs through assessments. Students can proceed in a number of directions from transitional jobs to work experience or on-the-job training as well as help with job search for unsubsidized employment. Through cooperative agreements and employer engagement, students will benefit from internships, work experience, workforce preparation activities, and soft skills training. In addition, the Local Workforce Board has approved waiving the HSE requirement for ICAPS students who are seeking funding through Title I to reduce the financial burden for credential attainment.

- Using the insights and lessons learned from successful dual credit programs to scale up similar efforts in other sectors and regions;

Both community colleges within the region have very strong relationships with their secondary vocational schools – the LaSalle / Peru Area Career Center (ACC), and the Whiteside Area Career Center (WACC). IVCC currently has dual credit offered at their vocational center in the fields of

Welding, Early Childhood Education, Certified Nursing Assistant, Information Technology, Computer Aided Drafting, Manufacturing and Certified Production Technician. IVCC is looking to expand offerings to potentially include Automotive Technology, Agriculture, and Hospitality. SVCC offers dual credit for Machining, Welding, Computer Aided Drafting, Early Childhood Education, Certified Nursing Assistant, Computer Information Systems, and Digital Media Arts. Both community colleges are working to strengthen the relationship with their vocational centers even further.

SVCC just recently completed its second WACC Explore Sauk day (fall semester). Every WACC student (600 +) comes out to campus and learns about an academic program that aligns with their career goals. Then, to follow up, in the spring those students interested in attending SVCC come out with their parents for an info session that includes presentations by departments such as Student Support Services, Financial Assistance, and Admissions. This is part of an overall strategy to expose WACC students to SVCC's programs, getting them comfortable in a college setting, and introducing the myriad support services SVCC offers.

IVCC recently held its Manufacturing Expo that brought over 250 area high school students to the college, after tours of local manufacturers, for a program that included discussions on career tracks and pathways, education and training requirements, and a conversation on "what's next" related to college and career after high school. This was followed up with a shadowing experience which brought another 150 students back to campus from the ACC allowing them to spend more time shadowing students and faculty in preferred programs. In the spring IVCC hosts a Career Expo event that brings approximately 1200 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders to campus to explore a variety of careers.

Both institutions are looking to take these ideas from our respective Area Career Centers and expand into programs for adult students in conjunction with our workforce partners.

- Determining the most effective marketing methods and messages for informing college and university students about Prior Learning Assessments;

Both IVCC and SVCC will continue to expand current and future students' awareness related to the opportunities for credit for prior learning. Print marketing materials, the college website, and social media will all be used in this regard. As noted below, both colleges will look to expand connections to adults who are currently out of work or underemployed, in order to inform them of the possibility of their work experiences translating into college credit. Both colleges intend to expand their PLA opportunities through streamlining processes and procedures.

- Investigating how targeted marketing can identify segments of the labor force, such as mature workers and the underemployed, who may not require extensive education or training to qualify for jobs in high demand occupations;

Both colleges will work with Tri-County Opportunities Council and local IDES offices to develop a "Rapid Response" like experience for those individuals who have been laid off, have lost their job, or are currently underemployed to include (but not limited to) academic materials related to short term certificates, academic advising, and financial aid information. IVCC and SVCC will work in conjunction with our WIOA partners to make sure we have data on the most current lists of

unemployed or underemployed workers in order to expose them to academic programs that align with their career goals.

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

Again, during the development of our Self-Assessment Implementation Plan, staff proposed using the Journey Mapping to implement a fully-aligned and integrated career-pathways system for our job-seeking customers. For the business customers, the BST members are currently piloting the NCI Works' Rapid Talent Pipeline Initiative for collecting and tracking data and activity related to our business customers.

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

Adult Education programs will be accessible to all potential students by providing services at the One-Stop center as well as in the community. Program locations are accessible to students and the adult education program staff is able to provide classroom accommodation or accessibility services to students who qualify for this assistance. Adult education staff members are trained on addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities.

In order to reach a variety of students, program information will also be shared within the community through print, social media, and Skype. Adult Education shares program information and services with the local workforce development board and area employers. Greater programmatic accessibility will bring more potential students to the adult education program allowing for more students to successfully complete the high school equivalency and career pathway education.

Participation in adult education also allows students the opportunity for participation in ICAPS programming which is by design a fast-track to earning both the high school equivalency and an industry-recognized credential. Upon completion of the ICAPS program, students are then able to enter the workforce or continue in post-secondary education to earn a higher-level certificate or degree.

- In the 2022 modification, use insights and lessons learned from COVID-19 National Health Emergency regarding the identification and service delivery to targeted populations significantly affected by the pandemic.

As the lead agency in Illinois for provision of services for individuals with disabilities, the Illinois Department of Human Services- Division of Rehabilitation Services (IDHS-DRS) will work LWIA 4 partners to ensure that access to program services will be available for persons with disabilities. DRS' local offices continue to be closed to in-person services due to the ongoing COVID-19 National Health Emergency. All DRS local office direct service staff are working remotely from home with community visits allowable per the DHS Secretary's guidance, which can fluctuate based upon surges in positive cases. Support staff are scheduled to report to the office on a rotational basis to address operational needs and complete tasks that

require in-office equipment access. Service delivery (i.e. referral/intake, vocational counseling and guidance, eligibility determination, assessment/evaluation, individualized plan for employment, job development, training, job placement and supports) has continued throughout the COVID-19 closure of local offices without interruption or delays in services.

Because of our access to up-to-date computer technology, and assistive technology for those staff with disabilities requiring this accommodation, we have been able to maintain and even improve services to our customers. The use of Web-Based Meeting Platforms, cell phones and having increased access to online forms, training, etc., enabled us to continue services without interruption or delays.

While access to the technology significantly enhanced our ability to continue the provision of services without delay, we quickly realized the need for additional staff training to utilize the new technology and computer-based systems. Our DHS-DRS Training Unit team increased on-line training activities and additional staff were added to support the unprecedented need for online training. DRS also developed new partnerships with outside training providers. We also saw a rapid change from a very paper-intensive program to one much more in line with VR programs in other states. DRS seized the opportunity to put required documents & program access information all online and made available on a forward-facing website along with so much other important information about our services for customers & families to access.

Additionally, recognizing our community based providers who partner with DRS to serve persons with disabilities were also struggling through the pandemic, DHS-DRS was able to provide financial support to many of these agencies to allow them to keep programs going so families could continue to access services. DRS-VR has always provided our students & job seeking customers with laptop computers and assistive technology necessary to be successful in their vocational program. During the pandemic, we were able to offer any DRS customer who needed one, a laptop for academic training or job search activities at no costs to the customer or family as a part of their Individualized Plan for Employment. This was especially helpful to students who were attending school remotely, and individuals who were interviewing for job remotely, etc.

As a result of these supports being provided, enhanced, and activated in such short time, DRS was able to have a very productive year in terms of increasing employment outcomes for individual job seekers with disabilities and maintaining support for student customers in academic training, trades, & certification programs at our state supported colleges and universities.

Along with program services, the local Workforce Board, through the Targeted Populations Committee and the Employer Engagement Committee worked closely to ensure services for all populations are equal and aligned. Present in this workgroup is representation from providers of service to individuals with disabilities, veterans and formerly incarcerated.

The Illinois Department of Corrections reached out to local partners to secure program information sessions at an in-person reentry summit since COVID-19 closed access to correctional institutions only printed materials.

- D. Provide information regarding the local coordination strategies with state (including the Unified State Plan), regional and local partners to enhance services and avoid duplication of activities, including a description of the following, noting any significant implications of the COVID-19 National Health Emergency, were applicable:

As a general statement, four of the five priorities identified by LWIA #4 in its Self-Assessment Implementation Plan address coordination, sharing customer information, aligning services, increasing knowledge of partner programs and services among all staff, creating manuals, utilizing the Customer Journey Mapping Model and the Rapid Talent Pipeline Initiative, all of which are designed to enhance services, facilitate data collection and avoid duplication. Furthermore, as first stated in Section 3 of the MOU, and reiterated throughout this local plan, the partners in LWIA #4 agree that the greatest challenge to successfully enhancing service delivery is the lack of a shared common data base system for capturing information on both job-seeking/individual customers and businesses. Therefore, they fully support BEST, Inc.'s response to the Services Integration NOFO on behalf of NCI Works to design an on-line resource that would address this issue, and could also be used as a best practice for other local areas experiencing the same challenge to achieving their goals.

These goals also support the following strategies laid out in the State Unified Plan:

- Coordinate demand-driven strategic planning at the state and regional levels
- Support employer-driven regional sector initiatives
- Provide economic advancement for all populations through career pathways
- Expand service integration
- Promote improved data driven decision making
- Advance public-private data infrastructure

Specifically:

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

BEST, Inc., the provider of the Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth employment and training activities under WIOA, will be housed at the Comprehensive One-Stop Center so all Career Services will be offered onsite for individuals who are eligible for their services. Offsite access points can receive services throughout all eight counties. Furthermore, BEST, Inc. will take part in cross training, group orientations, job fairs and will be a member of the Program Services Team for the purpose of enhancing services offered to both the job seeker and the businesses as well as to help avoid duplication of activities.

NCI Works approved waiving the HSE requirement for ICAPS students who are seeking funding through BEST, Inc., Additionally, BEST, Inc. Business Relations Reps will market job-seeking ICAPS students to local employers as part of their business services visits.



- Adult education and literacy activities under WIOA Title II. This description must include how the Local Board will carry out the review of local applications submitted under Title II consistent with WIOA Secs. 107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA Sec. 232 (§ 679.560(b)(12)).

Adult Ed and workforce agency staff will hold partner orientations to avoid duplicating services, and will maintain communication on co-enrolled students.

NCI Works will carry out its coordination duties under WIOA Title II in much the same way as under other WIOA Titles. As previously stated, the Executive Committee is assigned the responsibility of reviewing the local plan to assure the alignment of Core Partner programs and services, and the Oversight Committee is responsible for establishing continuous improvement goals for local workforce system

Providers of workforce investment activities under title I of WIOA, adult education and literacy activities under title II of WIOA, and career and technical education (as defined in section 3 of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2302)) will be asked to submit a joint report to the Executive Committee briefly describing how their activities serve as a complement to one another and avoid duplication of services. If the Committee determines there are gaps and/or overlaps in services, the providers will be asked to revise their current plans and re-submit to the full NCI Works board at its next meeting.

Furthermore, the Executive Committee will review applications to provide adult education and literacy activities under title II for the local area to determine whether such applications are aligned and consistent with the local plan, and that all programs and services are available and accessible to all individuals, including those with disabilities.

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

The interagency Business Services Team has continued its tradition of collaboration when trying to meet the needs of the area's employers. In May 2019, the Business Services Team organized an Ottawa Employer Forum to provide local employers information on services that were available to them at no charge from various agencies. The Business Services Team also communicates on what businesses they are visiting and then schedule joint visits monthly. When unable to do joint visits, each program's staff utilize their knowledge of partner programs to communicate what the Workforce System can provide the employer. In October 2019, a Chicago representative from another WIOA Partner, Dept. of Rehabilitation Services was included in our employer visits in the Princeton, Illinois area. This allowed the local employers to learn even more about services that are available to them from yet another one of our partners.

There have been cross trainings via conference call, organized by One Stop Operators, to meet with one of the proposed activities on the previous local plan. These will continue regularly to ensure that staff from all programs are able to assist clients as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Wagner-Peyser staff are currently coordinating with the Unemployment Insurance Program on the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment grant through the Department of Labor. The Unemployment Insurance Program profiles the clients monthly and provides the list to the Wagner-Peyser staff. Wagner-Peyser in turn, sets up a meeting with these clients and provides them information and services to assist in their attempts to find gainful employment. Any barriers that arise during these assessments are discussed with the clients being referred to appropriate partner services and/or workshops.

Wagner-Peyser staff also review job seeker resumes in Illinois Job Link and make appropriate job referrals and schedule interviews for job seekers with local employers who are attending our monthly hiring events. Wagner-Peyser staff also review the recent IllinoisJobLink registrations and call the claimants to inform them of available partner services and assist them in further updates of their resume to enhance the possibility of success in them finding employment before their Unemployment benefits are exhausted.

- Vocational rehabilitation service activities under WIOA Title IV (§ 679.560(b)(13)).

Similar to an in-school youth IEP appointment, all providers will be at the table to make sure we are not duplicating services but rather addressing the specific needs of individuals being served through WIOA Title I and Title IV. Many of the customers served by Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) are interested in jobs that will supplement their government benefits (SSI/SSDI, SNAP, Medicaid, subsidized housing, etc.) so it is important for all staff to be aware of the entire menu of training opportunities that is available to ensure customers are receiving training in fields which will likely result in competitive employment. This sharing of knowledge can be accomplished through cross-training and allowing front line staff to share best practices in working with individuals with disabilities and working with employers who hire individuals with disabilities.

Finally, providers of workforce investment activities and local agencies administering plans under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 will be asked to submit a joint report to the Executive Committee briefly describing how their activities serve as a complement to one another and avoid duplication of services. If the Committee determines there are gaps and/or overlaps in services, the providers will be asked to revise their current plans and re-submit to the full NCI Works board at its next meeting.

- Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Program

As the primary CSBG program for the comprehensive one stop center, Tri-County Opportunities Council will have an Outreach Specialist working out of the one-stop one day per week. An intake application will be taken on those individuals interested in their supportive services at the one-stop on the day that the Outreach Worker is on site. At that time, appropriated services and /or referrals will be provided. Clients interested in supportive services at other times may contact 800/323-5434. The staff will provide direct linkage to services and/or referrals based on the information obtained in that call.

During COVID-19 local coordination strategies remain the same with local partners. The services were offered through an electronic means.

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

The Youth committee of NCI Works review goals and strategies tied to workforce needs in the area youth. They recommend for approval youth contracted programs that tie HSE or credit recovery with the 14 elements in Title I youth funding to identify a well-rounded youth experience. They also participate with Title I staff in going into schools to provide job search, work habits and career exploration to area youth. Title I along with Perkins (both secondary and post-secondary) annually a career exploration days are hosted and well attended by area high schools, HSE classes, and enrolled Title I youth. A wide range of careers in clusters include health care, manufacturing, STEM, business, criminal justice to name a few. These events are hosted at the post-secondary community colleges in LWIA #4. Educators are part of the presentation panel and help plan the day.

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

Again, four of the five priorities identified by LWIA #4 in its Self-Assessment Implementation Plan address coordination, sharing customer information, aligning services, increasing knowledge of partner programs and services among all staff, creating manuals, utilizing the Customer Journey Mapping Model and the Rapid Talent Pipeline Initiative. Each of these initiatives is designed to enhance services, facilitate data collection, align services and avoid duplication. Furthermore, these goals also support the following strategies laid out in the State Unified Plan:

- Support employer-driven regional sector initiatives
- Provide economic advancement for all populations through career pathways
- Expand service integration
- Promote improved data driven decision making
- Advance public-private data infrastructure

Cross training and common case management will be a focus with partner staff as we move into a more integrated case management role as defined in the self-assessment. Working to streamline common career pathways with the secondary and post-secondary CTE and Perkins is part of the planning process. Both entities were present during the planning sessions and will continue to work closely in activities. Another Post-Secondary activity that has currently been incorporated is

that they will make up part of the Rapid Response team to go out and speak during Employee/Employer Rapid Response.

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

**Tri-County Opportunities Council (CSBG)** provides the following supportive services as a partner in the one- stop comprehensive system:

- Outreach
- Comprehensive needs assessment
- Intake
- Case management
- Career planning
- Workforce preparation
- Financial Literacy

A comprehensive needs assessment is completed with each client to determine the type and level of supportive services desired from the CSBG program. Based on the needs assessment, specific individualized goal plans are developed and coordinated supportive services are provided. When needed, partner services are requested and services are bundled to meet client need and ensure non-duplication of services.

Since the **BEST, Inc.** supportive services will be included as part of this plan which is being developed as a collaborative effort, all workforce partners will have the opportunity to review them and identify any duplication or conflicts. The Program Services Team (PST) will also be encouraged to share supportive services policies and procedures during their joint meetings in order to maximize the resources of each partner program.

**IDES** programs aid those who are job ready or require limited supportive assistance. This limited assistance includes computer and internet access, soft skills training, resume writing skills, and interviewing skills. Any deficiencies that are identified outside of IDES' scope will be referred to the appropriate partner agency for assistance.

**National Able/Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP)** provides the following supportive services as a partner in the one- stop comprehensive system:

- Outreach and recruitment
- Comprehensive needs assessment
- Intake
- Case management
- Paid Job Training
- Workforce preparation

A needs assessment is completed with each participant to identify any unmet needs or barriers they may require assistance with. Using the outcome of the needs assessment, Individual plans are developed and coordinated supportive services are provided either by National Able or referrals to other partner agencies are requested to best meet the participants need and ensure non-duplication of services.

Any policies related to the provision of transportation and other supportive services in the local area that require NCI Works input and/or approval will be reviewed to make sure they adequately meet the needs of customers, and do not conflict with similar policies of other partners.

E. Provide a description of how the local area will provide adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities including:

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

BEST, Inc. covers 8 counties with 9 program offices that offer the ability to do mobile case management in communities that need service but does not have an office location. In all the access sites along with the comprehensive center all title I services will be offered along with some partner services and direct linkage availability but at the very least referral options. Northwest Central Illinois Works fully intends not to limit the options available to either employers or workers in order to meet their employment needs. Again, emerging and transitional workers need training in essential skills, career exploration, basic academic skills, and life skills. Incumbent workers and to some extent transitional workers would benefit from skills-upgrade training and retention services. Depending upon individual need, workers in any of the three categories could benefit from supportive service assistance, personal and employment counseling, learning how to balance work and life issues, and retention services. assessment testing and interviewing is conducted by Career Planners. Illinois workNet, O\*NET and individual interest tests are administered, in addition to an Individual Employment Plan and Individual Career Plan interview. Career exploration is conducted with phone calls and/or internet based searches.

As part of the 2022 modification, describe how adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities will address the impact and recovery from the COVID-19 National Health Emergency.

In response to the COVID 19 crisis, LWA #4 adjusted to a remote office structure to serve both adults and dislocated workers through Career Services, Training Services and Supportive Services. New ways of case management were created and improved in the last 2 years and will continue to use remote access when deemed necessary. All previous services were transferred to electronic including eligibility, authorization and work based learning activities; signatures, timesheets, evaluation. The last 2 years has taught us to be flexible and think “outside the box” when it comes to service delivery and human centered design.

The definition of "self-sufficiency" is determined by the local WIB. In LWA # 4 "self-sufficiency" has been defined as 200% of the Lower Living Standard Income Level for family household income for the purpose of eligibility for program services.

- A description of how the Local Board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with statewide rapid response activities (§ 679.560(b)(7)). As part of the 2022 modification, describe how adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities will address the impact and recovery from the COVID-19 National Health Emergency.

As a result of COVID-19, Rapid Response events by key partners were conducted remotely. Once the contact has been made of a rapid response event the key partners – Title I, Title III and Post-Secondary Perkins will conduct an onsite or electronic visit. Partner services will be shared and surveys entered into Illinois workNet. Follow-up will be conducted to make sure all services are explained.

F. Provide a description of how the local area will provide youth activities including:

- A description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in the local area, including activities for youth who are individuals with disabilities, which must include an identification of successful models of such activities (§ 679.560(b)(8)). Working with individuals with disabilities is an area that Title I and Title IV work closely together on. One of the strengths is how the two programs work with in-school youth in work based learning. A common scheduled appointment allows for a team approach to meet the needs of the youth. Another strength is working with Title II and Disability Services with the college to link individuals with actual resources. Taking a contracted youth program approach with youth services under WIOA helps on to align an individualized career plan that meets the needs of the youth.
- A description of how local areas will meet the minimum expenditure rate for out-of-school youth. Local Area # 4 gives priority to contracted youth programs who apply for youth funds based on Out-of-School Definitions. Program design is focused on Out of School Youth and Local Boards oversight committee reviews fiscal reports every two months.

Local workforce investment activities for youth are as follows:

- Providing the 14 elements required to be offered to WIOA-eligible youth per TEGL23-14 either through BEST, Inc. staff or the providers who contract for youth services. In some cases, these elements will be delivered directly by the provider or BEST, Inc. or as a referral to an appropriate agency. Depending upon the nature of the activity, some of them may be work-based activities. RFP for service providers are let out each year for either a new proposal or a one-year renewal if the provider is meeting performance and other criteria established for renewal option.
- Past participation in summer programs, Department of Natural Resource summer program, joint Trade Union Project with BEST, Inc., Community Gardens Summer Project through Special DCEO grant, job shadowing, industry tours that are also models of past work-based learning All services provider that could possibly benefit a youth in the future would be part of the Career Planning process, in other words, journey mapping the youth's life from start to employment and follow up.
- Using technology to stay connected, e.g., Facebook, Twitter and now a cellular phone for texting.

- Currently we have a youth coordinator whose main focus is on developing youth activities such as our Work in the Real World, Career/Life Preparation Project, and also being a representative on the youth committee
- Partnering with Adult Education to possibly co-enroll for work-based learning and ICAPS along with working with Division of Rehabilitation Services for transition services for older youth

**NOTE:** It is a matter of record that attempts to procure youth services through a competitive process have fallen short of expectations in the past, in spite of the NCI Works Youth Committee's due diligence and good faith efforts to meet the intent of the law. Therefore, should the Youth Committee ever determine that there are an inadequate or insufficient number of responses to the RFPs/RFQs, NCI Works retains the right to make sure any and/or all of the 14 elements are provided in whichever way(s) it deems appropriate in order to carry out its responsibility under the Act. This may include offering any of the allowable activities through the Business Employment Skills Team, Inc., the local grant sub-recipient; mainstreaming youth in community college programs; or continuing attempts to award grants/contracts on a competitive basis through either traditional or non-traditional methods. It is the feeling of the NCI Works Youth Committee that pursuing this course of action is in the best interest of the local youth and that it is preferable to running the risk that their needs go unmet. Regardless of the method utilized for procuring the programs/services under these circumstances, approval by NCI Works would be required through the annual plan process. At a minimum, RFPs will be let out and approved on an annual basis according to the following procedures: RFP's will be let out in late winter, early spring; rated and presented to a Youth Committee meeting for conditional approval (contingent on allocation and negotiation). Projects approved by the Committee will then be presented NCI Works for conditional approval (contingent on allocation and negotiation). Should the Youth Committee and/or NCI Works deem it necessary to let out additional RFPs, a similar time frame will be implemented.

- As part of the 2022 modification, describe how youth activities will address the impact and recovery from the COVID-19 National Health Emergency.

Continued services listed above were delivered through virtual or on-line access. Services were adapted to ensure no gap of services or delay in activities for the youth participants in local workforce area #4. Staff learned a lot about the ability to use technology and incorporated this immediately. After time the pros and cons were identified and changes were made. For example: we learned that young adults who we assumed would be all over technology were resistant to learn through Zoom so other avenues had to be brought to the forefront.

G. Provide a description of how the local area will provide services to individuals with barriers to employment<sup>8</sup> as outlined in the Unified State Plan

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

**IDES Wagner -Peyser** staff will assist with resume creation, interview skills, and other related activities. Additionally, they will educate the individuals and area employers on the possible tax credits or special bonding programs based on the barrier. Finally, they will refer these individuals out to other partners for specialized assistance through the referral process that was created with all the Partners in June 2017 with Workforce

Enterprise Services, Inc. as part of the incorporation of the Process Mapping Training Manual.

Any customers with barriers to employment will be referred from **BEST, Inc.** to partner agencies to assess and address these issues prior to job placement. The One- Stop staff utilize the common Partner Referral Form, which is then signed by the job seeker prior to direct linkage to the appropriate service provider or providers. Furthermore, WIOA requires the Title 1B partner to give priority of service to low-income individuals and individuals who are basic-skills deficient. BEST, Inc. staff are aware of this requirement and consider it as part of the enrollment process.

**Tri-County Opportunities Council**, as a Community Action Agency, is charged by the federal government to work specifically with low-income citizens to provide them with the tools and potential for becoming self-sufficient. Federal funding is used locally to offer specialized programming in communities. An initial intake, which includes income verification, is completed to determine household eligibility. Eligible households are afforded the opportunity to work in partnership with CSBG staff to address any identified skill deficits.

**National Able/Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP)** is a federally funded program administered through the U.S. Department of Labor based on the Older Americans Act. The SCSEP program promotes useful part-time (at minimum wage) training opportunities in community service activities for unemployed low-income persons who are 55 years old or older who are actively looking for employment. A SCSEP participant must meet the age and income criteria, which is 125% of the current poverty rate, to qualify for the program.

The SCSEP program provides on-site job training to transition the participant into an unsubsidized position of employment in conjunction with the participant's job goals and gain self-sufficiency. Participants receive local minimum wage for community service assignments on a part time basis. This is not only a job training program it also serves as a viable community service resource based on the requirements of the Older Americans Act. Thus, SCSEP is both a training and community service program.

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

To align with Perkins V requirements related to data tracking, SVCC and IVCC are both incorporating the practice of disaggregating of data based on ethnicity, race, and gender, on multiple levels. For example, both colleges are including the assessment of data based on race, ethnicity, and gender in the Program Review process. This data will be examined by internal stakeholders and advisory councils to develop strategies to improve either enrollment or persistence numbers of non-traditional students. Findings will also combine with the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment, completed every two years, to inform the spending of Perkins funds through



- Exposing more high school students, particularly young women and minorities, to careers in science, technology, engineering and math fields.

Both colleges have a history of, and will continue to, work with our local vocational centers and local high schools to expose young men, young women, and minority groups to non-traditional fields related to careers in science, technology, engineering, and math.

During the 18-19 school year, SVCC was awarded a Pathways to Results grant to market Radiologic Technology to male veterans – an underrepresented group within the major. The college is assessing to see if that marketing influenced enrollment, and if so, will consider funding marketing initiatives to continue to market programs to underrepresented groups. SVCC also has a career fair every spring where it highlights companies that are attempting to increase the diversity of their workforce.

IVCC has instituted a new student organization, Women in Technology, whose members are comprised of young women interested in careers in science, technology, engineering and math. Purposes of the student organization include: meeting the needs of women on both a personal and professional level; and providing support for each other from entry into college to entry into the workforce. Students not only support each other but function as role models to younger students as they travel to local area high schools and middle schools to discuss non-traditional careers for women in the STEM fields.

IVCC also has a career fair each spring that highlights careers with a focus on equity and diversity.

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

Both community colleges are planning on working with their local BEST representative and other workforce board partners to determine if they can link new students to students who have recently moved to a new career through a funded education program.

- Ensuring workforce services are strategically located in relation to the populations in most need

Improving access is a strategic goal for both community colleges, and we work in partnership with local agencies to determine where people are under-informed about academic programs. While the geographical region is quite large, both campuses, along with workforce agencies, should be able to

serve all of their respective populaces, especially through an improved referral system and the increase in online programming.

**Tri-County Opportunities Council** is a Community Action Agency. The mission of our organization is to investigate the impact of poverty throughout our nine county service area. We work in partnership with individuals, families and communities to provide opportunities that support movement towards stability and self- sufficiency for those impacted by poverty.

As part of this mission, the CSBG program has office sites located in seven of the eight counties served by the Local Workforce Area 4. Those counties are: Bureau, Carroll, LaSalle, Lee, Ogle, Putnam and Whiteside. We do not cover Jo Daviess. Outreach Workers in the CSBG program also travel to non-office locations, such as libraries, restaurants, partner offices, etc. to meet with potential clients who are not able to meet in a traditional office site.

The populations served by **BEST, Inc.** primarily include low-income youth and adults, as well as individuals who were laid off from work due to plant closings and/or major lay-offs, all of whom face financial hardships. NCI Works and the local CEOs recognize that these individuals greatly benefit from the broad access to programs and services made available through the local workforce development agency, and therefore fully support the 9 offices strategically located throughout the 8 counties in LWIA #4. Furthermore, BEST, Inc. offices all have access to Skype for linkage with other programs if needed as part of their career path journey mapping.

**IDES** has staff located in the comprehensive one stop in Ottawa and an access site in Sterling. Additionally, staff are sent out from these offices to remote areas to do workshops and aid as needed. Similarly, IDES has a toll free number (800-244-5631) for anyone to call during normal business hours to get assistance with their needs.

**National Able/Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP)** operates in the 8 counties in the LWIA 4. Our service area is very large and at this time we do not have permanent, dedicated office space located within the LWIA 4 area. We provide services within this region through referrals from our partners and provide access to services through direct linkage. We also schedule appointments to meet participants face to face at partner agencies within the communities they reside in throughout LWIA 4.

H. Provide a description of training policies and activities in the local area, including the following and any significant implications of the COVID-19 National Health Emergency, as applicable:

- How local areas will meet the annual Training Expenditure Requirement (WIOA Policy Chapter 8, Section 4<sup>9</sup>);

LWIA #4 has exceeded the annual Training Expenditure Requirement every year and sees no problem with continuing that trend going forward. Financial reports and compliance with this requirement are reviewed by management staff on a regular basis, and reported to both the BEST, Inc. Corporate Board of Directors and NCI Works at their bi-monthly meetings. Any concerns about not meeting the 50% threshold are discussed and corrective action determined.

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

Work-based learning (WBL) activities offer a wonderful opportunity, both pre-classroom training and post classroom training, to learn about an occupation of interest prior to investing time and money only to find out that particular career will not meet a customer's professional and/or personal goals. It also allows them put into practice those skills obtained through classroom training.

Work Experience prior to classroom training offers a customer the opportunity to gain valuable information about the skills needed as well as about the workplace culture of the specific occupation. The outcome would be either validation of a course of classroom training selected or an adjustment to one's career/occupational goals. As a post-classroom training internship, a customer gains valuable work experience in a new career/occupation that should shorten the time needed in gaining unsubsidized employment.

Transitional Jobs should be offered to Adults with either little or no work history, or prolonged unemployment. In LWA #4, this WBL is designed to serve as the first step in transitioning into the workforce. For the Adult customer, and in particular those customers with whom we would do joint case management with our TANF, Transitional Jobs could be the first step in a career path that would be followed by a longer work experience position, or it could serve as an avenue of career exploration.

OJT can an attractive offering in the business services menu of employer incentives, especially in today's business climate when employers are experiencing difficulty in finding qualified workers. Employers may be more likely to hire a candidate who has some of the required skills and then utilize an OJT to train for the additional skills needed if supported by a financial incentive. Aggressive marketing, including the use of testimonials from employers who have hired workers through an OJT contract, will be utilized. This marketing campaign will include educating our partners on assessing potential OJT opportunities for our common customers, as well as educating our customers on how to sell the program as an opportunity for a win-win situation for them and for the business.

Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) is, and will continue to be, promoted and encouraged to all area businesses by BEST, Inc. Business Relations Representatives and those cooperating partners of the Rapid Talent Pipeline Initiative (RTPI) business services team. The demand for IWT has skyrocketed in the past few years to the point where BEST, Inc. reached the maximum allowable for funding in PY '18, and it is on track to reach that milestone again in PY '19. Focus on continued training of the areas incumbent workers not only benefits the employee by giving them employable/marketable skills, but it also benefits the business by making their current workforce more effective and efficient during changes in technology and business practices.

As with current national trends, LWIA #4 plans to expand Apprenticeship Programs during the current program year and even more so during PY '20. Two initiatives support that strategy. First of all, NCI Works in sponsorship with BEST, Inc., Illinois Valley Community College and St. Margaret's Health as the participating business, celebrated Apprenticeship Week with the official signing of their new Certified Medical Assistant Apprenticeship paperwork. It was a 2-year project but one that launched the beginning of new opportunities in traditional fields (i.e., manufacturing and the building trades) and non-traditional fields (e.g., healthcare), benefitting both employers and workers. A second example of NCI Works increasing its presence in the Apprenticeship field is that BEST, Inc. responded to the recent Apprenticeship Expansion NOFO for a Navigator to focus on promoting current apprenticeships and creating new ones in EDR #6

on behalf of the local workforce board. Successful projects should be announced in January of 2020.

In July of 2018, BEST, Inc. on behalf of NCI Works, hired Workforce Enterprise Services, Inc. (WES, Inc.), to create a universal Talent Pipeline template that would meet the needs of employers in a rural workforce area that lacked the population centers to establish a diverse talent pool. WES, Inc.'s efforts resulted in the creation of the Rapid Talent Pipeline Initiative (RTPI). The goal of RTPI is to help individual employers address their critical talent needs by understanding their skill requirements, identifying talent solutions that can be implemented quickly, and working with our regional partners to put these solutions in place. Almost all employers are facing talent shortages right now, but these challenges are even greater for the rural employers in the NCI Works region. Employers need talent solutions that can be implemented rapidly. RTPI projects are meant to be done with one employer at a time in most cases, so that customized solutions can be found and implemented quickly. RTPI will emphasize leveraging talent pipeline resources that already exist, rather than creation of new programs, and will also use work-based learning solutions when possible.

NCI Works views the RTPI process as central to its goal of having effective employer engagement and business services in the region, through collaboration among the partners in the One-Stop system. NCI Works will use the RTPI process to help meet its One-Stop Certification effectiveness criteria related to responsiveness to the needs of businesses. The RTPI process is intended to be implemented on a collaborative basis among the partners.

- Provide a copy of the local Individual Training Account Policy and describe how training services outlined in WIOA Sec. 134 will be provided through the use of individual training accounts, including, if contracts for training services will be used, how the use of such contracts will be coordinated with the use of individual training accounts under that chapter, and how the Local Board will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs regardless of how the training services are to be provided (§ 679.560(b)(18)); and

Customers who are eligible for Training Services as defined in the plan, i.e., must be WIOA-eligible, must have the necessary skills and qualifications in order to find self-sufficiency employment, must select a training program that is directly linked to employment opportunities in the local area and is on the State Approved List (ETPL). The State Eligible Training Provider list of training services will be made available to customers through the IWDS and Illinois workNet. Customers can access the Illinois workNet by using the computers in the resource rooms or a personal computer. The individual must be able to apply for financial aid (i.e., must have a high school diploma, HSE or Associates Degree as defined in FAFSA), and if not eligible for financial aid due to a default, must have written proof that a repayment plan is in place and is being fulfilled. Any participant enrolled in a training program has a per participant cap of \$13,500. This includes required costs of tuition, books, and fees. The cost of required training materials must be reasonable. See the limits on training material costs. A waiver of the maximum ITA dollar amount may be granted based on the following:

1. Prior client experience with the particular provider and program.
2. Inter-agency review committee approval.
3. Possible cost share arrangements with client.

Customer Choice will be ensured based on the following procedures:

1. Staff will gather the necessary documentation to verify that customer has completed initial services.
2. Staff will work closely with the client to complete all mandatory Training Services.  
Staff will advise and explain to the customer the Eligible Training Provider List and document it in case notes and/or the IEP.
3. Staff will verify that the training selected for that client is reasonable (based on cost and suitability of client to successfully complete), and appears on the Approved Training Provider list.
4. Staff will determine amount of assistance each semester by dividing \$13,500 by the number of terms needed in order to complete training program.
5. Place copies of documentation in customer file.
6. Staff will enter the appropriate services on to IWDS system.

A waiver to the requirement that an individual must have a high school diploma or GED/HSE to be eligible for an ITA was approved for students enrolled in the ICAPS program who are also enrolled in high school or an HSE program as part of a collaborative effort between BEST, Inc., Adult Education and Perkins/CTE.

At this time, LWIA only uses contracts for training services under the Incumbent Worker Training program. Adequate training for demand occupations have been supplied on the Eligible Training Provider list. If contract training would be an area of need, the workforce board would develop proper procedures to assure effectiveness. This would be followed by a medication to the Local Plan and a 30 day comment period.

- Provide a copy of the local training provider approval policy and procedures. Describe how the Local Board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services through the system and that the providers will meet the employment needs of local employers, workers and jobseekers.

The LWIA #4 local training provider approval policy and procedures are attached. Each time a provider comes up for certification or re-certification, the request is reviewed by a committee of 3 BEST, Inc. staff who are familiar with the performance of the provider as well as the demand for the training. This committee was recommended by the Oversight Committee and approved by NCI Works to fulfill this function. The committee then makes its recommendation for approval to the Oversight Committee at its next regular meeting, who then makes its recommendation for final approval to NCI Works at its next regular meeting. This process was put in place in order to avoid delay in providing access to training programs to Title IB customers.

<sup>8</sup> The term "individual with barrier to employment" means one or more of the following populations: 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, individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act, single parents, including pregnant single women, long-term unemployed individuals, and such other groups as the Governor determines to have barriers to employment (WIOA Sec. 3(24)).

<sup>9</sup> <https://apps.il-work-net.com/WIOAPolicy/Policy/Index/250>

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

- To transfer funds between the adult and dislocated worker funding streams.
- To use funds for incumbent worker training as outlined in WIOA Sec. 134(d)(4)(A)(i).
- To use funds for transitional jobs as outlined in WIOA Sec. 134(d)(5).
- To use funds for pay for performance contracts as outlined in WIOA Sec. 133(b)(2-3).

Any transfers of funds between adult and dislocated worker funding streams must be approved by both NCI Works and the CEOs of LWIA #4 based on a request from the BEST, Inc. Financial Director. This request must also include a justification for the transfer request. Need for the transfer and funding availability will be considered in the request for the transfer as well as for in the approval of the transfer.

Use of IWT funds is included in the original budget based on obligations of contracts carried into the new PY, as well as anticipated need going forward. As stated previously, LWIA #4 reached the maximum amount allowed by law, and anticipates the same for PY '20-PY '23.

Use of funds for transitional jobs is included in the original budget based on anticipated need going forward.

LWA #4 does not intend to use funds for pay for performance contracts at this time.

I. As part of the 2022 modification, if needed, describe the impact of the pandemic the operating systems and polices within the Local Workforce Areas (LWIAs) otherwise not already described above. Include what steps, to the extent known, that will be taken over the next two years to adapt to the impact of the pandemic regarding the operating systems and policies within the Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIAs).

Other Partner Services that were not included elsewhere in this document include:

- Childcare and transportation are needed for those who can work outside the home to attend training programs. Representation and funding is needed but more importantly, connecting with those who need it has yet to be addressed.
- The connection so well established between BEST and DHS in which Customers were able to walk a short distance to see a Career Planner was no longer in place due to the agency staff working from home. No longer required to participate and without the one on one guidance, these obstacles kept most isolated from the idea to work or go to school.
- The format of Facebook was used by the Chamber to promote the drive-up job fairs in which DHS learned of the events after the initial events occurred.
- Childcare and transportation is needed for those who wish to work outside the home or attend educational training programs. Until the two deficits are addressed the likeliness of successful employment outcomes will be very limited.

- In March 2020, the Illinois Department of Employment Security's (IDES) Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) program began enlisting the use of digital tools that facilitated remote work and day-to-day administrative operations. The use of this technology allowed for customer service provisions to take place that, due to COVID 19's impact, had been restricted. As telework and virtual event planning and implementation emerged as common practice, lessons were learned and improvements to our delivery model took place. These changes have left its mark on our day-to-day operations in the post-COVID-19 landscape.
- Perkins V perspective, the pandemic has had a negative impact on student attendance, participation, and completion in career and technical programs. We continue to work with our industry partners through program advisory councils and the Chief Manufacturing Executive advisory group to problem solve the issues that we, as an educational institution face, as well as the issues that our industry partners face in attracting and retaining a skilled workforce. We have adapted many teaching strategies to accommodate learning through the pandemic and continue to find new ways to reach students and promote learning.
- As a provider of supports addressing "social determinants" such as transportation, housing, reliable childcare, health care access and educational opportunities, Tri-County has and will continue to ensure services are provided to individuals referred through the One Stop system. When possible, in person appointments are conducted. Other options available to meet are via phone, email and Zoom. In order to reestablish connections with partners in the One Stop, outreach efforts will occur to ensure collaborative work with partners exists. Outreach staff through the One Stop referral system will make linkages to partners, who address employment needs of clients served.

There have been modifications to the manner in which services from Tri-County have been delivered at the One Stop Partner location since its recent re-opening. . At this location, staff are seeing clients in person by appointment only. Policies and procedures developed by the One Stop Partners as it relates to safety and wellness are being followed during service delivery. Potential customers are made aware of the modifications to accessing services at this site. If customers are unable or unwilling to meet at the One Stop Partner location, staff are able to meet in person at other sites, via phone, email and by computer.

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

Local Workforce Area #4 is committed to help everyone find their place in the community both as an employer and a program. Our differences together make a stronger one with fair and equitable treatment access opportunity and engagement for all. Our Targeted Population Committee for the Workforce Board works closely to ensure services for all populations are equal and aligned.

To ensure equitable access to workforce, educational, and community services, students may enter the program via the one-stop center or program office, contact via telephone, or request a virtual web-conference. We provide individualized services based on student needs, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, language, (dis)ability, age, religious commitment, or political perspective.

In the classroom we create an environment that welcomes all. We help students learn in the way that will meet their individual needs. We create an accepting and supportive classroom environment that builds purpose and motivation. Our instructors and our staff always show interest and appreciation for cultural backgrounds and we establish class norms that show sensitivity and inclusiveness. We provide a curriculum that is respectful of differences. We also provide learning accommodations, lend necessary technology, and provide students the opportunity to attend class remotely when needed in order to remove barriers to participation.

We believe that all people should have equitable access to jobs that are safe, pay a living wage, offer benefits, provide career pathways and opportunities for mobility. We also understand that there is an overlap of workforce development and “social determinants”. We know that gaps in educational attainment and barriers related to housing, transportation and supportive services systematically disadvantage people of color in the labor market. Social factors such as family income and wealth, access to healthcare services, transportation, housing quality and affordability and access to reliable childcare restricts job opportunities for workers. While these “social determinants” fall outside the direct scope of traditional workforce development and educational efforts that are focused on worker training, placement and career advancement, they are critical components of an equitable workforce system. By aligning Tri-Counties resources and efforts to address the causes of these social determinants, as well as providing supportive services, through programs, addressing housing affordability, access to health services, transportation, educational advancement, childcare and other supportive services, Tri-County will be able to ensure that barriers to workforce equity can be addressed and reduced for customers.

Tri-County Opportunities Council will continue to work within the One Stop System to ensure linkages to partners to coordinate services for job seeking customers.

DRS’ local plan in the Lasalle office for FY22 includes several outreach goals for increasing referrals, especially of individuals from various racial/ethnic minority groups and other marginalized populations. We will continue to identify and respond to the specific needs of our business community in our service area. We will do this while staying true to the most critical component of vocational rehabilitation services, which is the assurance that vocational goals will be developed in partnership with the customer. They will be based on customers skills, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.

As we continue to navigate towards what we hope to be an eventual end to the COVID-19 Pandemic, DRS will continue to work in partnership with all of our LWIA 4 partners to plan and strategize together to identify and try to meet the needs of our business community and key stakeholders. DRS is also committed to sharing resources, and to working collaboratively with our LWIA partners to provide timely & quality services to our shared customers/clients/participants/job seekers.

During spikes in COVID, those with lower immune systems, they require technology including available instruction in their homes that link them to education and employment.

Workforce needs more Customer, Caseworker and private sector input to affectively find solutions to the needs of the community. Equity can be addressed by collaboration from those from childcare and



transportation to create pathways for Customers to engage outside their homes. On the other hand, with COVID numbers so high and the medical community predicting that COVID is going to remain, we can better serve more by identifying resources to put computers and Internet in the homes of constituents. Along with these resources, there must be training on how to use the technology when learning and ongoing glitches that arise.

The funding needs to go away from the idea of these services in a building and move to more career planner outreach that occurs from home to home.

Those without computer hardware, knowledge of software, and Internet access are unable to establish a pathway to education, training and employment. Connecting with those who need guidance has yet to be addressed. When Workforce reaches beyond the traditional model to develop new modes of communication and tackles the more difficult obstacles of childcare and transportation, we will then see more people working.

If budgets will address a new model of funding remote Career planners whose expertise includes training and mentoring Customers rather than paying for security guards and building expenses, we will be more in line with serving all sectors of the population.

SVCC holds program reviews every five years for each program which have a large equity-based component. Data driven analysis shows where certain groups may be underrepresented in our programs relative to our district at large. This information is then shared with our advisory councils in order to discuss reducing these equity gaps. SVCC will happily share this information with Workforce partners as well in order to strategize about best serving every member of our district who would benefit from training.

## **CHAPTER 5: PERFORMANCE GOALS AND EVALUATION – LOCAL COMPONENT**

### **Chapter 5**

The plan must include information on the actions the Local Board will take toward becoming or remaining a high performing board, consistent with the factors developed by the State Board (WIOA Sec. 101(d)(6)) and (§ 679.560(b)(17)). LWIAs are required to provide *updated* information and analysis noting any significant impacts of the COVID-19 National Health Emergency and what steps will be taken to address the challenges and opportunities that are associated with performance goals and evaluation.

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

As a general note, LWIA #4 partners are waiting on final direction from the State regarding the status of the common measure and/or any additional State Performance Measures. With that said:

IDES will monitor its programs (Migrant & Seasonal Farm Workers, Wagner-Peyser, Unemployment Insurance, Trade Readjustment Assistance, and Veterans) to make sure they are meeting WIOA, State, and Federal mandates, implementing corrective action plans where needed.

BEST, Inc. will monitor its programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth and Trade) to make sure they are meeting WIOA, State, and Federal mandates, implementing corrective action plans where needed.

All partners will provide their performance measures/goals to NCI Works for monitoring purposes. Performance status against the measures will be provided in a format and on a frequency as requested by the Board. Reports will be submitted to the NCI Works Oversight Committee for their review and recommended action if any. The Committee will then present the reports along with its recommended action for review and approval by the full Board.

<h2 style="margin: 0;">Workforce Development Activities (Title I of WIOA)</h2>
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### LWIA 4 - Business Employment Skills Team Inc.

<u>Adult</u>	PY 2020	PY 2021
Employment Rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	85.0%	85.0%
Employment Rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit	85.0%	85.0%
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	\$10,000	\$10,000
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters after Exit	82.0%	82.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	71.0%	71.0%
<u>Dislocated Worker</u>		
Employment Rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	86.0%	86.0%
Employment Rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit	83.0%	83.0%

Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	\$8,500	\$8,500
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters after Exit	79.0%	79.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	57.0%	57.0%

## Youth

Employment or Education Rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	73.0%	73.0%
Employment or Education Rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit	72.0%	72.0%
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	\$3,500	\$3,500
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters after Exit	70.0%	70.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	54.0%	54.0%

All Partner information has been and will continue to be included in the NCI Works Annual Report.

- B. Provide a description of the current and planned evaluation activities and how this information will be provided to the local board and program administrators as appropriate.
- What existing service delivery strategies will be expanded based on promising return on investment?

Based on the information in A., the Oversight Committee will make recommendations to the full board to expand delivery of services and/or programs after a review of the information provided. One example may be to expand Apprenticeship Programs based on the success of the Apprenticeship Navigator Project if LWIA #4 is awarded funding under the Apprenticeship Expansion Grant. Monitoring and Certification of the One Stop ensures that the working area in the Comprehensive Center is compliant with ADA and accessible to individuals with disabilities.

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

Likewise, the Navigator Project could be discontinued if the grant is awarded to LWIA #4 but produces no positive results.

- What new service strategies will be used to address regional educational and training needs based on promising return on investment?
  - What return on investment and qualitative outcome data for various education and training programs will be collected to identify barriers to enrollment?
  - What are the most cost-effective approaches to taking down those barriers or helping residents overcome them?

Based on the disaggregated data collected through annual program reviews, both colleges will assess enrollment, retention, and successful completion, and make adjustments where necessary. Qualitative data will also be collected from industry partners to gauge their employment needs. Additionally, through the Rapid Response team, admissions, financial aid, advisors, career services, and disability services will all play a role in ensuring that a potential student realizes the tools that exist to prevent barriers to attending college and finding a new position. Lastly, the One-Stop Center will be instrumental in making sure that member agencies and institutions are both sharing information, and also not duplicating services (in order to be more cost effective).

C. Same as B above

D. As part of the 2022 modification, if needed, describe the impact of the pandemic on the regional service strategies, including use of cooperative service delivery strategies and the connection of job that will be taken over the next two years to adapt to the impact of the pandemic in regard to regional service strategies, including use of cooperative service delivery strategies and the connection of job seekers with employers.

As listed throughout this entire document, continued service to our customers is our number one priority. We will adapt to service delivery throughout the next two-years as needed.

E. As part of the 2022 modification, describe how a workforce equity lens is or will be incorporated in the analysis of performance goals and implementation of evaluation activities.

Workforce Equity is not a new element in program services and design. We will continue to evaluate performance goals and report to the Oversight Committee which in turn will report to the Workforce Board on activities in Local Workforce Area #4.

## **TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS AND ASSURANCES – LOCAL COMPONENT**

### **Chapter 6**

This chapter includes the technical requirements and assurances that are required by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA Sec. 121 (c)(2)(iv)). LWIAs are required to provide *updated* information and analysis noting any significant impacts of the COVID-19 National Health Emergency and what steps will be taken to address the challenges and opportunities that are associated with meeting the administrative requirement of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs.

A. Fiscal Management

- Identify the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds described in WIOA Sec.

107(d)(12)(B)(i)(III) as determined by the chief elected official or the Governor under WIOA Sec. 107(d)(12)(B)(i) (§ 679.560(b)(14)).

The Chief-Elected Officials of LWIA #4 have designated Business Employment Skills Team, Inc. (BEST, Inc.) as the Grant Sub-recipient/Fiscal Agent to disburse the Title 1B Funds according to all WIOA federal, state and local laws, regulations and policies, and per available grant funding. With the use of electronic platforms all administrative responsibilities have been carried out in accordance with all policies and procedures.

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

Attached are the local procurement policies and procedures for LWIA #4. Subgrants and contracts for WIOA Title 1B activities will be procured based on the appropriate policies and procedures, and per available grant funding. Although the policies remained the same, carrying out the negotiations, contracts, agreements and purchases were all done electronically through Zoom or other appropriate platforms.

#### B. Physical and Programmatic Accessibility

- Describe how entities within the one-stop delivery system, including one-stop operators and the one-stop partners, will comply with WIOA Sec. 188, if applicable, and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities (§ 679.560(b)(5)(iii)).

During the pandemic when customers were unable to report a physical office, staff provided services through electronic means. Efforts were made to continue services as if they were in person. As the state is allowing more access to physical buildings we will return to the following process.

BEST, Inc. (Title I) and IDES will be housed full-time at the Comprehensive One-Stop on a regular basis, and therefore all career and training services will be available at all times for individuals seeking services. Tri-County Opportunities Council (TCOC) will provide services on-site one day per week and through direct linkage the other 4 days of the week. Adult Staff administer the TABE Test on site at the One-Stop Center twice a month unless there is a need to do so in between scheduled visits. All other workforce partners will provide their services through direct linkage as described elsewhere in this narrative. Furthermore, a1H staff members will be trained to provide services to all, regardless of the range of abilities, mobility, age, language, learning style and education level. Additionally, assistive devices, such as screen-reading software programs and assistive listening devices will be available

Partners will draw upon the expertise within the partnership to address specific issues; e.g., Illinois Department of Human Services - Division of Rehabilitation Services to address accommodations in providing services for individuals with disabilities.

Specifically:

IDES will provide access on site at the Ottawa one-stop for the following programs; Title III: Wagner-Peyser, Unemployment Insurance, Trade Readjustment Assistance, Migrant & Seasonal Farm Workers, and Veteran's Services. These services will be provided by trained full time staff in a facility that meets EO/ ADA standards for access to those with disabilities. To ensure inclusiveness of services IDES has staff members on site who speak Spanish and access to a phone interpretive service for any other language.

BEST, Inc. (Title IB) will provide access to Title IB Adult, Youth, Dislocated Worker and Trade Adjustment Act programs. BEST, Inc. staff are fully trained in EO/AA policies and procedures and have direct linkage contact with an EO/AA Officer who is housed full-time in the BEST, Inc. administrative office in Oglesby. The BEST, Inc. Program Manager and Business Relations Manager, who have a combined 50+ years of experience in workforce programs, are both housed at the Center, along with one Trade Career Advisor, one Career Advisor with extensive working knowledge of all three Title IB programs, and one Business Relations Representative with extensive knowledge of all business services offered throughout the system.

For customers wishing to access DHS/TANF services, interviews are conducted in person or via telephone. Those who walk into the center and wish to apply for TANF can be directed to the DHS office that is located in the area where the person resides.

Tri-County Opportunities Council (CSBG) will be housed one day per week at the Comprehensive One Stop. While at the Comprehensive One Stop, the Outreach Worker will complete an intake application on those individuals interested in CSBG supportive services. At that time, appropriated services and/or referrals will be provided. Alternative methods of direct linkage, while at the Comprehensive One Stop, will be by Skype, with video capability, as this is the preferred and agreed upon option by all partners. This option provides face-to-face virtual meeting.

Clients interested in supportive services at other times may contact 800-323-5434. The staff will provide direct linkage to services and/or referrals based on the information obtained in that call.

The Outreach Worker will participate in training to provide services to all, regardless of the range of abilities, mobility, age language, learning style and education level. The Outreach Worker will facilitate the use of assistive devices, such as screen reading software programs and assistive listening devices by clients in need of this type of assistance. Use of other partner's expertise to address specific barriers will be facilitated by the Outreach Worker; i.e.: Illinois Department of Human Services - Division of Rehabilitation Services to address accommodations in providing services for individuals with disabilities.

The Outreach Worker will also utilize Tri-County Opportunities Council Equal Opportunity/ Affirmative Action Plan which serves as a guide to the agency's equal opportunity objectives and includes the manner in which the agency plans to provide

accommodations for client services. Contained in this plan is a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and Hearing Impaired Plan, which provides guidelines for the Outreach Worker, as well as resources and supportive services which can be obtained for those who do not speak or speak limited English or those who are hearing impaired. This helps to ensure any barriers to obtaining services are removed.

The one-stop center recently went through a self-assessment and was found to be up to standards.

Specific examples include:

1. Sidewalks are ramped, and the door into the center is mechanized
  2. Bi-lingual materials, posters and signage
  3. Visitors to the center have access to a language line
  4. IDES has the ability to hire a sign language interpreter when needed.
  5. Assistive technology (e.g., software packages, equipment with different background lighting, etc.) has recently been updated and provided to the center
  6. All partner staff was trained by the Illinois Assistive Technology office and provided with reference manuals.
  7. A receptionist is available to greet visitors and can help direct them based on specific needs
  8. Ample accessible parking spaces closest to the door are available in the parking lot
  9. The location is recognizable and is a regular drop-off point for public transportation at the front door of the center
- Provide copies of executed cooperative agreements (as applicable) which define how all local service providers, including additional providers, will carry out the requirements for integration of and access to the entire set of services available in the local one-stop system, with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities (§679.560(b)(13)). This may include cross training of staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers and other efforts at cooperation, collaboration and coordination.

There are no cooperative agreements for this Plan. However, the MOU and services listed are agreed upon by the Partners and approved by the CEOs and LWIB.

### C. Plan Development and Public Comment

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

All meetings during the pandemic will be held electronically in accordance with the Executive Order protocol and co-chairs declaration.

At their March 1, 2022 meeting, NCI Works voted to approve the PY 22 modification to the Local Plan after the completion of the 30 day public comment period if no major changes came out of the public comment. A Legal Notice was placed in local newspapers

and posted to the NCI Works website open for public comment. There were no public comments received.

A combined meeting of local partners was held to begin development of the MOU and the local plan on January 13, 2022. Most partners were represented and participation was excellent. On February 28, 2022, a combined meeting was held to review the progress of the two documents as well as to verify alignment of information. Again, partner participation was excellent. With all being in agreement prior to the third meeting, a roll call vote was conducted with all partners so that the Report of Outcomes could be submitted by the April 15, 2022 deadline.

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

LWIA #4 received no public comments during the 30-day comment period.

- Provide information regarding the regional and local plan modification procedures.

Regional plan modifications will be done in coordination with the appropriate LWIA, in a manner following the procedures of the original plan development and submission, and in compliance with DCEO policy.

Local plan modification will be done in a manner following the procedures of the original plan development and submission, and in compliance with DCEO policy. Any local partner wishing to modify the plan should notify the NCI Works co-chairs of their request in writing, and should include their specific purpose of the modification.

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

Under Title I, EO Compliance Monitoring is conducted on an annual basis. During the program process, the EO Officer completes a Dynamic Formula for Equal Opportunity Statistical Calculations that determines if there are any disparities within the Adult, Dislocated Worker or Youth Programs.

As part of the Workforce Board, the Targeted Population Committee/workgroup made up of partners, workforce boards, chief elected officials and service providers for the said population, addresses the hiring needs of individuals with disabilities, veterans, ex-offenders and other populations facing special challenges to obtaining employment. Listed below is the goals/purpose of the committee:

1. Identify issues that present barriers to employment for each targeted population.
2. Coordinate and collaborate with appropriate other stakeholders to develop and implement strategies to address the challenges. (including the core and required partners)
3. Set eligibility, service and budget priorities



4. Solicit input and cooperation from the business community to develop work-based learning and/or employment opportunities.
5. Develop and implement best practices and promising strategies that will create successful career pathways.
6. Provide information and assist with operational and other issues relating to the provision of services to individuals with disabilities, including issues relating to compliance with WIOA Section 188, if applicable, and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.